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Utopia and History: Camoes' *Os Lustadas* and Tavares' *Uma Viagem à Índia*

There is definitely a heterogeneous legacy in utopianism, recognized as such by many critics, which makes it hesitate between stability, or even rigidity, on the one hand, and transformation or process, on the other. The invention of symbolic (mostly literary) places that have served as the location of utopia itself, be they More's *Utopia* (1516), Campanella's *The City of the Sun* (1623), or George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), necessarily tends to the former (stability); whereas if utopia is primarily connected to a hoped for (or feared) future, it seems to underscore the latter (transformation), as for instance in the writing of António Vieira or Fernando Pessoa – as well as in the work of the great historian of utopia himself, Ernst Bloch.¹ Fredric Jameson, another central critic of utopianism under its different guises, therefore distinguishes between utopias as a ‘programme’ and an ‘impulse.’² And he correctly underlines the different implications of these. Bloch himself is, I think, definitely more interested in the latter (the impulse) than the former (the programme). In fact, Bloch’s principle of hope, according to which utopia is essentially seen as a connection between the future and the present, an anticipatory form of realism, so to speak, highlights one of the main issues in utopian thought: the fact that it supposes a confrontation between (and therefore an awareness of) what is and what, in Bloch’s superb phrasing, stems from the *not-yet.* The *not-yet*-conscious knowledge, the unconscious and anticipatory

dimension of the future, strives for this very future and upholds the belief that utopia and its principles of a supposedly 'better world' lie somewhere ahead. Therefore, the basic notion that lies at the heart of Bloch's notion of utopia is not stability but process and movement. And it is this impulse that I will try to see at work in two texts from Portuguese literature: Os Lustadas ['The Lusiads'], the epic poem published by Camões in 1572, on the one hand; and Uma Viagem à Índia [A Journey to India], a rewriting of Os Lustadas published by Gonçalo Tavares in 2010.

My main contention in this paper is twofold. On the one hand, I propose to read the last two cantos of Camões' Os Lustadas, the broad episode of 'Ilha dos Amores' ['The Isle of Love'], as yet another figurative invention of an imaginative utopian reality. After all, it is an island (not an isthmus, but the next best thing), the Portuguese voyages of discovery are at the heart of it, and these two aspects are also central, as we know, to More's Utopia.

Mine is not a novel reading of this episode. Let me just recall the Brazilian critic, Leodegário de Azevedo Filho, in his book entitled Camões, O Desconcerto do mundo e a estética da utopia, as well as the great Camonist Vítor Aguiar e Silva, who actually addresses the polemics around whether or not this episode may be read as a utopian discourse. His response is specifically addressed to the historian Martin de Albuquerque who, in

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3 Bloch's impact is immense. See for instance how his work is constantly used by Jameson, op. cit.; or the special issue of Journal of Contemporary Thought entitled Utopias Today! edited by Patricia Vieira and Michael Marder (31. Summer 2010), especially the contributions by Alexandre Franco de Sá, 'From Modern Utopias to Contemporary Uchronia', 37–55; and Ruth Levitas, 'Secularism and Post-Secularism in Roberto Unger and Ernst Bloch: Towards an Utopian Ontology', 151–170. See also Levitas, The Concept of Utopia (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1990).


5 Gonçalo Tavares, Viagem à Índia (Lisbon: Ed. Caminho, 2010).


his book *A Expressão do poder em Luis de Camões*, refuses to consider Ilha dos Amores as part of a utopian project, mainly because he limits the utopian model to More's work, and he finds no indication of its direct influence on Camões. However, as Aguiar e Silva points out, and to go back to Jameson's terms, if you define utopia only as a programme, and more specifically More’s programme, it is obvious that few works, if any, will respond to such a limited model. Utopia as Jameson's impulse will not be recognized; and as far as *Os Lustadas* are concerned, the Ilha dos Amores will not fit with the model of an ideal and socially organized city that regulates social behaviour politically, morally, and sexually. But this is precisely why Ernst Bloch's reflection is decisive here: because if we consider the utopian impulse as such, we will have to recognize that 'Ilha dos Amores' offers a whole set of characteristics to be considered. Aguiar e Silva stresses, amongst others, the allegorical and symbolic meanings of the episode and of the imagined island — not only a *locus amoenus*, but what he terms the 'jubilant *copulatio*’ of men and deities, which will generate, in Venus' own words, a new kind of humanity (IX, 42). Aguiar e Silva correctly interprets this joyous sexual encounter as the announcement of the beginning of a new cycle in the history of men, and as constituting a counterpoint to a consciousness of the dissolution and corruption of the actual world order. Another central characteristic underlined by Aguiar e Silva is the fact that Bloch's 'anticipatory illumination' is connected, in 'Ilha dos Amores', to the hope for desire, fecundity, and nature, and therefore to 'the splendidly eroticized landscape of the island'.

So, the atmosphere of both sexual and intellectual fulfilment, of knowledge (the 'máquina do mundo', and of material abundance, found

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10 Ibidem.
11 Ibidem, 152.
in the island, converges with the possibility of reading this episode of Os Lustiadas as the climax of the poem, the consecration of the heroes, and the construction of a utopia directed towards the future and the principle of hope that constitutes it. Ilha dos Amores is definitely a figurative invention of the not-yet-conscious that plays such a central role in Bloch's thought on utopia.

However, there are at least two other elements that I should like to add to this description, and which combine to give us a mixed interpretation of the meaning of 'Ilha dos Amores'. On the one hand, the island is not only a place that the navigators reach; it is also a place from which they return home. In More's Utopia, Raphael also comes back. But of course he is not an inhabitant of Utopia, and those who are stay home, for that is where they already live. In Os Lustiadas, the combination of the 'utopian function' (to again use Bloch's terms) with the classical legacy of the nostos narrative, which plays such an important role in the epic tradition, gives this episode of Os Lustiadas a distinct flavour: the navigators savour their own version of utopia and of perfection - but they do return from it to reality and to imperfection, as Eça de Queirós' Ulysses will also do, in his short-story 'Perfection'. So, my interest is also engaged by the mixed nature of Camões' episode, and the meaning of a return home that makes us reconsider the utopian reading of 'Ilha dos Amores'. In my opinion, the nostos narrative underscores the fact that 'Ilha dos Amores' is definitely more a utopia-as-impulse than a utopia-as-programme. It does not delineate a programme for the future, or a viable programme, as a totality, for any structured society. However, the impulse is there, even when it does not assume 'the combination of closure and system' that Jameson assigns to the programme of utopia itself - or, for that matter, that Louis Marin recognised as the 'totalité et harmonie de la description utopique'

12 Jameson, 'Varieties of the Utopian', Archaeologies of the Future. The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fiction, 5.
and harmony of the utopian description]," in his seminal book of 1973. Let me just add these revealing words of Helder Macedo:"

The climax of the poem is [...] not Vasco da Gama's successful arrival in India after the voyage that provides its historical framework, but the discovery, on the voyage home, of an Island of Love, metaphor for a new Golden Age where all opposites could be reconciled in historical time."16

The second element I would like to emphasize is this: not only do the Portuguese navigators come back home, but they also bring the nymphs back with them: 'Levam a companhia desejada/ Das Ninhas, que hão-de ter eternamente./ Por mais tempo que o Sol o Mundo aquecere.'" In the light of these lines, I think we must reinterpret the utopian dimension of Ilha dos Amores: its impulse is directed towards the future ('hão-de ter eternamente'), and the full realization of utopia will necessarily entail a new generation of men, as we have seen, as well as a new-founded land, where the heroes will live: not Ilha dos Amores, but Portugal itself. From this point of view, the nostos is a fundamental necessity in this plot for the future: Ilha dos Amores falls short of a full-fledged utopia, so that Portugal may in the future become one, once that new humanity is born. Is this already a hint of the imagining of the Fifth Empire, which would play such a central role in the imagination of Vieira and those coming after him? I would not venture to say. But I certainly think that Camões is imagining Portugal, although a different Portugal from the corrupt country he criticizes so harshly, for instance in Canto X. I am therefore also convinced that he is imagining the future, including in it the 'principle of hope' that despair of the present so often brings.

I mentioned in the beginning that my argument is twofold, and that the function of Ilha dos Amores, in Os Lustadas, was only a part of my

14 Ibidem, 79.
16 Ibidem, 11.
17 Luís de Camões, Os Lustadas, X, 143.
reflection in the context of an interpretation of utopia. The second part of my argument deals with Gonçalo Tavares’s book entitled *Uma Viagem à Índia*, published in 2010. It is obviously a rewriting of *Os Lusíadas*, and a deeply interesting one. Let me describe it in some detail, so that the reader is aware of its main characteristics. The reader may have noticed that I avoided a generic classification, and that I alluded to this work only as a ‘book’. The reason is that, as I hope to make clear, the generic classification is itself contradictory. The book reads like an epic. More specifically, it reads like a rewriting of Camões’ epic, as we shall see. But it is not an epic. Eduardo Lourenço¹⁸ alludes to it as ‘a simultaneously luminous, parodic and burlesque counter-epic.’¹⁹ But its closeness to *Os Lusíadas*, in my view, implies that it is more than ‘just’ a counter-epic. In a certain sense, it is the very notion of *aggiornamento* that is here at stake: to investigate under what conditions one is able to write something that responds to the epic in the early twenty-first century. This response or rewrite is therefore also a deep homage, not just a counter-reading of the genre of the epic, and of the difficult and troubled reception of this in modernity.

There are of course major links that continuously wrest *Os Lusíadas* away from the sixteenth century, when it was written and published, and which repeatedly project it into its own future. To name just a few of these, let me recall Pde. António Vieira, and his *História do Futuro* [History of the Future]; Almeida Garrett, most centrally in his narrative poem *Camões*, as well as in his drama *Frei Luis de Sousa*; Cesário Verde and his *opus magnum* ‘O Sentimento dum Ocidental’; Guerra Junqueiro and the influential ‘Pátria’; Teixeira de Pascoaes; Fernando Pessoa and *Mensagem*; the heteronym Álvaro de Campos, especially his ‘Ode Triunfal’; and more recently (1988), António Lobo Antunes, with his novel *As Naus* (translated into English as *The Return of the Caravels*).²⁰ Because of its central role in contemporary literature, Lobo Antunes’ novel merits a special mention,

¹⁹ Ibidem, 15.
as it weaves the narrative of the ‘retornados’ from the ex-colonies around a major figure, ‘a man called Luís’, who writes his epic under our very eyes, and who lacks, as Camões did, one eye. The fact that his name, Camões, is never even pronounced makes it all the more important to recognize that the major character of this novel is of course an impoverished and abandoned Camões, who comes back from Africa with the coffin of his father (still another indirect allusion to Virgil’s Aeneas and Anchises). If we recall that Lobo Antunes several times insisted that it should have been this man, Camões himself, who became the narrator of the twentieth-century novel, we understand that this is a deliberate link to indicate the context in which Tavares’s volume should be read. In As Naus, the allusions to Os Lusíadas are a constant topic. But let me refer only to one of the allusions to ‘Ilha dos Amores’, in the last chapter of the novel, when the ‘máquina do mundo’ is explicitly recalled by ‘the man called Luís’: ‘Ever since [the poet] had returned from Africa, even the flow of time had seemed absurd to him. He still hadn’t got used to the slow quince-jelly summer sunsets, the lack of grass with its avid insect rustle, and he would move about the city as if on a planet created by the mechanics of imagination [...]’. So, in this novel it is the poet himself performing what traditionally would be a nostos, returning home for a ‘better world’. But, of course, in the universe of the counter-epic, which is Lobo Antunes’s postcolonial universe, there is no nostos anymore, and coming back is always an alienating experience.

If I emphasize the novel by Lobo Antunes, it is because I find that our contemporary literature is, paradoxically, becoming increasingly entangled with Camões’ epic poem. And of course the reading of As Naus must have been an important step for Tavares’ own endeavour.

However, Uma Viagem à Índia has a more complex genealogy and tradition, and is not aptly described only in terms of what we have seen until now. On the one hand, the author’s connection to Os Lusíadas must be described in its full extent. On the other hand, and as we shall see, this is not a ‘tête à tête’ conversation between Tavares and Camões, a dialogue between the strong poet and his epigone, as Harold Bloom would put

24 Ibidem, 203.
it. On the contrary, it is a multiple conversation, and the dialogue with Camões is mediated by a number of other texts and voices that must also be recognized and adequately described.

Let me begin with Os Lustadas. *Uma Viagem à Índia* keeps the formal epic structure of the cantos but, more than that, refers specifically to the Portuguese epic by maintaining the same number of cantos (ten) as well as, in each canto, the exact same number of stanzas that structure Camões' poem. However, the *ottava rima* is abandoned: each stanza oscillates between five and eleven lines, with a strong preference for seven or nine (perhaps this may be described by saying that the octave is clearly not a preference); the line isomorphism, that is the use of the heroic decasyllable, is also abandoned, as is rhyme. Besides the epic structure, however, the internal thematic structure of *Os Lustadas* is also easily recognizable in this narration of a contemporary trip to India. Some of the main episodes that we are used to recognizing, such as, for instance, the treasuries by Baco, 'Velho do Restelo' or precisely, 'Ilha dos Amores' appear under different guises in Tavares's novel, and are kept in the main storyline of the poem. 'Ilha dos Amores', which in Camões' epic begins in Canto IX, 52, and goes up to X, 143, almost the end of the poem, is recognizable in Tavares's book in exactly the same stanzas: it is like a kind of invitation to read this long episode, and its main events (the sexual reward of the navigators, the banquet, and the 'máquina do mundo', with its prophecies) as a very close rewriting of the events in the original poem. The twenty-first century is therefore read according to a sixteenth-century model -- and this, which underlines the analogous points of connection, also enhances the profound dissimilarities that bring the two poems together.

In terms of non-national legacy, however, *Viagem* adds other interesting points to this picture. The protagonist of the voyage, the one who fulfills the role of Vasco da Gama in *Os Lustadas*, is a character named Bloom. This in itself creates a kind of internal rhyme with some other of Tavares's novels, which group themselves in series such as 'The Neighbourhood', with novels such as *Monsieur Valéry, Monsieur Brecht*, or *Monsieur Calvino*). But Bloom is a very special kind of foreigner, for he is also the protagonist of James Joyce *Ulysses*, a novel published in 1922 that tries to respond to Homer's *Odyssey* much in the same way as Tavares's book does to *Os Lustadas*. So if
Viagem rewrites Camões's poem, it does so through the mediation of Joyce and of Homer himself, a model that Camões also used in the context of his own poem.

All of these epic poems (let us refer to Ulysses and Viagem as such, even if we have to be aware of several grains of salt to do it) have common elements: the travel and the roaming; the struggle with the nostos topic; the recognition of different geographical, symbolic, and even allegorical notions of travel; a protagonist who is part of his community and who interrogates his own role, and capacity, as such; a revisitation of memory through a rewriting that is also, at least in the case of Camões, Joyce, and Tavares, a reinterpretation and therefore transformation of different 'national' literatures, as well as of the concept of national literature itself.

So, my main point of interest, if we take all this into consideration, is the following: what happens to the possibility of utopia that Os Lustadas contained in 'Ilha dos Amores'? How does that episode translate into this modern (counter?) epic by Tavares? Does Uma Viagem à Índia still hold to that particular striving for the future that, in any case, the utopian function and impulse aim at?

Let us take a closer look at the episode. Its structure in Os Lustadas is well-known. The navigators arrive on an island whose idyllic description is coupled with obvious erotic details, soon to be embodied in the presence of the nympha, who immediately enter into an erotic game of desire and sexual pursuit with the navigators. The first part (IX, 52–87) of the episode is therefore a materially charged description of the sexual encounter. It is followed by an allegorical interpretation of the episode (IX, 88–95), in which the poet speaks of its meaning as the 'delightful honours' that are the root of true immortality. Canto X opens with the banquet offered by the nymph Thetys to Gama and the navigators, in the first part of which the fame of the heroes is prophesied and described at length, only to be interrupted by Thetys taking Gama to see the 'world machine' [máquina do mundo]. The careful description of this, as well as a detailed attention to its geo-symbolic meaning, lead to a renewed interpretation of the planet itself. Finally, the episode ends (X, 143) with the navigators embarking on their return journey to Lisbon. And the poem ends with a last invocation to Calliope, the poet's muse, and a last exhortation to the king, Dom Sebastião,
which contains the seeds of joy and hope (X, 147–148), of justice (X, 151), and of experience (X, 153), all to be sung by the poet himself and therefore be made part of immortality (X, 154–156). Let me emphasize again how the future is made implicit in this long episode of the poem: on the one hand, because the sexual encounter between the nymphs and the men will give rise to a new humanity, which will go beyond those men who have already gained, by their deeds, the status of heroes; on the other hand, because this new generation lies ahead in a historical time and place: Portugal.

But there is still another sense in which the future is implied here: the meaning of immortality rests not only on the deeds that have been done, but on the existence of a poet, and on the poem he is just completing. Therefore, we may say that the ‘principle of hope’ implied by Ilha dos Amores is only to be totally fulfilled when the poet’s work is recognized as that special song that is able to endure through time and outlast it, by actually transforming itself into the course of future history. If we take into account this proposition, as I would contend we must, then the utopian impulse we may find governing the two last cantos of the poem ultimately rests upon the capacity of the poem to historically transcend history, by becoming a kind of utopian site of the not-yet-conscious, as Bloch would say.

Let us now look at Uma Viagem à India, and try to compare it with Os Lusiadas. The main episodes we have found in Camões’ epic are also to be recognized in Tavares’ book. Two men, Bloom and Anish, return from India, and meet up in Paris with Jean M. As soon as they land, they arrange a meeting with three prostitutes, and go with them to a wood where there is a house. ‘E cis que o avião aterra, finalmente (...), Jean M, Bloom e Anish cumprimentam-se. As mulheres são apresentadas brevemente; Jean M/ pisca o olho a Bloom; dois táxis estão já à espera./ e o grupo segue de imediato para os arredores de Paris,/ onde uma casa alugada será o espaço da festa/ merecida’ (IX, 51). This wood, which we may compare to the traditionally sexually charged Bois de Boulogne in Paris, is described with several details: a small hill, a small lake (that will become important in the subsequent development of the episode). Different kinds of trees (‘árvores de fruto’, ‘laranjeiras’, ‘loureiros’, ‘pinheiros’, ‘áamos’, IX, 56–57), different kinds of fruits and berries (laranjas, cerejas vermelhas, amoras, ...) and different flowers (o lírio, a rosa, as violetas) grow in this wood, which on the
one hand alludes to the idyllic description of ‘Ilha dos Amores’, while, at the same time, introducing a dark and secretive element that brings to the fore another important related text: Dante’s *La Divina Commedia*, and its *selva oscura*. This is, indeed, *a selva oscura*: ‘(Mas o espaço só estará completo com um morto ou,/ lá em cima, com uma ave.)’ (IX, 62). This is also to say that the idyllic component that comes from Camões is intertwined by Tavares with the elegiac component from which Dante’s work also stems: death is the counterpart of life itself. *Mara amor*.

This is a particularly important idea for a full understanding of what happens in *Viagem*. Bloom has gone to India, passing through different places, and is now coming back. But his story also includes, in the past, the assassination of his father, which brings into the picture still another connection, this time to myth and tragedy itself and, of course, to Oedipus. This travel to India might be a kind of expiation and redemption, similar to the travel that the blind Oedipus undertook with his daughter Antigone, before coming to his place of birth (and death), Colonus. But is it? May one experience, in the twenty-first century, true expiation? And true redemption? The poem itself explicitly alludes to the twenty-first century (IX, 65), and I do think this is an important clue to what happens in the poem, especially in its two last cantos: the story is a contemporary one, and history plays an important role in this inquiry into how utopia is or is not able to survive in the present day.

A fundamental part of the inquiry is to understand the role of Bloom himself, as well as that of his companions. We have seen that da Gama and the Portuguese navigators had conferred on them, in *Os Lusiadas*, the status of heroes, and it was as such that they were received and rewarded by the nymphs: they themselves were no longer ‘only’ men. Instead, their own honour and glory made them worthy of coupling with the nymphs. However, in *Viagem*, Bloom is definitely not a hero, even if a lot has happened to him, during his travels. Here is how Tavares describes him, in the same stanzas (IX, 88–89) where, in Camões, the allegorical sense of ‘Ilha dos Amores’ is unveiled:

No entanto, esse homem que já reflectiu sobre
Todas as coisas, Bloom;
Esse homem que já anou e sofreu,
Que já viu morrer, que já matou;
Esse homem que pensava virar a existência
De cabeça para baixo, pérti-la em dois como a um caco,
É esse mesmo homem que agora acaricia as nádegas mais ou menos firmes
De uma mulher de quem nem conhece o nome,
Quem é Bloom? Ninguém sabe (muito menos ele: está demasiado perto.)

É um organismo que tem tudo em potência.
Pode ser santo, ou vender anjos roubados
À igreja de um padre que salva.
Os homens têm fome, e quando
Têm medo fogem e nessa fuga pisam o
Chão ou outros animais. O amor existe,
Mas não num ser vivo que se move.
O inesperado insinua-se no que parece definitivo
E ninguém se conhece antes de morrer. (X 88–89)

This description would fit some of the reasoning not of Os Lusiadas,
but of Peregrinação, by Fernão Mendes Pinto: men who are not heroes
led by honour, glory, and therefore fame and immortality; instead, men
who conduct themselves by the rules of tranquility vita, that same melancholy
that will grow steadily throughout the episode, to culminate in its
ending:

Não procurou proezas extraordinárias,
Porque viveu o suficiente para perceber
As várias epopeias que existem
Num só dia de Inverno onde o céu
E o frio empurraram levemente o homem para a janela.
A imobilidade como epopeia infima,
Eis o que descobriu já depois de estar cansado.

Não há assim tanto mundo, pensa agora Bloom.
Os órgãos individuais estão organizados e são firmes:
Terramotos universais podem não interferir
Na mais leve sensação de um homem.
O universo e eu
Não nos cruzamos (X, 100–101)
The melancholy pathos that thickens in the last canto of this poem must not blind us to the fact that melancholy is also a crucial counterpoint of heroism and immortality, in Os Lusíadas. In fact, it is part of my contention that stanzas such as the last ones quoted are a direct rewriting of Camões’ reflections in several cantos of his epic, and are most immediately found in Canto X, in stanzas 8–9, or later in stanza 145. The poet loses his voice and the joy of his writing; and summer is rapidly changing into autumn, as heat gives way to cold:

[...] Aqui, minha Calíope, te invoco
Neste trabalho extremo, por que em pego
Me tornes do que escrivo, e em vão pretendendo,
O gosto de escrever, que vou perdendo.

Vão os anos decendo, e já do Estío
Há pouco que passar até o Outono;
A Fortuna me faz o engenho frio,
Do qual já não me jacto, nem me abono;
Os desgostos me vão levando ao rio
Do negro esquecimento e eterno sono.
Mas tu me dá que cumpra, ó grão Rainha
Das Musas, co que quero à nação minha. (X, 8–9)

Nevertheless, while in Camões the principle of hope limits, or at least combines with, the dark side of melancholic mannerism, as, among others, Vitor Aguiar e Silva and Helder Macedo have highlighted, creating a contradictory atmosphere that is what characterizes Os Lusíadas as such, in Tavares nothing seems able to rescue joy and belief from the tedium of the past (and the lost childhood). In this last canto, Bloom is gradually invaded by an incapacity to react, and he seems frozen by his inability to live either in the past or in the future:

[...] Estou entre o solo e o céu, em sítio
Intermédio, pousado sobre nada, em caminho
Indeciso. (O pior sítio para estar vivo
É entre aquilo que um dia nos exige
E aquilo que o eterno nos promete. No meio, cis o sítio pior. (X, 104)
In a metaphoric nel mezzo del camin [halfway point on the journey], Bloom is caught by the impossibility of acting either as a man or as a god (heaven); he cannot compare to Camões’ heroes, and therefore the allegorical meaning we have seen attributed to ‘Ilha dos Amores,’ in Os Lusiadas, is impossible to replicate. There is also no utopia in the future, after all, because the new humanity that Os Lusiadas had conceived of has not come into being. Bloom is one of the impossible heroes of the twenty-first century, imprisoned in that ‘Melancolia contemporânea’ [contemporary melancholy] that constitutes the postface of Tavares’ poem. That his last deed is the assassination (an inexplicable assassination, because only a form of tedium) of the prostitute he was with, only comes as a confirmation of the fact that ‘O que se faz quando nada se sente é brutal’ (X, 134). Paradoxically, it is at this moment that the poem affirms his odd status as hero: ‘[...] foi Bloom, foi o herói Bloom/ quem matou a mulher/ que entrou já morta no lago com o/ bolso composto com várias notas altas’ (X, 133). If in Os Lusiadas the navigators not only copulate with the nymphs, but bring them home, so as to breed a new kind of humanity, in Viagem the rewriting makes it clear that only a burlesque version of the episode remains viable in a world where men are mere minor parodies of an ideal. So, utopia is not recreated in the wood and its house; Ilha dos Amores exists only in its petty version of men who pay women for sex, and the end of its episode is not future life, but present death: ‘No coração de Bloom uma certeza, um refrão: já não sou um impulsovo que mata, sou um assassino.’ (X, 136).

The rest of Tavares’ poem, however, makes it quite clear that this new kind of heroism, which also rests upon what Hannah Arendt recognized as ‘the banality of evil’ in modernity itself, comes to Bloom because he has killed not for an impulse, but for true assassination: ‘Nós homens que matam existe um certo orgulho/ temporário muito próximo da sensação de imortalidade/ que manuais religiosos descrevem com pormenor.’ (X, 139); ‘[...] Ao lado de um assassino qualquer homem/ sente medo e orgulho.’ (X, 142). So, pride, immortality, and fear mingle in an uncanny hero who becomes such when he has affirmed his extraordinary status. No longer one of Camões’ heroes; no longer Lucifer and his exceptional revolt; this new kind of hero relies on the trivial status of modern evil itself.
The main difference in this respect, then, between Os Lusiadas and Uma Viagem à Índia is also twofold: it has become impossible to replicate the two major utopian horizons included in 'Ilha dos Amores' – the heroic horizon and the geo-symbolic one. And it is also impossible to perform the nostos that we have found in Lusiadas and which, in my opinion, is at the heart of the utopian impulse of the episode discussed. In Viagem, Bloom does come back to Portugal – by train. He does arrive. But we will never know whether or not he jumped from the bridge.