Os lusíadas luís de camões pdf

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Os Lusíadas, as The Lusiads is called in the original Portuguese, is the national poem of Portugal, and any reader with an interest in Portuguese history and culture will benefit from taking up this book.As the author of the country’s national epic, Camões (1524-80) is a hero throughout Portugal. A brave and steadfast soldier, he lost an eye in battle with the Moors, during an engagement in what is now Morocco in 1550. His eventful life took him to many outposts of Portugal’s then-growing trade empire – from Goa in India to Macau in China – and to combat in Egypt and shipwreck in Cambodia as well; and therefore, when he wrote in The Lusiads about the rigours of travel and the perils of war, he knew whereof he wrote.The historical backdrop for the action of The Lusiads is Vasco da Gama’s voyage around southern Africa’s Cape of Good Hope to India, and back, between 1497-99. When da Gama made his voyage successfully, it meant that seaborne trade between Europe and Asia no longer had to pass through the Muslim kingdoms of the Middle East, paying tributes and taxes to Muslim rulers all the way along. This maritime “end run” around the Middle East, while it promised rich profits to Portuguese merchants and healthy revenues for the Portuguese crown, was not likely to encourage warm feelings among the Muslim powers who stood to lose all that revenue; and perhaps such factors work with feelings of religious rivalry to explain why Christian-Muslim conflict is such an important theme of The Lusiads.What may surprise a first-time reader of The Lusiads most is the way in which mythological deities of classical Rome play an important role in the epic. In composing his poem, Camões drew upon classical models, with particular emphasis on Virgil’s Aeneid; and just as the Roman love goddess Venus protects her son Aeneas in Virgil’s poem, so Venus works to protect da Gama and his crew in Camões’ work. Meanwhile, the wine-god Bacchus emerges as an antagonist, determined to foil da Gama’s plans to lead Portugal to world-power status. When da Gama’s crew, having successfully rounded the Cape of Good Hope, arrives in Mozambique and begins establishing trade relations with the people there, Bacchus is enraged:“Fate has decreed that these Portuguese shall win mighty victories over the peoples of India. Am I, the son of Jupiter, and in myself so nobly endowed, to tolerate that another shall be exalted by destiny and my own name eclipsed? Once before, the gods willed that one Alexander should wield power in those regions and by might of arms reduce them to his yoke. But it is not sufferable that this handful of men should be gifted with such skill and daring that alike Alexander and Trajan and I should have to give way to the name of Portugal.” (p. 50)And with that, Bacchus performs a Loki-like transformation and, disguised as an ordinary Mozambican, begins stirring up the Mozambican people against the Portuguese! Fortunately (from the Portuguese point of view), da Gama and his men are more than able to defend themselves from this treacherous attack. Eventually, da Gama’s fleet arrives at Malindi, on the coast of modern Kenya, and the king there receives them hospitably and asks them to tell their story. This provides the opportunity for an extended flashback like the one through which Odysseus in the Odyssey relays the tale of his adventures at the court of King Alcinous of Phaeacia. In this case, however, what da Gama is relating is the Portuguese history of that time – always from a patriotically Portuguese point of view, as when he tells of the success of King João I in maintaining Portugal’s independence from Castile in the Battle of Aljubarrota in 1385. It all sounds very classical when da Gama, courtesy of Camões, tells the king of Malindi that “João for his part was nothing daunted, his strength welling up from his heart as Samson’s from his hair” (p. 104), as he prepares to lead his outnumbered Portuguese forces into battle. Spoiler alert: the Portuguese win the Battle of Aljubarrota, and “The king of Castile recognized his defeat, abandoned his purpose, and left the field to the victor, content not to be leaving behind his life as well” (p. 110).The king of Malindi, impressed by all that he has heard regarding Portuguese courage and valour, decides to help the Portuguese, offering da Gama and his men the aid of his best navigator. But Bacchus is still determined to wreck da Gama’s mission, and enlists the aid of the sea-god Neptune in stirring up the waves against the Portuguese voyagers. Any reader of the Odyssey, remembering Poseidon’s implacable anger against the homeward-bound Odysseus, will not be surprised to find that Neptune’s rage against the Portuguese is comparably easy to unleash – providing a convenient explanation for the stormy seas that da Gama and his mariners often faced on their historic voyage. The never-quite-fully-resolved tensions between classical mythology and Roman Catholic Christianity as literary and philosophical underpinnings of The Lusiads are on full display in the prayer that da Gama offers up when Neptune’s sea storm has reached its highest fury:“Divine Providence,” he implored, “fount of mercy, Lord of earth and sea and sky, who didst lead thy chosen people across the Red Sea to safety, didst deliver St. Paul from the perils of wave and quicksand, and didst preserve Noah and his sons from the flood when no one else was saved: if we have already come safely through other fearsome dangers, having known our own Scylla and Charybdis, our own shoals and quicksands, our own ill-famed Acroceraunian rocks, why after so many travails dost thou now forsake us, if this our undertaking offend thee not, to whose glory alone it is directed?” (p. 156)Fortunately for da Gama, as he invokes the aid of the Christian God, the Roman goddess of love is already hastening to his assistance. Venus’ idea for rescuing the Portuguese from the wrath of the wind gods is a simple one: she sends out beautiful nymphs, assigning each one to visit the wind god who is enamoured of her, and the lovestruck wind gods are only too happy to moderate the force of their storm winds. In The Lusiads – as, no doubt, in the royal court of 16th-century Portugal – it clearly helps to have friends in high places.Spoiler alert: Da Gama’s Portuguese fleet makes it safely home. And in another jarringly classical moment, Venus decides that the homeward-bound Portuguese mariners deserve a reward proportional to their sufferings, and thereforedecided to prepare for them, there in mid-ocean, a magic island beauteous with flowers and verdure….There she would have the loveliest of the ocean nymphs await the brave fellows, to enchant their eyes and vanquish their hearts with their singing and dancing; for she was proposing to work secretly on the nymphs’ affections and predispose each to a readier will to please whichever of the Portuguese should catch her fancy. (p. 203)Camões subsequently describes, in rich and sensual language, the passionate love that drew the sailors and the nymphs together. These passages from The Lusiads might not have won the approval of some of Portugal’s Catholic hierarchy, but the lush romantic-fantasy element of it all no doubt appealed to many other readers.Some features of The Lusiads may sometimes make for uneasy reading. Camões’ portrayal of most of the Muslim characters in the book, for example, made me think of the unfavourable way in which some of the tales of the 1001 Nights portray Byzantine Christians. Most of the Muslim characters in The Lusiads are depicted as deceitful and treacherous – with the notable exception of one decent and honourable Muslim who helps da Gama and his crew, and ends up converting to Christianity! In short, this book is not going to win an Interfaith Award for Ecumenical Understanding anytime soon.Yet The Lusiads provides a valuable insight into the Portuguese mind at a time when that small Iberian nation was enjoying what is still known in Portugal as a idade de ouro, the Golden Age. I read Camões’ work on a trip to Portugal; and from Braga to Figueira da Foz to Coimbra to Sintra, I saw images of a soldier in armour, with one eye missing - unmistakably, Camões, still holding a place of honour among the Portuguese people. Similarly, at the harbour of Lisbon, I saw the massive Padrão dos Descobrimentos, the Monument to the Discoveries. Looking out upon the Tagus River, Prince Henry the Navigator stands at the prow of the ship-shaped monument, holding a ship model that symbolizes his lifelong commitment to maritime exploration; behind him, on the "deck" of the monument, under billowing sails, stand various Portuguese explorers - including Camões. To understand the spirit of exploration that, for a time, made Portugal a formidable world power – a spirit that many people of modern Portugal still take great pride in – one would do well to read The Lusiads. ...more

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