

3 Poems

Roberto Christiano

Catarina de Bragança

What need do we have of the cold protestants
of Britannia? A marriage of politics and not
of love—Charles married me by proxy. A move
across a board of chess to keep Spain in check.
My dowry included the cities of Bombay
and Tangiers. Oh England—a country that
would sooner see your head on the block
than at a table of whist. Oh English—too many
consonants and not enough vowels. They despised
me because it took so long to learn. As for Charles,
in the intimacy of my quarters I ground my teeth,
wept, and referred to him as Charles the Libertine.
I thought the English might have liked me more.
Not only was I faithful, I introduced them to tea.

Uncle Robbie and the Portuguese National Football Team

Do you watch Portuguese soccer?

No, I don't watch sports.

So, you don't know about

Cristiano Ronaldo, Luis Figo,

or Rui Costa?

No, I don't.

So, you don't know about

Nani, Deco, or Simão?

No, I don't know about them.

I guess this means you don't

watch The World Cup,

and I guess you don't know

about the Grupo de Morte,

the Group of Death,

or how Carlos Queiroz

led Portugal to the second round.

No, I've never watched

The World Cup.

Well, I, your uncle, spoke

to the Portuguese Embassy,

and they said the office staff

came in 5 A.M.

just so they could watch

the game against Korea.

Portugal won—7 to 0.

Oh, I said. Congratulations.

Coke Memorie

As I savor the sip of this Coke,
I can feel the decay progressing
inside my mouth. I would like
to give it up, but I can't.

Disabled by a breakdown,
an actor I know
survived off the residuals
of his Coke commercial,
the tag line of which was
“I don't want anything,
if I can't have the real thing.”

My Great Aunt Anna
remembers when the real thing
first came out. She says
“Back then, it made you feel
really good. It had zip to it.
I think it was those small glass bottles.”

In 1886, Coke first appeared
as a patented medicine—

a digestive and headache remedy
as well as an impotence aid.
Each glass contained nine
milligrams of cocaine.

Once, my friend Paola,
stuck in a mental ward,
had a stomach ache,
and didn't want to speak
to a doctor anymore.
I brought her a Coke.

My father in his little
Portuguese village
of Salir do Porto,
heard of Coke
when he was a teenager
struck with acne
spreading across his face.
He pedaled barefoot
on a bicycle
through miles and miles
of poverty and sorrow
to buy a Coke
because he believed
it would cure him.

