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Couto the Classicist - Ancient Literary Sources in *O Soldado Prático*

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Abstract

The second version of Diogo do Couto's *O Soldado Prático* is one of the best-known works of Portuguese prose from the late 16th century. Yet one of the most distinctive aspects of the text—its many references to memorable sayings and deeds from Greco-Roman antiquity—has received little detailed scholarly study. Despite considerable interest in the historical sources of Couto's *Décadas da Ásia*, no systematic attempt has been made to determine Couto's classical literary sources for *O Soldado Prático*. This article examines the most frequently cited texts that Couto used as sources for stories and quotations from classical antiquity. It demonstrates that Couto translated or paraphrased many of these anecdotes from two sets of works: Spanish translations of Plutarch and the moralizing works of the Spanish bishop Antonio de Guevara. This survey of sources concludes by assessing what Couto's dialogue reveals more broadly about Portuguese classical reception and translation in the late 16th century.

Keywords: Diogo do Couto, classical reception, *O Soldado Prático*, Plutarch, Antonio de Guevara.

Introduction

As one of the most prolific historians of 16th-century Portuguese India, Diogo do Couto has long occupied a distinguished place in luso-

phone literary history. While his principal contribution to early-modern historiography was the continuation of João de Barros's *Décadas da Índia*, Couto is best known today for his trenchant critiques of Portuguese colonial administration in the second version of *O Soldado Prático*.[1] This book-length dialogue, in which a veteran soldier, a court official, and a nobleman discuss the moral and political problems of Portuguese colonial rule in India, was written and revised in the final decades of the 16th century. After the first dialogue was stolen from Couto and circulated anonymously, the text of the revised second version remained in manuscript form for nearly two centuries before its publication in Lisbon in 1790 by António Caetano do Amaral.[2] Despite its complicated editorial history and much-delayed publication, the dialogue has had an enormous impact on the historiography of Portuguese India in the modern era. Manuel Rodrigues Lapa, who edited the text in the 1930s, viewed the *Soldado* as a vital complement to Luís de Camões's epic *Os Lusíadas*, and subsequent scholars have continued to affirm its importance for understanding Portuguese society in the late-16th century.[3]

Like Camões, Couto was an experienced soldier as well as a skilled writer, and an important part of his success—both literary and professional—was the perception that he embodied the renaissance Portuguese ideal of the cultivated man of action, accomplished in both *armas* and *letras*.[4] During the 17th century, Couto's classical literary credentials helped establish his authority as an historian and, later, as a member of Portugal's new literary pantheon.[5] The earliest biography of Couto, published by Severim de Faria in Évora in 1624, emphasizes Couto's academic training

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[1] Unless otherwise specified, all subsequent references to *O Soldado Prático* refer to the revised second edition. For the text of the dialogue, I follow the edition of Ana María García Martín (Couto 2009), except where noted. All translations are my own.

[2] For the history of the text's composition and publication, see Coimbra Martins 2001: 237-58.

[3] See Couto 1937: xxviii. García Martín (2009: 33) observes that the dialogue has traditionally received more attention from historians than literary critics.

[4] Cf. Couto 2009: 12-15; Severim de Faria 1624: 150r. For the interplay of military and literary activities over the course of Couto's career in India, see Moniz 2019: 16-17. Cf. Lapa 1937: xiii.

[5] See Couto 2009: 12. The author's portrait in the *Décadas* was accompanied by an epigram likening Couto to Caesar: *Exprimit effigies, quod solum in Caesare visum est. / Historiam calamo tractat et arma manu* ("This portrait depicts something that was only previously found in Caesar: he moves history with his pen and weapons with his hand")

by proudly listing the famous Jesuit teachers under whom he studied, along with the subjects in which the precocious young student excelled, including math, geography, Latin, Italian, and poetry.[6] As was typical of Jesuit education in the 16th century, Couto's studies focused heavily on Latin, ancient literature, and history.

Although Couto periodically cites ancient Greco-Roman authors elsewhere in his vast historical output, nowhere is the author's classical erudition more on display than in the second version of *O Soldado Prático*. Unlike the *Décadas da Índia*, which contain occasional references to classical figures or brief citations, *O Soldado Prático* is characterized by the nearly constant quotation of classical anecdotes, sayings, and facts by the veteran soldier. In fact, this display of literary and historical erudition is one of the most distinctive differences between the first and second versions of the dialogue. In contrast with the earlier version, which contains only eleven mentions of classical antiquity, the second version contains over seventy references to ancient Greece and Rome, many quite lengthy.[7] Interspersed throughout the dialogue, these literary references comprise a significant portion of the text, such that certain scenes take on the character of a miscellany or ancient phrasebook.

In contrast with Couto's contemporaries, who generously praised his humanistic education and broad learning, modern scholarship has tended to take a more critical stance toward the author's display of classical erudition in *O Soldado Prático*. Amaral, the text's earliest editor, disparaged what he saw as the "excessive erudition" of the second version, warning that Couto made numerous errors concerning classical antiquity in the dialogue.[8] Editors and commentators in recent decades have frequently followed in Amaral's footsteps, variously criticizing Couto's citations of classical exempla as "tedious," "occasionally abhorrent," and "tiresome."[9] While Luís de Sousa Rebelo offered a forceful defense of Couto's classicism as an essential

[6] Severim de Faria 1624: 148v-151r.

[7] See Coimbra Martins 1998: 301. For the text of the first version of *O Soldado Prático*, see Coimbra Martins 2001. This earlier version of the dialogue references Argus (372), Caesar (389), Troy (431, 496), Roman matrons (460), a comparison of Pompey, Caesar, and the "imperador Danibal" [sic] (474), Viriathus (489), Vitruvius (495), Seneca (553-4), Ovid (557), and Scipio (562).

[8] See Couto 1790: xii, 5.

[9] See Cruz 1994: 311, vol. 2, Couto 1937: xxvii, and Pearson 2016: xi. Cf. Boxer 1948: 12; Coimbra Martins 1998: 301, 2001: 40; and Moniz 2019: 14.

component of the text's didactic and moralizing purpose, the mainstream of scholarship has continued to view the author's frequent discussion of ancient exempla in the dialogue as a regrettable defect.[10]

In turn, these critiques have led to a divergence in how scholars have assessed Couto's knowledge of classical literature. On one end of the spectrum, Reis Brasil, following in the footsteps of the 17th-century biographical tradition, praised Couto's educational breadth, claiming that he was "perfectly knowledgeable" in Latin, Ancient Greek, French, Italian, and Spanish, in addition to the mythology, philosophy, and culture of ancient Greece and Rome.[11] However, Brasil's assessment is an outlier among modern scholars, who in many cases have found baffling inconsistencies in Couto's reporting of classical details. Echoing Amaral, two of the most distinguished scholars of Couto's works, António Coimbra Martins and Maria Augusta Lima Cruz, have found the author's classicism lacking.[12]

Despite these critical assessments, and despite the existence of multiple modern editions and translations of the text with notes and commentary, there has been virtually no systematic investigation into the sources of Couto's classical literary knowledge in *O Soldado Prático*.[13] In this article, I seek to improve the situation by providing an overview of two important sets of literary sources used by Couto in the dialogue, tracing both the breadth and the limits of his knowledge of Greco-Roman antiquity. Although considerations of space prevent me from discussing every classical anecdote in detail, I will show that many of Couto's references to classical history and literature in *O Soldado Prático* are close translations or paraphrases of Spanish editions of classical works printed in the first half of the 16th century. Of these print sources, I devote special attention to two groups of works that account for over half of the dialogue's seventy-plus classical anecdotes, references, and quotations: 1) Spanish translations of Plutarch's *Moralia* from the late 15th and early 16th centuries, and 2) the moralizing

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[10] Sousa Rebelo 1977: 443 argues that an allusion by Couto to Erasmus's *Sileni Alcibiadis* in a dedicatory letter to the Conde de Salinas (2009: 57) is meant to emphasize the philosophical orientation of the dialogue.

[11] Couto 1988: 15. Moniz 2004: 22-23, 38 offers a similarly positive assessment of Couto's education.

[12] See Coimbra Martins 2001: 40: "Este nosso querido clássico não tinha vocação clássica." Cf. n. 9 above.

[13] Couto 2009: 35.

works of the Spanish bishop Fray Antonio de Guevara, particularly his handbook for courtiers, *Aviso de privados, y doctrina de cortesanos* (1539). Couto's reliance upon these sources sheds valuable light on the nature of his engagement with classical literature, especially with respect to Ancient Greek texts. In carrying out this investigation, I hope to add nuance and complexity to our view of Couto's accomplishments as a scholar of classical antiquity in *O Soldado Prático*, whose reliance upon faulty sources hints at the great extent to which early modern knowledge about classical antiquity was mediated through anthologies, translations, and (at times) outright fabrications.

In the sections that follow I begin by surveying Couto's use of Spanish translations of Plutarch, before turning to Antonio de Guevara, who was the source of numerous historical and literary errors in the dialogue. I conclude by assessing the breadth and quality of Couto's classical learning in the context of early modern Portuguese literary culture, with an eye towards better understanding some of the key mechanisms of (and motivations for) classical reception in early modern India.

1. Plutarco Español

The most frequently quoted classical author in *O Soldado Prático* is Plutarch, who is the source of no less than twenty-four anecdotes in the text. Plutarch was immensely popular in 16th century European literary circles, and his multifarious corpus of biographies, essays, and famous sayings was the subject of many printed editions and translations in early modern Iberia. Within a cultural and religious milieu that cherished collections of moralizing sententiae and exempla, both Latin and vernacular translations of Plutarch's *Apophthegmata* became an important vehicle for disseminating knowledge about Greco-Roman antiquity to a wider reading audience.[14]

Despite the existence of excellent scholarship on Couto's use of contemporary historical sources in the *Décadas*, the question of how exactly Couto accessed Ancient Greek literature remains virtually unstudied.[15]

[14] See Morales Ortiz 2000: 78-84; Redondo 1976: 549.

[15] Although Loureiro (1998) catalogues many references to Greek authors in his monumental study on the *Décadas*, in most cases he does not identify specific works, editions, or translations.

However, a few indicators have led scholars to surmise that the Portuguese historian relied upon translations, rather than direct consultation of texts in the original language. Rui Manuel Loureiro, for example, has shown that a handful of references to Greek authors in the *Décadas* are clearly mediated through translations or compilations, such as Ramusio's *Navigationi et Viaggi* (1550), which served as Couto's source for Arrian's *Periplus Maris Erythraei*.[16] Yet the specifics of Couto's engagement with Ancient Greek literature remain murky. Did he typically consult this material in translations of complete works or in miscellanies and compilations? In print or in manuscript? In school texts or through his own extracurricular reading? In Latin or vernacular translations?

Couto's use of Plutarch in *O Soldado Prático* presents us with a useful case study for addressing these questions. As I demonstrate below, an analysis of quotations drawn from Plutarch reveals that Couto relied exclusively upon Spanish translations for his knowledge of Greek literature. Even in translation, however, Couto evidently read widely, consulting a diverse assortment of printed editions by four different translators: Diego Gracián de Alderete's *Morales de Plutarco* (1548), Juan Castro de Salinas's (a pseudonym for Francisco de Encinas) *Primer volumen de las vidas de los ilustres y excellentes varones griegos y romanos* (1562),[17] Diego de Astudillo's "Dialogo de Plutarcho, en el qual se tracta, como se ha de refrenar la ira" (1551), and Alfonso de Palencia's *La primera y segunda parte de Plutharco* (1491). Below is a list of the twenty-four Plutarchan anecdotes that appear in *O Soldado Prático*, in the order in which they appear in the dialogue. Although some of the anecdotes in this list were also available in other translations from the 15th and 16th centuries, specific features of Couto's word choice, orthography, and syntax typically signal his reliance upon a single translation.

[16] Loureiro 2019: 65-67.

[17] This partial translation of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* was originally published in 1551 in Strasbourg under the author's real name, Francisco de Encinas. However, due to Encinas's conversion to Lutheranism, some later editions employed the pseudonym "Juan Castro de Salinas." See Lasso de la Vega 1962: 486-9 and Beardsley 1970: 42-3. When citing this work, I follow the 1562 "Castro de Salinas" edition, as this pseudonymous version would have circulated more easily in Portuguese territories.

Couto (2009)	**Plutarch**	**Translation**
"Antíoco, quando uma noite foi perdido e desconhecido…" (72)	*Mor.* 184D-E	Gracián 1548: 10r
"Porque os atenienses, segundo Plutarco, na *Vida de Teseu*, chamam aos reis *anaces*…" (74)	*Thes*. 33	Castro de Salinas 1562: 42v-43r
"Qual destes teve o que Dario, rei da Pérsia, que tinha um camareiro deputado para todos os dias…" (78)	*Mor*. 780C	Gracián 1548: 103r
"Como Lívio Druso, tribuno do povo romão, do qual se conta que, vivendo numas casas na praça mui devassas de todas as partes…" (100)	*Mor*. 800F	Gracián 1548: 79r
"Gentio era Dario, rei da Pérsia, e, constituindo certos trebutos a seus povos…" (107-8)	*Mor*. 172F-173A	Gracián 1548: 2r
"Querendo os lacedemónios prover nas desordens dos reis, pera que governassem com medo dos homens quando o não tivessem de Deus, ordenaram aqueles éforos…" (117-18)	*Lyc*. 7	Castro de Salinas 1562: 126r
"Aquela lei que fez Sólon, como Plutarco em sua vida conta, defende com tanta rigoridade que nenhum vivo seja ousado a dizer mal de nenhum morto…" (121)	*Sol*. 21	Castro de Salinas 1562: 264r
"Antíoco o III, estando em Éfeso, viu uma sacerdotisa de Diana muito fermosa…" (127)	*Mor*. 183F	Gracián 1548: 9v
"El-rei Agesilau, estranhando-lhe um seu privado porque não quisera ver a Megabuto,[18] filha de Antipáter …" (127)	*Mor*. 209D-E	Gracián 1548: 24v
"Amigo muito d'alma era Antipáter do grande Fócion e pedindo-lhe uma cousa como esta, lhe respondeu…" (130)	*Mor*. 188F (cf. *Mor*. 142C, *Phoc*. 30, *Agis* 2)	Gracián 1548: 13v
"Quão fora estão estes de serem como o mesmo Fócion, de que inda agora falei, o qual, governando Atenas…" (130)	*Mor.* 822E	Gracián 1548: 91r
"Inda que faça como outro Sólon, o qual, vendo a ilha de Salamina…" (141)	*Sol*. 8	Castro de Salinas 1562: 245r-245v
"Faça-se o que fizeram aqueles éforos de Lacedemónia, que, estando em um conselho…" (153)	*Mor*. 801 B-C	Gracián 1548: 79r
"Lemos também de Esténio, governador dos mamertinos, que fez a todos os de seu povo que seguissem a parte de Mário…" (182)	*Mor*. 203D	Gracián 1548: 21r

[18] Although both manuscripts read "Megabuto", most editors, including García Martín, print "Megabata." For a defense of the original manuscript reading, see below.

"Péricles, todas as vezes que era eleito pera capitão dos exércitos, dizia consigo: 'Olha, Péricles, que hás-de mandar e governar homens livres, gregos e atenienses.'" (182-3)	*Mor*. 186C	Gracián 1548: 11v
"E esta é rezão por que aquele famoso Licurgo mandou que as leis que fez na sua reformação da república espartana não fossem escritas…" (212)	*Lyc*. 13	Castro de Salinas 1562: 137r
"Pompeu, dignamente merecedor de sobrenome de Magno, por sua clemência chegou a triunfar…" (231-2)	*Mor*. 203E-F	Gracián 1548: 21v
"Quando Plutarco, na *Vida de Rómulo*, põe aquelas três virtudes com que os reinos e empérios se acrecentam…" (233)	[*interpolated*]	Castro de Salinas 1562: 102v
"E assi os mesmos, quando queriam engrandecer os seus deuses e seus reis, lhe chamavam *meilichioi*…" (234)	*Mor*. 458B-C	Astudillo 1551: 75v
"O grande Pompeu com esta virtude sojugou todo Ponto, Arménia, Síria, Cilícia, a grã Mesopotâmia…" (238-9)	*Pomp*. 45	Palencia 1491: 83v (part 2)
"E esta foi a rezão por que Cléon, quando entrou no governo da sua república, se despediu dos parentes…" (239-40)	*Mor*. 806F	Gracián 1548: 82v
"Com nenhuma outra cousa subiu Filipo, pai de Alexandre, a tanta grandeza senão com mão aberta…" (244)	*Mor*. 178A-B (cf. Cic. *Att*. 1.6.12)	Gracián 1548: 5v
"Temístocles, capitão dos atenienses, por onde veo a ser famoso, senão pela liberalidade…" (244-5)	*Them*. 18	Castro de Salinas 1562: 16v
"Do mesmo Alexandre se lê que, ouvindo praguejar dele certos soldados, lhe dissera com a boca muito prudente…" (250)	*Mor*. 181F	Gracián 1548: 7v

In total, fifteen of Couto's references to Plutarch are derived from Gracián's influential translation of the *Moralia*, seven from Castro de Salinas's partial translation of the *Parallel Lives*, and one each from Astudillo's translation of *de Cohibenda Ira* and Palencia's complete translation of the *Parallel Lives*. As I will illustrate through closer analysis of a few examples below, it is likely that Couto worked directly from these texts when composing *O Soldado Prático*, rather than relying upon memory. In many cases, Couto translated nearly word-for-word from his Spanish source, while in passages where he paraphrased more loosely, various lexical and syntactic features make it possible to ascertain which translation he consulted.[19]

[19] Couto employs word-for-word translation of his Spanish sources, either in part or in full, in the following anecdotes: 2009: 74 (*anaces*), 78 (Dario), 121 (Sólon), 127 (Megabuto), 130 (Fócion), and 182-3 (Péricles).

The extent to which Couto follows the exact phrasing of his translated sources is evident throughout the dialogue. One example that typifies how Couto approached his classical source material is the story of the Persian King Darius, drawn from Gracián's translation of Plutarch's *ad Principem Ineruditum*:[20]

> El rey de los Persas tenia un camarero ordenado, o diputado para solamente esto: que entrando de mañana en la camara le dixesse: 'Levantate rey y cura de los negocios que quiso que curasses tu dios.'

In his own version of the anecdote, Couto adapts his Spanish source with a mix of paraphrase and verbatim translation:[21]

> Qual destes teve o que Dario, rei da Pérsia, que tinha um camareiro deputado para todos os dias, em amanhacendo, entrar livremente na sua câmara e lhe dizer: 'Levanta-te, rei, e vai curar dos negócios que Deus quis que cuirasses!'?

In the narrative portion that begins this excerpt, Couto reproduces much of Gracián's vocabulary via Portuguese cognates. Yet he also varies the syntax and provides additional details that are not present in the Spanish text, such as his glossing of the "King of Persia" as Darius. By contrast, when Couto translates the direct quote from Darius's servant, he reproduces Gracián's Spanish text nearly word for word in Portuguese, only altering the form of the imperative verb *cura* (cf. *vai curar*) and moving the phrase *tu dios* (cf. *Deus*) earlier in the sentence. Contemporary scholars argue that Couto often copied directly from written historical sources when composing the *Décadas*, and the similarity between Couto's quotations of Plutarch and the wording of his Spanish sources supports the notion that he used a similar method in *O Soldado Prático*.[22]

In addition to showing how closely the Portuguese historian hewed to his Spanish source texts, the anecdote about Darius also illustrates an interesting facet of Couto's classicism: namely, his regular inclusion of non-Greek and non-Roman figures. Over the course of the dialogue, ancient

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[20] Gracián 1548: 103r (Plut. *Mor*. 780C). For quotations of early modern Spanish texts, I have retained the original orthography, while occasionally modernizing punctuation and capitalization for the sake of clarity.

[21] Couto 2009: 78.

[22] See Loureiro 2019: 58-9; cf. Loureiro 1998: 24.

Persians are the subject of six classical anecdotes, while Egyptians and Lydians receive one mention each.[23] Even the Carthaginians, famously known as mortal enemies of Republican Rome, are praised for their lack of judicial corruption, while Couto discusses the Greek medical writer Galen alongside the medieval Arab luminaries Al-Razi and Avicenna.[24] Compared to many of his contemporaries, whose classical engagement betrays a strong preference for Roman and Greek models, Couto's literary references reveal interests in antiquity that stretch well beyond the confines of Greece and Rome, even if he is ultimately constrained by a reliance on Greco-Roman sources.

Couto's tendency to closely mimic—almost to the point of transliterating—his Spanish sources occasionally led him into factual or textual errors. Many of these mistakes appear not to be the result of careless transcription, but rather of Couto unknowingly reproducing errors from his sources. An interesting example of this occurs in a story about the Spartan king Agesilaus from Plutarch's *Moralia*. In Couto's version, Agesilaus physically removes himself from the presence of a young woman named "Megabuto" rather than be tempted by his sexual attraction to her:[25]

> El-rei Agesilau, estranhando-lhe um seu privado porque não quisera ver a Megabuto, filha de Antipáter, que estava cativa, lhe respondeu que mais queria vencer a si e ser superior em semelhantes cousas que ganhar por força de armas uma poderosa cidade; porque mais é de estimar em um capitão conservar em si sua própria liberdade que tirá-la a outros.

Couto's version of this story is derived from Gracián's translation of the *Moralia*, with which it shares a handful of distinctive lexical features and near-verbatim repetitions:[26]

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[23] For classical anecdotes that are primarily about Persian figures or customs, see Couto 2009: 78, 83, 107-8, 174-5, 216, 250; for anecdotes about ancient Egyptians, see Couto 2009: 65; for Lydians, see 2009: 235-6.

[24] For Couto's discussion of Carthaginian magistrates, see 2009: 113. Conversely, Hannibal is the subject of reproach multiple times in the dialogue for his decision to waste away in the luxurious Campanian countryside instead of seizing the initiative against the Romans; see Couto 2009: 124, 126-7, 196-7. For the reference to Galen, Al-Razi and Avicenna, see 2009: 214-15.

[25] Couto 2009: 127.

[26] Gracián 1548: 24v; cf. Plut. *Mor*. 209D-E.

> Viniendo Megabuto hija de Epithridates muy hermosa (que el amava) a el, para le saludar y besar, se aparto Agesilao[…] dixo no es menester que la rogueys: que mas quero vencerme a mi y ser superior en semejantes cosas que ganar por fuerça una muy poderosa ciudad de los enemigos: porque mejor es conservar se a si mismo la libertad, que quitar la a otros.

Although Couto does not translate every word from the Spanish text, he has clearly adapted Gracián's translation, with a few modifications.[27] For instance, Couto directs the moral of the story not at kings but at military "capitães," while also changing the identity of Megabuto's father ("Epithridates" in Gracian's version) to "Antipater"—a casual mistake that does not appear in other editions or translations of Plutarch's *Moralia* from this period.

If we compare both Couto and Gracián's versions to the Ancient Greek text of Plutarch, however, one crucial difference emerges. In the original Greek text, it is not Megabuto, the daughter of Epithridates, whom Agesilaus resists, but rather Megabates, the *son* of Spithridates.[28] In other words, Gracián censored Agesilaus's homosexual attraction by changing Megabates' gender. It is likely that Couto himself was unaware of this bowdlerizing change in the Spanish translation, since it stems from an even earlier Latin translation that served as one of Gracián's sources.[29] Such moralizing "corrections" to translations of ancient texts were not uncommon in the censorious world of early modern Spain and Portugal, although the original Greek text was typically left unaltered—accessible only to those with the requisite linguistic expertise. Indeed, had Couto consulted a Greek edition of Plutarch, he would have found the male gender of Megabates clearly identifiable in the text.[30] Couto's description of a female "Megabuto" thus reveals one of the pitfalls of the author's reliance upon translators, who occasionally altered the text for religious or political reasons, oftentimes without informing

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[27] Two other Spanish translations of this same passage by Francisco Támara (1549: 21v) and Juan de Jarava (1549: 5v) use markedly different vocabulary and syntax not found in Couto's version.

[28] Plut. *Mor*. 209D. In the Greek text, the name appears in the genitive: *Megabatou*.

[29] For Gracián's use of Latin translations of Plutarch, see Morales Ortiz 2000: 221-41.

[30] See, e.g., the bilingual Greek-Latin edition by Stephanus (Henri Estienne), 1572: 370. In his overview of Renaissance efforts to censor homoerotic details in the works of Plato, Todd Reeser (2016: 21-61) notes that such censorship was primarily directed at *translations* of ancient works, rather than Greek editions of the original text.

readers of the change.[31] Whether or not Couto knew about the homoerotic content of the original text, his transmission of Gracián's censored version is representative of a wider tendency among Renaissance authors to alter classical texts to avoid giving offense to Christian audiences.

Changes to ancient texts occur in other contexts as well in *O Soldado Prático*, such as when Couto mistakes a translator's interpolation for the genuine text of Plutarch. In a brief reference to Plutarch's life of Romulus, for instance, Couto quotes a passage that does not appear anywhere in the Greek text:[32]

> Quando Plutarco, na Vida de Rómulo, põe aquelas três virtudes com que os reinos e empérios se acrecentam, que são clemência, moderação e verdade, põe a clemência primeiro, como mais necessária.

Upon closer examination, Couto's source turns out to be an interpolated passage from Juan Castro de Salinas's Spanish translation, in the comparison of Theseus and Romulus: "De suerte que lo que haze los imperios durables es la moderacion, la verdad & la clemencia, que son virtudes puestas por la orden de natura en el medio d'estos dos viciosos extremos."[33] Interestingly, in addition to unwittingly citing the translator's comments as if they were Plutarch's own, Couto rearranges the order of the three aforementioned virtues to prioritize clemency—a better fit for the veteran soldier's comments about Portuguese officials in India. Given that Couto likely believed this passage to be part of the original Plutarchan text, the rearranging of virtues reveals a willingness to bend certain details of an "ancient" (at least from Couto's perspective) text in order to suit the needs of his arguments about contemporary Portuguese administration of India within the dialogue.

Thus far I have focused on inaccuracies in Couto's reporting of classical anecdotes, since these mistakes provide evidence concerning Couto's linguistic abilities, his knowledge of ancient history, how he accessed Greek literature, and how he conceived of classical antiquity. It is clear from the presence of various errors in the dialogue—most of which could have been avoided by consulting Plutarch's texts in the original language—that Couto

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[31] See Reeser 2016: 30-32. Reeser notes that, when explicit justifications were offered in introductions or textual notes, they often appealed to Christian sensibilities concerning homosexuality.

[32] Couto 2009: 233.

[33] Castro de Salinas 1562: 102v.

relied entirely upon translations of Ancient Greek literature. It is possible that Couto had some training in Ancient Greek and that he simply lacked access to reliable texts while writing *O Soldado Prático*, but his failure to catch even basic linguistic errors indicates that he was not proficient in that language.

On the other hand, it is worth emphasizing that most of the twenty-four anecdotes derived from Plutarch in *O Soldado Prático* are accurately reported, reflecting Couto's careful consultation of his translated source material. Within the limits imposed by his lack of proficiency in Ancient Greek, Couto drew upon a relatively wide range of translators and texts. These literary sources encompassed not only Plutarch's popular *Apophthegmata* and *Parallel Lives*, but also a diverse mix of essays from the *Moralia*, such as the political tracts *ad Principem Ineruditum* and *Praecepta Gerendae Reipublicae*, as well as the moralizing treatise *de Cohibenda Ira*. Moreover, Couto's classical quotations represent some of the earliest piecemeal translations of Plutarch into Portuguese, preceding the publication of fuller translations by centuries. On the one hand, since the high degree of Spanish bilingualism among educated Portuguese elites in the 15th and 16th centuries reduced the need for Portuguese translations of classical works, Couto's recourse to Spanish translations is unsurprising.[34] On the other hand, Couto's decision to consistently translate these classical anecdotes into Portuguese without explicitly acknowledging his Spanish sources may have had some cultural significance due to the fraught linguistic politics of Spanish rule during the Iberian Union (1580-1640)—a possibility I will revisit in the conclusion of this article.

2. Classics and Pseudo-Classics: Antonio de Guevara

The problem of faulty or pseudo-classical source material comes into sharper focus in the case of Fray Antonio de Guevara, a Spanish bishop and author whose writings provided source material for at least seventeen anecdotes in *O Soldado Prático*. Guevara, a Franciscan bishop who served as imperial chronicler in the court of Charles V, was one of the most popular Spanish authors of the 16th century.[35] Between 1528 and his death in 1545,

[34] On the use of Spanish by Portuguese elites in the early modern period, see Wade 2020, Dasilva 2017 and Buescu 2004.

[35] See Márquez Villanueva 1999: 19 and Grey 1973: 61.

Guevara published an eclectic mix of books, ranging from pseudepigraphic works of Marcus Aurelius to handbooks on court life and a treatise on seafaring, which were reprinted and translated throughout western Europe. The Spanish bishop's pseudo-historical works about Marcus Aurelius, the *Libro áureo de Marco Aurelio* (1528) and *Relox de príncipes* (1529), were especially popular, receiving numerous translations and over 100 reprintings during the 16th century alone.[36] In the spirit of the times, these didactic and moralizing books were filled with references, quotations, and historical anecdotes from classical antiquity.

For all his commercial success as a purveyor of classical wisdom, however, Guevara's humanist contemporaries found much to criticize in his knowledge of ancient history and literature. As early as 1540, the Spanish humanist and professor Pedro de Rhúa penned a series of letters detailing dozens of factual and linguistic errors in Guevara's writings, as well as a handful of what appeared to be outright fabrications.[37] Although a few modern scholars have dismissed Rhúa's critiques as academic nitpicking, other 16th-century humanists repeatedly disparaged Guevara's accuracy as a historian.[38] In the modern era, Guevara's philological and linguistic skills have fallen under suspicion as well. In his study of Guevara's *Década de Césares*, Joseph Jones argues convincingly that Guevara had a fairly shaky grasp of the Latin language and was entirely unable to read Ancient Greek.[39]

It is unsurprising, therefore, that Couto's use of Guevara as a source of classical information—especially his *Aviso de privados*, which accounts for sixteen of the classical anecdotes in *O Soldado Prático*—led to numerous inaccuracies in the Portuguese dialogue. Overall, Couto made use of the classical material that he found in Guevara in much the same way that he did when consulting Plutarch, selecting memorable passages relevant to the issues discussed in the *Soldado*, and translating or paraphrasing them from Spanish into Portuguese. One key difference, however, is that Couto never explicitly cites the Spanish bishop as his source for these passages,

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[36] See Redondo 1976: 572-8; Buescu 1996: 179; and Buescu 2009: 80. The Lisbon edition of 1529, retitled as *Marco Aurelio con el Relox de Príncipes*, effectively served as a corrected second edition of the *Relox*.

[37] See Buescu 2009: 81; Grey 1973: 32-42. Cf. Redondo 1976: 554 n.158, who records a lengthy list of names of ancient philosophers invented by Guevara.

[38] See Grey 1973: 43-51; Márquez Villanueva 1999: 22-26; Buescu 2009: 74.

[39] See Jones 1966: 20-25; cf. Márquez Villanueva 1999: 42-3 and Redondo 1976: 75.

mentioning only the ancient authors and works cited by Guevara, which in many instances are inaccurate or entirely fictitious.[40] Despite the fact that the use of classical anthologies, dictionaries, and commonplace books was in fact widespread among early modern readers, Couto's method of citation effectively disguises his reliance upon intermediary sources.[41] Since Couto has no qualms citing humanist authors like Juan Luis Vives when discussing more recent historical events, the decision not to explicitly acknowledge Guevara at any point in *O Soldado Prático* may indicate a certain bashfulness on the author's part regarding the use of secondhand sources.

Below is a table of the seventeen classical anecdotes in *O Soldado Prático* that I am able to attribute to Guevara with a high degree of confidence, listed in the order in which they appear in the Portuguese text. As I discuss below, even in the passages where Guevara drew upon real classical texts (as opposed to inventing his own quotations and sourcing them to fictitious historical figures or authors), the Spanish bishop often introduced noteworthy errors that Couto then reproduced in *O Soldado Prático*.

Couto (2009)	**Guevara**
"Leam-se os filósofos antigos, verão em quanto estimavam o segredo, que a mor pena que os atenienses tinham em suas leis era a que se dava ao que descobria o segredo; e em tanto se guardava que, tendo um tempo guerra com Filipo de Macedónia…" (64-5)	1539: 40r
"Diodoro Sículo escreve que entre os egípcios era cousa crime descobrir o segredo; e traz por exemplo um sacerdote que viu outro com uma virgem no templo de Ísis…" (65)	1539: 40r-40v
"Anaxilo, capitão ateniense, sendo cativo dos lacedemónios, foi metido a tormento para que dissesse o que el-rei Agesilau tinha detriminado…" (65)	1539: 40v
"Na guarda do segredo eram os atenienses tão puros que conta Plutarco, no livro *De Exilio*, que, passando um egípcio por uma rua…" (65)	1539: 40v
"O filósofo Pitágoras, os primeiros dous anos ensinava a seus discípulos a ter silêncio, por se costumarem a guardar segredo…" (66)	1539: 39v
"Conta-se que, chegando o divino Platão à porta de Dionísio Siracusano, perguntara a Brias, seu camareiro, o que fazia, e ele lhe respondera…" (66)	1539: 41r

[40] Cf. Park 2020: 40-41, which discusses a passage from Diogo de Bernardes's use of a classical anecdote from Guevara's *Aviso de privados* in a passage of *O Lima* (1596). Interestingly, Bernardes confuses the names of the two main characters in Guevara's version—a mistake that Park tentatively attributes to the casual way in which such anecdotes tended to circulate at second or third hand.

[41] See Burrow et al. 2020: 11-12.

"O filósofo Filípides, quando se ditriminou a server a el-rei Lisímaco foi com condição que lhe não descobriria segredo algum, porque entendia quanto ia na guarda dele, pelo haver por cousa divina." (66)	1539: 40v
"Como o emperador Aureliano, que, sendo afeiçoado a beber vinho tinto, um Torcato não só não bebia outro vinho senão este, mas inda…" (73-74)	1539: 7v
"Os famosos tiranos ho Fálaris Agregentino, Dionísio Siracusano, Jugurta Numidiano, e outros muitos desta sorte que sustentaram seus reinos, não foi com virtudes…" (98-99)	1539: 26r
"Aquele continente e valeroso capitão Cipião Africano, sendo-lhe no cerco de Cartago presentada uma moça cativa muito fermosa, natural numidiana, a não quis ver…" (125-6)	1539: 32r
"Não cuido que aquele homem do Danúbio falou no senado de Roma mais livre e mais altamente do que o vós tendes feito em definsão do Estado da Índia…" (183)	1529: Bk. 3, Chs. 2-5; cf. 1528, Chs. 31-32
"Dizia o divino Platão que nas terras onde havia muitos medicos havia muitas infirmidades…" (211)	1539: 16v-17r
"Naquelas repúblicas antigas, os graves legisladores que as governavam nunca lhe insinaram esta ordem do juízo que hoje se usa…" (211)	1539: 16v
"Conta Plutarco que Ptolomeu Filadelfo respondera a uns que…" (241)	1539: 25v
"Dionísio Siracusano, segundo Plutarco escreve, entrando em casa do príncipe seu filho…" (241-2)	1539: 25v
"Piteas, grão-duque que foi dos atenienses, segundo Plutarco, foi príncipe honrado, temido e muito esforçado capitão …" (249)	1539: 39v
"De Dario se escreve que, estando um dia comendo, movendo-se práticas entre os seus sobre Alexandre, um capitão chamado Ménon…" (250)	1539: 39r

With respect to historical and literary authenticity, the classical anecdotes that Couto drew from Guevara run the gamut from accurate translations of genuine classical material, to mostly-correct versions of ancient stories, to fictionalized anecdotes erroneously attributed to ancient authors.[42] As I demonstrate in the section below, some of these errors hint at the limits of Couto's literary and historical knowledge, while also highlighting the permeability of "classical" literature as a category in 16th century discourse.

Of the authentic classical passages that Couto copied from Guevara, the most common cited source is Plutarch.[43] Because Guevara did not know

[42] Redondo 1976: 75 notes that many of Guevara's errors are likely attributable to his use of translations and editions of classical works from the 1490s that contained various printing mistakes.

[43] See Redondo 1976: 545.

Ancient Greek, all of the genuine Plutarchan anecdotes mentioned in *Aviso de privados* are derived from Latin or Spanish translations, such as those of Erasmus or Palencia, discussed above. Such is the case in the story of Philippides and Lysimachus, preserved in Plutarch's *Moralia*, which Couto's soldier cites in a discussion of state secrecy.[44]

However, Couto did not always attempt to sort accurate from inaccurate information when using Guevara as a sourcebook for classical antiquity. Even when discussing authentic stories from classical antiquity, Guevara's works contained many errors that Couto unwittingly reproduced in *O Soldado Prático*. One such mistake occurs in a story about King Darius, who rebukes one of his captains for speaking ill of Alexander the Great:[45]

> De Dario se escreve que, estando um dia comendo, movendo-se práticas entre os seus sobre Alexandre, um capitão chamado Ménon, que não era prudente na boca, meteu muito cabedal em dizer males de Alexandre, o que Dario não sofreu, e com ira lhe disse: -'Cala-te, Ménon, que não te trago comigo para que desonres Alexandre com a língua, senão para que o venças com a espada.'

This particular version of the story comes from Chapter 19 of Guevara's *Aviso de privados*:[46]

> El rey Dario, estando un dia comiendo, moviose platica a su mesa de hablar de Alexandro Magno, y como un su muy querido capitan, que avia nombre Miño, cargasse mucho la mano en dezir mal de Alexandro Magno, dijole el Dario: Calla tu lengua, Miño, que yo no te traygo en esta guerra para que deshonrres a Alexandro con la lengua, sino para que le venças con la espada.

While this anecdote does ultimately derive from Plutarch, Guevara's retelling contains a few errors that are not found in other Spanish translations, such as that of Gracián. For instance, in Plutarch's version, Darius's captain is named "Memnon," not Minon. Furthermore, it is not Darius who rebukes

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[44] Couto 2009: 66. Cf. Guevara 1539: 40v, which was based on Plut. *Mor*. 183E, 517B. Couto's version of this story occurs within a sequence of classical references that reproduces no less than *seven* anecdotes from Chapter 19 of Guevara's *Aviso de privados* (1539: 39v-40v); cf. Couto 2009: 64-66.

[45] Couto 2009: 250.

[46] Guevara 1539: 39r.

Memnon, but rather Memnon who rebukes an anonymous soldier.[47] Of course, Guevara's mistakes do not fundamentally alter the message of the story. Nonetheless, the fact that Couto's dialogue contains the same errors indicates that he did not check Guevara's version of the story against the more accurate translation by Gracián—even though he drew upon Gracián's text for other classical anecdotes in the dialogue. Similar mistakes—wherein an authentic anecdote from classical antiquity is marred by a linguistic slip or factual error—can be found in other passages that Couto sourced from Guevara, often complicating the work of establishing a faithful version of the text of *O Soldado Prático*.[48]

The final category of classical anecdotes that Couto adopted from Guevara—outright fabrications—has long caused problems for editors and commentators of Couto's dialogue. As early as 1790, Amaral had noted that at least some of the textual and historical errors in the text must be attributed to Couto himself, rather than his copyists.[49] However, in the absence of a detailed accounting of Couto's sources and the accuracy of his classical anecdotes, many such errors have evaded detection. For example, while a short passage about Plato, the Sicilian tyrant Dionysius, and his servant Brias has generated commentary and emendations concerning the correct reading of the name "Brias" (or "Abrias," Coates's reading), none mention that this Brias is, in fact, a literary invention found only in *Aviso de privados*. The same is true of "Anaxilo, capitão ateniense," another Guevaran innovation.[50]

It is possible to extend the list of pseudo-classical anecdotes that Couto unwittingly inherited from Guevara's *Aviso de privados*, which also include lesser offenses like false citations and fictional stories based upon authentic details from ancient texts.[51] However, I would like to conclude the section on Guevara by examining a thematically important reference that Couto's

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[47] Plut. *Mor*. 174B-C; cf. Gracián 1548: 3r.

[48] For discussion of textual issues arising from Couto's use of classical anecdotes, see Gorey (2021).

[49] Couto 1790: 5.

[50] See Couto 2009: 65; cf. Guevara 1539: 40v. On "Brias" in Guevara's books, cf. Rhúa 1549: 80r-80v, 83v.

[51] See, e.g., the tale of "Torcato" and the emperor Aurelian (2009: 73-4), taken from chapter four of *Aviso de Privados* (1539: 7v). Although Aurelian's love of red wine is attested in the *Historia Augusta* (*Aurel*. 49), the anecdote about a wine-loving Torquatus being appointed Censor has no parallel in ancient sources.

readers almost certainly would have recognized. Near the end of the first part of the dialogue, the court official compliments the veteran soldier—who has been critiquing Portuguese colonial policy—by comparing him to "that man from the Danube":[52]

> Não cuido que aquele homem do Danúbio falou no senado de Roma mais livre e mais altamente do que o vós tendes feito em definsão do Estado da Índia. Eu vos tenho ouvido cousas tão estranhas e maravilhosas, ou, pera melhor dizer, tão torpes e feas, que não sei como Deus não tem acodido a elas com algum grande castigo.

This reference has caused confusion for some commentators on the dialogue, who have incorrectly identified the "homem do Danúbio" as Julius Caesar.[53] The reference, however, is not to an ancient figure, but to a famous episode from Guevara's *Relox de príncipes* (1529), in which a fictional representative of conquered Germanic tribes, "un pobre villano de la ribera del Danubio," travels to Rome to plead for relief from imperial oppression.[54] In a moving speech before the senate, the man decries the tyranny of the Roman administration, arguing forcefully for reforms to improve the treatment of his people in the provinces.

In light of Guevara's position within the court of Charles V, this scene was widely interpreted by his contemporaries as an allegorical critique of Spanish colonialism, with the "villano" representing the plight of indigenous Americans.[55] Although Couto's reference to the "homem do Danúbio" does not offer any comment on the historicity of the anecdote, in this particular case it is largely beside the point. His readers would have understood that the allusion associated Couto's criticism of colonial misrule in India with Guevara's critique of Spanish imperialism in the Americas. Thus, the value of the reference lies not only in its appeal to classical authority, but in its power to evoke *recent* discussions of imperialism. In contrast with the other pseudo-classical anecdotes that Couto harvested from *Aviso de privados*, in which the Portuguese historian seems to have been genuinely unaware of Guevara's many inaccuracies, the allusion to

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[52] Couto 2009: 183.

[53] See Couto 1988: 84 n.62 and Couto 2016: 90 n.119.

[54] The episode is included in both *Libro áureo de Marco Aurelio* (1528, Chs. 31-2) and *Relox de príncipes* (1529, lib. 3, chs. 3-5).

[55] See Chiong Rivero 2004: 94-99; Hutchinson 1997: 9; Castro 1945: 56-7.

the "homem do Danúbio" is intriguing because it suggests a *positive* use for pseudo-classical inventions: namely, as a way of critiquing imperial power in an allegorical guise.[56]

Conclusion

Although the preceding discussion of classical sources in *O Soldado Prático* has necessarily been selective, I believe that I can now offer a few conclusions about how Diogo do Couto's dialogue fits into the broader picture of classical reception and translation in late-16th century Iberian literature. With respect to textual transmission, the dialogue reveals three parallel tendencies in Couto's approach to classical sources: 1) engagement with a variety of sources, including multiple different translations of the same ancient author, 2) a desire to faithfully reproduce the text of his written sources, both through close paraphrase and word-for-word translation, and 3) a general lack of concern (or even awareness) regarding errors in his source material. This last point, which encompasses mistakes that are at times surprising for someone of Couto's educational background, reflects the great extent to which his engagement with classical antiquity was mediated through vernacular translations, as well as non-classical texts and handbooks that served as de facto anthologies of ancient quotations and anecdotes.[57] While many humanists, (such as Pedro de Rhúa, discussed above) focused intently on matters of philological and historical accuracy when discussing ancient texts, Couto appears to have been more interested in the *moral* relevance of classical anecdotes and sententiae than in their truth value per se.

This focus upon the moral value of ancient literature—even at the expense of philological rigor—placed Couto squarely within an ongoing debate among Renaissance and early modern humanists over the values and methods of literary scholarship. On the one hand, as recent work by Rowan Tomlinson on "encyclopedic" modes of reading in Poliziano and Montaigne demonstrates, early modern authors could (and did) find compelling reasons to read encyclopedic texts even when they contained

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[56] In a similar spirit, the Spanish bibliographer Nicolás Antonio compared Guevara's writings to the moralizing fictions of Aesop and Lucian (1672: 99, vol. 1).

[57] For the circulation of books in Portuguese India in the 16th century, see Loureiro 1998: 33-44.

glaring factual errors.[58] On the other hand, the early 17th century witnessed a growing scholarly backlash against the use of secondhand sources such as anthologies, miscellanies, and dictionaries.[59]

In assessing Diogo do Couto's accomplishments as a reader of ancient texts, therefore, I would argue for charting a middle course between the credulous enthusiasm of scholars like Severim de Faria and Reis Brasil, and the dismissive assessments of more recent commentators. From a scholarly perspective, *O Soldado Prático* contains many linguistic and factual errors, which should temper the received image of Couto as a humanist polyglot, promoted most vigorously in Brasil's 1988 edition. Yet despite the limits of Couto's classical knowledge and linguistic abilities, his use of classical sources reveals broad, eclectic interests in classical antiquity. While Ancient Greece and Rome provided obvious models for Portugal's colonial administrators, Couto's positive engagement with classical narratives about Persians, Egyptians, Lydians, and Carthaginians also reveals an open-mindedness about foreign cultures that compliments his complaints elsewhere in the dialogue about the unfair treatment of the non-Christian inhabitants of Portuguese India.[60] Above all, Couto's use of Guevara as a "classical" source suggests that he cared more about the power of historical anecdotes to promote ethical behavior among his Portuguese contemporaries than about the textual or historical accuracy of his sources.

Lastly, there is the question of language and translation in the dialogue: is there any significance to the fact that Couto scrupulously translated all of his classical anecdotes into Portuguese in a way that obscures his use of Spanish sources? In the first version of *O Soldado Prático*, written in the 1560s, Couto occasionally quoted full sentences in Spanish and Latin, so it is worth asking why he opts exclusively for Portuguese in the second version.[61] Given that Couto rewrote and revised the later version in the aftermath of the death of the Portuguese King Sebastian and the advent of Spanish rule under the Iberian Union in 1580, I believe that it is possible

[58] Cf. Tomlinson 2016: 40-41, who discusses Poliziano and Montaigne's arguments for reading Pliny's *Natural History* despite its many inaccuracies. Cf. Chapter 4 of Nakládalová 2013 for a helpful overview of fragmented, encyclopedic modes reading in the Renaissance.

[59] See Fouto and Weiss 2016: 1254, who discuss Faria e Sousa's rejection of secondhand sources in favor of consulting original texts.

[60] See, e.g., Couto 2009: 110-11.

[61] For quotation of full sentences in Spanish in the first version of the dialogue, see Coimbra Martins 2001: 433; for Latin, see 2001: 496, 562.

to interpret the author's translation efforts as a symptom of the shifting linguistic politics of late-16th century Portugal. Although bilingual literary production was common among Portuguese authors throughout the early modern period, the loss of national sovereignty in the final decades of the 16th century raised the political and cultural stakes of choosing to write in Portuguese, especially when texts in Spanish had the potential to reach a larger audience.[62] In the context of increased cultural anxieties under the Iberian Union, it is plausible that Couto's decision to translate all of his classical anecdotes into Portuguese sprang from a patriotic desire to minimize or disguise his reliance upon Spanish sources.[63] This interpretation is supported (at least indirectly) by the fact that in the one passage where Couto allusively signals his engagement with the Spanish bishop Guevara (when referencing the "homem do Danúbio"), the effect it is to remind his readers of an allegory in which Guevara *strongly critiqued* the colonial policy of the Hapsburg monarch Charles V. I would end, then, by suggesting that *O Soldado Prático* not only provides a window into the mechanisms of classical reception in early modern Portuguese literature, but also hints at the complex linguistic politics of that reception within the context of Portugal's shifting political fortunes in the closing decades of the 16th century.

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[62] See Wade 2020: 1-8; cf. Fouto and Weiss 2016: 1244-53.

[63] Interestingly, when Couto quotes more recent authors, such as the 15th century Castilian poet Fernán de Pulgar (Part I, Scene 6), he leaves the text in Spanish. Couto evidently only felt the need to translate the *classical* anecdotes and quotations from Spanish into Portuguese.

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