

“I’m going to the edge of the ocean and capture the setting sun!”
wrote Kazuo Dan, in 1971, while living in Santa Cruz, Portugal.

Styx

As a spectre of ghastly marrow
you summon demonic apparition:
 our memories of division;
 our longing of tomorrow.

No longer may the sparrow sing
the cruel ache of a speechless bard,
whose pain is all to begin
in drowned screeches of sorrow.

Bard of Styx, sing no more,
I've been chosen for the harvest,
and shall deposit you in a harpist
whose honeyed cords shall endure.

Your tears of stained glory
will finally resist the fury
of the fate you've been adorned...

And for your beloved, do not weep,
creatures of beauty never truly die,
that eternal fate soaked in darkness
gazes at such beauty with sightless eye!

Come with me and sing fair,
for the underworld is purely acoustic,
might you find some other love there
under-passion will be no short of mystic!

And with harp-in-hand and no faun
spread the waters of destiny still unfound,
for it is dead you'll find your peace,
lust in that never-ending release...

I, who heed your call
cry no melodies of old,
I've sung them all, bland and bold,
and from them still feel withdrawal.

Such symphonies have no haul,
and no nymph announced ovation,
from them, only ruthless evasion...

At times I feel unworthy
of any melody at all.

On Styx, there is no life,
only the penetrating knife
imbued in the poison of love.

Your adoration was not in vain,
for the blade has struck the vein
freeing you from the song-less above.

Acid Etchings of Youth

Hold me closely, Mother, take upon me tight,
don't let me lunge against the tides of dreamy days,
allow my breath to condensate the windows with haze,
don't unbound my feathers, barrier me from the flight.

I'm made of scrap and fear, I birth shape of nightmare,
my ruptured veins are conduits of those acid revelations,
my core of molten iron hardens upon the cycle of compare
to days when you held me close, held my head upright.

Modernity is of pale, cruel forecast, spectres of black and white,
while elder summers take the haunting task of breathing shortly,
hold me close, Mother, I'm afraid of every new approaching night,
paralysed that forthdays may never match our warm past.

Do not release me, don't allow me to fade in endless motions,
let me nest under your linen skirts where nightfall is blended
with the vividly coloured layers of my grandmother's carnations.

Embrace me, Mother, shelter me from those lonely eyes,
bleed rays of light from your skin, replace these adult skies
where love takes absent form, becoming an etching of youth
bound to only be remembered, mourned upon graves of lies.

Spiegel im Spiegel

Down along the creeks of my youth in rural Portugal, little was known and even less was affirmed. The truth we knew was but the width of our backs carrying baskets of italian-cherrie and the scarred skin of our feet as it tethered to a land of dry scents and elder wisdoms. Those landscapes paved of humble and gentle hills, the verdancy of those days and golden-hue of those sunny displays, was but a paradise that could only be compounded with innocence of youth and beauty of imagination.

Now, twenty-two, the distance between those times and now seems to have widened in two fronts - a massive increase in foreign appreciation towards my country and its beauty, compelling it to change in both blissful and nefarious ways, and my own inner comparison to those days of stillness and elation.

My poetry is a mirror within a mirror of those feelings, not so much a rejection of change and evolution, but a sad cry to those times that I cannot regain, to the visions I had, those that far exceeded in magnitude the ones I can still sight today. Unfortunately, some-things will fall under the rotary nature of growth, and akin to how my grandmothers carnations can never be replicated—since only she knew how to grow them, I will never be able to replicate the beauty encapsulated in my memories of those times.

Understanding the limitations of Art is, by extension, gaining clarity about the limitations of my own mind. Those outer edges of my consciousness - where rain becomes digital, placid conceptions become black lagoons, where life is prismatic and unequal - are the home of my poetics, my *Caliath*, a memorial sea of floating islands, whose waves rush to touch the sands of my silence.

Solitude

To which there is none,
just an avatar in reflection
in fleshy shackles of steel.

To which, there is only one,
the mirror of introspection
just reflects the cruel ideal:

Someday, somewhere, love will sprout,
it will ambush me in a warming assault
of crystal vision, humanity in force,
our perfect duality in its pure source.

I pray for heavy rain to wash the fragments
of the most beautiful creation in shatters:
the emerald dreaming of love, forever fated,
and, solitude... the painful days of waiting.

I've locked all my adoration in high tower
behind traps and nefarious unlocking device,
enchanted warriors awarded infinite power,
vulnerable only to magic of love precise...

Alone, I wait, threading fel lines of agony,
my loneliness itself will never create
a crusader willing to love me valiantly.

Scald

Two glassy rocks bedding four roses,
we crossed radiance in Lion's Mane,
you charmed me with effortless poses,
boiling my blood, making me insane...

The nights were feathered and warm,
I placed my arms in a forced crux:
the ritual of love in primal form
summoned by skins of radiant flux.

When I love, I'm defeated and mute,
my words evade me to bounce on the hills,
they kiss the rivers in a shout so acute
capturing all my love inside small stills.

Might any return to me, my sweetheart,
I could never tell you in which part
I first fell for your sweet eyes.

My evaded words left me in those rocks,
four roses among the proses of our talks.
Since then, the Lion roaring in my glass
can only mutter three words without class...

Those for you, long carved in eternal tablets,
three words are all I need to see what inhabits
your scalding, mellow and so beautiful heart.

Salvatorian Rescue

Of an exclusively portuguese family knowledgable of no other language and never living elsewhere, it often comes as a surprise that I write mainly in English. Better yet, how I'm even able to, as I never received proper education in the subject-language.

At the brave and unparalleled age of eleven, my parents hauled me with them to Algarve, a coastal region in Southern Portugal known for its summery enchants of white beaches and Mediterranean whiplash. I was not a child keen to sunbathing, neither was I known for my prime social skills—a kinder manner of saying I had no friends, I didn't have much to do or many interactions that would keep me occupied. At the third-day of that one-month vacation, I came across an elderly figure who had recently moved to that region of my country. A solitary man selling his decade-old book collection because he no longer had space for it, doing so on a promenade stand that overlooked the unreflective darkness of the nightly sea.

He sold his collection for a special price, much lower than that of Portuguese bookstore standards, and his collection had works of impeccable taste, especially delicious for a curious lonely child. I'm talking St. Augustine's "*Confessions*", Vladimir Nabokov's "*Lolita*", Clive Barker's "*The Great and Secret Show*", Kierkegaard's "*Philosophical Fragments*" and poetry collections like "*Ariel*" and "*Orpheus*". All of them cheaper than the next, all imploring to be read!

One barrier stood between those fragments of time and I: they were all in English, and I didn't know English—not even the slightest. But my impetuous and childish brain wasn't to be defeated—no, I had to read them, they *had* to be mine, they would be *my* vacation friends. The young mind functions under a singular motivation, that of desire.

So, everyday I would beg my father for ice-cream money, evade every one with my under-growing shortness and make my way to that promenade. I would rush home to deposit the stacks of books and then spend the warm

nights striking mosquitoes and reading words I couldn't understand.

Through our common latin predecessors, I was able to find similarities between words and start generating their meaning by myself. The structures were increasingly more inked in my mind, so I started understanding verbs and adverbs by their placement, as well as what would constitute an adverb or a pronoun, along with suffixes and prefixes by how they were commonly distributed.

With different writing styles that would muddy my theories of the language, I would use sound to distinguish written laconism and laquonism, as an excessively descriptive writing-style is lyrically more robust in most romantic languages, and then compare various types of constructions, understanding to which extent could a phrasic structure virtually stretch and maintain its viability. Hyphenation and apostrophes were more complicated, since they have no inherent logic to them, but acquired commonality. To a certain point, I believed they could be used arbitrarily with little impact.

What I did not anticipate was that my incessant curiosity brought me upon works that I couldn't understand at such a tender age, and this magnifying lens of learning was only compounding my inadequacies and lunging me into a state of deep introspection. Not only was I winging a language, I was effectively re-writing the books into a digestible state, one so detoured and twisted that could only reflect my own volatile visions — not those of the true authors.

That was my first contact with the literary stratosphere: that state of rising to ether, but being simultaneously helpless, restricted to hover and observe. I was removed from the stage of operations and placed in the benches surrounding the field, bound only to record and dissect my sight—a narrator of a world that isn't mine.

The man selling those books was named *Salvatore*, the godfather of my relationship with written life and my servitude to literature.

Name of War

While growing, I wrote my name in water,
hoping a fresh stream would take it away,
an emotionless human doesn't matter
in this cruel scheme yearning the today.

Mountains break my view, my horizon is finite,
not even the rim of the sky can bring me sunlight.

But it rained instead, washing my name back home,
it rains outside, it rains inside, it hurts to speak,
there are no clouds, only needles in a catacomb
falling... slowly... corrosive acid with every leak.

This storm in my heart, this malediction in my mind,
the disease of the fragile and destroyed humanity,
in its threads I can't see, I can't shout, I can't find
any star in this darkness outcasted from reality.

I lay lonely, holding a book of grand existentials,
scrolling my fingers among the soaked leather
for my name and the rain have no differentials,
even storms have names, yet, they are just weather.

Now, it rains eternally inside me, in cinematic loop,
showing a young boy in a nameless street park
waiting sadly for a never-coming sunlight spark.

Saturno

All bend to the nuanced softness of sound,
notes descend, give birth to coloured light,
poised as they hit our rough inner ground,
shedding serenity, nesting among still nights.

To those aerial figments of love, I present soul,
and to those scapes of composed tranquility
I kneel and surrender my emotion laid whole
so it can be cleansed under its wing of purity.

Birds spawn music as they rise to artful heights,
rain droplets compose as they softly crash on soil
reproducing petrichor scents and watery sights.

Music feels, hurting within the covenant of its sounds,
raising ecstasy only to collapse, fading into silent lines,
it preludes the narratives of our joyful and painful lives,
elapsing our sorrow inside frames of its fragile bounds.

Music is you and it is I, our tongues are enslaved by words:
the raging speech of crime, the loving whispers at sundown
can be solemnly produced by those unpretentious songs of birds
enchanted winds and rain, dressing Nature in a musical gown.

Music is Earth's faithful orbit around our doomed, detonating star,
it is the silver tether binding our spirit to its this sacred ground,
it summons inert energy to burst, leap, whirl and dance around,
it reaches all burrows of our fresh wounds, all hope from afar,
and gathers it, shackles it to our tears, draws it on our smiles.

And I, laid faded upon poems, dream of that exurgent sound,
if my pen could play, I wouldn't write, if my voice could resonate,
I wouldn't need any rhyme; it is in Music that my soul is found.

Lyricism in Composing

From the brilliantly crafted sonnets made by **Antonio Vivaldi** to accompany his *“Four Seasons”*, to the beautiful and grim *“Danse Macabre”* composed by **Camille Saint-Saëns** and inspired by a poem from **Henri Cazalis**, many grand and highly emotional pieces of music have been sprouted from poetics, whose brevity and mind-altitude served as coal under many musical flames.

The faith and appreciation of an ancient craft - poetry - allows me to understand that my work, whatever it may be, can never be considered final. I can only dream of the days someone will haul it and morph it into something more beautiful and meaningful, but in the meantime, I’m taken by deep appreciation for those that have previously held my artistic kin to such high regards.

Music and Poetry have been so deeply kindred ever since their inception, with the Ancient Lyricists of Alexandria, the Bards and the Troubadours, that presenting an homage to the immersion of music seems so natural to me. Music has aided me in times of deep trouble, and backgrounded every day whose brightness bled into my skin, making me smile freely.

Ache

Today, I swore I saw your smile
in the purple strains of an orchid,
tracing the most beautiful profile
inside the softened loops of an orbit.

The ends of my mouth raised instantly,
like posted soldiers nearing peace-time,
my eyes fused inwards in sweet combine
searching for your inner image constantly.

My palms faced up, begging the sun for light,
and as a statue, I laid there, awaiting the sight
of your eyes once more, searching for mine,
with a penetrating look orbiting my outline.

This light in my chest, the engine of my soul,
draws energy from our vivid memories,
runs in the rivers through incessant stroll
breaking upon my vision of our reveries.

Now, I cry, watering my spring orchids with tears.
I night-walk, living our dreams, fearing the wake.
I wait eagerly for the day this inner storm clears
and I can hold you again, ending this painful ache.

Yangtze

(I - SPRING)

To bathe in this serpent lake; grip a dying Sun,
hold the mist of death in these shrivelled fingers -
pathetic romance coarse with powder of a gun -
inside hollow lips mustering the saddest song:

Hands yearning as much as their muscles constrict,
a vicious crunch bursting blood from missing teeth.

I saw sonic ripples through the mist; a foretold culprit
hiding verdant-tears from its venomous underneath.

Spring those fallen to assonances of distancing flutes,
paintings of their saddened fronts in shredded vitality
bleeding acid oils bellow the river's mangrove roots,
striking marshes of ticking solitude in Time's duality.

Plightful visions of distance prelude the landscape
in darkness slept beneath fields of unending graves,
wooden markings of pain and chilling marble shapes
standing ground against the river's welcoming waves.

(II - DOWNSTREAM)

A lone wanderer bellow these ashen temples
turns to question my life of deserted solitude:
'Are you just a man surveying inner symbols
of a past bound by your melancholic servitude?'

This drainage basin yearns pain over any other kind,
flows from the deadness of Space, the cruelty of Time
to assault all my lonesome sensations: my voided mind
is made of blurry memories spilt over any lazy rhyme.

Verse this taste, so good... hurting this much, so crude...
how artful is the natural carnage of a poetic man-eater?
In leaps of devilish displays, this river exhibits my rage
gorging within my sharp eyes - revolution in the nude,
breathless bellow the water, my death fuses every litre.

This is the face of abject fear when morality resigns...

An emotional fend against anything I count on...

A ward from the force of the river's sidelines...

Mirrors reflecting those laughs long foregone...

Cruel reminders that good times are done...

Washed downstream in these chronic binds.

(III - DELTA)

' - Perhaps I was God when you needed me,

the kick of solitude felling you to one knee.

or a sliver of love you felt under any embrace

bringing all purity you held to fallen disgrace.'

I'm in the centre of all those faces, like a grandiose waterfall,
I'm a violent melody of liquid falling to immediate ground
supplicating the ocean to claim me under its withdrawal
through screeches of a dead voice in cascading sound.
I run a course paved by scorching metals and swords
crashing into a fulminant colossus of my own words...
To think I could instead have watered a Great Oak,
or be timeless, rushing through hills of erosion.
perhaps a mythical, silky and reflective cloak
protecting nude lovers in their fated fusion.
Now, I drift in a void of my own creation
among the graves of a memorial sea.
my serpent river of verdant eyes
has dried from its stagnation
and has finally taken me.

Confusion and Choice

“Yangtze” is, by leaps and bounds, the most complex work of poetry I’ve ever produced. Partially inspired by the great photography works of Nadav Kander with “Yangtze - The Long River” and Zhang Kechun’s “The Yellow River”, it draws from images of life and fluidity, while such concepts are obscured by a thick, pale mist that syphons from both serenity and suffocation.

To break down this poem and drive your interpretation of it would be a disservice to composing. It can mean a myriad of things, all of them valid and all of them heartfelt, and it can also not mean much. But what is within my power is to display what motivated me to write it, and what feelings sustain the spring of this poetic river:

Modernity and modern liberty are blessings in their own accord, and perhaps the highest achievements of our kind as we strive for a better understanding of our reality, but being increasingly liberated arrives with its own price. My freedom was always relative and hand-held, even as I

child, I was both motivated and constrained to follow certain paths that could, by my parents' views, open gates to my wellbeing and happiness. Along the discovery of what those concepts could ever mean, I searched for such meaning in whatever I was able to grasp, and found nothing less than an exponential amount of confusion.

I'm a naive and light-hearted individual, which meant I quickly fell in love with many of the things I explored, and saw within them the depth I yearned for, but did not have energy to attain without sacrificing something else.

Those choices can envelop you in serpents of anxiety and subsequently throw you into chasms of confusion and paralysis.

Between the endless choices gifted by liberty, I didn't find solace in all the scapes of air I could breathe, but instead a daunting sensation of how immensity can crush me. Akin to standing atop a mountain and overlooking the golden fields and their infinity, the beauty overflows and after the awe has washed over, a rogue wave comes and

crashes onto you - that of possibility, the merciless nature of Time and how any wrong step can lead you to tumble down the mountainside and return you to a world of reductiveness and inadequacies, one where the sky isn't endless, the fields aren't infinite, and steps aren't foreseeable.

What can be described as a “plague of volatility” by some, suddenly becomes a more encompassing concept, one that stretches not only on what you could and can do, but also to what you are and what you quest to be. And as I stand here, writing this prose, I still stand equally confused and smothered by the vastness of space, as much as I was when I wrote “Yangzte” and, honestly, as much as I've always been.

To some, this might display an exhibition of ungratefulness or self-outcasting, but not having a choice or having all the choice seem to fall under the horseshoe theory. Albeit opposite, they both seem to stun us in the same way. As such, the long and yellow Chinese River seemed like the perfect painted match to what I feel. A river

so long and vast, so beautiful and overwhelming, so variant and inconstant, that its own grandeur seems as liberating as it is dangerous. Along the sinuous basin of the Yangtze, life continues to bloom effortlessly and eroded, and as eons pass, the river stays impetuous and untamed.

Alpine

(I - CLIMB)

Up, chilling howls to my flesh, inhale,
I breathe in, ice glistens in these lungs,
I hurt through, spears collide, exhale,
my arteries bleed out in a trailing veil.

The children of these pines hunger once more,
what feast shall satiate their void for Absolute?
What God will ignite within their soulless gore
of presenting my strains of cut meat as a tribute?

Up, maybe a sliver of light still drips from the peak,
it tunnels, silence transforms, gains shadowy shapes
of ghouls revealing all destiny any verse can still seek
while I'm drained, slain by the soundless form it takes.

Muddy snow morphs into a silvery mass of quicksand,
dark yearns to be darker, cycling through gradient shades,
darker, solidifying around me, only leaving my raised hand,
darkest, through liquid pain descending in cascades...

(II - INSIDE/LOST)

A gush of wind has lifted the petals of a lily,
they flow, escaping my sight, bright and free,
they flow, pulling my soul away, it's almost silly
how beautiful is their dew, lightly reflecting me....

Had I seen my beauty before, where would I be...?
I cry, perhaps the spores of these ferns can carry my heart,
give it a home on a warm forest, away from my frigid pain.

Wind, what evils have you brought upon my scarred arms?
Paintings, symphonies, grand melancholic displays of suffering,
What have you brought today, wind? More pain for me to nest in?
What have you given me? Crescendos of sharp blades thrusting?

Heavy strikes of violins descending from the crested strings,
shadowy children running in circles, plaguing the melody,
flutes bursting, metals colliding above pulled out wings
bleeding feathers, touching my face, they're velvety...

I'm the first movement of the darkness nearing quickly,
ambushing myself bellow the pines, bellow the entropy,
and the more I'm blinded, drowned in my sandy innards,
the deeper I can breathe, the clearer I can finally see...
that no one lives here, I'm a wilder-man, no one loves me.

Another Dream

Verse envelops each side of geometric light
and one by one, through layered velvet skirts,
it quickly loses and slowly regains brightness.

You, who overlooks life from insentient space,
bleed the crown jewel of unconstrained reality:
the dream, whose prismatic worlds of venture
made by brass and steam, held suspended
atop verdant islands of floating gleam,
are cruel and beautiful and untamed.

The dream, hanged between two palm trees,
is a hammock of rest for any outcasted agony,
a graveyard for despair, a blooming elegy...

Dreams die and are soon reborn, akin to light
they elapse quickly and slowly regain their shape,
but without such visions along this dead space
how else is the sane mind expected to survive?

That recurrent dream in warm days of youth
is hope cast upon futures of shimmer and rose,
and in return, we dream of a world that smooth
even as we face the dreary curves of awakening.

You, overlooking, shall see in the glisten of tears:
that geometric light, pulsing rapidly as it descends,
and between the layers of prismatic colour:
maybe another dream, refined and sinuous,
and with some luck, this one never ends.

Dreaming of Reductionism

Whether in slumber or by daylight, dreaming is one of the hardest human experiences to encapsulate. Although I'm often plagued by insomnia, I've taken solace on daydreaming as means to explore the furthest corners of possibility and creation.

According to Albert Camus in *"The Myth of Sisyphus"*, *"to a man, understanding the world is reducing it to human size and stamp it with his seal."*, and I agree wildly with this piece of brilliant insight. However, we can evade that reduction by entering the boundless world of dreams. There, the limitations of humanity cease, and any sense of inadequacy becomes verboten. Dreams, in both its surreal and imaginary forms, must be credited with the creation of many of our most impactful artistic journeys. And with some zest and tenacity, dreams can be reshaped into wondrous and inspiring works of Art.

That is and has always been my *dream*, to inspire the production of Art higher than mine could ever be, more daring and elevating, something truly ethereal. And playing a part in that, no matter how reduced, is of supreme honour. And that is also why I deeply care about my poetic developments, because now I create poems, but one day, I dream of creating poets.

Noise, Peace

Gathered circling the rosemary topiaries
five children scatter in fashion of hide and seek,
distant squabs chirp away the eerie memories
giving rhythm to renewal, faint and weak,
chirp and chirp – noise, peace...

In tandem, blades sharpened quickly in respite,
'da capo' flies at captives of a world soft and sweet
in the key of allegro they swirl and dance and leap,
shadowed by blue hell-fires burning vigorously
with vitality of ancient speech, flames of vanity
from coal of childhood, manipulated and bleak,
sharpen and sharpen – noise, peace...

Mechanical typewriters click-clack those fables
of grand heroism within the four squares of a pillory,
click-clack, each pulse angered against the machinery,
click – clack, pulses from which who do not speak
tangled and twisted and fallen upon tortuous feet,
each pulse, a strike, each more bound to never cease,
click-clacking, pulsing – noise, peace...

Alas, birds never pause their song, rosemaries still weep!
Those children have well-hidden, but all forgotten to seek,
and such despair is peace in a mist of solitude, yet uncaught
while those birds weep, those rosemaries sing, for reality
is but a game which is always hidden and never sought!
Those children have well-hidden, and giggle their secret,
ignorant of irony the High Absolute holds under its vests,
they giggle and scum, but the joke is solemnly on them...
Chirp and chirp, giggling – noise, peace...

Time presents all with a bulletless gun forged of temper,
and patiently, they await the shot, and stay well-hidden
and still they forsake to seek, all laying faint and weak,
soon, they will be me... and will pray those moments to seek
all manners of chirp, sharp, click and clack, all sorts of noise
that can lift the weight of shift, all laying in deep desperation
for any form of release, for any kind of insignificant peace...

Kafka & The Lone Man

“Noise, Peace”’s name was inspired by Franz Kafka’s “The Blue Octavo Notebooks”, where the author reaffirms his longing for peace and the constant distraction of noise.

In Portugal, one of the most common sights is lonely - and often elderly - men sitting on park benches or atop low-height street walls. They sit silently and with daunting, desolate expressions. Ever since I can remember them, they’ve been there, and although many perish with Time, others soon replace them. I especially remember riding my bicycle or trading marbles, and meanwhile, they just stood akin to statues, marking the passage of minutes, hours and days. These figures were easy to miss, becoming nearly decorative and bleeding into the Portuguese summery waves of hot asphalt, and it took me quite some time to understand them.

As younglings, we are energetic and bursting like cosmic formations, but as time elapses and reality begins to seep deeper into our skins and minds, so does our awareness for simplicity and our longing for peace, much like Kafka.

To me, understanding them required becoming them, and for days, I roamed the streets of Lisbon alone and searched for places where I could descend into silence.

An unoccupied mind is a dangerous one and for a long time, I couldn't settle nor tame my thoughts as they roamed free, and I saw poetry in everything, from seagulls to pigeons, from tourists to natives, from the small pieces of decaying wood shed by those lonely benches to symbols and urban phrases spread across the walls. Everything was an experience of deep thought, reflection and ponder. And as those days passed, even the poetic force of sunsets started to seem impish compared to the infinitely intricate details of life and its motions. The longer I looked, the less I could see and the more I could hear.

Noise, in its simplest form, is peace. The ability to disconnect our minds from a visual world of aesthetics and overwhelming displays, and just hear our surroundings, is akin to taking our warm palm to our chest and feeling the heat radiate through those veins. Everything suddenly becomes coated with inexplicable mysticism and a level of assured meaninglessness that cannot be described otherwise. That is peace, or at least, my peace: bird chirps, sharpening stones, mechanical typewriters, and that warm palm that sustains the weight of being. Those men really did meld with their surroundings, the kind we can only envy, and the thoughts that plagued their lives and shattered their souls have now been taken by those simple noises, and they can relish in quietude and peace, because they needn't say anything, they only need to listen.

Osmosis

Two steps sideways, I'm elevated into godhood,
fingers on a cord, above the weeping violins,
tears of blue ink from gills of golden hardwood,
the crescendo creeps and envelops in our skins:

I look at you, with my half-shut obsidian eyes,
my ivory face is immovable, untouched by time,
the ink fuses with the ceiling, drawing blue skies,
this dance... a static exchange of verse and rhyme.

My waist-shattered days gripped by your hands,
struggle calmly to grip you back without force,
fated jewel, mine is your heart where it stands,
even the smooth emerald hills were once coarse.

Broken is the man that doesn't love, that can't see
the beauty beyond fine-cut gems, so pristine...

When we dance, nature bends all evil within me,
who would turn this into just vice for the guilty?

I drink what I am - a beautiful man with watery skin,
I love what I see - the man my dreams couldn't create,
forsaken are the ones who condemn lovers of their kin,
so, shall we dance like jewels outshining the cruel hate?

Fire and Brimstone

While growing, my sexuality was always absent from my thoughts, to the point where I didn't truly know where I stood. Although not concerning, everything moved very quickly once it did, and I was left digesting a world that wasn't very familiar to me. My discovery of homosexuality was met with concealment and shame, as such acts were not looked kindly upon in my little rural village in central Portugal.

My first boyfriend, at the not-so-tender age of seventeen, marked a confusing yet important stage in my development. We would take strolls and visit monuments, be overtaken by bright days and glowing buildings, and everything seemed smooth until our gutsy action of holding hands prompted an unkind reaction from the nearby teenagers, taking them to haul insults and some harmful objects (which in hindsight, I find a bit comical). This behaviour was not unheard of considering the space in

which we lived, but it caused me to dwell into a strange sensation of irrational fear. I did not understand the cruelty, but now, I understand it better.

If you were to ask me at the time, I would be adamant in the opinion that my sexuality in no way shaped my views and actions as a social being, but now, I understand how much that too was a case of self-deception.

Today I stand proud of who I am, but also very cautious of what I can become. And, despite thinking that homosexuality itself changed little about how I construct my reality, I know that the product of my sexuality definitely did: the cruel feeling of inadequacy, the prospect of disappointment, the invasive and destructive shame, all those things changed me deeply and drove me to a state of overcompensation and even worse, a lot of self-destruction.

To feel your worth being leached by something you previously thought to be so minimal - that of the gender you feel attracted towards - and to experience that reduction, led me to believe I had to prove that worth

elsewhere. A lot of what I am, I owe to that pain, and my reinforced gratitude and gentility towards the world stems from my unavoidable reflex-reaction of not clinging to that pain.

Today, the landscapes are a bit different, and many folks of my troupe have crafted an easier reality for themselves and many to come, and I wish to continue that effort for as long as I can. But still, many do not have rights or suffer terribly from adverse environments, and I urge any reader to do their best and mitigate those situations around them.

I wrote "*Hosmosis*" because of these experiences. It was my first poem deriving solemnly from my life and being, as it doesn't draw inspiration from any other work of Art. (*although I'm certain some passive influence exists concerning its structure and wording.*)

Letter to Gustav

High grace forbad these flowers to bloom,
withering instead into dreadful sin,
and I feel light as the cells swim
through the dunes of my skin
threatening my spirit,
coercing it to sing,
the weight
to dissipate.

Ships dock, set sail, and sink,
in which of their voyages is Death to come
what pasture awaiting within the boundless
made light approach the already numb,
and atoms gain corrupted freedom
died as they lived in a plague of the fruitless,
skies roar, shoot sharp blades and fade,
which of those strikes sings nearing end?

My mind burns all those pines of seclusion
but what forest fires may create enough charcoal
for me to compose poems of my conclusion?

Gustav, you turn the knob in the wrong direction,
create, so you shall endure, colour all with bright allure,
rhyme the senses with chalk, write the tears of your walk,
create, create a world not so desolate, paint company
with syllables of worship, goodness and rage, be yours
to bend and sharpen and reclaim.

Create, Gustav

As I look at the wind passing bellow the curtains, and the line outside that separates the bright sunlight from the soothing shadow, I understand that poetry envelops me in ways that aren't mystical or elevating, but rather, perpetuating.

Our Time in this world is sparse, but through verse, I'm allowed to condensate it into something tangible, give it curves and shapes, turn my seconds and hours and days into statues of lyrical nature, whose delicate fingers can play the lyre, unfazed by their stone forms. This perennial deconstruction of reality aids our ability to continue feeding from the waters of beauty that life springs, even midst tragedy, even through pain, even in the shadow.

The process that I employ in my poetry allows me to reclaim those fragments of the perpetual, of infinitude, without bounds or obligations.

Ironbard

I sing;

For those who have fallen after nights of painful persistence;

For those who have suffered beneath endless claims of conquest;

I sing for heroes of the past, I sing against the silence of destiny.

Between songs, my crackling voice offers the highest resistance,

Yet I sing strongly, my melodies push away the sorrowful pest

Of an unjust path, it backgrounds all your hopeful journeys.

I sing;

For those who loved without why, for those who fell from high sky;

For those defeated by perilous times, for victims of heartless crimes;

I sing for you, as the notes of my lyre brush against your gentle tears.

Between cries, my waving heart preludes a track of highest defeat,

It breaks apart, I use a piece to pick the cords as it falls to my feet,

I sing all painful sorrows with the true humility of Nature's poetry,

I sing all glory and heroism with the force of ungrounded potency...

And as I retire from barding at dusk, my gold-laced voice evades me,

as I nest in my bed once made of melody, all I hear is nearing silence,

I sing all ancient tragedies, except the one that took me from you,

Because in this bed made of music, my voice feels ever-so lonely...

Painting

Grassy fields splattered with narrow-leaved docks,
the green tint of mossy lichens on eroded rocks,
the sight of when I look at you.

Streamy tethers of clearwater behind perennial canes,
the endless dirty pathways, carrying blood to the plains,
your eyes carving through the royal blue.

Stony formations carved lovingly from ancient stories,
the scent and vibrant colour of wild-picked blueberries,
the smell of those arms I want to fall into.

Highly hovering flocks of common blackbirds at rest,
the beating heart of Nature, pushing our bodies to nest.

Gush in the painted sensation of your view.

Forceless... the love of the trees for their landscapes,
restless... the melody of the blackbirds for their skies,
I lay in streams, a livebearer made to inhabit your shapes,
my tranquil and motionless listener of the birds reprise,
this eternal halcyon sewn by a singing cuckoo,
receives mystical prayers, let it be just a preview
for our fusion, you sing within me, I swim in you.

Dogwood and Yarn

All you are, hidden in primeval flickers
is but a shy child jumping rope by itself,
and perhaps - that solitude still lingers
between the spices of my kitchen shelf.

All I am, lapping waves and foamy fingers
sticking wet to pages of Dostoy's temptations,
a chorus of marble figurines instead of singers
chanting the hows and whys of lonely pain.

All those windows, flapping too fast to clench,
not fast enough to shatter the dogwood frames.

All I am, all you are, yarn fibres and icy stench
spinning phrases in cups of enlightened flames.

All we truly know is how much not to fuss
too much, about not knowing much at all.

But we know that little is known to us
besides what we are, and what we find.

And after all I am, I know to be yours,
and you, after all you are, know to be mine.

Silver Descent

Emil Cioran once said: “*There are questions which, once approached, either isolate you or kill you outright.*”

If existentialism bled some clarity, it would be that of misery and hope being motors of life, instead of meaning. It is easy to descend into the underworld of despair and believe it holds enough propulsion to thrust us back. Well, that’s not how it worked, not for me. The carnage of a divided mind daunts in silver, alike to seeing **Takeshi Kitano** raise the handgun to his head while maintaining a satirical grin in *Sonatine*. A reality once made of shapes loses the outline, blends and haemorrhages colour into our formless thoughts.

Company now walks alongside its most prized trophy, that of perception, dragging chains of ice along desolated empires. I communicate with those who understand me, and remain paralysed from the sound-waves of echo. I expose to those who don’t, and am torn apart as my labyrinthian perspectives deepen.

I deposit so much of what I am into what I believe, that once nothingness approaches, there are no trenches or turtle-formations, only a mind of dry-wood scaffolds witnessing the entry of a fire-striker. My ideas are volatile and flammable, falling under sheets of traps laid by modern concepts, and as they fall to those spikes, their corpses are already voided of life and emboss, since my self-preservation has deconstructed them far before the descent.

Misery and hope fuse and evolve to doubt, and doubt collects as if made of liquid, drowning the surroundings and washing them of certainty and emotion. Doubt envelops reality and names it purely material, it smothers pain and mourning and names them inconclusive, it dissolves the being and replaces it with meaning, and truth just becomes the punchline of a precise delivery. Meaning is an atom of solitude placed distantly from our galaxy, it holds no brightness, no seeable form or motion.

The more I search, the less I find, perhaps searching is the crime of which I'm guilty, but what does that *mean*?

Logiculos

Harvest the apple, eat it, throw it away,

It's seeds roll up in earth, become grotesque

'Tell me, adored, how much do you know?

How do the skies roar with a lightened ray,

how does a pearl-kite choose a branch

where it may gaze calmly at it's prey?'

Kites nest within high-tree sticking cups,

we grip the ground in cognisable vertigo.

Lightning breathes figments of hot plasma

as I admire the frugality in one's own time.

Knowledge takes form of a suffocating miasma

drawing air from lungs, replicating the paradigm.

The cost of wisdom harms no less than it's hunger,

the kites choose the weakest branch, they're weightless

without the heavy quest of striking all concepts asunder.

Gears turn within us, we expand our mechanical interior,

liquid doubt collects, we reduce with every exhaled breath,

'Tell me, loved, how much do you know?

Can you grasp the reason why tides turn,

or how those apple seeds sprout and grow?'

Our proficient understanding pleas to be sated

with every fragment, begging silently for sound

of a singular cyclic question beneath uncertainty:

– How much do you truly know, my venerated?

In this north-less voyage, what have you found?

And Birds Are Still...

I remember those solacing springs...

The swallows sang near the water-mill
rotating the vile malice that age brings.

Now the river dried, and birds are still...

I remember the leaves dancing in a whirl
with soft breezes giving me a warm chill,
from my spine to my lips always in curl.

Now the trees have died, and birds are still...

I remember the cicadas haunting the orchard
With vibrant heat turning asphalt into waves,
melting the dark grains into needles of torture,
transforming singing birds into frozen slaves...

I remember... everything, every detail.

The days of Sun, flowing akin to streams,
the gray days, smothered in rainy veil...

I remember... all of it, in weeping dreams.

Now, I suffer, all of it, memories in vain.

Now, I've dried out all the ink of my quill,

Now, I remember the pain, and birds are still.

Stillness

With “*And Birds Are Still...*”, we enter the realms of melancholy in my compositions. My childhood was spent climbing loquat trees and admiring the descent, so much so that my grandmother thought fitting to call me “*the monkey boy*”. I would search for sticks so I could use to roll algae in the streams next to our house, and would catch the tiniest tadpoles so I could care for them in our cloth-washing tank. Whenever a toad was captured, I would remove the leeches from his underneath and release him back into the streams. I remember vividly picking cherries with my entire family, all of us beneath one tree, talking—laughing and eating some from time to time. I ate so many that my lips would become bright scarlet and the floor paved with those little glistening seeds. We were happy, and the sights of our little mountainous side where we could overlook fields of history and emotion was a paradise few had the chance to encounter.

Now, those memories merge with the lights of the cold concrete city I live in, and every sight seems pale compared to the Sun of those days. Melancholy is, along with abandonment and loss, an essential part of our tether to humanity and empathy. We miss and yearn and ache, and the sidewalks of our lives become emerald reflections of what they once were, as we carry that weight and build something new, never forgetting everything we left behind, never releasing what is so worth keeping: our memories, the keepsakes of our sanity.

“And Birds Are Still...” is but a small entanglement of memory that I’ve given shapes to, so I can feel its sinuous curves and feel less lonely in my happy remembrance. It shares its name with one of **Takashi Yoshimatsu**’s greatest works, part of his *“Memo Flora”* musical compositions, and one of the first melodies I was taught to play as a child. Not only does the composition itself already draws from melancholy, it is a painful reminder of my days of innocent youth. Those in which no trouble was grand enough to transcend warm nights, and the ways and meanings of things were simple and diluted. I didn’t know much, and I didn’t need to.

Now, life takes different shapes with heavier beauties and higher concepts, as well as their opposites: heavier burdens and higher miseries. And as it seems, these can become so encompassing that they not only resist the nights, but also bleed into my surroundings, creating a moment of lethargy that saddens space, perpetuated in the stillness and silence of birds, the same silence of "*Noise, Peace*", which launches you into the chasms of the mind and plants seeds of uncertainty and danger, the same silence of "*Solitude*", whose smothering extends to those around us and becomes unbearable. One we've acquired now after so much aching, because now, the birds are still...

On The Nature of Hurt

My smile once illuminated by flares
bears nature's perfect lines as it evades,
flowing from me with tender cascades;

All poetic stands aged, verse soon decays
into the silence of their breaking pauses,
along the dashing nature of our days;

Blinding light, radiating from fruit of a plane tree
Lends me sight of the ravenous gravel of my fall,
Games my image in mirrors of tangible apoplexy,
Claims the woe I haul, any pain I can still recall:

The shiver carrying Death sticks to the shadows,
vessels sink within a maelstrom of my sorrows,
tides rebel in the wake of my own cleansing.

All end overlooks the salt of this sea,
from green shallows to argent dream,
from grim gallows to ice-pallid stream,
inasmuch as it can collapse onto me.

Bayside and nothing else, nothing more,
bleeding among the desolation I've left,
seaside, pure evermore, and enslaved.

All near-end overlooks this light washing rapidly,
that of a smile, that of a sea, that which is mine,
ending where it stands, nearing as it falls gravelly,
ending all around, withering the sound, leaving me...

Arpa Dios

Plumes of smoke motion through the lethargy,
gardens bloom with zest of a fogging Spring.

A caress, readily taken, too quickly forsaken.

A scent, lingering far around, nearing wide.

The trees, the skies, strolls of impervious beauty,
the birds, mother's sighs, marbles of starry obsidian,
cold picture screens, cassettes of viridian wildlife,
the monkey chalk lines, that kiss still so shoddy,
the infinite minutes of embarrassing smiles.

Sometimes, days are just sad, I don't know why,
they too can fear the nightfall, they too can cry.

I don't know why.

I look back still not knowing why.
Each step feels more earthbound,
each distance a torrent of howls,
every view, a less forgiving round,
stepped sand-castles circling a soul,
paper windmills bleeding their vibration,
photographic stills turning to desolation.

All memories, all shards of those before me,
all but images of those I will create,
all captured deep-sea emotions,
why they left, I do not know,
yet they stay, and I don't know why.

Static Limbo

Days of November dwindle with distance,
pinkish-blue twilights and madonna lilies.

Childish love never permits being forgotten,
it seems built under temples of persistence,
through months when inner tempest roars
higher than droplets of any rainy existence,
it persists... it remembers... in godly anthems.

Clear-streams flow with innocence of youth,
and they carry away generations of platitude:
whom to love, what to be, clear-water smooth...

Days aren't so kind, at least, not anymore.

My visions of an impish child in mischief

hide behind glass panes, capturing insects:

bees, wasps and flies in a static limbo of relief

from when the Sun smiles upon such panes,

reflecting over my growth of bending servitude.

Childish love, entrapped between two narrow rocks

and smothered from algal blooms made of memory

dragging my peace into a watery grave, drowning...

But my child eyes overlook where it has drowned

scouting those lilies of regret, ardor and sound,

they overlook the glorious surfacing of melancholy

sprouting words from the impenetrable ground

and allowing me to compose how much I miss

those days when I didn't need to write at all.

Gatekeeper of Illusion

That outer look into life is a preying whirlpool, as the questions prompted wage war at my existence. I'm now a spectator—or even narrator—of a reality that cannot be mine. Is that fuel for madness, or a gateway into abstraction? - there is a slight chance that it can be both.

Art, if well-constructed, can create a prismatic surface infused into my intellect, and all passing information is refracted and reduced to infinitely coloured beams. That process is how eyes become sapphires, and dreams become emeralds. That process is how existence itself edges from the unbearable to the pinnacle.

A soul composed merely of opposites is bound to idealistic servitude. Art gives me the sensation of conceptual sincerity, allowing me to seep into what experiences *are*, rather than, what they *could* be.

But the scattering of light is but an impish fragment of our beings. Existing, by itself and due to its very nature, will always scatter sufficient light to satisfy our conceptual needs. Art is not so much needed, but rather wanted by those who are unsatisfied with the shades of reality.

Artists are now gatekeepers of that abstraction, they stand atop that edge and dip on both sides. Madness becomes tangible and mutable. And even if just for mere seconds, artists acquire the only superpower I've ever witnessed—they bend reality, and allow me to feel the structure of my being as part of something that far transcends me, part of an illusion that doesn't *need* me, but still very much *wants* me.

My childish self finally found some friends, and these truly want my company. My sight upon this world, that of a spectator, is not one of an artist. It is just part of the fabric of being human.

Avenues in France

Three children sing in a paved cobblestone berm,
it's so familiar, a sepia motion gaining tones of blue,
these shoulders buoy willingly to their young tune,
with eyes closed, I imagine azaleas waving as I do...

These colourless buildings seem to give a hug so firm
in the way they bend, balconies whispering to the Moon,
spelling your frame with silvery veils - an opalescent beam.

As your phantom grips my palm, bursts an under-worldly tango.
My senses twirl fully, small leaps in all directions, what a dance!
This street paths directly to my heart, like the avenues in France,
relish our tropical valse releasing the scent of chopped mango...

Our haunted moves are slow, touched by yellow lamp posts,
tears damp the tones under fallen notes of a Spanish guitar
bellow any memories we dance through, mi flor del mar...

(II)

Trade my flesh for more seconds in this elusive street,
to reach beyond the shrouds slowly falling from this vision,
or lift the sheets concealing a dancing statue of our collision
shining within the eyes of all new lovers, moving their feet...

Strike a note off tune - my strident nights consuming cigars
accompanied only by wine-stained papers and roaring cars,
my thoughts escaping to sweeter realities, where you danced
in every street, every corner, even the shadows were entranced...

I'm the exasperated front of urban satire in shape of a man,
a fictional protagonist birthed from ancient solitary sadness
holding dead flowers inside a vacant nightly bus in Milan,
abandoned, gripping carelessly to the crevasse of madness.

I yearn, I miss, I can even cry for this hallucination,
but any spirited tears I shed today will soon dissipate
and I too will fade in the pan-out of that bus station,
forgotten behind credits of the illusion I tend to create.

(III)

Silly, those children still sing in those avenues in France,
the damp Spanish guitar backgrounds all my hopeful walks
searching your frame laid in silver, restless for our last dance,
leaping within my hope... between lights of these city blocks.

To rest in a bed ever-empty is a tortuous exercise of agony,
my shrivelled muscles haven taken habit of rolling the sheets...
Between visions of you and which vase will hold those flowers,
my mind edges by the image of a withered petal held by gravity.

Lacking strength in my limbs, how will I find you in those streets?

Hold this pallid hand, rush blood into my cracked lips,

let's once again stride through those aerial avenues...

Bend those cherry-trees once more by gripping my hips,

our dancing game of hit and miss is one we can't lose.

Life Implies Death

Loss is a cruel reality, turning life into a perpetual wake. We mourn not only those we lost, but the shards of us that were lost with them, and even those that could still be built. "*Avenues in France*" is a harsh poem about such grief, and sometimes, decent into *the nihil* - that nothingness created from the grime of mourning days. The past overcomes the present, rendering us a new world with no colour or shape; a vision that only translates absence; an overwhelming distance between our inner and outer; a signature of solitude where there used to be none.

"La morte si sconta vivendo."(*Death is spent by living*) - said Giuseppe Ungaretti.

What death does not account for, is the lives it leaves in its wake. We must haul the memories, the weights and the crashing of those waves. We must carry the pains, the collapsed realities and perspectives. We must continue, dragging cargo whose spikes lunge at our hearts whenever we look back. It hurts every-time, it holds no mercy.

Paradise

What shades delve inside my heart
Of past memories, blurred in pain,
What souls silently inhabit my veins,
What voyage of agony do they impart?

These faceless creatures so devouring
Deep inside, they feast, taunting,
Tainting every word I let escape,
Demons of cruel speech and pure hate.

I beg for release from these iron balls
Locked to my shins with chains of ice,
They drag and drown all my thoughts
Who deserves to pay such nefarious price?

I beg for the scythe, may it strike truly,
Death is collateral compared to this plight.
Even the calming serenity of the dark Night
Can't purify this blinding plague of fury.

May the afterlife be a silent garden
Adorned with tall trees and flowers,
Worthy of my life soaked in burden,
Maybe a beautiful paradise, just ours.

Akin

My life without you is akin
to a dead rose, shedding petals,
to darkened rust in old metals,
what a nightmare it has been.

Now, I write loveless letters
with dry ink and burnt paper,
may they dissipate into vapour
and reach you in the beyond.

My life without you is akin
to an ocean turned to desert,
photographs reduced to dirt.

A sunless land without light,
stuck eternally into dark night:
a paralysis of the heart and mind.

A senseless man without his half
stuck eternally into an epitaph:
the hallucination for the blind.

Without you, life is akin
to nothing truly worthwhile.
But the real nightmare has been
a haunted memory of your smile.

Four Chestnut Kings

When I read poetry, it's not customary to do it in one sitting, since verse can be overbearing at times, especially when the verse in question is condensed with a large amount of information or emotional overdraws. So, to break that cycle of lyricentric text, I will make a little break and explore the wonders of my culture with you.

In the Portuguese province where I grew up and still live, **Ribatejo**, there used to be a big amount of agriculture. In fact, most of my family still works in that field, working sun to sun along the plantations of Tagus. These men and women who journeyed from far to find work at the river basin, commonly denominated “**gaibéus**”, worked seasonally in the process of removing weed and debris from the yearly plantations, along with cleaning the non-cultivated fields in order to avoid crop-destroying vermin and wild-fires.

Being a descendent of such inspiring figures whose work was so elementary and harsh, I've always felt tenderly connect to the earth of our province. Its fertility and unbound resilience binds with my flesh, courses through my veins and forms me, as if I'm a plant of these fields, yielding fruits in shapes of worship and care.

In our village, four men stood as figures taken out of a painting. All day, every single day, they would gather in a stone table beneath the centurial chestnut tree that grew in the town-square, and they gambled away their hours with Swedish cards. For twenty-two years, I don't remember ever seeing them anywhere else, and after so long, they still play the same game using the same spent and ancient deck. I've always been a lonely and sensitive child, and would have a hard time making friends, so I started watching them play cards in hopes they would interact with me.

The day they did and the days that followed were among the most important in my young life. And at the impish age of twelve, I discovered poetry without ever reading a poem. As Oscar Wilde says and rightly so - from

my experience - *“A great poet, a really great poet, is the most unpoetical of all creatures. But inferior poets are absolutely fascinating. The worse their rhymes are, the more picturesque they look. The mere fact of having published a book of second-rate sonnets makes a man quite irresistible. He lives the poetry that he cannot write. The others write the poetry that they dare not realise.”*

Those men, who I’ve nicknamed *“The Four Chestnut Kings”* over the years, and have nicknamed me *“Crow-boy”*, taught me those values of our culture and earth. They taught me *living poetry*, the likes of which can never be written, only lived, experienced and passed onto those who are open to it.

Along their many lessons that I was far too young to comprehend, one has followed me throughout every bar I had to jump over during my trials: *growth should always elevate above pride*. Our world, the fragments of those who lived before us and those who shall outlive us, the meticulously woven fabric that runs through our gentle interactions, coursing from the deepest trenches of our

beings and effusing everything with a touch of pure selfless humanity, all these concepts require nurture and growth well beyond what one person can contribute. But we all should, we must.

My little corner of the world still lives and breathes faintly, and as sure as the Sun shall rise, the pillars of our culture will weaken and collapse. Younglings like me are tasked with preserving the legacy of those who have preceded, and assure that it continues. Whether in our Art, in our strange and fast speech that no one can understand at times, in our cold buildings whose freshness allowed us to prosper during harsh Summers, or even in our strange obsession with wine and *piquette*. Who I am, and the simple fact that *I am*, I owe to my rich and ancient culture, and perpetuating it through conservation is beyond imperative to me. For as long as I live, so shall my culture.

(II)

The First King, *Sr. António*, taught me that he would have never been happy had his life been different. Such humility and resolve isn't a consequence of self-indulgence or denial, but rather, the mere act of seeing endless beauty in the particles of dust visible by sunlight between those chestnut leaves. The same specks we are often reduced to when the large and ever-hungry concepts of infinitude and meaninglessness assault us, giving us sight of a Universe that far precedes our presence and will long outlive it. But we needn't be small bellow those distant stars, we can instead relish in the fact that we have the ability to see them, feel their heat and radiation, witness their light-year brightness. The simple fact we can conceive these concepts shouldn't be reason to reduce us, but rather, it should empower our visions and ambitions.

The Second King, *Sr. João*, insisted that no love ever equals the first. Although I've always questioned his truth, he seemed headstrong about the universality of what he affirmed. To him, the first time you fell in love was the most important, perhaps not the most intense or pleasant, maybe even short-lived and insufficient. He said it could have lasted seconds, and that still wouldn't change the magnitude of its influence within our beings. It took me a while to understand, but I believe he might be correct.

The Third King, *Sr. Lima*, was an avid fan of traditional Portuguese culture, often stating that he would never bear dying outside of Portugal, hence why he never left the country. The slightest risk of not ending his life where it started, he said, would be reckless, because doing so would devalue every figment of his being. Portugal had given him everything, every moment of joyous pleasure and every laughter, the smiles and giggles of children, the sinuous shapes of grape-picking women that he flirted with in his youth. All of it was his, all for him to blossom and grow,

melodies made for him to hum and dance to, but more importantly—it was all sufficient.

The fourth King, *Sr. Zé*, would often say that the world always gives us more than we can give back, while the others nodded with certainty.

From that point on, I started looking at moments cinematically. The conversations between my parents as I rode with them across the mountainside dirt roads, the breathing patterns and subjects, everything aligned in a grand display of colours and lights. My first love was this land, and I couldn't be happy elsewhere. Giving back to it is my singular purpose, through poetry and prose, Art and life, I plan to give every atom of my body to this earth, certain that I shall never be able to give it more than what it has given me. That, in its most profound essence, is comfort. And the cinematic life I've been granted in its rawest form, is my *living poetry*.

Exe/Exe/One

There I planted, underlines ran a braided course,
before pathed truth, yet here I lay, awaiting light
under nefarious gaze, torn open by an urban maze,
here I lay, forfeit by the sombre under odious night.

Rise, produce and consume, succumb.

Numerals of Truth turn my sinuous charters alight,
systems and stars rotate above their cosmic haze,
binary halves reduce spectrums into tints of white,
machinery already dreams, we envy those machines,

Rise, produce and consume, succumb,

befall your kin and serve until you're numb.

Exe/exe/one, power of silence under the east Sun,
darken sight eclipsing the mysterious sombre line;
Victorious life, feverish and impotent under it's kind,
breathes more carbon under threat of a cartoon gun.

Rise, produce and consume, succumb,
befall your kin and serve until you're numb,
believe, pray and kneel, or taste imperial steel.

Chapels steep into cold blood, one thousand nights
gather circling the reddened flood, time fades out,
youth crackles the leaves on the floor while it fights,
they expend emerald dreams of rain into a drought.

Behold flocks of goldcrests,
impish constructs of feathers
where my solitude now rests.

Rise... produce, consume, succumb,
lay waste to your forests of scapes,
bombard the claim of other's fates,
destroy the blue sky, raise gray fume,
silently plea for a more forgiving doom.

Windswept

Mine, among these preludes sang by heart,

I weep bytes, bedevilled by electronic rains,

Who am I but windswept among fel strains?

Darkened screens cracking my being apart...

I've come in the pinnacle of this boreal age,

A human tesseract seeking the chilling revenge,

Infinite in any image, the red and green light,

Synthesis preying silently in every beeping night.

Given, bombarded by the assailing existential,
Not being enough, being too much, not being,
Eyes navigating the dark spectrum of potential
Drowned in expectations, expected to be freeing.

For those who heed the call of the forceful futures,
Singing love in time won't carve our hearts hollow,
The centres of our warped humanity are but sewers
Running garbage into a waterless ocean, yet shallow.

These already empty shells inside reloaded arms,
These bounties brought upon by bloody storms
Create a stunning maelstrom of pure body mass
That I calm during lazy days, inside a whiskey glass.

Emerald Cage

I'm chained to a prison made of grace
beneath the small singing bird's wing,
smothered, feeling the breeze on my face.

This flight elevates in admiring distance
above crowned kings and hallowed queens,
insignificant bellow the sadness of existence.

I'm taken to relinquish the bird's song:
"Life is candid and it flows through rocks,
it's effusing, it loves with electric shocks,
it frees you while it traps you with desire,
and strikes you down into a waterless mire."

The bird nourishes problems of the older,
it's a philosopher of the skies, a barded soul,
may it see ground, it will fall like a boulder.

These fantasies created among mindful dreams
are emerald cages with bars of flowery vines.
I'm trapped - yes - but not by a bird, it seems...
Motionless under the weight of higher minds.

To be, to exist beyond the scope of elements,
to exist, to be more than just glued ligaments
of flesh and beating veins, of bones and blades.

As air rises violently to the high heavens, so shall I,
as droplets reflect colours, so shall the iris of my eye,
and to see - truly penetrate - the figments of suffocation,
to dodge the cruel themes shrouded by self-commiseration.

The world is made of rhythms and harmonies: a bird's song,
and even the arch-thinkers of the skies change their tune:

“Life gambles itself under the waves for centuries-long,
take refuge in my wing, admire the distanced reality,
be one with the captivity of your natural mortality,
never descend the bog of truth bellow the clouds,
you won't be free there, among earthly crowds.”

To ascended readers, the world may be endless glee,
but I'm made of the same dirt that suffocates me.

To great minds, it may be the painful screech of a banshee,
but my tears shed only when I see the beauty that evades me.

To whom belongs the aegis of truth or the hardness of reality
seems to be a recess game beneath the weight of mortality.

Ships That Dare

Yet, my skin does not bleed light once cut, my memory is not a sea filled with vessels hauling treasure, and I can't see past sky-rim. Those ships—I see them set sail and pass, wreck and sink, cast onto fiery cascades, and I see myself in them, drowning and burning.

I know how it ends; I've seen it before;

Comes with day, engraved by ancient lore:

They leave, and I stay.

I stay in this mental illusion of a small port-village, where the sound of seagulls preludes the daylight, but distant and faintly echoed. Where the windows radiate with the blue-hue of gentle waves, and onlookers are statically sighting the sea, waiting endlessly for a ship that will never arrive, a day that will never come.

These days held by the belly, broken and shattered in every street and any corner, are the simplest notes sang by those seagulls. The lightness of serenity—that white sand. The heaviness of doubt—that ravaging ocean. Everything fitting as if it inspired a painting, in an harmony only captured by timelessness. Everything existing, breathing and seeing directly from my body, all aligned perfectly where they previously couldn't fit.

That very unity of aesthetic space and sensorial emotion, a painting of words and concepts, is far beyond my abilities to encapsulate. As those ships pass, I stay, and the village grows ever-so static, slowing the motions, and the harder I try to encapsulate that mirage, the stronger it presses to bevel my mind, turning a timeless figure into a limited reality.

The further my descent, the clearer I can see the origin of my constructions, and trace it back to single day crystallised within my memory:

Thornless Bramble

As a child, I was crowned as the clumsiest infant born on the year of ninety-five. I would climb every tree, most commonly fig-trees, cherry-trees and loquat-trees, being of immortal beauty dotting the spaces between decayed buildings, dripping age from their roof-tiles. I would climb them and quickly fall, so much so that I broke my forehead three times, and still have the three scars of my infant adventures paving my face. (Not sure why, I would always fall on my forehead)

Any toy brought to my hands would be quickly destroyed, and wouldn't last hours, the same hands decorated with wounds and bandaids from breaking so many falls.

There was, however, a fabled and worthy nemesis in that forsaken village, one whose victory was far too common: the brambles. If I was to fall on a trench—which I did often—it would be in the only dug-up segment that, by stroke of luck, housed bramble-thorns. If I was to jump over the sheep gates at my grandmothers, I would always mystically land over a shrub of those nefarious berry-bushes. They won so many times that I started seeing the thorns as friends—always at my side. Anytime I see a thorn-bush today, I like to touch the spikes lightly, just to remember the pain they brought me and how quickly it would pass. The pains of today, those don't leave so quickly. As an adult, I now begin to pray for those thorns, instead of present pains that sting much harder, much deeper.

Every-time she treated my wounds, my grandmother would say, joyful and smiling:

-“If you weren’t born, my son, you would have been invented.”

I would answer with the mischief of a plotting young devil—a boy with evil on his eyes, but sweet evil, very childish and with no ill-intent, but just to relish the feeling of sharpening my tongue:

-“They should instead invent a thornless bramble.”

She would laugh, I would smile, we were happy. While those small droplets of blood sprouted from my scarred legs, and from the high-noon light of our harsh Sun reflecting that scarlet onto my skin, we were happy.

But the vibrating lines of melancholia and nostalgia aren't sufficient to perpetuate that day. There was a sentiment of humanity that forced itself into my memory, akin to branding iron or an inked needle. The constant reduction our mind imparts suddenly suspended, and worry became a bubble outside my reach.

I can trace my life ever since those days, I can replicate it imaginatively as it elapses, every new-facing direction becomes a transition of colours. I am suddenly a motion-picture of myself, constantly distilling moments that have passed and synthesising their essence into different shapes. I become the artist, shifting through lenses, walking along worlds, gatekeeping those illusions, creating realities that can bend beyond those ships, sailing and wrecking.

My realities and memories collapse into one fused singularity—which I call a *composition*—my emotions and beliefs hover from the silence between syllables—which I call a *poem*.

Street Lights and Reeds.

Flocks of gussied-up men walking dames back home,
moonrises high above, shifting from silver to gold,
and street lights illuminating the misery of some,
my men, some solitaires and their fleeting hold.

As oil-paintings would have it, nothing moves
through the canvas of lonely self-destruction.

And hovering my hands above red buttons
luck would take a bite: the golden moon
still shines in splendorous, rich solitude.

Time fades - as do those men and their dames,
suns rise in chromatic transitions, black to white,
and street lights cast shadows on my brittle veins
whose blood carries only pathetic existential blight.

Top hats, bowties and beige collars, and my eyes
searching for more golden truth beyond moonshine,
are tossed into a exhibition of lights and black tails,
shocked from a display of flowers, heels and sighs,
which will live and dance and love beyond my time
to remind me of how cruel I've been to my kind.

They will gussy up, kiss and enchant and smile,
and I will lay face-down upon the table of buttons
operating a world that isn't mine, living such lies
of giving meaning to collapse and beauty to agony,
instead of bouquets to dames, instead of bathing
beneath those golden moonshines and street lights.

Barren Destiny

A tree's only mission is sanctity of being;
may the forest-front whisper, it would beg
for any glimpse of serene gentility.

Matching them, we are shattered in duality;
Chaotic minds whose binaries have collapsed
into doubt, certainty of doubt, and mortality.

Alas, the voice still whispers, never muffled
and never ceasing, because modern agony
is a distant moon, waxing and waning.

Tomorrow, our inner rings will hold prophecy
of overgrowth stemming from past velocity,
the light sparks of rhythm turn to moisture
and bulks of knowledge into gravelly soil.

Yesterday, I dreamt of emerald and earth
sprouted from my deepest emotional turmoil,
and such sapling bore fruit of beautiful galore:
serene gentility, beautiful still, in silent encore...

But time itself cannot generate that paradise
hidden between the notes of a faded whisper.
What kinship to green may our flesh elevate
if we only torture it with heartless despise?

The ending, as we meld with time and grass,
perhaps then, maybe tomorrow, or even now,
as overgrowth reclaims my brittle mind of glass
and turns me into blooming vines in eternal vow.

The Dispute

One succumbs under the eye of truth;
The other crafts worlds, and conquers;
One looms evocations of its own youth;
The other lays still and... still ponders.

I observe their catharsis and narrate the piece,
I build the waterlogged world in which they live:
the oxbow lakes and unending fields of plantains,
every single genuine expression and raging portrait.

And while I weave the satin tapestry of their fate
the blood of their veins fuses with my garish ink
assuming life on paper, those demons that I create
in prismatic shards of everything I could still be
sewn into fibres of what I most deeply hate.

I produce these realms, and they destroy me,
every inch of land populated with lavish life
merged with any glimpse of my fleeting sanity.

I give myself to them, and they receive me,
every kiss of doom in my romantic realism
fused with any vestige of memorial empathy.

These emotions I haemorrhage along the pages
are elm trees rooted alongside under-worldly lakes
begging that languid water that taunts them for ages,
but receiving instead a merciless and molten ending
drying within a volcanic winter of my naive mistakes.

And upon one final hour of sinking dusk
I shall bleed out, hopeless and demented,
stabbed in a rampage of a loved character
wielding a weak jewelled dagger I created.

Bronze & Bismuth

What would be of worth without madness,
what could escape the leer of paradise
planted statically on the other side?

The Sun, the Sand, everything in stillness,
the palms, the joy, a maddening disguise
held between fingers of a tropical tide.

Lunatics, we escape through the moon.
Man-made madness with scent of flesh
sliding electrically to a looping tune.

Of fury, of rage, immortalised seduction,
as deep as pink oceans and lime nights.

Of kiss, of embrace, empathised relation
elapsing quickly through absurd lights.

I'm molten iron poured into a bronze cup,
I'm a digital shadow in synthetic slowness,
a simulation of choice,
a necessity to blow-up
into fragments of loneliness.

Why poetry, still?

Since the elder days of lyrical production, poetry has taken shape of shoulders carrying the shadows of human declaration.

From a singular first word of verse to the last sound of its adored stanza, it has been used to spawn nights of joyous dreams, dawns of draping silks, and as a hand moves to slide away those curtains woven of melody: a window, leading to scapes of exposition, hills of galloping horses hauling our pains, our wounds, whatever we deem worthy to exist in that composition, because it too shall stand to compose us.

That is the level of communication all artistic movements tend to bleed out, those small shreds of emotion that plea for capture, and beg ever-so softly to be replicated, to be laid upon those hills of erosion so they too can taste the winds and streams carving away figures of reality. So they too can dock at those immense seas of

versed salt, so they too can be cast upon the shame of their fault. Sharing all our moralities and sorrow, fears and loves, they are the Gods our mind are able to create, our fronts illuminated midst the foggy lighthouses of our fate.

Poetry is sound requesting to be heard, all the while praying that it shall never be truly felt. It holds no message but the one it cannot convey, inhales only the air it cannot attain, and rises ethereal, dodging a volley of arrows aimed at the core it humbly attempts to translate.

And I, narrating the strolls of flowers and their petal waltzes, am reduced to a lonesome grain, carried away, endlessly carried away, each verse another wind-strike, meters and meters of paths along a starless sky, from eons where the sun is blindingly beautiful in its rise, to minutes where its just an icy sphere casting upon me the lores of demise. Taken away by blowing agonies, abducted in the desperate glistening of their tears.

What was before an effigy of nature's claims, is now a valse of linen strings placidly caressing my skin, takes form beneath my ground of insecurity, holds my callous hands, kisses my cracked lips, and signals towards horizons of truth in doubtless figure, wrapping around these hands, and soon dissipates.

Versing is of utmost cruelty, its envy at the rawest state;

Envy of those blooming lotus flowers, breaking the hearts of any deemed beautiful before their reveal. Envy for the melodious birds whose lyrics none can encapsulate. Envy for a world presented to us in all its higher forms, and along those horizons of elevation and the figures representing such painstaking fortune, we do not see us, only, at the rarest of times, glimpses of our verses and melodies along with paintings of our pains. Versing sets boulders ablaze and hauls them at the endless scenario, salvaging anything whose beauty stands out from the remains, leaving a wake of all we abandoned at the flanks of those once-sylvan lanes.

It hurts... every time.

Doing so in any tangible way...

But what would poetry be if it could not
destroy the landscapes it attempts to create?