

CAMÕES IN THE UNITED STATES¹

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Anyone interested in the reception and reputation of Camões in the United States will do well to start with the research of Norwood Andrews, Jr. In a series of articles and monographs he has done a great deal of the archeological work, casting his nets wide, to locate references and discussions in journals, magazines, and books. Yet his work has not been merely bibliographical, for he has also addressed at length and in scrupulous detail larger matters such as the scope and significance of Camões' presence in America ("A Projecção de Camões e d'Os *Lusiadas* nos Estados Unidos da América", included in *Os Lusiadas: Estudos Sobre a Projecção de Camões em Culturas e Literaturas Estrangeiras* (Lisbon: 1984), pp. 331-449, and "Toward an Understanding of Camões' Presence as a Lyric Poet in the Nineteenth-Century American Press", *Luso-Brazilian Review* [Winter 1980], 17: 171-85), the basis for and the motivations behind the American poet-critic Ezra Pound's attack on *Os Lusiadas* (*The Case Against Camões: A Seldom Considered Chapter from Ezra Pound's Campaign to Discredit Rhetorical Poetry* [New York: Peter Lang, 1988]), and Camões' influence on the author of *White-Jacket*, *Moby-Dick*, and *Billy Budd* (*Melville's Camões* [Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1989]). To Andrews' work I would add my own. In *The Presence of Camões: Influences on the Literature of England*,

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America, and Southern Africa (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), I include critical considerations of what might be called the more belletristic interest shown in Camões' poetry and life by American writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Emily Dickinson, and Elizabeth Bishop.

But I have chosen not to repeat either myself or rehearse Andrews' work. Rather I would like to bring to your attention names and texts that are not addressed either by Andrews or myself and that have been largely, if not entirely, ignored by students of Camões. The texts I have identified are generically different: a cultural history from the year 2000; an early nineteenth-century memoir; early twentieth-century speeches by a Brazilian diplomat; an early twentieth-century scholarly survey for a poetry and drama publication; a late nineteenth-century diplomat's journal; a traveler's impressions by a writer best known for a restaurant guide; twentieth-century editions and translations; and representative reference works; and, finally, college or university literary journals. I might mention that elsewhere, in "Notes on Camões", *Revista de Estudos Anglo-Portugueses*, no. 8 (1999), 7-15, I have called attention to the strong presence of Camões, largely by way of quotation from *Os Lusíadas*, in an American textbook for use in grammar schools, dating from 1881, on the peoples and countries of the world.

1. The History Book

From Dawn to Decadence (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), subtitled "500 Years of Western Cultural Life: 1500 to the Present"—a tome that runs to nearly nine hundred pages—can be rightly viewed as the capstone to Jacques Barzun's long and distinguished career as teacher and historian. He was born in 1907. Of interest here is his treatment of Camões and epic poem.

Barzun first mentions Camões when talking about Spanish Golden Age literature and the fact that that literature, beyond the knowledge of the scholar-specialists, is largely unknown in non-Castilian countries. "The main cause lies in Spain's isolation when its imperial glory faded", he writes, "but neglect of this kind has not been limited to works produced in Spain. It is a mistake to believe that 'anything really good' will cross frontiers and find its due place.... The prime 16C example is the poem about Europe's expansion westward, the epic *Lusíads* by the Portuguese Camoëns, himself an explorer and Humanist" (109).

Later Barzun considers the case of Camões and *Os Lusíadas* at greater length and from what is, in these problematically nationalistic times, a refreshingly candid point of view.

While Tasso was garnering praise for his work, another poet in another southern land was composing a true epic. If the name of Camoëns and the title *Lusiads* do not at once evoke recognition, the reason is again that of language: Portuguese is not widely read or studied outside its native limits in Europe and America. Camoëns chose a subject more factual than the paladins and had a more useful experience than the Italians for epic work. He was a soldier and sailor. He fought the Moors in north Africa, lost his right eye in battle and was invalided, re-enlisted to find adventure in the Indies, and there became an official in charge of a trading post. Accused of embezzlement and put in prison, he managed to get free and sail home. There, like everybody who could hold a pen, he wrote plays and sonnets and began the epic that made him the great national poet indeed—a great poet *tout court*.

His subject was contemporary: the conquest of the ocean sea by the Portuguese. And his ostensible hero was a recent, historical character, Vasco da Gama. The actual hero is the Portuguese people, “the illustrious heart of Lusitania”; the name of the ancient Roman province that recurs in the title *Lusiads*. The adventures of the hero as man and people are the real and allegorical events of the explorer’s voyage home from the East. What there is of the marvelous in the incidents is due not to magic but to the well-known gods and goddesses of the ancients. Thus in the great episode of the Isle of Love, the domain of Venus, where the sailors take the Nereids, nymphs of the sea, as brides, Gama is the lover of their queen, Thetis, hitherto unattainable. Gama succeeds in his wooing after the repulsive giant Adamastor, typifying the enemies of the Portuguese, has failed. The union of godly beauty with human courage is to produce the future heroes of Portugal. In Greek mythology, when Thetis is subdued by Love, her offspring is the dauntless Achilles.

This sample episode from *The Lusiads* is enough to show that it is a Humanist epic. Women other than goddesses play important parts in several of the main

scenes. Among these is the story, told with lyrical tenderness, of Iñes de Castro, the historical mistress of Prince Pedro of Portugal, whose close advisers compelled him to have her put to death. In tone and conception, the poem is equidistant from the popular ballad and the learned pastiche. Camoëns has been blamed for mixing the pagan myths with Christian, but it is standard Humanist practice. It is not sacrilege but spiritual synonymy. In *The Lusiads* the allegorical and the historical planes are traversed by physical action, told with unabating vigor and vivid detail. It came naturally to one who, though writing on terra firma, had spent many days on the deck of a ship. The fervor with which Camoëns celebrates the conquest, first of the sea by rounding the Cape of Storms at the tip of Africa, and then of the natives and the trade of the southeast Indies, makes his poem the first and last national epic—this at a time when the nations of the West were not so much made as in the making. The work withstands comparison with Virgil's imperial *Aeneid*. Using a longer line than the Italians, Camoëns was able to achieve grandeur more easily, especially in the speeches. And he shares with the ancients and the writers of sagas something one might call epic pessimism. He is also considered Portugal's greatest lyric poet, as well as the man whose writings fixed the Portuguese language.

Os Lusíadas has been translated four times into English, the latest version being in prose. [Actually there are more like seven or eight English-language translations of *Os Lusíadas*, the latest being Landeg White's, published by Oxford University Press in 1997, along with approximately the same number of partial translations. See Iolanda Freitas Ramos and Isabel Cruz Lousada, "Traduções de *Os Lusíadas* em Inglaterra", in *Camões em Inglaterra*, edited by Maria Leonor Machado de Sousa (Lisboa: Ministério da Educação/ Instituto de Cultura e Língua Portuguesa, 1992), pp. 13-67.] (The one to read is Leonard Bacon's, in verse.) [*The Lusiads of Luis de Camões*, translated with an introduction and notes by Leonard Bacon (New York: Hispanic Society of America, 1950). More about this work later on.] But there is another means of access that is strongly recommended to anyone who knows Spanish: it is to study in a comparative

grammar the forms that differ regularly in Spanish and Portuguese and then to plunge into the poem with a dictionary at hand. (153-54)

2. The Memoir

In *Reminiscences of Spain, the Country, its People, History, and Monuments* (Boston: Carter, Hendee and Co., and Allen and Ticknor, 1833), Caleb Cushing (1800-1879)—a diplomat and politician from Massachusetts, writing in mid-career—employs as epigraphs two excerpts from Camões' *Os Lusíadas*. The first of these epigraphs, along with lines from *Coplas de Manrique* and from Ford's *Lover's Melancholy*, comes from Canto 4 (95-96) and is used before the chapter on "Fortune, A Vision of Time":

Oh gloria de mandar! Oh vana cobiça
Desta vaidade, a quem chamamos fama!
Oh fraudulento gosto, que se atiça
Co' huma aura popular, que honra se chama!
Que castigo tamanho, a que justiça
Fazes no peito vaõ que muito te ama!
Que mortes! Que perigos! Que tormentas!
Que crueldades nelles experimentas!

Dura inquietação da alma, e da vida;
Fonte de desemparos, e adulterios;
Sagaz consumidora conhecida
De fazendas, de Reinos, e de Imperios.
Chamam-te illustre, chamam-te subida,
Sendo digna de infames vituperios:
Chamam-te fama, e gloria soberana;
Nomes com quem se o povo nescio engana. (I, 214)

The chapter titled "El Afrancesado" (the "Frenchified" one, being a Spaniard, "driven into banishment" by "the vicissitudes of the Peninsula" [II, 139]) contains two epigraphs: first, lines from Massinger's *Fatal Dowry*, and then, lines from Canto 3 (17-19) of *Os Lusíadas*:

Eis-aqui se descobre a nobre Hespanha,
Como cabeça alli de Europa toda;
Em cujo senhorio e gloria estranha
Muitas voltas tem dado a fatal roda.

Mas nunca poderá com força, ou manha,
 A Fortuna inquieta pôr-lhe noda,
 Que lha não tire o esforço, e ousadia,
 Dos bellicosos peitos que em si cria.
 Com Tingitania entesta, e alli parece
 Que quer fechar o mar Mediterraneo,
 Onde o sabido Estreito se ennobrece
 Com o extremo trabalho do Thebano.
 Com nações diferentes se engrandece,
 Cercadas com as ondas do Oceano;
 Todas de tal nobreza, e tal valor,
 Que qualquer dellas cuida que he melhor.
 Tem o Tarragonez, que se fez claro
 Sujeitando Parthenope inqúieta:
 O Navarro; as Asturias, que reparo
 Já foram contra a gente Mahometa.
 Tem o Gallego cauto; e o grande e raro
 Castelhana, a quem fez o seu Planeta
 Restituidor de Hespanha, e senhor della;
 Betis, Leaõ, Granada, com Castella. (II, 138)

Camões' stanzas testify to diversity within unity in sixteenth-century Spain, a theme that leads to Cushing's argument that in the nineteenth century "how readily the provinces of Spain would fall into a federative government,—nay, how congenial such a form of government is with the whole spirit of their institutions" (II, 184).

Incidentally, if memory serves me, the two quotations from *Os Lusíadas* constitute the only Portuguese in Cushing's book, though there are references to Portuguese history in several essays. It occurs to me that there is no scholarship that goes into the matter of Camões as the source of epigraphs for English-language texts (or, perhaps, for texts in any other language). I offer these two instances from Caleb Cushing's book as a start in the search for the epigraphic Camões.

3. The Speech

Over the course of his adult life Joaquim Nabuco (1849-1910) propagandized for Camões, in his native Brazil and, extraordinarily, during his five-year tenure as Brazil's first ambassador in Washington. In the United States he gave talks at some of the major American universities in the states of New York and Connecticut:

"The Place of Camoens in Literature", to students at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, on 14 May 1908;

"Camoens, the Lyric Poet", at Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, on 21 April 1909; and

"*The Lusiads* as the Epic of Love", at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, on 23 April 1909.

Each of these lectures achieved print separately as pamphlets, presumably in 1909 by the Brazilian Embassy in Washington, D.C., although there is no indication of date or place of publication. There are copies of all three pamphlets in the John D. Rockefeller Library, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, U.S.A.

Nabuco's Yale University lecture was noticed by at least one New York newspaper. On August 8, 1908, the *New York Times Saturday Review of Books* published "Camoens, Poet of the New World", by Elisabeth L. Cary. After quoting liberally from Nabuco's lecture, Cary concludes her piece:

Camoens is a subject rewarding from many points of view to the scholar who knows him; and one can only respect the judgment that prompts Mr. Nabuco to say that he did not come to "submit to criticism what an immemorial proscription raises above it", nor yet to indulge in invidious comparisons, but only to show that his poet "is one of those peaks, which cannot be measured, of the immortal chain of creators". (435)

(Two digressions. First, Nabuco's lectures at universities in the United States are discussed by Américo da Costa Ramalho, "Joaquim Nabuco e Camões", in *Estudos Camonianos*, 2nd ed. [Lisbon: Instituto Nacional de Investigação Científica, 1980], pp. 91-108. As the author documents, "'VII. Joaquim Nabuco e Camões' é o texto de uma conferência pronunciada na New York University e na Columbia University, ambas em Nova Iorque, no ano lectivo de 1961-62, e editada em livro, como suplemento de *Brasilia XI*, em Coimbra, em 1962" [xi]. Second, it is said that at the time of his death—on January 17, 1910 Nabuco died suddenly at the Brazilian Embassy in Washington—he was preparing still another talk on the subject of Camões, to be delivered, this time, at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.)

The three lectures Nabuco actually delivered at American universities were included, in Portuguese translation, in *Discursos*

e Conferências nos Estados Unidos, translated by Artur Bomilcar (Rio de Janeiro: Benjamin Aguila [1911]):

- "O Lugar de Camões na Literatura" (13-40);
- "Camões — O Poeta Lírico" (41-77); and
- "Os *Lusíadas* Como a Epopéia do Amor" (79-106).

Later, these lectures were included in *Camões e Assuntos Americanos—Seis Conferências em Universidades Americanas*, translated by Carolina Nabuco (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1940):

- "O Lugar de Camões na Literatura" (1-30);
- "Camões — O Poeta Lírico" (36-67); and
- "Os *Lusíadas* — Epopéia do Amor" (69-98).

In passing, I should say that Carolina Nabuco, the daughter of Camões' Brazilian champion, was herself a distinguished writer. Besides fiction, she was the author of a very good history of American literature. *Retrato dos Estados Unidos à Luz da sua Literatura* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1967). Interestingly, as she mentions in her memoirs *Oito Décadas* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1973), she had originally intended to write her book in English under the title of *A Psychological History of American Literature*.

4. The Scholarly Survey

In 1907 Isabel Moore contributed a piece—"The Literature of Portugal"—to the autumn 1907 volume of *Poet Lore*, a hardbound periodical published in Boston, Massachusetts, by Richard G. Badger. In this survey of Portugal's literature from its beginnings through the eighteenth century, the author devotes the most space—ten pages out of thirty-five—to Camões. Her biographical account reflects the scholarly knowledge of the time, which is to say that it remains somewhat romanticized, employing liberally as "biographical" evidence for events, episodes, and temperament, Camões' lyric poetry. As Isabel Moore indicates, "There are many random lines throughout his writings that give insight to Camoens the man as well as to Camoens the poet" (366). Moore quotes liberally from translations by Robert Southey, Lord Viscount Strangford, and Richard Garnett, even as she quotes approvingly Lord Byron's remarks on Strangford's translations, "it is to be

remarked that the things given to the public as poems of Camoens' are no more to be found in the original Portuguese than in the Songs of Solomon" (368). Of *Os Lusíadas*, Moore writes:

This great poem deals with the adventures of Vasco de [sic] Gama and is, almost incidentally an epitome of the achievements of the Portuguese nation. Camoens dedicated it to Dom Sebastian. The three greatest episodes in it are the Legend of the Floating Island, The Spirit of the Cape and Inez de Castro. La Harpe, who figures as one of the French translators of the *Lusiads*, says that, although it lacks 'action, character and interest' as a whole, he prefers its well-known episode of Dona Inez de Castro to the whole of [John Milton's] *Paradise Lost*. Voltaire has also criticised the machinery of the *Lusiads*. But Voltaire has also made Cameons [sic] born a Spaniard and a comrade of Vasco de Gama who, as a matter of fact, died before Camoens was born. Southey, although a Spanish scholar, was better acquainted with Mickle's poor English heroic couplets than with the Portuguese of the *Lusiads*. La Harpe did not know Portuguese at all (so says Sir Richard Burton), his so-called translation being nothing more than a new rendering of the literal version by D'Hermilly; and Voltaire knew the *Lusiads* only through Mickle's translation. [John] Adamson says (in 1820) that there are one Hebrew translation of the *Lusiads*, five Latin, six Spanish, four Italian, three French, four German, and two English. The oldest English version is by Sir Richard Fanshaw (1655) who was the English Ambassador sent to Lisbon to arrange for the marriage of Charles II of England with Catherine of Braganza. By the time of the third Centennial Celebration in Portugal of the death of Camoens (1580-1880) there were seven complete English translations. At this time, also, there was brought out in Lisbon the best complete edition of Camoens' works, the *Bibliotheca Camoneana*, by Juromenha, in seven volumes. It contains a list of all works upon, and translations of, Camoens. Of the various translations of Camoens Burton says 'all are meager in the extreme, they follow like a flock of sheep, they reflect one another like a band of Chinamen.'

Sir Richard Burton's own translations of the *Lusiads* and the *Lyrics* of Camoens deserve by far the most

consideration, as being entirely scholarly. It so happened that his own personal travels formed, as he says, 'a running and realistic commentary upon the *Lusiads*.' And again, 'I have not only visited almost every place named in the Epos of Commerce; in many I spent months and even years.' Burton speaks of 'my Master, Camoens' and finds in him much of the Orient; its 'havock and its all splendor. And—regarding his translation—he *naively* remarks that 'after all, to speak without due modesty, my most cogent reason for printing this translation of my Master is, simply, because I prefer it to all that have appeared.' (371-72)

But Moore is not willing to give Burton the last word on the matter. She continues:

Yet with all our faith in Richard Burton, we feel the need—when reading his Camoens—of his wife's strenuous assertions: not that they convince us; indeed, their very insistence merely confirms our worst fears; but we need something to explain at least why certain mannerisms were allowed to interfere with usual lucidity of feeling and expression of the original text. She says: 'This translation is not a literary *tour de force* done against time or to earn a reputation: it is the result of a daily act of devotion of twenty years.' So far, so good. The scholarly devotion of Burton has never been questioned. But, 'Whenever my husband has appeared to coin words, or to use impossible words, they are the exact rendering of Camoens; in every singularity or seeming eccentricity the Disciple has faithfully followed his Master:—his object having been not simply to write good verse, but to give a literal word for word rendering of his favorite hero. And he has done it so the letter, not only in the words, but in the meaning and intention of Camoens.' And again, 'To the unaesthetic, to non-poets, non-linguists, non-musicians, non-artists, Burton's *Lusiads* will be an unknown land, an unknown tongue.'

Even in the face of such an impeachment, one cannot refrain from questioning the 'literal word for word rendering,' and—what is of far greater importance—the 'meaning and intention of Camoens' in certain lines. Not to be too prolix on the subject it is but necessary to compare the following lines from the sonnets:

'Amor, com a esperança já perdida.' — Camoens.
(Amor, with Esperance now for aye forlore.) — Burton.

'Com grandes esperanças já cantey.' — Camoens.
(While ere I sang my song with hope so high.) —
Burton.

'Amor, que o gesto humano na Alma Enscreve.' —
Camoens.
(Amor, who human geste on soul doth write.) —
Burton.

'Tanto de meu estado mecho incerto.' — Camoens.
(I find so many doubts my state enfold.) — Burton.

'Transforma se o amador na cousa amada.' —
Camoens.
(Becomes the Lover to the Loved transformed.) —
Burton.

But enough about Burton's methods. One either likes Burton or one does not. With regard to our consideration of Camoens himself, we must always remember that the epic was in its infancy. Trissino had attempted the liberation of Italy from the Goths, but with poor success. Ariosto and his followers had thrown enchantment around the fictions of Chivalry. Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* had appeared only the year before *Os Lusíads*. Verily, Camoens was, as Gerald Massey said:

'the poet of weary wanderers
In perilous lands; and wide-sea voyagers.' (372-73)

The identity of Isabel Moore remains shadowy, though it is possible that she is the same Isabel Moore who published "Portuguese Folk-Songs", in the *Journal of American Folklore* (July-Sept. 1902) 15: 165-69.

5. The Journal

George Bailey Loring (1817-1891) hailed from Salem, Massachusetts. A physician, he also served as United States Commissioner of Agriculture (1881-85), and as minister to Portugal (1889-1890). In the year of his death appeared *A Year*

in Portugal 1889-1890 (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1891, his journal account of his Portuguese experience. In the preface he explains that he wants to extend the American's knowledge of Portugal:

I have been strongly inclined to sketch a country which has a most delightful climate and most charming scenery, is full of romantic traditions, and has been the theatre of some of the most remarkable events in history. From the days of Dom Henriques to the days of Dom Carlos, Portugal has contributed a large share of the contentious history of Europe; and now, after fifty years of peace, it enjoys an opportunity to become a most important kingdom. (v)

It is in his chapter on Coimbra that he takes up Camões:

The mother of Camoens... sent her son to Coimbra, gave her mite to the cultivation of his mind, and gave the country of her birth his immortal genius. We all know how misplaced love in the aristocratic circles of Lisbon drove him to the wars; how his censuring verse was punished by his banishment to China; how he was cast ashore at Goa, bearing his immortal poem through the waves; how he was betrayed and starved at Mozambique; how he depended upon the alms bestowed upon his negro servant Antonio in the streets of Lisbon for his subsistence; and how at last he found a pauper's grave where he rested in neglect until his country, inspired by a cultivated monarch, erected a stately and imposing monument to his memory. But we ought also to remember that he gave his native land the inspiration which great genius alone can give the mind and heart of a people. What Shakespeare is to the English tongue, and Dante to Italy, and Goethe to Germany, and Calderon to Spain, Camoens is to Portugal, revealing to the Portuguese mind all that is devoted, heroic, and noble in the history and character of the kingdom. The weakness of human nature consists not in the absence of generous sentiments, and poetic emotions, and noble aspirations, and warm appreciation, but in the incapacity of man to express the inmost workings of his soul. He who utters all this for his fellow-men, and gives shape to his thoughts and feelings,

becomes for all men the creator and guide. Camoens taught the people of his time and country all they were capable of, and Portugal became his as he made it. Byron, in his brilliant defence of [Alexander] Pope—who even at this day rises higher and higher in proportion as he is assailed—says: “He who can reconcile poetry with truth and wisdom is the only true poet in its real sense, the maker, the creator”; and this Camoens did, and placed himself in that great group around which stands that multitude who have laid their offerings on the altar erected to their inspired brethren, and have done the best they could to keep step to the music of their great leaders and captains. (107-08)

For the frontispiece to his book, Loring chooses—fittingly enough—a photograph of the high-standing Camões monument now reigning over the Chiado’s newest underground parking garage.

6. The Incidental Traveler’s Book

I have not yet learned much about Lawton Mackall. It might well be that he is the author of *A Story about Skippy* (published in Cleveland, Ohio, by the Belle-Vernon Milk Company, possibly in the 1910s) or the author of *Scrambled Eggs*, a play published in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1920. Or both. What he definitely was is the author of what is identified as “a recessional or final insult hurled at the reader” in *Crosby Gaige’s Cocktail Guide and Ladies’ Companion*, published in New York City in 1941. And he is responsible for *Knife and Fork in New York: Where to Eat, What to Order*, published in 1948, which has been called the first such restaurant guide for New York City. What is of immediate interest, however, is that Lawton Mackall is also responsible for *Portugal for Two*, a sprightly book of travels, published in New York by Dodd Mead in 1931. He leads into his account of Camões by speaking out “against the new municipal regulations which require that all citizens of Lisbon, not excepting *varinas*, shall wear shoes or slippers in the streets”.

Tyranny to Trilbys! The fish-women acquired their grace and charm unshod; footgear isn’t becoming to them. Fortunately the “reform”, like unpopular prohibitions the world over, is cheerfully evaded. The caryatids own

slippers and have them, but prefer to keep them stowed overhead, unless a policeman is looking.

Not long ago, I am told, one of these foot-loose ladies was actually arrested and fined. She paid. But a few days later she reappeared on the street wearing high boots laced up to the knee.

I like that spirit!

And I'm sure that Camões does, even more. He is in a position to see and know which baskets have unused slippers in them, for he stands thirteen feet tall, in doublet and hose, upon an imposing pedestal surrounded by eight lesser literary figures—Genius above Talent. Crowned with a wreath in token of the fact that he is Permanent Poet Laureate, he presides over our square, which doesn't really belong to our hotel at all: it is the Praça de Luiz de Camões.

Camoens, as we spell his name in English, ranks as the greatest poet whom the Anglo-Saxon world does not read. If he had sung the exploits of Columbus we should know him—well, considerably better. He'd be in our anthologies of Popular Recitations for Patriotic Occasions. But, instead of the Genoese who discovered some outlying islands of a New Wilderness, Camões chose as his hero Vasco da Gama, who, in 1497, sought and actually found the "way to the Indies", in a different direction—sailing around Africa and arriving at last at Calicut, on the Malabar Coast of Hindustan. By this voyage and subsequent ones da Gama established the amazing Portuguese trade empire in the East, which lasted for centuries and of which a few fragments still remain—not to mention the great colony of Mozambique, in East Africa, which he "picked up" for Portugal en route.

Today we make unconscious reference to da Gama's achievement every time we use the word "calico", which originally meant cotton goods from Calicut; but Vasco da Gama himself is just a name in our school books, and Camões, his epic-making biographer, is quite off our literary map.

Which is our loss. For Camões—soldier, poet, lover, idealistic patriot, and adventurer in far countries—happens to be one of the Full-Strength Originals which the human race has produced. Living a generation earlier than Shakespeare (1524 to 1579, to be exact), Camões is

the first virile voice of the Renaissance. Specifically, he is the poetic spokesman of Exploration, of that new dauntlessness which braves the Unknown to achieve Discovery. In the ten cantos of *Os Lusíadas*—"The Feats of the Lusitanians"—he not only recounts the experiences of da Gama and companions (with Homeric super-plot of gods and goddesses), but, in addition, reviews in stirring pageantry the entire history of Portugal—as then believed, or as romanticized by his vivid imagination. The poem is a superb crystallization of national feeling, penned by a one-eyed man whose life was a series of adventures, escapades, and misfortunes.

Curious, this inverse relationship between epics and optics. "Blind Homer". Blind Milton. Camões half-blind. As a young man he lost his right eye in battle against the Moores; and also, by being banished from her by a stern king, the sweetheart to whom he wrote his best sonnets. Thereafter the great lover took to caravels and cantos. After vicissitudes in India and Macao, he was shipwrecked off Cochin China, losing everything he possessed except the manuscript of *Os Lusíadas*, which he clutched in his right hand as he swam ashore. He died of the plague at fifty-five, in a charity hospital in Lisbon, without even the price of a winding sheet. He was buried with other paupers.

Now we see him as a bronze giant, the Presiding genius of the Portuguese-speaking world. The disfigured right eye, evidenced by a drooping lid, is as noticeable as it was in real life; has not been apotheosized away, for it is a soldier's wound—a soldier who grasps in his right hand the sword of valor. In his left he clasps to his bosom *The Lusíads*: the one epic that is a living force in the world today.

Personally, I am mortified that in a land where people know their Camões as the Scots know their Bobby Burns, I am acquainted with *Os Lusíadas* only with the aid of tepid translations. There are no adequate ones. Nobody has done for Camões what Edward FitzGerald did for Omar the tent-and-quatrain-maker. Dr. Samuel Johnson had intentions in that direction—imagine it!—and later urged [Oliver] Goldsmith to undertake the job. It is as well they didn't; for neither the Lexicographer nor the author of *The Deserted Village* possessed the requisite fire. Let

us hope that some poet of this generation—some really full-blooded one—will make the attempt, and turn that wingèd *-āos* and *-ōes* of the Lusitanian into soaring English. If only [John] Masefield—! (71-74)

I am not aware that Masefield ever undertook the task Mackall would set for him. It would be interesting, however, to look into the possibility that he somewhere said something about Camões, sea-faring men that they both were.

7. Editions and Translations

It would take another two decades before there would be any answer to Lawton Mackall's pitch for a more than adequate English translation of *Os Lusíadas*. Neither William C. Atkinson's prose account of "what happens" in the poem, which appeared in 1952, nor the verse translation based on Atkinson's prose account done by Hugh Finn in 1972, was the answer to Mackall's prayer. But Leonard Bacon's translation, appearing in 1950, turned out to be, in the opinion of some readers, the most satisfactory English translation of the last century. The work of a distinguished poet and translator of considerable learning, it is copiously annotated, profiting a good deal from the work of his predecessors in the field, with a particular debt to Jeremiah Denis Matthias Ford (1873-1958), whose Portuguese-language edition of *Os Lusíadas*—the first such edition in the United States—was published by Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1946, six years after Ford had published, also with Harvard University Press, an edition of Sir Richard Fanshawe's seventeenth-century translation of *Os Lusíadas*. It was Ford who suggested that Bacon offer his *Lusiads* to the Hispanic Society of America, which became the book's publisher, reprinting it several times over the years. Despite a few archaisms—"spake", for instance, runs through the text—Bacon's translation has not yet been superseded in the half-century subsequent to its publication. I should add that Bacon's translation, because it is the work of an American, falls outside the geographical limits, if not the linguistic province, of the studies published in *Camões em Inglaterra*, though even in that work Bacon does figure in passing; see pages 14, 46, 73, and 238, note 65.

Bacon's translation brings to mind another, often neglected, resource for scholarship: reviews of translations and secondary

works in journals and newspapers. I have located several reviews of Bacon's translation. The most significant of these are "Portuguese Epic in Octaves", by Thomas G. Bergin of Yale University, in the *Saturday Review of Literature* (Sept. 23, 1950), 33: 31; "A Portuguese Epic", unsigned, in the *London Times Literary Supplement* (Mar. 16, 1951), p. 168; and "Hymn to Portugal", by the poet and translator Dudley Fitts, in the *New York Times Book Review* (Dec. 24, 1950), p. 9. I quote a paragraph from Fitts's review:

The Lusíads, like the *Aeneid*, is first of all a paean of national consciousness, a hymn of patriotism—the right sort of patriotism, as Mr. Bacon points out, and it scarcely becomes any English-speaking person of the present time to disparage it, to sneer at it, because its global pretensions are so out of key with the sadly reduced Portugal of today. England was once like Portugal at its height; and we too may have had our moment. However that may be, it is both esthetically and spiritually enthralling to watch here the transformation of Vasco da Gama's great voyage—surely one of the most significant in history—into an apotheosized *persona* of a nation, to see how the imagination of the poet universalizes human action and makes a lasting myth of it. Heroic literature has not so many instances of this that we can afford to let unfamiliarity of language or of attitude deprive us of Camões.

Interestingly, Fitts provides a direct answer to Thomas G. Bergin's earlier review of Bacon's translation, in which he writes, condescendingly:

[F]or the epic as for so many things, patriotism, though admirable, is not enough. Indeed, it is a downright drawback unless the country whose merits are praised has "made good" to such an extent as to give its national history a world significance. When Virgil speaks with solemnity of the destiny of the Roman people we listen with respect because the destiny of Rome was in the event a great part of the destiny of Western man. But when Camões describes the Portuguese as a race so valiant as to terrify even the elements or prophecies that Lisbon will be another Rome we can only smile tenderly

for his aspirations and regret that the little country couldn't live up to them.

8. The Reference Work

An obvious (but neglected) source for research into such matters as Camões' presence in the United States is the reference work. I shall point you to two examples (out of many)—one from the very end of the nineteenth century (a copy of which I happen to own), and another from well into the twentieth century. *The Century Cyclopaedia of Names* (volume 9 of *The Century Dictionary and Cyclopaedia*, edited by Benjamin E. Smith (New York: Century, 1899) offers entries under both "Camoens" and "The Lusiad". The latter is made up largely of an extract taken from J. C. L. Simonde de Sismondi's *Historical View of the Literature of the South of Europe* (II, 480). The former offers a succinct account of the then received biographical view of Camões' life, along with some bibliographical information. In contrast, Thomas R. Hart's contributes a well-informed bio-critical essay on its subject to the multi-volume collection *European Writers: The Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. William T. H. Jackson and George Stade (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983), 2: 747-67. Interestingly, in taking up the relative inaccessibility of *Os Lusíadas* to readers without knowledge of Portuguese, he recommends Fanshawe in these laudatory terms: "Sir Richard Fanshawe's translation is a splendid poem in its own right and comes closer than any other version to giving an idea of the vigor of the original" (766). Hart's essay may well be the single best short introduction to Camões and his work available in English.

9. The College or University Literary Journal

In this category can be placed *The Indicator*, a literary journal associated with Amherst College, an institution located in Amherst, Massachusetts, the home of the poet Emily Dickinson. In the very first issue of this journal, published in June 1848, appeared a largely biographical piece titled "Camoëns". The author of the piece, identified simply as "Ralph" has not been further identified, though it is possible that it was written by George H. Gould, a friend of Emily Dickinson's and *The Indicator's* editor.

A second example, for which I rely on information provided by Marcus Freitas, a teacher at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, in Belo Horizonte and the one who discovered this long-forgotten journal, is *Aurora Brasileira: Periódico Literário e*

Noticioso. The journal was founded in 1873 by a group of Brazilian students studying at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. It lasted for eighteen issues, running from October 1873 to June 1875. The journal, published in Portuguese as a rule, covered many subjects in the areas of science, art, education and history. In its pages appeared at least two items relating to Camões, both of them in English. In its third issue, dated December 1873 appeared a bio-bibliographic article, with an emphasis on *Os Lusíadas*, aimed at Americans who were unfamiliar with the Portuguese poet. The idea of Camões as a national poet is stressed, fittingly enough since it appears right around the quadricentennial anniversary of the poem's publication. The author is identified as C. C. Shackford, a professor at Cornell. In the journal's fifth issue, dated February 20, 1874, appears Shackford's translation of Camões' poem "Sete Anos de Pastor Jacob". Apart from Marcus Freitas and I, you are probably the first to hear Shackford's translation in well over a century.

Seven years, as shepherd, youthful Jacob served
The sir of Rachel, beauteous mountain maid;
Yet not to that proud sire the service paid:
To her he looked for recompense deserved.

Content, while her beholding, he observed
Each hour which led to that far day delayed;
But Laban, craftly, Leah gave instead
And from the faith he pledged him falsely swerved.

He, sadly seeing through his bitter tears,
Thus cruelly withheld his shepherd-bride,
As though he had not earned the prize he sought;

Resolved to serve again, seven other years,
And would, he said, serve countless years beside,
Were not one life for such long love so short.

The Point:

It's simply that there are still Camonean references of all sorts to be gleaned by the inquisitive and industrious scholar who does not mind turning over the sometimes fragile and dusty pages of old newspapers or who will risk eyestrain by staring for hour upon hour at faded microfilm or microfiche.