

# THE PORTUGAL POEMS

## Senhor en do Café de Lagos

He carried a cane though he had no trouble walking.  
He wore a leather hat to keep safe his forehead,  
But the sun was neither too weak nor too strong  
Hemingway, I thought as I looked at him

Somewhere in those novels of sudden sentences and plain description  
This man resides.  
Among the fisherman and the soldiers  
Among the bulls and the toreadors  
He lived in the world.  
His masculine, Portuguese *monde*.

We catch each other's eyes as the waiter delivers the beer.  
We nod; only I smile.  
With the first taste, his hoary mustache catches only foam  
He mashes more than licks.  
It is a perfect movement.

Somewhere in those novels, his world exists  
But outside of them, it is dead.  
And in far too short a time, so is he.

## My Little Book of Poetry

My little book of poetry  
I have traveled the world with you  
Spain and France and Berlin and Prague  
And all Ports and places known to man

It was a businessman's cheat  
(Anthologies are for the dilettante)  
At first I didn't understand them  
And I preferred the short ones and the ones that rhymed  
Especially ones on passing time, fading beauty, and death  
(boy, that man was good at those sonnets)

But a changed has occurred  
A revolution in me.  
Now I can't wait to open,  
To share each new place with you.  
I search to find the best, the most appropriate  
The words that capture each new sight

My world is so different now.  
I am so different  
As I leaf your pages  
In another new land  
I smile a smile of wonder  
My little book of poetry  
Were you the seed or the symptom?

## Ulysses

I don't know what I was thinking  
I didn't have much hope going in  
I guess I thought I was ready for the challenge  
I believed that my work had paid off  
I thought I had become a good reader  
An etch-a-sketch of an artist

The damn thing seems to weigh nearly two pounds  
It made carrying my backpack a pain in the ass  
Schlepping it all over the Algarve  
The only person *impressed* was me

What is he saying?  
What is he talking about?  
Who's talking anyway?  
Go back, start again...again  
Where was the last place I knew what he was talking about?  
(The title page?)

They say goose liver is a delicacy  
Single malt scotch, an acquired taste  
Some things must just be beyond me.  
Who was I kidding anyway?

## Shave and A Haircut, Bum Bum

I notice the difference immediately  
The porter stops and looks at me twice  
Passport control asks several questions  
And customs singles me out for a search  
Yes, I can also afford the dessert

Sure of course I know  
Don't you think I would control it if I could  
It's an all or nothing game.  
And it's been so long since I've done this  
It's maybe the last time I'll get the chance  
Let me enjoy this.  
I AM ENJOYING THIS!  
At least I can still do it.

The guide book says the hotel does a nice job  
Of hiding all the low fare package tourists  
It's a four star hotel  
With those looks at reception  
I realize slowly...finally  
*I* am what they mean  
It's just hair!  
What's the big fucking deal?

## To Make A Living

A wool cap pulled tightly down upon his brow  
The top of a flannel peeking firmly to the North  
Out from the dirty blue sweatshirt holding all of him in place

A sheer cliff topped with jagged igneous  
Eons, winds and agua have shaped its coarse  
Reds and oranges and shells with trips of moss

His shoes about the same as mine  
His pants quite similar  
His patience, his courage...  
I am nauseous just watching him

300 feet to the water  
A misstep to the rocks below  
The fishing pole cocked up under his arm  
Hangs out...out  
He is six inches from out himself  
God, there has got to be a better way!

He stands to reel with resistance  
The wicker satchel awaits the catch  
Closer, still closer  
I can barely swallow

Nothing  
An empty line  
After cutting open the clam and placing  
Calm, out it goes again  
Please don't throw so hard!

We wait, I write  
He sits, we both think  
Eons, winds, aqua, and him in mine  
What's in his?  
"There has got to be a better way?"

## Across the Atlantic

Are you there on the other side?  
As I look at the expanse  
Though I know you are  
Still, I wonder

Staring at this, the horizon meets the sea  
I am at the other end  
Holding friends, pad and pen  
Do I really care?

At this moment it doesn't matter  
Nothing would change things  
And even if it could, it would not change this moment  
Still...I do wonder

New York to Portugal  
It doesn't seem so far a space  
From your heart to mine, however

Are you there on the other side?

## Small

How can you feel otherwise  
Except small in the face of this  
Powerless and inconsequential  
Insignificant to the main

One man swims in this  
Urine warms his bathing suit  
About as much as he changes the sea to yellow  
That is the size we have

I have friends who have never traveled  
I wonder why when there's so much to see  
I feel sorry for them their compactness  
I search for a logic for the way they seek

Is it magnitude they wish?  
The ant in his trap explores the world  
Boundaries limit, borders breechless  
Relativity diminishes the equation

Does this express the existence *de Los Dios*  
I feel quite the opposite  
So much unused, untouched, unknown  
Inefficiency, a cosmic freak happening  
It could have been infinitely other ways

Come here to check the arrogance  
Come here and see how important you feel  
What are nationalities?  
When we are all just sitting on the ocean's couch

## The Lighthouse at Cabo San Vicente

I wish I had a lighthouse  
Like the one at Cabo San Vicente  
To bring me safe to shore  
In the troubled waters of my life  
To lead me through the fog and clouds  
When storms brew the vision of my sight  
To stand constant, on-guard to the bedrock  
The foundation of a sure foot's flight

I wish I had a lighthouse  
Like the one at Cabo San Vicente  
I imagine life would be so much simpler then

## All Dogs Speak English

I always imagine all dogs speak English  
Whether here or elsewhere  
With their soft dog eyes, they look at me  
In some far off distant land  
When they hear my, “Hey there, good boy”  
As I beat my hand against my leg  
Their eyes beseech me, their jowls form a happy grin  
Ears prick and tails wag in frenetic smile half circles  
Oh thank god, they seem to kindly sign  
“Could you tell me, dear sir, what the hell these people are saying”  
We share a look of confusion, his tongue lapping at my hand  
As my shrug says “No” I say  
“Sorry boy, I wish I could,” petting firmly his furry chest  
“But English are the only words I speak”  
He nods understanding then he licks my cheek  
“They feed me pretty good and let me sleep a lot  
And they only bathe me once a month when it rains”  
He thinks a pensive moment, cocking his head to one side  
As I scratch just behind his ears  
“A pretty good life all the same,” he barks  
“I was thinking the same thing myself, ol’ boy”  
Getting to that spot just above his tail  
He stretches out his neck, pursing his canine face forward  
“But please sir, please, before you go,  
Let me hear it once more in my native tongue”  
“Of course,” I say happy to oblige man’s best friend  
“Fetch it, boy. Fetch it here.”  
“Yeeeeeeeeesssss,  
That’s a good boy”

## Me

I have been accused of writing too much about myself  
But what else is there?  
Are there bigger issues than what is happening to one's self  
And of other so called bigger issues  
War, poverty, the environment  
They only barely exist when outside of oneself  
Becoming real when their proximity heightens greatly  
During which then we feel, truly feel their relation

I believe the goal of writing in all forms should be  
Understanding the self, the world and your relation to it  
I write about me to understand me  
To explain me to myself  
To stop and think about the things that are,  
Why I do the things I do.  
Of the poems or the songs or the books  
Which have touched me  
Have changed my life forever on  
All have this, alone, in common  
That they affected me

I will show things, produce them and hopefully someday publish  
Yes for several reasons  
Certainly money perhaps fame and attention  
Maybe even adulation  
But included in all this is a hope  
That through the explanation of me  
Through the exploration of who and what I am  
Someone else sees a bit of themselves and  
Perhaps arrogantly, I hope, understands a bit more about themselves.  
And hopefully in our commonness, in our sameness  
That another sees or feels or relates to  
They will, as I have in like moments,  
Feel a little less alone

## Kiss me

Kiss me, Kiss me please  
Senhorita Portuguese  
My trip will not be complete without

I have come to see your country  
To see Leesh-Boa and the Algarve  
To eat *mariscados* and *peixe*, more *peixe*

But the truth is and this I won't deny  
I always not so secretly wish  
To meet a lady (well not too much a lady)

So kiss me, Senhorita Portuguese, kiss me  
For my trip has only one day left  
And I fear desperation may overcome me  
And I'll have to settle for an American instead

## **Drive**

It may be a cliché  
A stereotypical guy thing  
But I do so love to drive

## On My Way to a Matching Set of Twelve

At least I'm honest about it  
I let everyone know up front  
Even tonight I said, "Kevin, dear Kevin  
Another round for Micah and me  
And by the way, I'm going to steal this glass"

If I'm caught I wouldn't claim kleptomania  
There's much too much in me for so common an excuse  
And poverty is a state of desperation  
I'll never be man enough for that kind of admission

I'll say it will add beautifully to my collection  
A cadre of glass compatriots  
A Leffe, a Tuborg, a Carlsburg  
A Boddington, an Amstel, the Weiss beer

At some time in the not too distant future (hopefully)  
I'll have someone over for a date or sex  
I'll offer her a beer as a precursor or post-coital  
And show I'm a *gentleman* with a glass

She will have the Paulaner  
And in my hand I will hold this Super Bock  
I will smile with remembrance at the thought of Kevin  
Of that night, of Lagos, of Portugal  
Of a glass full of honesty, of friendship, of beer

## Turquoise

Shimmering, shinning, sheen of green-blue  
Crashing a foamy froth against the lime stone  
Pouring out, back into the verdant azure mix  
Forever

If it were all real  
Would it be enough to pay off the world?

## The End of the World

In Portuguese, this place is called  
Lame and desolate, abject in its starkness  
There is the turquoise ocean  
A *fortelze* to the left, a lighthouse to the right  
And rock at turns jagged and sheer  
Twisting from the shades of brown through orange and sometimes red  
Pale gray with snatches of green but mostly  
She is stale putty for miles on end

I am reminded of Cornelius and Zira  
Dr. Zaes and the Forbidden Zone  
I am a new world Taylor riding for a place  
Lady Liberty should be just around the way

It seems I can sit here for hours  
Long passed when the burn on my forehead recommends  
If this truly represents the end of the world  
It is my fervent hope we hurry on to that furious day

## A Souvenir

Can I take this?  
A stone-ah? *Sim?*  
He waves me away with it.  
It feels cold in my sweaty hands

He isn't a quarter though his path  
A design of diamonds and circles patterned with stone  
With a pounding object, he mashes them into place  
Stone by stone rebuilding Europe  
This must takes days, a week...years

Scratched white under my finger nails  
Simplicity, purpose, duty  
Why did I pick a white one, not gray?  
Clean, pure...special

No, not at all  
Europe keeping its past  
Say no to the tide of *informacao*  
The resistance of one man, one act  
Halting the wave of time  
Never let the levee break

I came from the land of concrete  
I vacation the world to see  
And what do I bring back home?  
One pure, simple, white stone

## **Well Placed**

A pigeon just crapped on my head  
Poetic justice isn't human alone