

The Expression of Poetry and the Impasses of Empire

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Abstract. In *The Lusiads* the expression of poetry—the poetry of Voyage—is opposed to the expression of Empire. This opposition is semantical as well as formal: themes and morpho-syntactical structures are intertwined. Both are analysed in detail. In fact, the relation of Voyage to Empire is complex, as each one “acts” upon the other, with different degrees of success.

Some years ago I published a study on *The Lusiads*, which is the basis of this presentation.¹ I was never a follower of my late colleague, the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, and I am not very much interested, I must confess, in the sociology of things not social. Thus, I never thought that I might find myself within the *champ*, as Bourdieu calls it, of *The Lusiads*’ interpretations. According to Bourdieu, each intellectual production has its place—inescapably—in a set (the “field”) of power relations and vested interests. However, another colleague, Professor Sanjay Subramanyan, in an article published this year in a Mexican magazine, suggests that my reading resorts to a definite political position: a sort of left-wingish revisionism—he does not use these words—insofar as I pretend that, in a certain way, Camões acknowledges the failure of the Portuguese imperial project.² In the poem, political failure amounts to *failure in expression*. We read *The Lusiads* with fresh delight, as if it had been written today. But to make one’s way through it may also be excruciating. In this epic, imperial ideology and Catholicism result in bad poetry; however, lyricism and paganism result in the beautiful poetry of discovery as well. (Things are more complicated than this straight opposition, as we shall see.)³

Professor Subramanyan's point of view is anti-colonialist. So far so good. But he seems to think that his is the sole respectable view. The idea that he might be outstripped by Camões himself and by Portuguese revisionists makes him feel uncomfortable. More so, if the revision is "leftist." The innuendo is perhaps that revisionism is a twisted way, in the post-colonial era, of still pretending to some kind of Portuguese "symbolic" supremacy. That being said, Subramanyan is in some sense right. An interpretation such as mine is indeed *post-imperial*. To throw into relief Camões's nostalgia and political awareness is much easier after the end of empires—let me congratulate Professor Victor Mendes for the title he chose for our conference. I thank him too, as well as Professor João Ricardo Figueiredo, for their kind invitation.

I shall oppose the expression of poetry—the poetry of Voyage—and the expression of Empire. Without trying to explain the meaning of this word, "expression," let me just say that I consider expression as having two components: the *need for expression* (explanation of expression cannot avoid being circular); we may call this need "feeling"—and the *need for form*. The need for expression has semantic content, the need for form does not, though form may have intrinsic semantic import. Of course I am not claiming any pre-eminence of semantics over form. We shall not say that a feeling so-and-so looks for its formal counterpart or for its "adequate" form. Need for expression runs together with need for form. To quote Schoenberg, from whom I borrowed the formula *need for expression*, form is immanent to feeling, and this is so from the very inception of the creative process. Themes and morpho-syntactical structures are intertwined; themes are themselves facts of expression. Felicitous expression derives from the co-implication and the co-adaptation of semantics and form.

Voyage and Foundation

The Lusiads begins with a dedication. Camões, author of the poem, addresses himself to the young King, Sebastião. Then the action begins, on Mount Olympus and along the coast of Mozambique. Camões, the narrator, relates the voyage between Mozambique and Malindi. Vasco da Gama, the protagonist, is traveling to the northeast. His aim is to attain India. In Malindi, Vasco recounts to the Sultan the history of Portugal's two dynasties as well as the trip between Lisbon and Mozambique.

Then, the expedition proceeds towards India. Camões is again the narrator. In India, Vasco's brother, Paulo, gives the Catual, an Indian official

(VII.44), another, abridged version of Portugal's history. It is Camões who relates the incidents of Gama's sojourn in India and his return to Lisbon. The trip is interrupted by a halt at an imaginary island, the Island of Love, where a Nymph and Tethys, one of Neptune's wives, predict the conquest of India subsequent to Gama's voyage, and the future discoveries of the Portuguese. (The reader was aware that those events predicted by the Nymphs had already happened, during the seventy years between the discovery of India and *The Lusiads*.) The fleet returns then to Portugal (in the time of one octave), and Camões concludes the poem, addressing himself again to the King.

We see that several Camões co-exist: the narrator of the voyage and the author of the poem, as well as Camões the poet and the man. Each one has different *problems of expression* to solve. What do *The Lusiads* relate? The first three octaves explain that the poem is going to recount a sea odyssey (*by oceans where none had ventured*, I.1.3): the discovery of India by Vasco da Gama in 1498. His voyage leads to the building (1.7) of a *new Kingdom* (1.8).⁴ Although it is mentioned almost cursorily, the new kingdom is one of the two axes of the poem. The other is Gama's voyage. *The Lusiads* tell the story of a *new foundation*, as the outcome of a *voyage*. I shall use these two designations, Foundation and Voyage, as abbreviations of Camões's basic inspirations.

This is not all. Camões intends, *likewise*, (2.1) to *sing* (I.3.5) those *kings of glorious memory* (2.1) who brought *ruin on the degenerate / Lands of Africa and Asia* (2.4). And, too, some men *whose immortal deeds / Have conquered death's oblivion* (2.5-6), that is, *heroes*. All of them—sailors, warriors—are Portuguese (3.5). Through their *navigations* (3.2), through the *victories* (3.4) of kings and heroes, *The Lusiads* wishes to celebrate the superlative *value* of the whole Lusitanian nation: *because another, higher value is rising* (3.8). This applies not only to present discoveries but also to the whole of Portuguese history, since the 12th century. Finally, the celebration of Portuguese merit has worldwide relevance: *These words will go wherever there are men* (2.7). Foundation in general and this particular voyage (I.3) are both *inaugural*: and not only this voyage, for Gama's is the prototype of all discoveries to come, as announced on the Island of Love.

The sequence of events shows that the memory of Portuguese kings and heroes (the past history of Portugal) is at the same level of meaning, if you allow me this expression, of the New Kingdom's, of which India is the siege. What is at stake is a re-foundation that reiterates other, previous foundations and re-foundations. The empire of India fulfills the project of João I, who was

the first king to set foot / Beyond his native soil (IV.48.5-6). This was also the project of his *supremely gifted progeny* (50.8). João *re-founded* the kingdom *founded* by Afonso Henriques—which had already been the object of several *proto-foundations*. These were the deeds of heroes, human (Viriatius and Sertorius), epic (Ulysses) and mythic (Lusus, son of Bacchus...). Everything related to this Portugal yet to be born is *old legend—perhaps untrue. / From antiquity nothing is certain* (III.29.2). But it is certain that Portugal must exist.

Of course, Vasco and Paulo da Gama, who in Malindi and India display Portugal's foundations and re-foundation, know all about the kingdom's history, from those mythical origins to the voyage on which they have embarked. Foundation has created the unambiguous and continuous *identity of the famous Portuguese* (I.3.5). That which was founded is the identity of a *community*. Portugal will remain forever identical to itself, reconquering itself whenever its identity is endangered. Portugal's identity is *necessary*, as it proceeds from God's decree. Consubstantiated in a miracle, Christ assisted to the kingdom's birth (III.45-46, the miracle of Ourique).

Since its inception Portuguese history unfolds the internal *necessity* of a providential *mission*, deviations and temporary feebleness notwithstanding. João I quits Portugal, "*so Africa / Should learn in battle how much less sufficed / The power of Islam than the power of Christ*" (IV.48). *Christianity* embodied in Portugal, will prove to be the destiny of the world. Foundation shall be renewed and extended into the future, thanks to a continuous process. The retrospective speeches of Vasco and Paulo will be completed by the "prophecies" of the Nymph, dwelling upon the conquest of India, and of Tethys, who spells out the "future" discoveries of the Portuguese, between 1498 and 1570. Camões delegates to the Gamas and to the Nymphs the account of Portugal's history. He keeps to himself the role of narrator of the Voyage, with the exceptions I mentioned.

Those speeches are delivered during, and from within, the expedition—the voyage draws history to itself. Voyage values are opposed to the Foundation's. It is not an abstract community that sails to India, but *these* seafarers, *hic et nunc, prepa<ring> our souls to meet death / Which is always in a sailor's horizon* (IV.86). Death and *hazards and assaults* (I.1), *great and grave dangers, the vicissitudes of life's journey*, without the aid of any kind of trust (I.105). Sailors yield their flesh to *the unknown dangers of the world / to shipwreck, to fishes, to the abyss* (X.147). The voyage exposes oneself to novelty, i.e. to *difference* (instead of identity). The *possible* and the *contingent* (instead of

necessity) are its modalities. History *fulfills* a mission, voyage *opens* to the unknown. These values will be joined by others, or shall multiply themselves in others: experience, desire, adventure, love, poetry itself.

Such oppositions have a religious expression. *Catholicism* is *univocal*, *mythology* is *plural*. Mythology guides the Voyage while the invisible hand of God supports foundations and re-foundations. However, the status of mythology and paganism in *The Lusiads* is far from simple: Catholicism has its representatives on Olympus, and one pagan god, Bacchus, remains Gama's unrepentant enemy. In addition, according to Tethys, in a famous stanza, pagan gods should, after all, prove to be a mere illusion or, rather, a poetical device (X.82).

These ambiguities derive from constraints related to expression. The expression of poetry conflicts with the expression of ideology and politics. In fact, Camões aims at rendering politics poetic, through the blends we shall encounter. But it must be kept in mind that the Christian God does not take part in the seafaring, and that Vasco's and Paulo's speeches never mention pagan gods. It is the Christian Divinity who commands Portugal's historical fate. Christ is the only god who manifests himself through signs and miracles; it is in His name that Idolaters and Moors are defeated.

Nevertheless, Portugal's future is forecasted by the Nymph and by Tethys, both sea deities. This is the case, since, with the discovery of India, the future is located and decided overseas and no longer in Europe.

Semantic and formal expression

Having in mind the components of expression, how do Voyage and Foundation exhibit the *need for expression*, and how do they relate to *form*? Another subject of expression must be considered, *Camões the Author* (and *Camões the Poet* too). Besides his initial and final addresses to the King, in Canto Seven Camões intervenes twice, in the first person. In a well-known verse he presents himself as holding *pen in one hand, a sword in the other* (VII.79). (Indeed—however, the marriage of lyricism and empire appears to be hazardous. It is not easy to conciliate Voyage's values to the Foundation's). Likewise, from the fourth strophe of *The Lusiads* Camões declares that his style should be *grandiloquent and fluent*. However, fluency pertains to lyricism, not to the turgidity of Camões's epic.

Both Voyage and Catholic Imperial ideology search expression. Their respective sets of values, and the conciliation of both, are the primary *semantic* content of *The Lusiads*. As regards *form*, two layers need to be distin-

guished. The first is morpho-syntactic, the second narrative. Both have semantic import, though different from what I call semantic content ("values"). We shall now see that Voyage and Foundation differ in their forms too.

The consistency of these so different kinds of oppositions is, I think, quite remarkable by itself. *The Lusíads express their combined effect*. But fluency—which voyage is by definition—seems to be contrary to imperial grandeur, in every respect.

I leave lexicon aside; obviously, the language of Voyage differs from that of Foundation. As for morpho-syntactics, I restrict myself to the *verbal grammar*: persons, tenses, moods and aspects. Conquest and the execution of a divine mission, as well as adventure and love, express themselves through actions, and verbs express actions. Thus, we have: as regards Voyage, the first person, the present, the indicative and the imperfect (mainly in the progressive form, the action that has begun and is not yet finished); as regards Foundation, the third person, the preterite and the future, the past participle, and the perfect (the action that is completely finished).

In what concerns the narrative structures, Voyage is expressed through *scenes*, *tableaux*, and Foundation through the above-mentioned *speeches*. Scenes are natural narrative correlatives of the progressive, the indicative and the present. Similarly, historical speeches appear to be the natural correlative of the preterite, the past participle and the perfect aspect.

We can anticipate that the Voyage's set of forms (morphological as well as narrative) tend to be "poetic" and that this cannot be the case of Foundation. It is not an easy task to bring past deeds to life, heroic and necessary as they may be, and render them poetic. Except for the lyrical episodes scattered over their rhetoric, Vasco and Paulo are by and large pompous. No immediate empathy follows from the imperial dream—and we can affirm it without retrospective illusions. Remember the departure of the caravels from Lisbon, one of the most moving and most celebrated scenes of the poem: an old man shouts at the expedition and at King Manuel's pretensions—*pride of power, vanity of fame, the wealth of kingdoms and empire*—and he condemns *the disregard of life* (IV.95-96: "Long live Death!" in Professor White's translation...). *Life should always / be cherished*. Immediately before the Old Man of Restelo's oration, *mothers, wives and sisters / made fretful by their love* (89) had expressed their *anxiety and dismay*, in six marvelous octaves (88).

Reverting to the Author and entering *in medias res*, the problems of conciliation that Camões had to solve relate to each of the two axes that we have been

considering. They are the following: (1) How to express poetically the unpoetic nature of conquest? (2) How are love and wandering, and the poetry attached to both, liable to express Imperial values? (The Samorin accuses Gama of “living the life of a vagabond,” *mas vagabundo vás passando a vida*, [VIII. 61], Gama answers a little later [67]: he is not *undivago e da pátria desterrado*.)

Camões's solutions are different for each one of these questions. They derive from two operations that, taken together, should bring forth Conciliation: (1) *Induced effects of the verbal grammar of Voyage* (persons, tenses, aspects, moods) *on the verbal grammar of Foundation* breath life into past history. Here, the active factor is formal. However, such effects cannot but remain limited as they collide with the semantics of Foundation, whose values are unchanging and perennial. (2) Symmetrically, *the semantics of Foundation are supposed to permeate and give consistency* to the discontinuity and the contingency inherent to the expedition, and to discovery as such. Divine and historical necessity would reabsorb the hazards of experience. However, this transformation rests exclusively on lexical means, as we shall see. Thus, it cannot be effective. *Form is missing*, consistency ensues from sheer verbal violence. The co-adaptation of semantics and form is shallow; it amounts to no more than an *effet de surface*. (Fortunately, though, the form and the semantics of Voyage are left untouched.)

Camões misses the reconciliation he searches. The status of paganism, in particular the misadventures of Bacchus, the wandering half-god and nevertheless protector of the Moors' enemies of Portugal, summarizes *The Lusíads*'s failure.

FORM

The discourse of Voyage: morpho-syntax, narration

(i) After the dedication to the King (*so / this epic may become your own*, [I.1]), the trip is introduced, in the imperfect. Aspectually, the imperfect is the progressive occurring in the past: *They were midway on the wide ocean... / The billowing wind was bowing gently ... the seas were showing themselves* (I.18). Similarly, the movement of the fleet is an action in progress: *the prows are / Cutting the sacred waters* (I.19).

Either past or present, the imperfect progressive is the aspect proper to the voyage. (Some rare exceptions have their own justification.) And the imperfect of Voyage acts on the discourse of Foundation: Portugal's past history unfolds in the progressive too, as if it were always still happening.⁵

(ii) A living present connected to the imperfect is the characteristic tense of *The Lusiads*. Making Gama's trip coincide with its description, Camões obtains that the action's time (1498) and the time of the narration (1572) overlap. The expedition is brought into the present as if it were evolving under King Sebastião's eyes, and the narration nourishes itself with the never-ending novelty of action. Such action—the travel—is the *narrative focus* of the poem. It is not an accident of history; it is rather history that comes on top of Gama's trip. Past pours into present in one precise moment, when, at the end of his relation to the Sultan, Vasco remarks: *At long last, to this safe anchorage, / Sweet solace and peace of mind / You provided. Now I lay down my task, / having answered everything I heard you ask* (V.85). Camões's poem is contemporary with the expedition and past and future history are contemporary with the poem and the expedition.

(iii) As we observed, the travel is told in the first person, by Camões, its natural narrator, and by Vasco, as an exception. (iv) Finally its mood is the indicative, things seen and historical facts are presented deictically.⁶ Together with the overlapping of narration and action, this contributes to suggest actuality, as if Camões himself had been a member of the expedition, bearing witness to Gama's deeds. And participation in the voyage reinforces *veracity*, as if the cumulative coherence of the first person, the progressive (preterite or actual), the indicative and the present established and declared the narration's truthfulness: it is the truth of self-evidence.

Narrative structures amplify this feeling of reality. The Voyage consists of a series of *tableaux vivants*: of the present, the past and the future; of people, of animals of many sorts, landscapes, storms, shipwreck. Of conversations and intrigues, among men and gods. Of fear and hope, joy and despair; of comic boastfulness, sexual fever, abuse, cruelty. Of grace, too.

Truth would be Camões's goal. His is not a mere *song of praise*. Truth is supposed to distinguish *The Lusiads* from its foreign counterparts. Neither Foundation accounts nor travel stories shall house *counterfeit / Exploits, fantasies such as muses / Elsewhere have dreamed or invented* (I.11). Truth possesses many facets: actuality of past and future history, presentification of actions and things, testimony. It does not refer only to Gama's seafaring. The sailors represent the whole Portuguese community, contingency is thereby legitimized: this trip embodies a mission. A continuous process of discovery and conquest must culminate in the Empire and in the political allegiance of the

Moor. The semantics of truth—Portuguese, Imperial truth—ascertains the meaning of Voyage, whose syntactic values would, in return, actualize the past and attract the future to the present. This magnificent dialectic is the target of *the author of The Lusíads*.

The discourse of Foundation: morpho-syntax and narrative structure

The syntax of Foundation is symmetrical to the Voyage's. Its natural devices should be the perfect (proper to accomplished actions), the preterite, the past principle and the irreality of the subjunctive mood (in speeches about the future), and the third person, which conveys the impersonality of dead events. However, as remarked, Portugal's history is re-enacted by the syntactic apparatus of Voyage.

As regards narration, the discourse of Foundation expresses itself through *four speeches*. All of them are eulogies praising the merits of Portugal. Whereas we are presented with the scenes of Voyage, we listen to the evocations and prognostications of two pairs of speakers, the Gamas and Tethys and the Nymph. Both proceed through the laborious, not to say verbose *re-activation* of times and events gone by or through prophecies already fulfilled. Induced syntactical self-evidence is not powerful enough to erase the strenuousness and artificiality of such procedures.

SEMANTICS

Semantics of Voyage

Voyage values are at the opposite of the Foundation's abstract concepts. "Experientialism," one classical *topos* of traditional interpretation, does not mean empiricism. Rather, it expresses surprise before what is absolutely new, terrifying as much as marvelous. *Who are these people... What customs? What beliefs? Who is their king?* (I.45), the navigators ask, at the beginning of the travel, when some small boats come near the fleet, from an island unknown. Something different appears where nothing seemed to exist—and this is by itself fascinating. *Our people were overjoyed and could only / Stare in excitement at this wonder* (ibid.). Such is the tonality of Gama's tour. The *unexpected* shall remain its mode.

The *sights* (V.17), *distinctly seen* (V.18), the *secrets and the mysteries of the deep*, as Adamastor the giant says (V.42), are *those dangerous things of the sea / that men do not understand* (V.16). Camões exhibits them in their *naked and crude truth* (V.89)—at the borderline of natural experience. Novelty is extra-ordinary and

strange, in Gama's trip as well as in the discoveries predicted by Tethys.

Not only St. Elmo's fires, scurvy, *current(s) of such force / [that] Our ships could make no headway in their course* (V.66), or tempests like... *some dreadful dream* (94)—but, also, cannibalism (X. 126), lands peopled in days bygone by *Children of the horrible coupling / Of a solitary woman and a dog—* where nowadays *men wear on their genitals / Tiny tinkling bells, a custom / Invented very subtly by their queen* (X.122). And, still, birds of paradise *which never alight / But fall to earth the day they end their flight* (X.132), *magic rivers* where *twigs that fall in it are turned into stone* (X.134). And so on. Sumatra is an example (see X.135.1-6).

In consequence Camões may comment: *O what an influence of signs and stars! / What strange, what marvelous qualities! And all without lying, plain truth* (V.24). Expression involves intensification and in poetry intensification becomes transfiguration. Poetic expression changes the status of things. Adventure and discovery are themselves *poetic*, not a sum of facts: there is no experientialism here, it is only for a small part, and the less interesting, that Camões refers to reality and to the concepts that subsume reality.

Seas stick to the hulls, they soak into the boats that travel across them: *Here we careened the ships, scraping / The hulls clean of six months' sludge, / And barnacles and limpets, harmful / Parasites of an ocean voyage* (V.79.1:4). Triton, Neptune's messenger, re-covered by molluscs and shellfish, is the living image of the fusion of D. Manuel's caravels with the elements.

The hairs of his beard and the hair
Falling from his head to his shoulders
Were all one mass of mud, and visibly
Had never been touched by a comb;
Each dangling dreadlock was a cluster
Of gleaming, blue-black mussels.
On his head, by way of coronet, he wore
The biggest lobster-shell you ever saw.

His body was naked, even his genitals,
So as not to impede his swimming,
But tiny creatures of the sea
Crawled over him by the hundreds;
Crabs and prawns and many others

Which wax with the growing moon,
 Crackles and oysters, and the slimy husks
 Of convoluted whelks and other mollusks.
 (VI.17-18)

Strangeness is disquieting as it establishes near intimacy with an absolute alien. But it cannot be denied, Triton is *plain truth*, as much as Adamastor's hallucinations or the Island of Love. They are truer than perception because they convey the mythical truth of *The Lusiads*.

Simple, matter of fact perception conceals prodigies. The famous waterspout is an instance of this intensification and transfiguration of reality. Something that is *seen distinctly* (V.19) is transformed, for *all* who saw it, into *an excessive miracle and, sure, an highly astonishing thing* (V.18). *Fascinium* becomes *tremendum*. *A little vapour ... grows heavier by the moment and suppurating with the huge volume taken up* (20). It appears to the sailors as *a purple leech ... / on the lips of some beast / ... Slaking its thirst with another's blood* (21). Then it disintegrates—and, *sated and replete, it returned to the water the water it took* (22), as if the waterspout had in fact become a leech, and water blood.

In the same hallucinatory vein, the Island of Love displaces itself parallel to the fleet. H. Macedo pointed out that it remains invisible until the fleet sees it: it is at this moment that Venus immobilizes the Island.⁷ Likewise, Adamastor is hallucinated by the expedition, in the form of a cloud initially perceived as having a human form. (A complex and ambiguous relation links Adamastor to the Island of Love.) And Adamastor became a rock owing to an hallucination of his own (V.55-56). Love is lived as hallucinated reality, in a literal sense.

Semantics of Foundation

The action of Voyage on Foundation has no formal counter-effects. Except for two or three exceptions, Voyage is never told in the perfect, in the past, or in the third person. The primacy of Foundation is semantical. In addition to the values proper to Voyage and to Foundation, the "truth" of *The Lusiads* would result from the syntactic power of Voyage combined with its semantical subordination to Foundation. Camões aims at insufflating poetic expressivity into history and at giving a political-religious significance to seafaring and discovery. History would thereby acquire the *self-evidence* of poetry—and poetry would be *validated*. However, the first operation does not succeed

completely and the second fails. The semantics of Voyage resists the will to power of the Portuguese.

It is easy to show how the teleology of history would bring about the reconstruction of Gama's trip. The set *community-identity-necessity-Catholicism* re-elaborates the set *expedition-difference-possibility and contingency-paganism*. A *new expression* of the Voyage would obtain.

In this light, (i) the navigators represent the whole Portuguese community, the expedition functions as its *delegation*. (ii) The identity of the community is preserved within difference (which is a category belonging to Voyage): identity takes the form of *continuity*. Vagrancy is redeemed by the constancy of a project. During the trip, "discoveries in series" between Mozambique and Malindi (Camões's narration), and between Lisbon and Mozambique (Vasco's narration), secure continuity. They will be expanded, thanks to complete discovery of the East, and of Brazil to the West. The "all-embracing" voyage of Magellan closes the cycle ideally: in fact, Magellan was *in all his actions Portuguese / If not completely in his loyalties* (X.140). Even if the series is not yet finished (see V.14: the South Pole awaits to be discovered), such an unfaltering continuity guarantees its future conclusion. Tethys explains to Vasco that discoveries obey a mysterious necessity: *There are lands beyond, veiled from you / Until the time is ripe to reveal them*.

(iii) Necessity invests contingency and possibility. Vasco da Gama's expedition ceases to be a mere possibility—it *must be accomplished*, as it was unanimously decided by King Manuel's Council. (Vasco had a premonition of it: *My heart had always whispered to me / Of some great enterprise of this kind* [IV.77].) Anticipation of action supervenes in the person who will enforce it.

Necessity submits contingency in two manners, at least. (iv) Foundation transmits to Voyage its *inaugural character*. It is always for the first time that things happen, be it the contemplation of southern heavens, the revelation of new seas, the discovery of stupendous prodigies. This is said in the famous third verse of *The Lusíads* (*By oceans where none had ventured*), and is reiterated in VII.30.7. In other words, discoveries are presented as an *invention of reality*. India's discovery, through which Portugal re-founds itself, is the critical point where the new future comes into being.

(v) Necessity reduces contingency also insofar as it transforms the expedition into a *providential mission*. Vasco must found the New Kingdom (I.1). Mars, god of war, is on the side of the Portuguese (I.36-41), as well as Venus, *ordained / by the Eternal Father to guard the Portuguese* (IX.18, see also

VII.15.2-8, p. 142). Since the beginning of the poem the reader knows that Jove ordered their victory (I.24-29, 40-41) and Jove himself announces it to Venus (II.44-45). Thanks to that, Vasco manages to elude all of Bacchus's ambushes. *Success of the expedition* is but the first stage of the defeat of the Moslems and of pagan gods.

Unlike the semantics of *Voyage*, the semantics of *Foundation* is not a natural one.

Expression

The semantics of *Foundation* is *un-natural*. This means that the providential mission of Gama and of the Portuguese is unable to attain a mode of expression equivalent, in one way or another, to the self-evidence of *Voyage*. Everything the *Voyage* presents, as it progresses, is undeniable truth, it belongs to the daily experience of the navigators. Each trait of the linguistic apparatus of the *Voyage* suggests other types of self-evidence: of the person (subjectivity does not question itself), of mood (*deixis* points to what is manifest), of aspect (action "in progress" cannot be put in doubt) and of tense (the self is immanent to his present experience.) That is to say, the syntax of *Voyage* assembles four independent factors of self-evidence: each one contributes to the self-evidence of subjective experience. The same applies to the episodes, which form the narrative structure. As remarked above, the unfolding of a *scene* is the counterpart of syntactical self-evidence.

Thus, both semantics (the wonders of discovery) and form (morphology and narration) appear to be an adequate expression of *Voyage*. The *Voyage's* form is coherent, powerful and complex. Semantics and form cohere too, they require each other. Therefore, the formal structures *lead to*, and *fit*, the semantics of *Voyage*. (*En passant*, voyage is an apt metaphor for life because they both have the same linguistic basis.)

On the contrary, *Foundation* does not conduce to self-evidence of any kind—neither that of experience, nor that of form. *Foundation* founds itself on an act of *self-designation*, it rests on a "sovereign" decision of the *will*. The identity and the communality of a country, and its necessary, imperial and Catholic destiny, do not correspond to any natural given. They are artifacts, elements of an ideology that Camões impinges on his readers' minds. In consequence, only the Portuguese, and not all of them (remember the departure from Lisbon), will recognize themselves in it. It is the stamp of Camões's genius that he stresses the constancy of the Moslems' and the Indians' refusal

of Portugal's imperial project, as if Camões's care for truth were more powerful than ideology. But this is also a hallmark of failure. *Conciliation of Foundation to Voyage does not achieve satisfactory expression.*

The *syntax* of Voyage acts upon Foundation. Its effect of re-actualization is limited, though: it does not correspond to the status of the past (irrecoverable loss) and it contradicts its semantics. Vagrancy does not mix well with imperial destiny. As for *narration*, the resurrection of history remains for a large part artificial: the syntactical operation is not entirely accomplished. The re-actualization effect only succeeds well—exceedingly well—as regards *lyrical episodes*, for instance the story of Pedro and Inês—and as regards everything that concerns human existence in general.

Semantical operations are less felicitous still. The taking over of Voyage by Foundation is *conceptual*, it does not follow from procedures similar to the effects Voyage attempts to induce on Foundation. It consists in an application of Catholic and imperial values from outside, so to say—resulting in mere overload of meaning. Taking over does not embody human expectations, therefore it cannot generate transfigurations. Here, adequate expression would require that the reader feel that *Voyage aspires* (“from inside”) *to its own inscription in the grandeur of The Lusiads’ political project.*

However, this does *not* happen in *The Lusiads*. Foundation's heavy and affected style is not a “matter of taste”: nobody would think of accusing Camões of “bad taste”! It is not required by the epic code, either. The reinforcement of semantic values, up to the triumphalist and tautological proclamation of Portugal's right to conquest, appears to the reader as bare defective expression. *Conciliation does not manage to find its form*, the need for expression and the need for form do not co-adapt, ideology does not become poetry. Some examples: the “singing” of the Nymph (X.68), or the panegyric of Nun'Alvares, the great captain, by Paulo da Gama (VIII.32). Camões the narrator does not express himself more gracefully (for instance, VII.25) and Camões the author is as little at ease:

To you, heirs of Lusus, I have this to say:
Your share of the earth is a small one,
And small, too, your portion of Christ's
Fold, shepherded from Heaven;
You, whom no forms of danger
Prevented from conquering the infidel,

Nor greed, nor reluctance in sacrifice
 To the Holy mother of God in paradise.
 (VII. 2)

The problems of expression met by Camões could not find a solution. They relate to the opposition between paganism and Catholicism, between poetry and power. To put it in a nutshell.⁸ Mythology is the symbolical framework of Voyage. Jove and Venus protect the Portuguese of whom Bacchus is the enemy. Intrigues in Olympus run parallel to action, all along Gama's journey. But Portugal has celebrated a covenant with the Christian God, not with Jove. How to reconcile polytheism with monotheism? We know Camões's answer. Paganism would only be a poetical operator. The Nymph explains that paganism is a collection of *mere fables / Dreamed by mankind in his blindness. / We serve only to fashion delightful / Verses...* (X.82).

However, this way out is far from satisfactory. If the goal of Voyage is to restore Portugal to his divine mission, and if Voyage is under the aegis of Olympus, then the Portuguese God requires pagan gods, poetically as much as politically. Therefore, he requires also Bacchus, Portugal's fierce opponent. Furthermore, Bacchus is definitely legitimized insofar as the Moor does not submit to the Portuguese. Vasco does all he can to form an alliance with the Samorin (VII.60 and 62) but the Samorin refuses—owing to the maneuvering of Bacchus. This amounts to acknowledging that the Moor's point of view does not yield to the Portuguese's. *As a consequence, Bacchus ceases to be a fiction.* He cannot be a bare stylistic device because the Moor, not entitled to exist *de iure*, resists *de facto*. And, through Bacchus, it is the whole pagan pantheon that *The Lusíads* rehabilitates.

Notes

¹ "O efeito-Lusiadas," in Fernando Gil and Helder Macedo, *Viagens do Olhar*, Porto, Campo das Letras, 1998, pp. 13-75. My analysis had the purpose of testing a philosophical hypothesis on self-evidence, developed in *Traité de l'évidence*, Grenoble, 1993. Concepts such as ostension, the progressive, the indicative, etc. are categories of self-evidence as I understand it. In the same volume: "Viagens do olhar: os mares dos *Lusiadas*," pp. 77-120.

² Unlike Professor Subramanyan, who quotes and extensively comments on some lines of my study without caring to mention either its title (the reader is allowed to think it was never published), or *Viagens do Olhar*, I have the pleasure of indicating the references of his article: "Somos el mundo: el discurso de la autarcía en la tierra de los descubrimientos," in *istor, Revista de História Internacional* (México), Ano III n° 8, Primavera 2002. My study is analysed on pp. 174-175.

³ And, of course, this opposition is not *a priori* and universal; I don't venture to go beyond *The Lusiads*. (This is an answer to a question put by Professor Helen Vendler.)

⁴ With some slight alterations, I follow Professor Landeg White's translation: *The Lusiads*, New York and London, Oxford UP, 1999.

⁵ For further details, see "O efeito-*Lusiadas*," § 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*, §§ 12-13.

⁷ H. Macedo, "A poética da verdade d'Os *Lusiadas*," in *Viagens do Olhar*, 138-139.

⁸ See "O efeito-*Lusiadas*," §§ 20-25.

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