

*Lost in America:
Portuguese Denizens in a Land of Nod*

George Monteiro

“Nod” is the Hebrew root of the verb ‘to wander.’

Occasionally, and usually by chance, one discovers the name of one of those many nondescript “unknowns” whose very existence is a fact lost to time and history over the long centuries of the Portuguese Diaspora. Thus the import of the “recoveries” of men living in eighteenth-century Philadelphia (a “gentleman” from Madeira and a Roman Catholic painter-glazier), a colorful bartender in mid-nineteenth-century New Orleans, the ancient survivor of what was “probably the oldest living family in the United States,” and a whole neighborhood of sea-faring folk in New York in the 1880s, as well another matter or two.

1.

After the Reformation, it has been noted, “discursive epitaphs and newspaper obituaries replaced Catholic masses for the dead.”¹ Of course, it would be an over-simplification at best to think that Protestantism in America has much to do with the country’s practice of the newspaper obituary. In any event, it is unlikely that the two Portuguese residents of Philadelphia at the time of their deaths, in 1766 and 1777, respectively, would have warranted a newspaper notice had they remained in the native land. In the democratic state named for William Penn, however, they qualified as subjects for obituaries intended to give some sense of the kind of lives they lived. The earlier of these obituaries appears in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* for September 4, 1766:

On Tuesday, 26th ult. (August), departed this life Seignior Joseph Joachim De Ornellas Evasconcellos de Figuera, a young Portuguese gentleman of good family in the Island of Madeira, who had resided in this city about seven years, during which time his conduct was so approved and his manners so engaging that, perhaps, few funerals have been attended by so many friends, who sincerely regretted the loss of the deceased. As he had no relations in this country, six of his intimates appeared as mourners, and other six bore his pall to the Romish Church in this city, where he was decently interred.²

The second of the two Pennsylvania obituaries recovered here appears in the *Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser* on January 24, 1776:

¹ Hilary Mantell, “Dreams & Duels of England,” *New York Review of Books* (Oct. 22, 2009), 56:12.

² Quoted in “Catholic Historical Notes,” *American Catholic Historical Researches* (Apr. 1901), 18: 91. The examples of Joseph Joachim De Ornellas Evasconcellos de Figuera and Emanuel Holmes can be used to counter LeGrand Cannon’s prejudice in the creation of Joe Felipe, the “Portygee” blacksmith who is cast as villain in *Look to the Mountain* (1942). This is especially remarkable in that Cannon’s novel about pioneering life in the New Hampshire Grants in seventeenth-century colonial America, was accepted by historians as “a transcript from the American past executed” with “sincerity, clarity, and delicacy” (Allan Nevins, “The Atmosphere of the 1700s,” *Saturday Review* [Nov. 7, 1942], 25:8).

On Sunday last was interred in the Roman Catholic churchyard in this city the remains of Emanuel Holmes, painter and glazier, of the district of Southwark, a Portuguese by birth, yet he loved liberty; for the defence of which he joined one of the companies of riflemen of this county, and constantly exercised with them. A foreigner almost a stranger, without relations (except his wife and children) without dependents, extensive connections or acquaintance, and although esteemed an honest man, not eminent as a tradesman, yet his remains were attended to the churchyard, not only by the company in which he associated, but also by as great a number of other respectable citizens and people of his neighborhood as ever attended a funeral in that populous district; such is the respect shown to those who declare themselves willing to step forward in defence of liberty, a respect, which wealth cannot purchase nor flattery bestow.³

When the *American Catholic Historical Researches* journal reprinted the Holmes obituary, it expatiated on the fact that Holmes had been a member of a company of riflemen: "This description makes it probable that Emanuel Holmes was the first Associator of Philadelphia who died and, therefore, in the intensity of public feeling at the time, his interment was made the occasion of a public manifestation of all classes of the honor due to all who had like this foreign born Catholic, taken up arms in defense of the rights and liberties of his adopted country."⁴

2.

Joining Joseph Joachim De Ornellas Evasconcellos de Figuera and Emanuel Holmes on the list of "recoveries" is Louis D'Jose. In New Orleans, a city with a Portuguese population large enough to support both a mutual benevolent association and, a few years later, a synagogue, Louis D'Jose was known to most people only as "Joe Portuguese," a celebrated local character who in the last year of his life (as it turned out)

³ "Emanuel Holmes, a Portuguese Catholic of Philadelphia. 'Loved Liberty' and Joined the Association in its Defense. His Burial in St. Mary's Graveyard in 1776. A Demonstration of Respect to a Defender of the Rights of America," quoted in the *American Catholic Historical Researches* 1887 (Oct. 1900), 17: 156.

⁴ "Emanuel Holmes," 156.

was written up in the New Orleans *Daily Picayune*:

Anyone who knows New Orleans knows Taylor's, of the Merchants' Exchange, and everyone who knows Taylor's Merchants' Exchange, knows Joe—Portuguese Joe—Joe, the bar-keeper, whose language, like his punch, is composed of various ingredients; such as his vernacular, his broken English, and grammatical Choctaw. Joe's ambition to "shine," is bounded within narrow limits indeed. It does not extend beyond the sphere of his bar—the scene of his daily occupation, where he practices with the most unremitting industry, and with an air of self-importance such as the erudite Sir Humphrey Davy never assumed; when engaged in the most scientific experiments in his chemical laboratory. But Joe, so far from seeking information which does not pertain to his immediate calling, rejects every advance which is made to increase his knowledge, either by colloquy or otherwise.

Ask him about the probable fate of McLeod, and he will tell you he does not keep that *liquor*, but informs you that he has got some excellent orgeat. Inquire of him if it be his opinion that President Tyler will veto the bank bill, and he replies that it makes no difference, for bank bills are *us better* than specie, and then flies off at a tangent to pass an eulogium on his prime London porter. In fact, Joe is a "strict constructionist" of the old adage, that "every man should mind his own business." He therefore leaves McLeod and the war question to be discussed by statesmen in petticoats and "soldiers in peace," and the fate of the bank bill to be speculated upon by politicians in a small way and men of limited means, while he manages to find full employment for his time, and occupation for his mind, in the dispensation of creature comforts to his various customers.

He is generally urbane and polite, but once "travel out of the record," ask him any question that does not immediately bear on his business, and you at once ruffle his temper, and may count on an abrupt reply, no matter how courteous the tone in which it may have been put.

The following scene will illustrate our position:

“Jo, Joe, Jowaw, my dear fellow, Jowaw,” said a lisping black-leg, yesterday, disguised in the dress of a gentleman, and affecting the foppery of a dandy.

“Yes, sir,” said Joe, seizing an empty tumbler in his left hand by the base and making it perform a summersol in his hand—“what you take, sir?”

“Make me a fiscal agent, Jowaw,” said the cozening coxcomb.

Now Joe, not being a gentleman of such diversified information as Michael, of the American, was ignorant of what a fiscal agent means, either in the political sense or as a beverage, though the “poker”-man was “running a saw” on him, and abruptly replied in his own peculiar disjointed method of giving expression to his ideas—“O, d---n, me no got no fiscal agent; if you want him, go Curns—he agent for dem works. What you take, sir?” said Joe to a customer, from whom he anticipated more money and less querulous trouble.

“Jo—Joe—Jowaw,” said the dandy, “you are an infernally ignorant brute,” and he sloped.⁵

When Joe Portuguese died in a fire in 1841, the obituaries, along with the details of his life as a “character,” told the story of his one great patriotic deed, performed many years earlier in a place far from New Orleans. Portuguese Joe, it was reported, had participated in the famous sea-fight on Lake Champlain in the War of 1812, serving on the *Saratoga* under Commodore Thomas McDonough. This unexpected American victory over superior British forces catapulted Commodore McDonough to prominence. McDonough’s fame spread across the country, turning him by war’s end, a rival to Andrew Jackson, the hero of the battle of New Orleans. Contemporary accounts of Commodore McDonough’s exploits at Lake Champlain cast the ship’s commanding officer as a single heroic figure in a great victory over an enemy with superior forces. If anyone else behaved heroically in this victory at Lake Champlain, that fact goes unmentioned. In fact, the part played by Joe

⁵ “Portuguese Joe: A Fiscal Agent,” *Times Picayune* (Aug. 8, 1841), p. 2.

Portuguese, McDonough's captain of the main-top, would be given its small share of the permanence newsprint accords only on the occasion of his death.

In death Joe Portuguese became something different and more honorable than merely a comical barman. He was given a hero's funeral, and in its report the *Daily Picayune* told the story of Joe's one extraordinary deed:

We long ago heard an anecdote of poor old Joe that obtained some of local knowledge by verbal communication from one to the other. He was captain of the main-top on board of Com. McDonough's ship "Saratoga," at the famous battle of Lake Champlain, at the time that the American flag was shot from the mast. In the very heat of the action, when shots were flying thick as hail, he stuck a hammer in his belt, a dozen nails in his pocket, the flag in his mouth, and mounted to the mast-head. All means of fastening the flag in any other manner had vanished long before in progress of the engagement. Joe nailed the flag to the topmast and descended safely to the deck amid the enthusiastic cheers of his shipmates! The anecdote we had often intended to tell before, but, among many other matters well worthy of type, it has remained in neglect.

To this anecdote the *Daily Picayune* added the information that while he was "known here by almost everybody only as 'Portuguese Joe,' few were aware of his right name, which we found some trouble in ascertaining yesterday. He was called, when addressed properly, Louis D'Jose, and he will be consigned to the tomb today."⁶

Several months later the *Daily Picayune*, capitalizing on a recent meeting with Capt. Aaron Fitzgerald, a marine aboard the *Saratoga* under Commodore McDonough in 1812, chose to recall still again Joe Portuguese's remarkable feat:

Capt. Fitzgerald interested us deeply with his description of the

⁶ Quoted in the *Boston Daily Atlas* (Dec. 13, 1842, p. 1. See also the *Barre Gazette* (Massachusetts) (Dec. 15, 1842), p. 2, and the *Vermont Gazette* (Jan. 10, 1843), p. 2.

exciting scene.—The flag had been twice shot down, and fell at length to the deck. Bullets were flying like hail through the sails and rigging. There was a single instant's pause when the flag dropped, as if all hearts sunk with it, and the next moment every eye in the vessel was turned aloft, and every voice broke out in long, deafening cheers, when brave Joe was seen dashing up the shrouds, with his mouth full of nails, a hammer in his belt, and the banner of the Union around his neck! He ran like a squirrel to the mast-head, and there clung as a living target for the British marines, until he drove his last nail through the flag into the truck; and, as the glorious stripes floated off again upon the breeze, he hung beneath it, waving his tarpaulin at the British vessels, and returning triumphantly the shouts and cheers of his shipmates below! The brave sailor reached the deck in safety: he had before been the pet of the ship, and now he became the hero. Capt. Fitzgerald was himself wounded in the action, having the upper part of his shoulder shot away by a cannon ball, and Joe became at once his watchful and attentive nurse. The Captain speaks of this with warm and grateful recollection. Poor old Joe's exploit is well worthy to prove a theme for some American Dibdin to enweave in song for our sailors of another generation.⁷

Unfortunately, Joe Portuguese's story has not yet attracted its Charles Dibdin, an English poet and composer known for his songs celebrating heroic deeds of patriotism, but it does make a cameo appearance in a dialect poem addressed to the *Daily Picayune* in 1842:

I hears of things, sometimes, my Pic,
Vot sets my eyes a veepin',
And often sorrows come so thick
One don't care how they deepen.
In von short moment vot we once
Gets all knock'd into smashes,—
Poor, poor old 'Joe,' the 'Portuguese'—

⁷ "Old Portuguese Joe," New Orleans *Daily Picayune* (Apr. 18, 1843), p. 1, and *Southern Patriot* (Charleston, S.C.) (Apr. 26, 1843), p. 2.

Peace, peace be to his *ashes!*⁸

Obituaries and doggerel verse notwithstanding, it was the fate of Joe Portuguese to have both his names disappear almost immediately, unlike, for example, that of Wyoming's John "Portugee" Phillips, the emigrant from the island of Pico whose extraordinary exploit is celebrated on a monument erected by the Historical Landmark Commission of Wyoming in 1936, with these words: "In honor of John (Portugee) Phillips who Dec. 22-24, 1866, rode 236 miles in sub-zero weather through Indian infested country to Fort Laramie to summon aid for the garrison of Fort Phil Kearny beleaguered by Indians following the Fetterman massacre."

3.

Here is information on another forgotten Portuguese sailor, one whose moment of fame—such as it was—came in the form of the recollections of one Henry Wright, a gunner on the *Hartford* during the Civil War. Of "Pete," a Portuguese sailor, who also served with him, Wright recalls:

"One of the interesting characters on the *Hartford* was 'Pete,' a Portuguese who was one of the steersmen. He was a spry old man of 65 to 70 years, short, broad shouldered, with a fringe of gray whiskers around his weather beaten face, and he talked in very broken English. While a boy he had enlisted in the British navy, and he was a sailor on the *Guerriere*,

when that ship was captured by the *Constitution* in the war of 1812. For a time he was held a prisoner of war, but he finally enlisted in the United States, and served until he was retired and sent and sent to the sailors' home at Washington. When the civil war broke out he pleaded so earnestly to be allowed to enlist again, that he was taken into the service, and, as he fervently prayed to go with Farragut, he was sent to the *Hartford*. He was chief mastman, and his duties consisted largely of seeing that the upper deck was kept ship shape, but, as he was experienced

⁸ "To the Pic—Forebodings," *Daily Picayune* (Dec. 27, 1842), p. 2, and *Southern Patriot* (Charleston, S.C.) (Jan. 5, 1843), p. 1.

under fire and cool headed, he was also made one of the four steersmen, who steered the ship through all her battles.” ‘Pete’ returned to the home after the war was over, and what finally became of him Mr. Wright does not know. One day Mr. Wright asked him how the *Constitution* happened to whip the *Guerriere* so soundly, and he replied. ‘American gunners fire so tam quickly they tear us all to pieces. They fire two, t’ree four time to our one.’”⁹

4.

The nineteenth and early twentieth century annals of the Alves family in the United States can only be hinted at in the following newspaper account in 1920. The occasion for the story was the 108th birthday of Antoinette Smith, an emigrant from the island of Madeira, a member of what was “probably the oldest living family in the United States.” There may what Huck Finn called “stretchers” in the account—namely Queen Victoria’s intervention, for instance—but the longevity of Alves family members seems credible enough.

*Woman, 108, Thinks God Has Forgotten
Born on Island Near Portugal in 1812; Wants to Die*

Springfield, Ill., May 12.—Illinois’ oldest woman—Mrs. Antoinette Smith, aged 108 years—wants to know if God has forgotten her. She believes He has, for she wants to die. To her life is a trial.

On the day before she celebrated her 108th birthday—April 16—Mrs. Smith said: “God has forgotten I’m here.”

The woman’s history is an interesting one. It dates back to 1812 when she was born on the island of Madeira, near Portugal. Mrs. Smith is a Portuguese. Before her marriage her name was Alves. When a child the family, through persecution, was forced into exile, Religion was the cause. Her mother was con-

⁹ “In and About Springfield with Farragut at Mobile Bay,” *Springfield Republican* (Massachusetts) (Dec. 22, 1907), p. 8.

demned to die, but appeals were taken to Queen Victoria of England by interested friends and her sentence was commuted to a fine. Queen Victoria obtained the commutation through her friendship with Queen Donna Marie, the then ruling sovereign of Portugal. But Mrs. Smith's mother could not pay the fine, so she was kept in prison for twenty-three months. When released the family fled to Trinidad. After two years' residence there they emigrated to America. Shortly after arriving in New York the family came by tedious stages to Illinois, settling in Jacksonville, a few miles from here.

The Alves family is probably the oldest living family in the United States. All its members are noted for longevity. John Alves, of Salt Lake City, who is only eighty years, is the "baby." Manuel Alves, a farmer living near Jacksonville, is ninety-six years old; Mrs. J. Figueria, of Brooklyn, eight-seven, and J. J. Alves, of Farmingdale, Ill., eighty-three. Mrs. Smith is the oldest member of the family.

But the Smiths are vying with the Alves for the longevity record. Mrs. Smith has five living children, twenty-seven grandchildren and five great-great-grandchildren. Her oldest child is eight-one years and her youngest sixty-four. The latter, incidentally, could easily pass for forty.

Prohibition was a blow to Mrs. Smith. It took away regular libations of wine in which she indulged.

"She thinks old people ought to have a little wine as a stimulant," her youthful sixty-four-year-old daughter explains.

Last fall the "baby" of the Alves family visited Springfield. It was the first time in sixty years that he had seen his sister, Mrs. Smith.¹⁰

5.

Perhaps it is not entirely surprising to learn that individuals like Emanuel Holmes, Joseph Joachim De Ornellas Evasconcellos de Figura, Louis D'Jose, and even the Alves family, after fulfilling their natural part in the common doom, have disappeared from the annals of history. But

¹⁰ *Lexington Herald* (Kentucky) (May 13, 1920), p. 5.

it is surprising to learn of the disappearance from all histories—national, regional or local—of a whole enclave of Portuguese emigrants in New York.¹¹ In 1873, Leo Pap tells us, there was “a very small Portuguese immigrant colony in New York,” but that even as late as 1898 it numbered “no more than about 100 individuals.”¹² It is pretty certain that Pap’s figure does not include the members of the Portuguese enclave that in 1889 was written up in the *New York Times* as “People from Portugal: A Picturesque Colony on Conover-Street in South Brooklyn”:

The Portuguese colony in this city is comparatively small, and the immigrants from the little strip of land on the Atlantic’s European shore are quickly swallowed up among the Spaniards, Cubans, and Italians who make their homes together in the city. But there is a little bit of water front in South Brooklyn where the Portuguese vessels all seem to tie up, and there the language can be heard any day and a glimpse of the true, though poorer, class of inhabitants of Portugal can be obtained. The vinous and other products of the country are stored in warehouses along Conover-street, and it is back of these that the Portuguese ships are docked. The vessels are nearly all sailing craft, with ugly-looking masts, dirty sails, but invariably with elaborately-carved and brilliantly painted or gilded figure-heads. The vessels are broad and roomy and look as though they would be a paradise for rats. Room is more looked after than fast-sailing

¹¹ In “Portuguese Enclaves: The Invisible Minority,” an essay based on work done in communities in Rochester and Corning, New York; Provincetown and Fall River, Massachusetts; Newark, New Jersey; Toronto, Canada; and London, England, the anthropologist M. Estelle Smith defines “a territorial enclave” as “a spatially cohesive neighborhood.” The places she chose for her study were largely major Portuguese communities (*Identity: Problems of Persistence and Change*, ed. Thomas K. Fitzgerald [Athens: Southern Anthropological Society, distributed by the University of Georgia Press, 1974], pp. 82, 90). When the emphasis falls on the term “neighborhood” in this definition of “enclave,” a plethora of smaller Portuguese-American communities suggest themselves, such as Bethlehem and Erie (Pennsylvania), Springfield (Illinois), Ludlow, Lowell and Peabody (Massachusetts), Mineola (New York), and Stonington (Connecticut), as well as a myriad of California places, as possibilities for fruitful study.

¹² Leo Pap, *The Portuguese-Americans* (Boston: Twayne, 1981), pp. 64-65.

qualities.

Conover-street is a curious place. For nearly half a mile it is practically a pier, for it is all planked, and, for the most part, blocked with piles of merchandise. Finally it emerges from under an arch into a broad street lined with houses, where seafaring men have their homes. Along the portion where the bows of the Portuguese ships extend over the planked way on a pleasant Sunday afternoon the Portuguese can be seen in their glory. Women in scarlet bodices and skirts of the colors of the rainbow are perched upon the spiling or on boxes. Clotheslines laden with variegated garments spread along the decks, while below, in groups of five to a dozen, the swarthy-looking men smoke fantastically-fashioned pipes and wildly gesticulate in their noisy arguments. Cheap wine is drank, often from the bottle, which is passed around from one to another, or poured into cups from wicker flasks.

Mixed in the crowd are black-faced half-breeds and negroes, sailors from the Canaries and Southern Islands. The book idea of a Spanish Main pirate is pictured on many a face, though their ferocity is mostly expressed in countenance and is only skin deep. The police do not have near as much trouble with them as with their Italian neighbors. They keep to their ships and rarely wander far for purposes of sightseeing. Yesterday there was a great crowd of them chattering like so many parrots and giving the street the appearance of a Spanish dock. This little colony there is not heard of often in Brooklyn, and few know of its existence.¹³

There seem to be no follow-up stories in the New York Times or elsewhere. The fate of this “little colony” remains a mystery to this day.

6.

And then there were the Portuguese ships. The “Elvira,” a Portuguese schooner, 1488 tons, was the subject of an entry in the journals of

¹³ “People from Portugal: A Picturesque Colony on Conover-Street in South Brooklyn,” *New York Times* (August 12, 1889), p. 2.

Wallace Stevens, who would achieve great fame as a modernist poet but who was then just another young man working in New York City as a journalist. On August 3, 1900, he wrote:

To-day I had a fascinating time. I received no assignments + from the point-of-view of money-making the day was a failure; from that of enjoying myself 'a grand success.' In the morning I read poetry + inwardly told the rest of the world to go to the devil (where I wish a good *many of them* really might go + stay). In the afternoon I wandered about—saw the Tombs, with Howe & Hummel's law offices right across the street; rode on the tail end of a dray till my rear was full of splinters + my entrails had changed places; and poked in + out among the wharves. I found a charming sailing-vessel—the 'Elvira' of 'Lisboa'—a Portuguese ship. She was a dandy—and old timer. Her hull was painted pink + blue and black; I forget how many masts she had; but there was a jungle of ropes overhead, in which were several sailors hanging like monkeys. The officers quarters were forward. The men were cooped up in the stern—a half-circle of filthy berths—excuse me! One fellow—the real thing—was dressed in pajamas of an explosive and screaming character. He said he talked a little English—but American was different. By the way, I had to ask a deck-hand where the quarters of the men were + not knowing the word for quarters I used 'chambres'—'Où sont les chambres des matelots?' which is execrable French—('Les chambres—où etc.?). The fellow snickered. The 'chambres,' or rather this single 'chambre' was more like a *salé à manger, à dormir, à baigner, à fumer, et à jouer les cartes* etc. It was an extraordinarily fine *mise en scène* for a 'wee bit tale.' I'm a polyglot to-night + no wonder! On deck were a number of chickens—several fighting cocks with which the sailors probably passed the evenings of unspeakable voyages. There was also a coop of pigeons—one a big beast that glistened as it strutted in the sun. if ever a ship opened a new world to me that one did. She sails for Freemantle, South Australia in about a week to

be gone four months.”¹⁴

7.

On April 4, 1923, Walter McClellan's one-act, *The Delta Wife*, was staged at the Le Petit Theatre due Vieux Carre, in New Orleans. In 1924 it was published by D. Appleton in its Modern Plays series, edited by Frank Shay. In 1925 Frank Shay, as director of the Provincetown Barnstormers, included the play in its summer season, along with Eugene O'Neill's *Gold* and Susan Glaspell's *The Verge*. *The Delta Wife* was subsequently staged, during the week of May 2, 1927, by the Memphis Little Theatre of Memphis, Tennessee, in the week-long Little Theatre Tournament for the David Belasco Trophy, at Frolic Theatre, New York, and received one of the two prizes awarded, each in the amount of \$200. It was reviewed: “‘The Delta Wife’ of the Memphis group was a play of no little timeliness, dealing with a man and a woman trapped in a hut by the rising waters of a Mississippi flood. Except for a slight bit of overwriting, particularly in the woman's part, it was an authentic endeavor undoubted dramatic effectiveness...”¹⁵ Three years later, as the *New York Times* reported, *The Delta Wife* was presented by “the Curtain Club of the College of the City of New York at the Y.M.H.A., Ninety-second Street and Lexington Avenue.” Its long life extends itself at least to 1949 when it was presented by the Cranford Dramatic Club, a community theatre in Cranford, New Jersey.¹⁶ There is no evidence that he McClellan ever had another play produced, if indeed he wrote other plays.

It is not Walter McClellan as playwright, however, that has piqued my interest, but McClellan as poet, who was an early contributor to the *Double Dealer*, the fabled New Orleans small magazine started in 1921. To the summer 1921 issue McClellan contributed a sonnet, “Arrangement in Black and Gold,”—the title appropriates James Abbott McNeil Whistler's title for his portrait of Robert Montesquiou-Fezebsac—with

¹⁴ *The Letters of Wallace Stevens*, ed. Holly Stevens (New York: Knopf, 1966), pp. 44-55.

¹⁵ “Little Theatres in Finals Tonight,” *New York Times* [May 7, 1927], p. 15; “British Group Seen in Theatre Tourney,” *New York Times* [May 6, 1927], p. 20; and , ed. Burns Mantle [New York: Dodd, Mead, 1947], pp. 521-24.

¹⁶ “Curtain Club to give Two Playlets,” *New York Times* (December 2, 1930), p. 25.

the words “New Orleans, 1821” in italics below the title.

The lovely Portuguese is dead,
Tall candles burn about her head.
Her negro slave, Lili-Alixé,
Prays with an ivory crucifix.
Until strange men knock on the door,
And walk upon the painted floor. . .
O men who bear this poor dead woman
Unto that place where nothing's human,
Behold your shadows this noon day
And know that she is less than they.
Rejoice that these black phantoms move,
Your living presences to prove:
Yourselves that still the heavy sun
Finds here alive, and shines upon.

The identity of “the lovely Portuguese” is unknown as is the seemingly historical occasion identified only as “New Orleans, 1821.” It occurs to me that the poem may be based on a painting, engraving or illustration of some sort.

As for the details of Walter McClellan's life, all that I have discovered to date is that he contributed a second poem to the *Double Dealer*, “Gayoso Girls are Golden,” which was reprinted in *The Bookman* (Mar. 1923), p. 37, and that he seems to have hailed from Memphis, Tennessee, or thereabouts.

