ESTUDOS

When I read the following article, I thought that it deserved to be known in Portugal, for its originality and especially as far as the Portuguese subject is concerned. So I asked Prof. Lipking to allow this publication, which he immediately did.

It first appeared in the March, 1996 issue of PMLA, and won the William Riley Parker Prize of the MLA (best article of the year). It has also been reprinted in "John Milton: Twentieth-Century Perspectives", Vol. 2, "The Early Poems", ed. J. Martin Evans (Routledge, 2003).

There is a mistaken mention, coming from Melville. Ir is not chamei-me, but chamais-me.

M. Leonor Machado de Sousa



THE GENIUS OF THE SHORE: LYCIDAS, ADAMASTOR, AND THE POETICS OF NATIONALISM

Lawrence Lipking

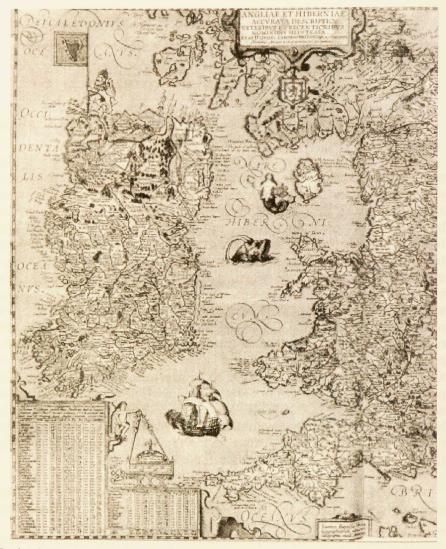
When Milton appointed Lycidas "the Genius of the shore", he was staking a claim for his nation as well as his poem. The spirit who guards the coast will cast a long shadow of British influence across the Irish Sea, translating the martyrdom of one poor soul into an opportunity for a new English poet to tame the flood and take his rightful place. Many Renaissance authors shared similar territorial interests. In an age of expansion, poets, like nations, often defined what they wanted to be by artfully redrawing or reimagining the map. Nor is this hobby innocent; as recent scholarship has insisted, map reading kindles thoughts of ownership, of empire, of routes of trade and invasion¹. The collaboration between poetry and nationalism comes out in the open in The Lusiads (1572) and other imperalistic epics². But it also supplies a quiet, persistent undertone to forms like the pastoral elegy of "Lycidas" (1638), which blends personal grief with a sense of how much the country has lost. Milton puts himself on the map by mourning for Britain. For one way a poet can speak for a nation — this essay will argue — is by expressing the grievances that hold it together.

The climax of "Lycidas" turns on a rescue mission. After long wandering in the sea, "the haples youth" (164) is lifted up,

¹ Helgerson stresses the "Whiggish" ideology of British map-making (105-47). ² Martz notes that the young Milton's "hope that a single great nation might lead the world toward true Christian greatness" led to "his early plans for a national epic of England that would be 'doctrinal and exemplary' to a nation of such a destiny — a poem that might do for England what Camoens had done for the history of his own small seafaring nation" (53-54).

washed clean, serenaded, and rewarded through a direct performative speech act:

Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore, In thy large recompense, and shalt be good To all that wander in that perilous flood. (183-85)



England and Ireland (Ortelius, folio 12). According to "Lycidas", the corpse of Edward King may have drifted to the extreme north or the extreme south of the Irish Sea (154-62). The detail above on the right includes the route of King's fatal voyage. The detail below on the right shows Land's End (also called Bellerium) and St. Michael's Mount. (Photo courtesy of the Edward E. Ayer Collection, The Newberry Library)

A spirit now stands on guard against future shipwrecks; it is time for the weeping to stop. Yet this climax acquires its force by reversing a pattern that has run through the elegy: the theme of frustrated protection. Neither pagan nor Christian watchmen have kept harm away. The nymphs and bards and muse, according to lines 50-63, were not looking after Lycidas, and had they been there, "what could that have don?" The greedy pastors of lines 113-31 neither feed their flocks nor defend them from the wolf. Even the angel Michael, "the great vision of the guarded Mount" who looks homeward from Land's End and melts with ruth (161-63), cannot offer safe harbor. Lycidas gathers all these frustrations into himself and promises help in the future — at least according to "the uncouth Swain" (186). But in the neglectful and bitter world of the poem, only an act of poetic will can salvage any hope of protecting the good.

What does Milton resent, and what does he want to protect? The questions take in the whole design of "Lycidas", its tangled poetic, theological, and geopolitical yarn. Many critics have heard a note of puritanical outrage in the poem, "the poet's anger that his countrymen should be oppressed, insulted, and tyrannized by Laud's prelates" (Radzinowicz 126), and a keen contemporary might well have felt the shiver of a coming revolution. Religion and politics join, as so often in Milton; the people of England must be protected from their government and church. Yet the poet may also have focused his thoughts more narrowly on the subject of the elegy, poor drowned Edward King, both as he was and as he might have been. In particular, Milton tries to locate the body. The poet's fascination with atlases has long been known, and readers can hardly find their way around his globegirdling passages without a guide like Ortelius or Camden. Evidently he responded to the death of his friend with characteristic behavior: brooding over maps (Whiting 103-07). "Lycidas" traces the path of the shipwreck from the channel of the Dee to the coast of Anglesey and sweeps the Irish Sea from north to south. However futile the search, there is comfort in navigating Camden's Britain, where a reader still gazes at proof that Scotland, Wales, and Ireland belong to one great commonwealth. The role of maps, and of some poems as well, can be to establish a sphere of protection — indeed, to look homeward.

Where might the angel be looking? Commentators have not had much to say about "homeward". The standard reading has pictured Michael shifting his vision 170 degrees, from southwest





to due north, away from the Atlantic Ocean and the Spanish coast ("Namancos and Bayona's hold") and back toward an English protectorate, the Irish Sea, where a saint's keen eye might detect the floating speck of a body. The charm of this reading consists of the marvelous image of a rock, "St. Michael's Chaire", abruptly wheeling around with its resident spirit and melting with ruth. But the geography remains vague. Neither Milton nor the reader knows where Lycidas is, nor can we be sure that the angel knows better. Most readers, I suspect, would prefer him to look not down but up, toward the home of the saints. "Angel" surely points in that direction. Lycidas is going home, as in the spiritual or as in Clarissa's setting out for her father's house. Heaven's his destination. This reading seems inevitable, and the dolphins sustain it. But it also has flaws. It does not account well for "melt with ruth", and, perhaps more important, it seems prematurely to antecipate the turn of the following stanza, when Lycidas does rise from "the wat'ry floor" to his father's house. If heavenly trumpets ring out at "homeward", the ensuing nuptial song will sound anticlimactic. Such cavils do not eliminate the reading, yet they leave room for another, less far off the map. The youth now lost in the sea had set sail for home; both Michael and Lycidas might have looked toward that place, and grieved at his failure to reach it. Ireland, also, was his destination.

On 10 August 1637, when Edward King drowned after the ship on which he was a passenger struck a rock and sank, not far from the Welsh shore³, on its way from Chester to Dublin, he gave up great expectations. The Latin preface to *Justa Edovardo King*, the memorial volume in which "Lycidas" first appeared, shows just how much awaited him:

Edward King, son of John (Knight and Privy Councillor for the Kingdom of Ireland to their majesties, Elizabeth, James, and Charles), Fellow of Christ's College in the University of Cambridge, ... was on his voyage to Ireland, drawn by natural affection to visit his country, his relatives and his friends — chiefly, his brother Sir Robert King, Knight, a most distinguished man; his sisters, most excellent women, Anne, wife of Lord G. Caulfield, Baron Charlemont, and Margaret, wife of Lord G. Loder [Gerard Lowther], Chief Justice of Ireland; the venerable prelate Edward King, Bishop of Elphin, his godfather; and the most reverend and learned William Chappell, Dean of Cashel and Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, whose hearer and pupil he had been in the University.

(Masson 651)

These were powerful connections, a family well entrenched among Ireland's ruling class. Though a younger son, Edward had reason to expect preferment in the church. Elected to a fellowship at Christ's in 1630, he had been assured by a royal mandate that Charles I, "well ascertained both of the present sufficiency and future hopes" of his promising young subject, took a personal interest in him (*DNB* 11:128). King proved his appreciation. Almost all his Latin verses, contributed to seven Cambridge collections, celebrate royal occasions, including the king's recovery from smallpox and safe return from Scotland. The quality of these verses has been impugned, but surely they do very well as bread and butter. Had Edward met a better fate (along with his king), he would have been destined (pace Milton) to be a bishop.

Nevertheless, he had not spent much time looking homeward. Though born in Ireland, he had lived most of his twenty-five

³ Franson's hypothetical itinerary for the voyage concludes that the "ship collided with Coal Rock two miles off the north-west coast of Anglesey" (57).



Europe (detail of Ortelius, folio 2). From the southwest tip of England, the guardian spirit Michael looks toward Spain.

(Photo courtesy of the Edward E. Ayer Collection, The Newberry Library). years in England and spoke classical languages but not Irish⁴. Even his college fellowship caused dispute, since he was considered, despite his Irish "home", a Yorkshireman (Fletcher 508-12). The family came from Yorkshire. Sir John King had prospered under three monarchs as one of the Protestants who colonized the Irish countryside; he had built a castle on the river Boyle and in 1613 (a year after Edward's birth) "was returned M.P. for co. Roscommon by the aid of Vice-president Oliver St. John's soldiery" (DNB 11: 138). Sir Robert King, the eldest son, inherited many of his father's places and fought for the king in the Irish rebellion. Later he turned to the service of the parliament, increasing his estate; and in 1650 his eldest son, John King, "took prisoner with his own hands the general of the catholic army, the popish bishop of Clogher" (11: 139). The family would continue to back winners. At the Restoration the same John King, a supporter of Charles II, became Baron Kingston and took his seat in the Irish House of Lords. This is a story of Anglo-Irish success, a story in which Edward King was robbed of his part⁵.

In 1637, how would Milton have viewed the story? However troubled by its royal flourishes, he would certainly not have deplored the colonizing of Ireland or denied the right of Edward King to consider it home. These were no more than justice. Whatever else Milton knew about Ireland, he knew his beloved Spenser. A View of the Present State of Ireland had first been published only four years earlier, in 1633, and its relentless argument for pacifying the countryside with famine and sword still seemed quite fresh. Entries in Milton's Commonplace Book record Spencer's call for a new settlement in which Anglo-Irish pastors like King, supported by soldiery, would wean the natives from their infidelity and paganism⁶. Moreover, the fifth book of The Faerie Queene gripped Milton's imagination; only outsiders

⁴ William Chapell, the Laudian provost of Trinity College and King's former tutor, was accused of various offenses against the native Irish, among them suppressing the Irish lecture.

⁵ Postlethwaite and Campbell provide the fullest account of Edward King's life and poems. The useful brief biographies of the Kings in the *DNB* are supplement by Mattimoe's information on the later history of the family, and Barnard includes the Kings in his relatively sympathetic view of English policy during the Interregnum.

⁶ "It is expedient that some discreet ministers of their own countrymen be first sent amongst them, which, by their mild persuasions and instructions as also by their sober life and conversation, may draw them, first to understand and afterwards to embrace the doctrine of their salvation" (Spencer 161). Canny analyzes the role of "this missionary endeavour" in the development of Anglo-Irish identity. Milton refers to *A View of the Present State of Ireland* twice (*Prose Works* 1: 465, 496).

could free Irena from Grantorto and bring about proper reform⁷. This view of the present state of Britain's colony would stay with Milton forever. The savage attack on prelates and papists that runs through so much of his later pamphleteering holds Ireland especially in need of salvation. The "true Barbarisme and obdurate wilfulnesse" of the Irish renegades demand "a civilizing Conquest" (Prose Works 3:304)8. Through leniency to Catholics, according to Milton, Charles I personally incited the Great Rebellion and called down a curse "upon himself and his Fathers House" (3: 485)9; to repair that division of the kingdom, Cromwell would have to serve as avenging angel. But the breach had begun much earlier. Retrospectively, when Milton gave "Lycidas" credit in 1645 for having foretold "the ruine of our corrupted Clergie then in their height" ("Lycidas", epigraph), he enlisted Edward King in the war against episcopal blind mouths and the privy popish wolf. Ireland, still more than its mother country, was being devoured. Nor could it spare the learning of scholars like King; too many Irish priests had "learn'd ought els the least / That to the faithful Herdsmans art belongs!" ("Lycidas" 120-21). This point weighed heavily in 1637. Through both precept and example, "Lycidas" celebrates the advantages of a university education, most of all when, as in Cambridge, Puritan sympathies chime with love of the classics. England had no better gift than learning to send to its poor relation¹⁰.

Indeed, King voyaged to Ireland like a missionary, if not a crusader. Milton was not the only friend preoccupied by that thought. Several contributors to *Justa Edovardo King* play with the same idea: Cambridge had sent out one of its own, a King (the pun was not easy to resist) to reform the world. A particularly striking instance of this missionary strain occurs in Henry King's

⁷ Henley's *Spenser in Ireland* is usefully supplemented by recent perspectives, both historical and literary, in Coughlan's *Spenser and Ireland*. Quilligan compares Spenser's apology for colonial violence in Ireland with Milton's apology for regicide but ignores Milton's attitude toward Ireland (12).

⁸ Observations upon the Articles of Peace (1649). "Milton's complicity in this dark chapter of Anglo-Irish relations" (123) is discussed by Corns.

⁹ Eikonoklastes (1649). By commanding the use of the Prayer Book in 1637, Charles provoked the Scottish National Covenant of the following year. Hence his enemies — including Milton — often regarded 1637 as the year in which Charles revealed his tendencies toward popery and his indifference to unifying Britain. Leonard argues that "Lycidas" was affected by Laud's persecution of Puritans in the summer and autumn of 1637. On Milton's early radicalism, see Haller (288-323) and Wilding (7-27).

¹⁰ Milton's early pamphlet *Of Education* (1644) argues that a good course of study would help stabilize the commonwealth. Significantly, both Edward and Sir Robert King took an interest in improving education in Ireland (Barnard 215).

praise for his brother's "might / Of eloquence, able to Christianize / India, or reconcile Antipathies!"(2). No place felt the want of such talent more than Ireland, the land of antipathies, and the King family aimed at reconciliation. But Milton tended to be more militant. "Angel", for him, was a fighting word; the "huge twohanded sway" of Michael's sword in Paradise Lost (6.251), recalling the notorious "two-handed engine" of "Lycidas", forbids any hope of a truce. Ever since the Book of Daniel, moreover, Michael had represented the ultimate nationalistic warrior-angel, Israel's champion and prince¹¹. The "vision of the guarded Mount" commands a British fortress. As Michael Walzer observes, "The angelic armies were the guardians of the elect - so important was this function to Puritan writers that they tended to ignore all other angelic activities" (164). And armies often crossed the Irish Sea. The angel implored to look homeward in "Lycidas" may well be recruited to grieve for the state of that home, bereft of one more guardian who would have forced true faith on a stiff-necked people. But Ireland will not be left defenseless. Milton provides it with a new genius, a saintly, crusading spirit.

The geography lesson of "Lycidas" confirms this militant, nationalistic reading. As usual, Milton's maps cover time as well as space, identifying each site through its historic or legendary associations. Visiting the neighborhood where King drowned, in lines 50-63, the poem travels back in time, to an age when nymphs, Druids, and wizards presided over the West Country and the landscape had been converted to Latin - Mona, not Anglesey; Deva, not Dee. The retrogression culminates in Orpheus, unprotected by the Muse and Nature, at the beginning of time (Evans 36-44). What all these sentinels and deities have in common is their ineffectualness. The pathos of their futility perfectly matches the pathos of the poem that invokes them, reciting their names in a fond dream that accomplishes nothing, least of all belief in their existence. Like the evicted local gods of the Nativity ode, these poetic spirits cannot survive one dash of cold water. Perhaps the poet regrets their vanished enchantment. Yet eventually, in the History of Britain, Milton would condemn the Druids as despoilers of ancient Britain, "men factious and ambitious, contending somtimes about the archpriesthood not without civil Warr and slaughter; nor restrein'd they the people under them from a lew'd adulterous and incestuous life" (Prose

¹¹ Daniel 10.21. DiLella discusses Michael's function as protector in *The Anchor Bible* (273, 282-84).

Works 5: 61). The defeat of this "barbarous and lunatic rout" by the Romans at the battle of Mona seems to antecipate, for Milton, all the later struggles of pious, civilized rulers of Britain against such barbarians and schismatics as the Welsh and the Irish (5: 75). We cannot project this hostility to Druids back into the dreams of "Lycidas"¹². But dreams conclude in waking. Poetic enchantment had been no use to King, and for better protection both Wales and the shepherd-poet would have to look to a faithful Christian god.

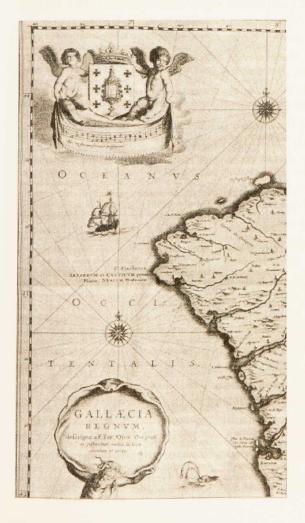
The circulation of Lycidas's body most fully reveals what is at stake for Milton (154-62). In their imagined journey, the bones obey no ocean current, but rather the extreme margins of the Irish Sea, the limit of Britain. "Beyond the stormy Hebrides", it is as if Lycidas has fallen off the world, or into "the monstrous world" that recalls antediluvian, pre-Christian myths or the terrors that lurk just off the edge of the map. We veer, from that northern border, to the verge of the south. Milton invented his own giant genius for the occasion. Though "the fable of Bellerus old" suggests a prior, legendary source, Bellerus seems in fact to have been the poet's own backward formation from Bellerium, the Roman name, still preserved on the maps of Ortelius and Camden, for Land's End. Once again we move through time as well as space. Milton manufactures a prehistoric tutelary fable or invisible landmark, apparently for the sole purpose of denying it any power except that of decorating a map. But Bellerus does prepare the coming of a greater, Christian spirit — vision rather than fable — whose dominion near Land's End suggests that the mandate of Great Britain derives nor from a Roman settlement but directly from heaven. Saint Michael guards the border. Moreover, the direction of his gaze leaves no doubt what he is guarding against. Namancos and the castle of Bayona represent Britain's eternal enemy (Mercator, between 347 and 348), lying in wait for a chink in the armor through which catholic venom can pour. Milton's first published pamphlet, three years after "Lycidas", appeals to the "Parent of Angels and Men" to keep the old grievances alive:

> O thou that after the impetuous rage of five bloody Inundations, ... having first welnigh freed us from *Antichristian* thraldome, didst build up this *Britannick Empire* to a glorious and enviable heighth with all her

¹² On Milton's changing attitudes toward Druids, see Owen (52-58).

Daughter Ilands about her, stay us in this felicitie, let not the obstinacy of our halfe Obedience and will-Worship bring forth that *Viper* of *Sedition*, that for these Fourescore Yeares hath been breeding to eat through the entrals of our *Peace*; but let her cast her Abortive Spawne without the danger of this travailling & throbbing *Kingdome*. That we may still remember in our *solemne Thanksgivings*, how for us the *Northren Ocean* even to the frozen *Thule* was scatter'd with the proud Ship-wracks of the *Spanish Armado*, and the very maw of hell ransack't, and made to give up her conceal'd destruction, ere shee could vent it in that horrible and damned blast.

(Of Reformation; Prose Works 1: 614-15)



Galicia (detail of Mercator, between 347 and 348). Namancos, to the right of Cape Finisterre, and Bayona's hold, below, are kept in view by "the great vision of the guarded mount" in "Lycidas" (161-62).

(Photo courtesy of The Newberry Library) Whirled in the sea like Lycidas, the wreck of the Armada certifies divine protection. Milton contrasts two images: the family circle of the Britannick Empire, self-contained like a throbbing, living being though in danger, through inner weakness, of suckling poisonous intruders, and the once proud, scattered enemy, her engines and explosives dispersed from frozen Thule to fiery Hell, not only visiting the monstrous world beyond the map but staying there. Contraction wins over expansion; the kingdom must draw together, into itself, to give birth to a better future. The five "Inundations" — foreign invasions of Britain — lay stress on the vulnerability of the island empire, surrounded by waves of trouble. But the greatest threat comes from a dire correspondence of inner and outer sedition, the covert alliance of prelate and papist. Only perpetual vigilance will save the nation — a vigilance that attends at once to Spain and home.

How much can one angel be expected to do? "Lycidas" does not ask him to do more than look, nor does it load him with the full burden of theological and political responsibilities. His business is melting with ruth, not arming for war. Yet grievance does enter the poem, and Lycidas shoulders his share. His "large recompense" as genius of the shore might be read as compensation for his injuries, but might equally signify the return he will give for being blessed. In any case, this genius will be fully employed, directed to "be good / To all that wander in that perilous flood". like a celestial lifeguard. But one might question what that shore covers and how far that flood extends. Early critics, focusing on the classical genius loci, tended to think of a limited local spirit, as particular as a lighthouse, inhabiting at best one small area of the Welsh coast. The anachronism did not please them; here, as Johnson had charged, a trifling pagan fiction mingled with sacred truth (165). But modern critics have justified Milton by magnifying the scope of his genius. According to A. S. P. Woodhouse, "The 'perilous flood' is this world of chance and change, and Lycidas has already commenced to exercise his beneficent influence on those who travel through it", as on the poet himself (Woodhouse and Bush 730). Today this might be called the orthodox reading, attractive in the boundlessness of its religious and poetic faith. A more literal-minded reader, however, is likely to doubt whether Lycidas or Edward King qualifies as guardian of the whole sublunary world or of *all* that wander. The claim seems hyperbolic; Lycidas may be a Christ figure, but he is not Christ.

Perhaps a compromise is possible. If "that perilous flood" is read as the Irish Sea and the shore as the British coast that bounds it (any place where King's body might yet come to rest), both the excessively local and the excessively cosmic aspects of the genius will be moderated. The poet commissions Lycidas to watch over travelers who face the same peril to which he succumbed and offers hope for more fortunate voyages to Ireland or through life. Nor must these various readings exclude one another. Just as the angel superimposes Lycidas on Saint Michael¹³ and "homeward" points toward both Ireland and heaven, so the genius fulfills many different functions. For those enamored, like the swain, with pastoral elegy and its conventions, the spirit connects the past with the present, like a new name penciled on an old map. For those, like many of the contributors to Justa Edovardo King, who want assurance of divine justice in a violent, senseless world, he restores King's religious vocation in a finer tone, more eloquent than ever after death. And for those, like Milton as he was and would become, who intend to fight for a Britain unified by true religion and the sword, the genius promises angelic sanction and victories on the other side of the "western bay". The journey will be resumed, with better success; the poetbard makes way for the poet-saint. Twelve years later, with Milton's blessing, an English army would surge across that flood.

Does this reading seem too aggressive for "Lycidas", that tender pastoral song to an oaten flute? Some readers will always prefer a kinder, gentler Milton. But a soft spot for the amenities of the poem ought not to obscure two respects in which it differs from the elegiac norm as well as from the other verse in the memorial volume. The first is its sense of purpose. Confronted by such an untimely, calamitous death, Milton alone insists on finding not merely consolation but a meaning. "Lycidas" earns the right to conclude the book; after a long inundation of tears and metaphysical wheezes, finally one poet speaks of tomorrow. King has inspired him with "eager thought" of what is to be done (189). Conventionally, the swain and his maker collaborate on a poem about poetry and rededicate themselves to the muse. Yet several parts of "Lycidas", most notably Saint Peter's diatribe, seem irrelevant to that interpretation. The poem demands more from its readers. Verse was not King's only calling, nor was Milton the poet to separate the ambitions of art from the call of

¹³ Pigman builds a case for identifying the angel with Lycidas rather than with Michael (109-24).

leadership and faith. The world — and more particularly Britain — needs a new reformation in which poet, saint, and soldier will join. Lycidas, once mounted high, will spend some time singing but more taking care of his flock. So will the swain, as he journeys to "Pastures new". King's mission to convert the Irish must enlist fresh recruits. Milton both justifies God's ways to men and steps out of innocence into a world that waits to be conquered, with the help of his genius. His powerful sense of purpose sets him apart.

The second difference is his emphatic sense of grievance, which sorrow alone cannot account for. To be sure, almost all the elegists in Justa Edovardo King sought something to blame for King's death (Williamson 132-47). Since God and providence were too high to tackle, piety usually settled on a safe alternative, like sin, storm, the rock, or (especially) the sea: "All waters are pernicious since King dy'd" (19). But Milton goes further. Not only does he indict "the blind Fury with th' abhorred shears", "the Fellon Winds", and "that fatal and perfidious Bark" (75, 91, 100), he also seems to hold a grudge against particular people for instance, those who do not care enough about poetry. When father Camus poses his leading question — "Ah; Who hath reft (quoth he) my dearest pledge?" (107) — he assumes a personal culprit (Who, not What), and Saint Peter appears to reply by denouncing the faithless herdsmen, who shove everyone worthy out of the fold. In practical terms, the accused can hardly be counted responsible for Lycidas's misfortune. Yet the poet spreads his charges wide. "Lycidas" is not only lovely but sour; its berries are harsh and crude, and its rose has a canker. The blight of King's death provokes his friend to look for revenge as well as redemption. If Milton finds new strength to fight for the future, he also knows whom and what he is fighting against.

The genius of the shore will be his ally. Despite its benevolent office, both purpose and grievance contribute to the figure. The appointment of a new protector always involves a challenge to the old order. This deity will drive out nymphs and Druids, superseding the local Roman and pagan gods with a universal Christian dispensation. At the same time, the situation of the genius as guardian of the Irish Sea implies a bridge to Ireland, no longer separated from England by a perilous flood but connected by a mutual spirit. Those who "wander" will henceforth feel a force that steers them home. The Welsh and Irish might not want such protection, of course; they might reckon the cost of a colonial guard and prefer to keep their own names on the map. But Milton allows them no choice. Heaven itself ordains this recompense; Lycidas is their fate.

Most guardian spirits, in short, serve national ends, and grievances are often the mark of a nation. Too many theories of nationhood prefer to forget this disturbing historical fact. The imagined community united by bonds of sympathy and interest makes a more satisfying picture than people bound together by bitter memories and common hatreds. America, its citizens like to think, was and remains a promise of freedom, not a complaint about taxes. Whatever the truth may be, however, and enthusiasm for the former ought not to blind a sensible person to the possibility of the latter. If recent history teaches any lesson about the rise and fall of nations — in the Balkans, for instance — it seems to be the amazing power of old resentments to endure and be revived, even after ideals have died. Nor is it only losers who feel aggrieved; the Serbs and the Afrikaners are martyrs in their stories. Poets help to keep these memories alive, with elegies and beautiful victims. Even as Milton was mourning a friend, he also was forging a nation.

In this process, a spirit who haunts the shore can be especially useful. Even its ambiguity contributes to its value. Like any border guard, it can shift in a moment from keeping out to keeping in and is never more effective than when its territorial claims can be presented as an extension of communal goodwill. Whether warding against Catholic Spain or melting with ruth at the internal breach that has struck home, Saint Michael stands up for England. Lycidas does still more, precisely because no hint of militancy mars the grace with which he takes responsibility for a sizable chunk of the map. At the same time, his effortless combination of Christian angel with pagan genius pours balm on troubled waters. It is as if he has become a natural feature of the landscape, an eternal part of things as they are, ancient and modern at once, threatening no one no matter how large his recompense may grow. Such spirits are expansive. The comfort they offer spreads from a fringe to the whole wide world.

They also fill a gap in poetry. During the seventeenth century, as the epic gradually died, the old gods lost their positions; Milton himself evicted them and left them homeless. But the decline of classical machinery also challenged Christian poets to find some other source of interest. Conventionally, the gods were what made poems interesting. Inhabiting each river, tree, or rock, they put a human face on inhuman things and lent the mystery or fascination of a story to poor dumb nature. A shore without its genius is just a shore. How to revitalize a verse whose spirits had fled seems a concrete problem for the contributors to *Justa Edovardo King.* Writing on classical themes in classical genres, and often in Latin, they can hardly resist the stock-intrade of any university poet, the recycled Phoebus and Echo and Neptune and Arethusa who prove that the student has done his homework. But most of this machinery is boring. It deflects attention from the death of King without creating any narrative interest, a standstill later summarized by Johnson: "how one god asks another god what is become of Lycidas, and how neither god can tell" (164).

At the end of the century, Dryden proposed a replacement for the classical gods. What is needed, he argues, is "as strong an Engine, for the Working up Heroique Poetry, in our Religion, as that of the Ancients has been to raise theirs by all the Fables of their Gods" (19). He finds this engine in the guardian angels of kingdoms. Inspired by the Book of Daniel, as well as by the Neoplatonic eidolons who had been much in the air at Cambridge during Dryden's school days, these "Tutelar Genij" could battle without defving God or the truth. Unlike the wars of Paradise Lost, moreover, their conflicts admitted some suspense. As Dryden points out, the Lord had allowed the angels of Persia and Greece to do more than hold their own against Michael, Israel's angel. The outcome of national rivalries cannot be predicted; it rouses feverish sporting interest. And human interest could hardly be greater; real people die in these wars. Dryden believed that he had invented a better machine. If a worthy poet should arise, "I am vain enough to think, that I have propos'd a Model to him, by which he may build a Nobler, a more Beautiful and more Perfect Poem, than any yet extant since the Ancients" (21).

It is customary to say that this model was never fulfilled. From another point of view, however, it had already triumphed. By the end of the Renaissance, national mythologies and personifications were so ubiquitous in poetry as to be taken for granted, like the emblem of Britannia on a banner or shield. These guardian angels straddle the globe or are carried in the pockets of voyagers whose poems remind them of the myth they are fighting for: Bellona, Gerusalemme, the Faerie Queene. The spirits of nations transform the epic tradition. In retrospect, Homer's and Vergil's gods came to seem more adumbrations of Dryden's territorial angels, as if Athene had only been another name for Athens. The interest of such spirits was particularly sharp when territory was disputed. The guardian who dwells along the line, on the margin or frontier or in limbo, is always probing the limits. Here colonists encounter the unknown and strive to familiarize it with a name — Nieuw Amsterdam, New York. Eventually someone will own the shore. But in the interim, while no one knows whose genius will prevail, guardian angels have to be installed. The uncertainty of these claims is exactly what makes them so interesting. Each genius tries to establish a foothold on alien real estate and thus becomes both emblem and hostage of national glory.

In the century before "Lycidas", as nations began to define themselves by the size and sweep of their armadas, imperialistic genii flourished. Of these the great example is Adamastor. Indeed, Camões created his titan precisely to serve as a great example. Rising up at the center of The Lusiads, the passage competes with all the memorable episodes of world literature and demonstrates that a modern Portuguese poet can equal if not surpass them. A remarkable number of critics have concurred. "I believe, that such a Fiction would be thought noble and proper, in all Ages, and in all Nations". Voltaire decided (73), and similar encomiums have been repeated up to the present: "The invention of Adamastor would be enough by itself to put Camões among the world poets. The making of a myth is beyond the powers of all but the greatest" (Bacon 204). Such claims put pressure on the episode. What seems at stake in the greatness of Adamastor is the validation of two related enterprises, the imperialistic epic and imperialism itself.

But who or what is Adamastor? A simple answer would be the Cape of Storms (by no means, in this context, a Cape of Good Hope). As Vasco da Gama recounts the high points of his voyage in canto 5 of *The Lusiads*, he comes to a moment when a mysterious cloud blacked out the whole sky and, awestruck, he prayed to know what is portended. Instantly a monstrous figure appeared, as huge as the Colossus of Rhodes, denounced the Portuguese for violating his forbidden, outlandish retreat, and cursed them by predicting the ruin of future adventurers. Interrupted by a question, "Who are you?", he tells his story:

Eu sou aquele oculto e grande Cabo A quem chamais vós outros Tormentório, Que nunca a Ptolomeu, Pompónio, Estrabo, Plínio, e quantos passaram fui notório. Aqui toda a africana costa acabo Neste meu nunca visto promontório, Que pera o Pólo Antárctico se estende, A quem vossa ousadia tanto ofende. (5.50) I am that secret and gigantic Cape To which your kind has put the name of Stormy, Never revealed to Ptolemy, Pomponius, Strabo, Pliny, and many others long since passed away. Here all the coast of Africa comes to a stop In this my never — witnessed promontory, Which toward the Antarctic pole its reach extends, And which your insolence so much offends.¹⁴

"Call me Adamastor", he continues. Once he was a titan, fighting Neptune for command of the sea. But one day, on the shore, he saw Thetis naked and fell helplessly in love. Lured to an assignation, he ran to embrace her but found himself transformed into a rock clasping a rock. He fled in shame to the ends of the earth, but the gods pursued him and completed his paralysis. Now, metamorphosed into this remote cape, he is still tormented by the circling waves, which remind him of Thetis. The story is over. Abruptly the apparition vanishes, the cloud breaks, the sighing of the sea is once more inarticulate, and the Portuguese sail on. They have rounded the cape.

Many classical myths are recycled by this episode, particularly (as commentators have pointed out) the woes of the cyclops Polyphemus, not only as the savage guard of the hinterland where Odysseus trespasses but as the frustrated lover of Galatea (Ramalho 27-44). Yet such reminiscences ought not to paper over the wildness and strangeness of the passage. Adamastor, in every regard, is a liminal figure. Camões takes pains to keep everything on the edge or teetering between worlds. Even the classical myths, Maurice Bowra notes, balance against the ogres of fairy tales and romance (123-26). Geographically, Adamastor stands for the place where maps lose their potency — here be monsters; historically, for an unknown part of the past, a legend and reality concealed from the ancients and yet to be explored; epistemologically, for a point beyond which human perceptions fail; theologically, for the forbidden. But above all he exists on the border between the animate and the inanimate, between the personification that responds to human desire and the nature whose immensity and violence reflect nothing but themselves. The difference between his epic and all the others, Camões insisted, was that his alone told the truth. This was hubris, of

¹⁴ All translations from *Os Lusiadas* are my own. Pierce comments on the passage as a whole.

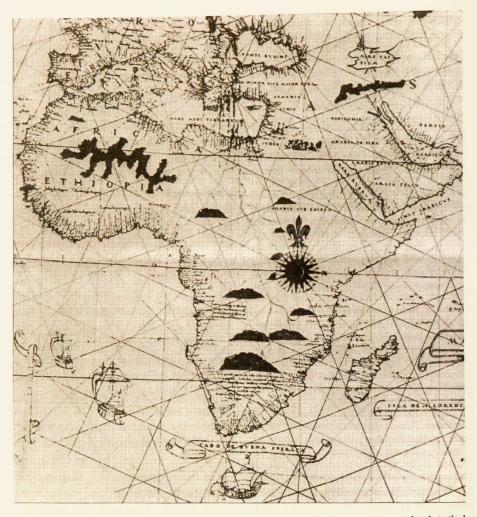
course. Yet Adamastor does emerge from the landscape and dissolve into the elements, as if his whole being were no more than an optical illusion. Now you see him, now you don't. His reality, like that of the *Ding an sich*, depends on the extent to which he cannot be apprehended.

The most impressive instance of this liminal effect occurs at his introduction, when the terrified gaze of the mariners, enveloped by darkness, literally conjures his colossal figure out of the air, while his voice growls from the depths of the ocean, accompanied by the creeping of Portuguese flesh. A shudder of sublimity passes from observer to reader. If Longinus had not been discovered, just when Camões left on the voyage from which he brought back his poem, this passage alone might have inaugurated the vogue of the sublime¹⁵. But a genius of the shore can also work more subtle magic. Consider his answer to the question "Who are you?" Translations fail to do justice to these riddles. "I am that hidden and vast Cape which you call Tormentório". The final word means "stormy", but in Portuguese as in English the sense of torment or anguish clings to it. In fact, the Portuguese had good reasons for using that name. Bartolomeu Dias had christened the Cape of Storms after first rounding it, in 1488. As the spirit of the cape has already "predicted", he will soon have his revenge on the sailor who dared to discover him: on the Portuguese expedition that followed da Gama's, in 1500, Dias would die in a storm near the cape. By then King João had renamed it the Cape of Good Hope. But euphemism could not disguise the perils or torments of Portuguese mariners, to hom the cape would always threaten storms. Meanwhile, the spirit has not divulged his "real" name, which is wrapped in darkness like the hidden or secret (oculto) cape itself. Instead, he reflects the voyagers' forebodings back on themselves.

A similar finesse bears on the name he does assume. "Adamastor is my name", translators say, or "I am Adamastor". But the texts reads, "Chamai-me Adamastor" 'Call me Adamastor'¹⁶. Like "Call me Ishmael", the phrase leaves room for

¹⁵ "The fiction of the apparition of the Cape of Tempests, in sublimity and awful grandeur of imagination, stands unsurpassed in human composition" (Mickle 63).

¹⁶ The episode was a great favorite of Melville, whose friend Jack Chase, Captain of the Top on the United States, is supposed to have recited the original to his shipmates while rounding the cape. Melville, who served under Chase in 1843-44, later dedicated Billy Bud to him; a passage that compares the menacing "genius" of the postrevolutionary, Napoleonic wars to "Camoens' 'Spirit of the Cape" may have been written in Chase's honor. Andrews argues that by alluding to "Cape Tormentos, Melville merges The Lusiad integrally into Moby-Dick" (92).



Africa (Ribeiro). This Spanish navigational map provides mariners with detailed information about the coastline; aside from a few landmarks, the interior of the continent remains mysterious. The Cape of Good Hope, conspicuously labeled, offers a passage to India and the east. In the detail of Europe, Spain dominates the Iberian peninsula, ominously leaving no room for Portugal. (Photo courtesy of the Newberry Library)

doubt; the spirit might be choosing an alias. If so, he chose cleverly, for the Greek root means "unconquerable" or "untamed". This genius of the shore refuses to be touched by visitors, let alone to offer them protection; even his name implies a stony resistance to civilization. Once again the figure stands at the border of the unknown, drawing a line that can be circumvented but never crossed. At the same time, he nurses a grievance. Torment, longing, resentment fill his being with a wild contempt that Europeans will try in vain to conquer or tame. Whatever they call him, he will respond with nothing but storms.

What does the figure stand for? To twentieth-century readers, in the aftermath of the long colonial shipwreck, the answer has seemed irresistible. Adamastor is the Other; the dark, unconquerable continent; the victims of imperialism; the blacks who already inhabit the land but whom *The Lusiads* barely notices. Camões had prophesied better than he knew¹⁷. In modern South African writing, the figure has played a major part. One crucial poem, in Roy Campbell's volume *Adamastor*, is "Rounding the Cape".

Across his back, unheeded, we have broken Whole forests: heedless of the blood we've spilled, In thunder still his prophecies are spoken, In silence, by the centuries, fulfilled.

The "terrific shade" is lord of "the powers of darkness" specifically, "Night, the Negro". More recently, André Brink's clever story *Cape of Storms: The* First Life *of Adamastor* has reimagined the encounter of European and African from the landward side, narrated by a native Adamastor. These versions revitalize the myth. Whether expressing the bad conscience of transplanted Europeans, as in Campbell, or the absurd failure of the colonizers to impose their own meaning on an eternal culture that regards them as mere birds of passage, as in Brink, they cast aside the limited interest of Portuguese nationalism in favor of global sweep. Most of all, they do justice to Adamastor's grievance. Of course he hated the voyagers and their gods, bound to break his culture, ecology, and people. Stuck in the midst of the epic like a bone in the throat, his grievance constitutes the work's one lasting emotion.

That grievance can hardly have been what Camões had in mind, however. If he is the ventriloquist who makes the monster speak, he must have been voicing some resentment of his own, a fury on behalf of Portuguese interests as well as against them. The genius of the shore can authorize bewildering conflicts of interpretation, as unrelenting as the sea against the land. Indeed,

¹⁷ According to one eminent commentator on *The Lusiads*, the relentlessly allegorizing Manuel de Faria e Sousa, Adamastor stands for Mahomet, which explains the titan's barbarism and hostility (540-66). The author may well have intended this reading.

he might be taken rhetorically for the figure of undecidability. How then can we hope to resolve it?

In practical terms, there are two main ways of reading the function of Adamastor in The Lusiads. The first would stress his paradoxical role in glorifying the Portuguese, or at any rate in assuring them that their sufferings make sense. This awesome, inhuman being at the end of the world, whom they alone have dared to confront, can speak their language, knows all about them, and can reel off details of their future disasters. Surely this flatters them. Exemplifying the power of narrative and of the gods to master a senseless world, personifying the unknowable. Adamastor seems curiously consoling. Even his curse, by predicting misfortunes that by the time of Camões had already happened, in what has been called the mode of preauthenticated prophecy (Lipking 88-89), affirms the inevitable logic that underlies history. Far from meaningless, the wreck of Dias proves how much the Fates take heed of Portugal. Moreover, a highly literate theogony props up Adamastor's story. At the tip of Africa, the gods in residence are not Tsui-Goab, Gaunab, or Heitsi-Eibib but Jupiter, Neptune, and Thetis¹⁸. How fortunate for the Portuguese! Not only are they competent to understand the story, through being well versed in Ovid, they also hold in reserve a more powerful god, who has always kept pagans in their place. Refreshed by the shudder that Adamastor summoned, they will now sail on with new purpose.

Hence the genius of the shore, in this reading, functions as a defence mechanism that shields the poet and his audience from having to face the brutal truth that storms and death and oppression happen, that people vanish into the wilderness forever, and that neither the gods nor nature cares. A similar mystification might be attributed to "Lycidas". After the remorseless passage in which the body is hurled about in the sea, Milton puts a better face on reality, dresses up Lycidas in fancy clothes, and assures himself and the reader that poetry matters. Meanwhile, the rocks along the shore await their next victim, indifferent to the genius who is supposed to blunt their edge. Personifications change nothing. Even the mighty voice of Adamastor, when heard without rhetorical amplification, sounds like a poet whistling in the dark.

The defense includes colonialism as well. In an impressive analysis, David Quint argues that the figure of Adamastor serves imperialistic ideology in two ways. First, by assimilating native

¹⁸ The African gods play roles in Brink's novel. Camões's mixture of pagan and Christian gods is criticized by Greene (219-31) and defended by Sims.

African resistance with the hostility of nature, it "overlooks and suppresses the Portuguese aggression that kindled the resistance in the first place" (118), as if blind, unmotivated fury led the Africans to fight for their land and as if the victors bore no responsibility for defending themselves with acts of violence. Second, Adamastor can also be read as "the poet's daring and aggrandizing figure of his own daring and greatness and that of his Portuguese heroes" or as "a mirror image of the Portuguese victor himself" (124). Either way, the epic's ideology appropriates any point of view that might support the loser. All Adamastor knows how to do is curse, and European civilization taught him that too.

Yet something essential seems missing from this account, and it is grievance. For all Camões's glorification of the Portuguese, The Lusiads does not sound any unequivocal note of triumph. Rounding the cape, on their way to one of the great imperial and commercial killings of all time, the voyagers pause for a forecast of everything that will go wrong for the next fifty years. Somehow the Portuguese are victors who feel like victims. Camões had plenty of reason to subscribe to that sense of history. Even the most optimistic reading of The Lusiads has tended to view the glory of da Gama's voyage as a reproach to the degenerate Portugal of the mid-sixteenth century, fat, at odds, and waiting to be plucked. The poem feeds off grievances. Some of these might be personal¹⁹. Whether or not Camões's father died at Goa after a shipwreck, as legend claims, the colonial enterprise has led the poet himself not to fortune but to bankruptcy, the loss of his right eye, exile, and the seedy alienation of a Graham Greene hero, who might like the idea of his country but could not manage to make a life there. Camões also identified his wretchedness with that of Portugal, as in his famous (if apocryphal) last words, that he was "content to die not only in her but with her" (in the year of his death, 1580, the country would be annexed by Philip II of Spain). This affinity for disaster helped establish Camões as the national poet²⁰. For Portugal might be

¹⁹ For analysis of the biographical tradition on Camões, see Saraiva. In English, Freitas supplies much dependable information, and Moser provides a historical context for Camões's feelings of victimization.

²⁰ Consider the mixture of hubris and martyrdom in a speech by the governor-general of Angola in 1936: "I am going to swear here, on this sacred book, the *Lusíadas*, on the Bible of our country, the loyalty of all the Portuguese in Angola. I swear that we, the Portuguese of Angola, will carry out, no matter what the emergency, or how difficult the sacrifice, our duty as patriots and that we know how to die, sacrificing our very lives for the lands of Portugal, which want to be and will always be Portuguese" (Duffy 270-71). Helgerson comments

defined as a series of grievances: against Spain, rival European empires, and especially the Moors. These enemies sustain the image of a people whose defeats, no less than their victories, spread their fame as crusaders and martyrs. The nation is small, and it is alone. Hence, at the moment of their greatest success, the Portuguese always remember that most of the world is conspiring againt them.

Adamastor tells them that winners will also be losers; that is the second main way of reading his function. Not only does he curse their presumption and savor their future losses, he reminds them to feel sorry for themselves, thereby setting the tone of much of the poem. A monstrous, contagious selfpity suffuses his story as well as what it implies about the fate of the Portuguese. Indeed, an unsympathetic listener might find comedy in the tale of a giant who pursues a beautiful young nymph and tries to win her by force, only to be outwitted and reduced to impotence. Nor can the vanguard of a colonial empire expect much sympathy when its schemes for conquest and profit meet resistance from the elements and the natives. Yet readers rarely scoff at the pain of someone who eternally longs for something unattainable. The Lusiads is an epic of longing. Its voyagers may blaze a trail for later profiteers, but fame puts nothing in their own pockets; and when Camões rewards them, at the end, with the magic Island of Love and a vision of the future exploits of their country, no one can miss the air of unreality. An alternative, heartfelt conclusion has already capped canto 7, where the poet laments his wanderings and poverty and lack of recognition. Not even Adamastor felt more sorry for himself. Dreams of glory hold both Camões and his epic captive; longing remains their most powerful emotion.

The pitiful, helpless giant and the self-glorifying, self-pitying nation — these two sufferers seem made for each other. Hence their torment serves to palliate or humanize the appropriations of the imperialistic epic. A memento mori accompanies the Portuguese wherever they go. From the subaltern's point of view, to be sure, such remorse might seem no more convincing than the weeping of the Walrus as he gobbles down every oyster. Yet colonizers do suffer. Whether or not Edward King's family exploited the Irish, whether or not Bartolomeu Dias opened the way for European domination of Africa, each of them was just as victimized

on the extraordinary embrace by the Portuguese of Camões's vision of their heroic destiny, a vision that "blatantly contradicted the reality of its author's experience" (163). That reality, in Helgerson's view, consists of the commercial interests repressed by the aristocratic governing classes.

by drowning and ended up just as dead. Nor does the patriotic fervor of Milton and Camões, or the possibility that neither was a very nice person, deprive them of the right to grieve. The myths these poets created still have the troubling power of titanism and of nightmare. Nations destroy themselves as well as others. At several crucial points of *The Lusiads*, including the very moment when da Gama's fleet sets sail, dissenting voices curse the whole colonial enterprise and predict that it will bring about the ruin of Portugal. Many historians would agree with those voices: the empire stretched the nation beyond endurance until it snapped like a string. At any rate, wanderers on the perilous flood do face real dangers. When a ship of state founders, harmless seamen and passengers pay with their lives.

In a famous image that Benedict Anderson borrowed to conclude the first edition of his influential Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Walter Benjamin describes the Angel of History, whose face is turned toward the past and who sees nothing but wreckage hurled at his feet²¹. That angel is also the genius of the shore, a guardian who presides over the wreck of ship after ship. Despite hoping for bright national futures, Camões and Milton turn their faces backward, toward the calamities and grievances that compose their historical myths of nationhood. The genius of the shore remembers how much he has to resent. Meanwhile, a storm from Paradise, a storm called progress, blows him irresistibly into the future. New nations, new enemies, will arise there, and the shore will become a site of endless territorial contests. Even fresh woods and pastures new are likely to be already inhabited by other shepherds and their gods, ready to fight for possession. Cromwell would have to finish what Lycidas started. Like the poet, the Angel of History cannot predict what will happen tomorrow. Yet the storm goes on, and perhaps it is safe to guess that, whatever else happens, tomorrow more ships will come to grief on that shore.

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²¹ Benjamin 257-58. The second edition of *Imagined Communities* adds chapters that deal with the map and with memory, both crucial, this essay argues, to the nationalism of Renaissance poets.

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