
Introduction

Camões without End

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This new Camões-themed volume of *Convergência Lusíada* relates to some words I read on June 22, 2026, in the Real Gabinete Português de Leitura (Royal Portuguese Reading Room):

As we begin this international colloquium, “Camões without End”, it cannot be overstated how inextricably linked this institution has been to Luís de Camões since its very inception.

On June 10, 1880, just as the entire Portuguese-speaking world was paying tribute to the poet on the third centenary of his death, the cornerstone of this building was laid in a ceremony presided over by Emperor Pedro II himself as part of the great celebrations that then took over the city of Rio de Janeiro.

To commemorate the date, the Gabinete organised other initiatives, including the minting of a medal and the publication of a handsome new edition of *Os Lusíadas* (The Lusiads) – a volume which earned widespread recognition for its graphic and editorial quality and is now a bibliophilic rarity.

Alongside the title page of this edition is a portrait of Camões by Columbano Bordalo Pinheiro – the image we have chosen as the emblem for this event. According to records, the portrait was commissioned by the Gabinete. And tradition holds that Columbano’s model was a friend of his, João de Deus, a poet and

educator who, in 1880, was fifty years old – just five or six years younger than Camões was when he died.

Ramalho Ortigão, who wrote the volume's lengthy prologue, judged the portrait to be magnificent, observing – in words attributed to him – that “its style is reminiscent of a beautiful Renaissance etching, and the figure's intense expression reveals most faithfully the historical physiognomy of the character”. In fact, this is an image that breaks with a long iconographic tradition. Instead of the heroic Camões described by Cesário Verde in his famous *O Sentimento dum Ocidental* (“The Feeling of a Westerner”) as “bronzed, monumental, with warlike proportions”, we see a man marked by time, yet not defeated by it.

In this engraving the poet appears frail and elderly with no laurels, no quill, and no sword. Yet he clutches a bundle of papers with a steady hand. And it is precisely this steadiness that speaks to us. More than the physical figure, more than a life subject to the limits of human existence, what is affirmed here is the permanence of the work. The hand, though aged, continues to hold with vigour the pages that span the centuries.

That is why, when the opportunity arose to extend the celebrations of the fifth centenary of Camões's birth until 2026, this image – so deeply connected to the Real Gabinete – naturally emerged as its emblem. We can see in it what the title of this colloquium seeks to encapsulate: *Camões without End*. Not the illusion of personal eternity, but the continuity of a body of work that lives on, revived with every reading, every generation, and every gaze cast upon its verses.

It was thanks to the sponsorship of the MISSION STRUCTURE FOR THE COMMEMORATIONS OF THE 500TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF LUÍS DE CAMÕES and the unconditional support of its Commissioner General, Professor José Augusto Cardoso Bernardes, Ph.D. – our great friend at the Real Gabinete – that we were able to organise this international gathering. And we brought to Rio de Janeiro some distinguished Portuguese scholars of Camões's work – three of whom, Isabel Almeida, Maria do Céu Fraga, and Vanda Anastácio, are members of the Curatorial Committee of the

Mission Structure – to engage in dialogue with colleagues from Brazil.

Once again breaking the silence of this commemoration on this side of the ocean, over the course of these two days there will be a coming together of different perspectives and disciplines around this one writer, demonstrating once more the endless engagement that his work offers.

To all those present here, and to all those who will join us via YouTube, benefiting from these multiple perspectives on pages that time cannot erase, we extend our sincere thanks.

Thanks also to all those who have contributed with such hard work, generosity, and dedication to shaping these two days of reflection and celebration.

Days that, once again, will surely confirm what Luís de Camões' work continues to awaken in its readers. Because, five centuries after his birth, it is still able to draw us in, unsettle us, bring us together, and move/stir us.

After all, for all those readers who love Camões – and only those who have not read him do not appreciate him – it continues to hold true that life is so short for love so long.

Having confirmed, as predicted, that our guests' contributions to the reading of Camões would be of the highest order, it was only fitting to preserve and disseminate them more widely – which we are doing here and now.

Having transcribed the honorary remarks proffered by Ambassador Isabel Brilhante Pedrosa and broadcast via video, we move on to the much-anticipated diversity of perspectives on the poet who brought us together on 21 and 22 June in the Coat of Arms Room at the Gabinete.

As a fine overture to the proceedings, Ana Paula Tavares, Camões Prize winner in 2025, composes a three-voice cantata, in which her own poetic voice intertwines with those of Camões (“Sobre os rios” [“Upon the rivers”]) and Luandino Vieira (“Livro dos rios” [“Book of rivers”]), weaving connections around landscapes, melancholy, exile, time, memory, and many other concerns that flow through the veins of men

and women, in her beautiful text “Camões, O canto do eterno em terra estranha: A propósito e sobre ‘Os rios que vão’” (“Camões, the song of the eternal on foreign soil: On and about ‘The rivers that flow’”)

Turning to the more essayistic contributions, Camões emerges as an author whose work extends across different times, languages, and cultural contexts, inspiring new forms of reading, appropriation, interpretation, and recreation. The various studies range from the structure and internal tensions of *Os Lusíadas* to its diverse forms of reception, passing by the *Rimas*, dialogue with key authors of modern and contemporary Portuguese literature, theatrical adaptations, and relationships between literature, publishing, censorship, and visual culture.

The collection opens with Helena Buescu’s study “Proposição e Anti-proposição n’*Os Lusíadas*” (“Proposition and Anti-proposition in *Os Lusíadas*”), which focuses on one of the constitutive tensions of the Camões epic: the relationship between the Proposition that opens the poem and its counterpoint, as it were, at the end of Canto VII. By examining the convergence of historical, symbolic, and existential contradictions in the poet’s voice, the study draws attention to the subjectivisation of the epic material and emphasises the simultaneously epic and lyrical nature of *Os Lusíadas*. In this sense, the so-called Anti-proposition allows us to recognise within the poem an authorial voice that not only celebrates but also judges, excludes, and questions the very project of the epic.

The reading of *Os Lusíadas* is followed by a focus on the *Rimas*, in Maria do Céu Fraga’s essay, “As *Rimas* de Camões: novos leitores, novos desafios?” (“Camões’ *Rimas*: New readers, new challenges?”). The study takes as its starting point the enduring presence of Camões’ poetry in society – and particularly in schools – to reflect on what it means to know Camões beyond recognition of his place in the canon and his symbolic value. Reading the poems and accepting the challenges they pose to readers lies at the heart of this proposal, which takes the figure of Dinamene as a prime example of how celebrating, transmitting, and studying a classical poet’s work can be intertwined.

In “A morte de Camões. Acerca de um *topos* da biografia camoniana” [“The Death of Camões: On a *topos* in Camões’s biography”], Vanda Anastácio investigates accounts of the poet’s final days written by his earliest biographers, bringing these into dialogue with an analysis of the many pictorial representations of this theme throughout the nineteenth century, making it a unique case in European iconography.

Camões’ enduring presence in later literature lies at the heart of the studies by Isabel Almeida, Rodrigo Xavier, and Sara Grünhagen, who examine, from distinct perspectives, the ways his work and figure have been revisited by writers both modern and contemporary. In “Pessoa & Camões”, Isabel Almeida examines the relationship established by Fernando Pessoa (under his orthonym) with the work and figure of the epic Camões, tracing the trajectory of Pessoa the critic and the composition of *Mensagem* [Message]. This trajectory, spanning from around 1910 to 1934, allows us to reconsider – beyond the notion of “the anxiety of influence” – the ways in which Pessoa engages with Camões and, simultaneously, contributes to a renewal of his position in Portuguese literature.

Rodrigo Xavier, for his part, turns his attention to the figure of Inês de Castro, in “A Inês sem fim de Jorge de Sena” [“Jorge de Sena’s endless Inês”]. The study is not limited to a particular reading of the myth but highlights the multiple perspectives Jorge de Sena takes on it in his *Estudos de História e de Cultura* [“Studies of History and Culture”]. The analysis foregrounds the interplay of historical and documentary readings with lyrical, tragic, epic, and cosmic dimensions, demonstrating how the figure of Inês emerges, in Sena’s essay, as an inexhaustible object of interpretation and as a myth whose lasting presence stems precisely from its capacity to spawn new readings.

Also looking at a contemporary reinterpretation is Sara Grunhagen, who, in “Que fareis com este livro? Camões em Saramago” [“What will you do with this book? Camões in Saramago”], explores Camões’ presence in the poetry, plays, chronicles, and novels of José Saramago.

Building on a lecture by Jorge Luis Borges on Camões, the study situates the relationship between Saramago and the sixteenth-century poet within a broader network of readings and tributes among writers. The analysis of episodes, figures, and verses from Camões lays bare the intertextual and critical nature of this presence, making it anything but a reverential observance of the canon. Camões is, rather, the object of a re-creative appropriation, through which Saramago reopens questions regarding the reception of *Os Lusíadas*, the Portuguese literary tradition, and his own position vis-à-vis that tradition. Affinities in the chronicle “A cidade” (“The city”) and the play *Que farei com este livro?* (“What shall I do with this book?”) broadens this reflection by putting into perspective the different forms of recognition and authorial inscription within the tradition.

In the following studies, the reception of Camões shifts to the Brazilian context. In “Camões nos palcos brasileiros” (“Camões on Brazilian stages”) Márcio Muniz examines three productions of *Os Lusíadas* staged in São Paulo in 1972 and 2001. Although separated by different political contexts – the first marked by dictatorial rule and the other two by the experience of democracy – the three productions are connected by commemorative events and by the work of the Portuguese Brazilian producer Ruth Escobar. Drawing on scripts and testimonies concerning the adaptations, the study traces the different ways the epic poem was transposed to the stage, taking account of the adaptation processes, the stagings, and the historical and political conditions surrounding the productions.

Also concerning Brazil, but in the late nineteenth century, is Gilberto Araújo’s study, “Leitura e censura de Camões em *O Ateneu* de Raul Pompeia” (“Reading and censorship of Camões in Raul Pompeia’s *O Ateneu*”). The article examines the presence of *Os Lusíadas* in the 1888 novel through the interplay between reading, censorship, material culture, and the reception of the epic. The analysis begins with the censored school edition of *Os Lusíadas* prepared by Abílio César Borges in 1879 and traces the repercussions of these editorial practices in *O Ateneu*. The tension between the

anti-Portuguese sentiment attributed to Raul Pompeia and the centrality of Camões' poem in the novel allows us to understand how the epic is subjected to a process of parodic inversion, shifting from its epic-didactic function to a sphere associated with the pornographic and moral ambiguity.

The last two essays explore other modes of circulation of Camões' work. Thus, Julio Bandeira's study, "Camões, até onde os olhos alcançam: o Triunfo de Maximiliano I e *O Barroco* de Eugenio D'Ors" ["Camões, as far as the eye can see: The triumph of Maximilian I and Eugenio D'Ors' *O Barroco*"], broadens the field of enquiry to encompass the relationships between literature, art history, and visual culture. Bandeira draws a parallel between the non-European worldview present in *Os Lusíadas* and the universalising dimension associated with the Triumphal Procession commissioned by Emperor Maximilian I, and, drawing on Eugenio D'Ors, revives the idea of Portugal and Greece as the cultural cradles of Europe. In this context, the Baroque emerges as a category capable of shedding light on Europe's cultural opening to other regions of the world, including Brazil and the Orient, allowing us to consider Camões' work in relation to a broader history of forms of representation and cultural circulation.

Meanwhile, Paulo Knauss turns his sights to a somewhat overlooked aspect of the poet's pictorial representations in the nineteenth century, prior to the grand celebrations of 1880: the image of Camões shaped by artistic creation associated with the construction of the symbolic order of King João VI's government and reign, in which Camões was largely depicted as a warrior.

In addition to the working sessions, music and poetry featured in the Coat of Arms Room. We owe a debt of gratitude to the Fluminense Federal University's Early Music Ensemble for a program that, under the title "Love Enigma" revolved around Camões' European era, explored various composers, and captivated everyone present with their performances on period instruments. And, during the closing session, ten female voices – the vast majority speakers at the

event – brought to life the poet’s lyrical voice through readings of selected poems.

Also during a break at the colloquium, Isabel Almeida read an entertaining excerpt from the *cordel* pamphlet *Visita de Camões à vila de São Saruê* [“Camões’ visit to the village of São Saruê”], which was also part of the Camões-themed bibliographic exhibition on display throughout June and July in the Gabinete. Under this pretext, we present here, in the “Miscellaneous” section, a reproduction of the pamphlet alongside a news story on the work of two folk artists who, in their own way, have revisited Camões. Thus, under the title “Zé Andrade, Salomão Rovedo e Camões: quando a arte popular recria a memória literária” [“Zé Andrade, Salomão Rovedo, and Camões: When folk art recreates literary memory”], we highlight the presence of our epic poet in this other strand of creative expression.

Taken as a whole, the studies gathered here reveal the vitality of Camões as an object of investigation precisely because his work resists reduction to a single interpretative tradition. Between textual analysis and cultural history, literature and theatre, education and censorship, tradition and recreation, the various contributions trace Camões’ journeys through manifold eras, spaces, and languages. The collection thus seeks not only to revisit a central work of Portuguese literature but also to examine the ways in which each new reading, rendered by interrogating Camões, contributes to redefining the place he occupies in the present.

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