You can help us promote this event in a few simple ways:
* Send us a mailing list of people you would like to be notified of your reading.
* Tell your friends and acquaintances about the reading and urge them to come. Word of mouth is incredibly powerful.
* Send us a picture and a brief biography of yourself with emphasis on your writing to be used in our press releases.

Documentation of the Event
All of our readings are videotaped for archival purposes. The event will be rebroadcast on the Billings community public access Channel 7 in the summer of 1993. We hope to also make tapes available to other public T.V. stations, libraries and schools in the future. Enclosed is a "Videotape Release" form. Please sign and return this form.

Honorarium
We can offer an honorarium of $75 for your visit, plus $25 toward transportation expense. A contract from the YMCA is enclosed. Please sign and return in advance so that we may process your check in advance. Be sure to include your Social Security number.

Does want a bookstore to do it?

You are encouraged to bring any books for sale; we will provide a table and salesperson during the evening. The Writer's Voice does not take a sales commission on books sold by guest authors.

Call

On behalf of the Writer's Voice, thank you for taking time to visit and share your work with the community. Please feel free to call my administrative assistant, Laila Nelson, at 248-1685, or me at 248-9331 with any questions or special requests.

I look forward to seeing you on April 27.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(male)

Corby Skinner

Corby Skinner
Director

Sally's #

Call re Book sales

The Writer's Voice

of the Billings Family YMCA
Billings, Montana

a member of The National Writer's Voice Project of the YMCA of the USA

Bring 10 Books!

March 4, 1993

Mr. Datus Proper
1085 Hamilton Road
Belgrade, MT 59714

Dear Mr. Proper:

John Barness tells me that you have agreed to participate in our reading on Tuesday, April 27, as a participant of the Writer's Voice Community Series. We are very excited about your visit!

Your reading is a part of The Writer's Voice Spring Reading Series which includes Montana writers: Ripley Hugo, Phil Condon, Lowell Jaeger, Anner Marble, Mick Fedullo and others, as well as the National Tour members Terry McMillan, Allen Ginsberg and Philip Levine.

Your Visit

Date: Tuesday, April 27

Time: 7:30 p.m. Please arrive by 7:15 p.m.

Place: Youth Services Center at the Billings YMCA, located on 4th Avenue North between ~~North 33rd~~ and 32nd Streets.

Program: Program title: "Sports and Field."
Please plan your reading to be about 30 - 45 minutes in length. The works you select to read are entirely your choice. We have a 15 minute intermission for coffee and refreshments. If you wish, you can hold a question/answer period following the reading.

(after intermission?)

A podium and microphone will be set up for your use.

& Table?

Promotion

We will do all that we can do to promote this event to the general public including:

* Announcement in our spring 1993 brochure, mailed to a list of +12,000
* Advertisement in YMCA publications whenever possible.
* Press releases to key newspapers, radio stations, magazines, and libraries.

- Send 1 book to Corby

The National Writer's Voice Project is made possible by a major grant from the Lila Wallace—Reader's Digest Fund.

[EDITED VERSION FOR READING ALOUD]

[Explain: This chapter starts with an epigraph from the poet Camoes -- Portugal's Shakespeare. He wrote an epic on the little wooden ships that sailed from Portugal, startingg early in the 15th century, and little by little discovered a big round world.]

In this chapter I'm just going to be exploring a Portuguese kiosk with a friend named Adriano, She is old enough to be my father.

Chapter 12

SECRETS OF NATURE

"So, you daring race .... You have come to surprise the hidden secrets of nature and of its watery element, that to no mortal, however great, however noble or immortal his deserts, have yet been revealed. Listen now to me and learn what perils have been laid up against such excess of presumption."

Camões, The Lusiads, Canto Five

The Mondego River plunges from Portugal's highest range, cuts through the steepest gorge, and dawdles past the oldest university. The flow sections the nation's land and people: granite and shepherds at the top, then terraces and peasants, bottomlands and farmers, streets and students, salt marshes and shipyards. This stream is to Portugal's natural history what Sagres is to its human achievements. [Sagres is the rocky peninsula from which those little ships sailed to discover the world.]

Adriano and I wanted to drink from the Mondego's source and

cower in its canyon. We were in no hurry, however. I was working up courage for the passage -- a translation of passagem, meaning a place on the gorge's cliffs where one passed or one didn't. Adriano the Fearless just wanted to work up to the best part gradually, enjoying the preliminaries.

"I like to watch the brooks," he said. It was what he had said about pretty women earlier, ~~the meninas back in the Alentejo~~, but for streams we got out of the car and stared without shame. Had we rushed, we might have driven from ~~Anadia~~ Adriano's home to our lodgings near the upper Mondego in three hours, but ~~Adriano~~ he chose to spend the afternoon admiring nature.

We were not disappointed. The rocks below the bridges were round and smooth. At their bases, fringes of grass shaded the dark places that we coveted. Upstream, arms of water spread out into the hills. Two or three times Adriano told me that he had caught trout in some hidden pool. At the other crossings, we speculated that the rivulets must be big enough to fish, judging from their topography; and then we imagined unplumbed pools protected by hidden passages. Few anglers would be man enough but we were sure that we could pass, if only life gave us time.

You might think that the topic would run dry. It doesn't. Not even when the river shrivels. Men see nature's sculpture on women, women's bodies in nature. We are not deterred when the notion is ludicrous. (There was a movie, once upon a time, that compared Marilyn Monroe to Niagara Falls, and I went to see it anyhow.) Nature is always female. This confession is embarrassing, today, and ~~we~~ men might be persuaded not to talk about

our vision, but in the dream time we paint her on our cliffs, up beside the mammoths and elands. There is no future in father nature -- not for men, at least. Women may have any vision they wish, [and welcome to it].

We parked for a drink of the Mondego [River] up where it was small enough to spout from a fountain. On impulse I bought a cup from a peddler who was waiting by the spring for live ones. The cup was of tourist-pottery, ugly and green, with a shepherd and his Mountain Dog in relief. I baptized it in the fountain, drank from it, and kept it to help me remember the taste.

We stopped at a hotel that Adriano remembered as having been good, once. The ancient couple in the bar seemed surprised that we wanted to spend the night. On my room's wall hung a framed, faded photograph of a British ship -- one of the Queens on her maiden voyage. Over the porcelain washbowl was a shelf with a drinking-glass and a water-flask. I set out to take a sponge bath (useful skill, in Portugal) but stopped when I got a close look at the flask. It was yellowed by a crust inside: mineral deposits from old plumbing. Next door Adriano said O diabo -- The devil -- which is his strongest language. I looked in and saw him standing at the washbowl, socks wetter than his face. The water had poured onto his feet from its rusted-out drain pipe when he pulled the plug.

Next day at dawn we stopped in Videmonte, but not for long. It was the village closest to the Mondego's gorge. Everything was stone: The walls of the fields, the narrow road that twisted through them, and the houses. The chapel and a few of the other

buildings had coats of cement covered by paint. The house of José Sequeira Mendes had no such cosmetics, but it had Adriano's friends. We greeted them -- briefly, because there was a long walk ahead, and we would have to hurry to get out of the canyon before dark, even in the long twilight of late May. José loaned his son Manuel to the expedition. Manuel stowed his staff in the car and jumped in with us.

Adriano would fish near the ford across the Mondego, he said. But first he dropped Manuel and me at the bottom of the gorge. The young man would be my guide. He was lean and strong from a stint in the army, brown fist curled around the staff.

The river was half blue, half foamy-white, and small at the bottom of its canyon. Manuel showed me the goat-trail down through the rocks. I rushed to assemble my rod and tie on a team of three Portuguese wet flies. They should have been good before the sun warmed the water, but the trout paid no attention. I cast upstream through the pools, letting the flies drift back past me, deep. Then I fished cross-stream and watched the line swing around in the current. In desperation, I teased the top fly along the surface, the two below it serving to keep my leader straight. It is a good method for eager trout, but these weren't.

(River my love, you are cold. You shove me when you're close. You grumble when you're not. Don't push me away: Give me a fish. I've been faithful to you, in my way, so now be kind.)

I would have to move faster, Manuel said, or we would not get out by sundown. I tried jumping along the rocks like him and suddenly found myself on my back. The water cushioned my fall but

I was not grateful. Somehow my whole torso had landed in the river with my legs above, on dry land. It was a position that I had never before achieved despite my acknowledged expertise at falling into rivers. Ego aside, this was not as bad as my conventional tumble because the hip-boots did not fill with water and my trunk would blow-dry soon enough. The bright side did not occur to me right away, though.

We came to an eddy that had created a little foothold for alders. A bird was dancing in them but I paid no attention, drifting my fly deep under the brush, troutless. The bird still danced. It was a desperate dance, but then I was getting desperate myself. The flutter came again and I saw that the victim was a pintasilgo of sweet song. I waded the stream, boots shipping water. The finch had tried to eat a trout-fly that someone had cast across the stream with a spinning rod. The float had caught in the alders, the line had broken, and the fly had dangled, a cruel trap. I unhooked the bird and held it for a moment to calm down, soft black and yellow body quiet in my caress, scarlet face looking at me. When I opened my hand the finch lay for a moment, not realizing that it was free, and then flashed off through green leaves.

Flocks of goldfinches are called charms, with good reason. My damsel in distress did not say thanks but I hoped that she was relieved not to be popped in a cage like most in Portugal.

My own line had been dangling in the current below me during the rescue operation. I waded back to shore, cleaned the flies of some flotsam they had picked up, and cast them to the upstream

end of the eddy. My intention was just to get the line straightened out so that I could wind it back evenly onto the reel. Chances of catching anything after that commotion were slim. But the line twitched as it drifted under a limb and I pulled the rod tight. A strong trout flashed gold, hooked on the top fly. I trotted her downstream at once, keeping the angle between me and fish constant till she tired and slid into my net. She was a brown trout, Portuguese native of antecedents older than Adriano's. As I released her, my back began to feel warm and little glints reflected from the current. The sun was out.

* * * * *

I want my trout ~~Nereids~~ shy and seductive but ardent when I catch them, like the water nymphs of the Poet Camões. In the Latin countries -- and even in Germany, of all places -- trout are assigned a female gender. You can, of course, find scholars who will tell you that the gender of a noun has nothing to do with sex. I do not fish for scholars. I fish for *a truta*, *la trucha*, *la truite*, *die Forelle*. English-speakers may say of a trout "look at 'im jump!" But everybody knows that we're odd. Who else would give trout a gender suitable for making war instead of love? I am grateful to have lived in the Latin world long enough to get these matters straight.

* * * * *

The trout the finch gave me had a secret: mayflies. Her throat contained two of them, caught before they could fly or mate. They are called duns, in that stage, and I recognized them from their sober dress, the color of olives turning ripe. I stowed my wet-fly leader, put on a finer one, and fastened to its tip a single floating fly resembling the real thing. Then I rushed back to the fishing with no time out for contemplation. When water nymphs are ready to be caught, they must not be kept waiting.

A poem from the mid-fifteenth century addresses the problems of "a man that lovith ffisshyng and ffowling both" and uses them as metaphors for the pursuit of love. It was a "pleasaunce" or "dysporte" with rules,[1] not constant love. There are only so many poetic words, even in English, and I suppose that the anonymous author wanted to use the best of them for his strongest passions.

* * * * *

I knew why the trout were feeding: it was because there were mayflies to eat. I did not know why the mayflies and therefore the trout stopped all at once. Minutes after they did, however, the sun disappeared too, and Manuel told me that I must hurry to climb the bad passagem before rain made the rocks slick. I looked for excuses. It was climb or swim, though. The river rushed through a cleft between cliffs, too deep to wade.

The passage would have been easy for a rock-climber. Even some anglers would have been competent for it. I was not, but I

accomplished the thing by scraping my fingertips and taking a minute interest in patterns on the rock before my nose. I did not look at the currents grumbling down below. Having passed the throat of the gorge, I descended sloping granite casually, legs barely trembling. Manuel told me to wait, urgency in his voice. I saw the viper just before his staff hit it. It was small, by comparison to a rattlesnake. I would not have killed it. I am not much afraid of snakes, but still the poisonous kind always stirs some lost emotion.

Above the passage, light-green grass grew from rocks in the Mondego, tall and lush as pampered plants in the office of a banker. I could not remember seeing so much unused forage anywhere in Portugal. Goats can go almost anywhere, but the passage had preserved paradise, or at least stopped the people taking care of the goats. The river felt lonely, my secret. Humans had trickled through it for hundreds of generations, of course. All had been tested by the passage. Ghosts of this quality made such good company that I did not mind a thin, cold rain.

Fishing was slow. Mayflies seem to know that they should not leave the stream-bottom till the air-temperature is right, though how they can make such judgments is a mystery. Manuel and I moved along, he looking for vipers (which he could see better), I looking for trout (which I could see better). One has to learn to see things, you know. It is not just a matter of visual acuity.

I stood on a rock sloping into the Mondego, looking at a distant side-current that had an occasional odd quiver. There was

a wink of white under water, then another a minute later. I could not see the rest of the trout, but the white had to be its mouth opening to take something drifting in the current. The something would be nymphs: not the poet's kind but their namesake, immature mayflies. They had planned to hatch during the burst of sun, perhaps, and been fooled by the change in weather. Hatching is a dangerous passage, for nymphs.

This was a trout worth the full treatment. I clipped off my dry fly, lengthened the leader with a fine strand, and tied on a nymph that I had dressed for the occasion. It had an abdomen wound of two pale fibers from the tail of a late-season pheasant. The thorax was spun of fur ~~guard-hairs~~ from a hare's ear. The thread that held the dressing together was Pearsall's silk and the hook a Partridge, strong for its size. The magic and the science were both studied, you see.

I waded till I was cross-stream from the trout and some thirty feet away. The fly was in my mouth, soaking, and it sank instantly when I cast it. The trout did not move. It did not move on the next two casts, either. On the fourth, there was the little pale wink when the fly had drifted to the right position. The line came tight just long enough for the fish to react and jerk it from my fingers. Small trout cannot do that. This one made a long, wallowing jump and ran upstream -- another thing small trout cannot manage -- for the shelter of a cliff. The line angled deep and ticked twice on a rock, but the shelter that the trout found was not good enough. It came back into my net, ~~fifteen-inches-long,~~ big-jawed and not pretty. Manuel said that

he had not seen a trout quite so big.

When I opined that trout are female, I was referring to those of normal size. This one was hook-jawed, a male characteristic. You admire a trout like that but you do not court it. You fight it.

The rain ended then, the breeze blew in warm gusts, and fish began rising freely, which does not happen often on the upper Mondego. I cast frantically. One small trout made a mistake at last and I derricked it in. Its mouth contained dark specks: black gnats. I tied on an imitation and hooked a better fish, but then the rise was over, almost wasted.

Never mind. We were through the narrowest part of the gorge by then, able to walk along the banks in places, and Manuel wanted to keep moving. We heard bells up above us on the canyon walls. Then we heard high, laughing voices: children trying to drive goats where they did not want to be driven. I would have laughed too but big boys don't just break out giggling with no reason.

* * * * *

Wilderness is a thing in the mind, nobly savage. I want it. It is the last illusion I am allowed, because humans didn't work out, Lord knows, and the animals I tried to ennoble were even more ridiculous. (There was a nature-faking film, one more of a long line, in which father bear reared his offspring. In nature, that cub would have made a couple of good meals.) I want the real

thing, beautiful, red in tooth and claw. I enjoy it even in bed, covers over my head. Maybe that is how I enjoy it most.

The Mondego's gorge feels right. It keeps most people out and lets me in. It gives me running water and trout. The trout are the better for having adapted to me over millennia. The laughing and tinkling of bells are also echoes across the ages.

In America, we like to pretend that there is wilderness ruled only by the balance of nature. In fact nature knows no balance and if she did, we humans would have altered it before now. Calling a place wilderness is nevertheless convenient because it lets us duck decisions on management. If it were not wilderness by law, somebody would find a way to get up the gorge with engines -- jet-boats or helicopters or something. He would drive an off-road vehicle over the goat trails to the rim. Anyone trying to stop him would be accused of violating democratic freedoms. We are a new, all-or-nothing civilization. It takes an old one to build wilderness from half-measures.

I would like to tell you that the gorge of the Mondego is safe. In fact it is known locally as the sítio da barragem, place of the dam, because for years the engineers have been wanting to plug it up and flood it. Maybe the European Community will loan them enough money for the job.

* * * * *

The canyon flattened till there were pastures on its right side, and in one of them a bored shepherd sat on a rock. His dog

lay beside him, then sat up, glared, and charged us. It was very big, a real Mountain Dog (Cão da Serra). I waded into the river. Manuel stood his ground, braced his legs, and raised his staff. Only then did the shepherd give a command. He was happy to liven up the day, but not if it meant risking a working-dog's bones. The beast paused, watched us, growled. The shepherd called it back and we heard its name: "Arombo". It sounded like the growl. Mountain dogs are bred to attack wolves, which requires dim wits and large size. Portuguese shepherds would not waste food on a big dog with no function. I would have been glad to see this dog's man get a clout with the staff.

(Odd, is it not, that wolves survived in Portugal but died out in the wilder spaces of Montana? I suppose that the European wolves had a chance to adapt to man -- hide from him or prey on him -- before modern weapons evolved. In America, wolf met man and bullet at the same moment.)

Manuel guided me to Adriano's car by a route that I would never have found, well away from the river. We walked extra miles, but quickly and for the most part downhill. We passed shepherds' cottages far from any road. In one field we greeted a woman who sat on the grass, watching a small herd of cattle, while her young son ran around playing with grasshoppers and rocks. His nose was running but he looked happy. He was not lonely. She was.

Adriano was searching a field near his car, catching crickets for his grandchildren. We climbed in, lazily, and drove off, diesel engine putt-putting in the contented way it always

did when we had caught our trout. It did not even frighten a quail calling beside a small field of green wheat.

We stopped near the village of Taberna to buy a wheel of mountain cheese for dinner. It was expensive, in a land where most food was cheap, but Adriano thought it good value for the flavor. We went with the shepherd who made the cheese into a windowless stone hut used for this purpose alone. Real queijo da serra [cheese of the mountains] could be made only in this region, at this altitude, and in this kind of building, Adriano said; the bacteria or something did not prosper elsewhere. No trace of goat's milk could be allowed to overpower the mild odor of milk from ewes grazed on rock-rose shoots. And we paid extra for a cheese made from the shoots before the plant came into bloom. My stomach started to rumble.

It did not stay empty in Videmonte. ~~Mrs. Sequeira~~ Manuel's mother took us upstairs to a kitchen -- far from any plumbing -- where things were cooking in an open fireplace. After reflection, I am still of the opinion that this was the best-smelling meal ever cooked. There was medronheiro -- wood of the strawberry tree -- sputtering under a cast-iron cauldron. There were chestnuts drying in a wooden rack around the fireplace. There were lichens steaming on granite walls. Dinner started with caldo verde (a soup of tall cabbage, potatoes, and sausage). Then came rice with kid, more kid in a sauce, two kinds of pastries, and a cheese redolent of rock-rose shoots in spring rain. There was red wine in a clay jug covered by a white cloth. There was -- well, there was the fragrance of years gone by, because everything in that

room would have been the same in the Middle Ages.

We should have taken time to enjoy ourselves, but we were too busy, between sniffs and bites and sips, eulogizing each trout that had brought us here.

(1)Hoffman, Richard C., in Speculum 60/4 (1985), pp. 898-9.

Chapter 13

(The Portuguese people are native. No sudden change in culture or land use, as in America. One of my themes – not in this chapter – was the search for a noble savage.)

.of

Send Copy to Knox

Datus Proper
1085 Hamilton Road
Belgrade, MT 59714
(406) 388-3345

EXCERPTS ON ANGLING

from

~~Looking for Portugal~~

Datus Proper

(Scheduled for release by

Simon & Schuster early 1983)

[ ] Paragraphs in brackets used for Field & Stream.

I

SECRETS OF NATURE

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Adriano and I wanted to drink from the Mondego's source and cower in its canyon. We were in no hurry, however. I was working up courage for the passage -- a translation of passagem, meaning a place on the gorge's cliffs where one passed or one didn't. Adriano the Fearless just wanted to work up to the best part gradually, enjoying the preliminaries.

"I like to watch the brooks," he said. It was what he had said about the women back in the Alentejo, but for streams we got out of the car and stared without shame. Had we rushed, we might have driven from Anadia to our lodgings near the upper Mondego in

three hours, but Adriano chose to spend the afternoon admiring nature.

We were not disappointed. The rocks below the bridges were round and smooth. At their bases, fringes of grass shaded the dark places that we coveted. Upstream, arms of water spread out into the hills. Two or three times Adriano told me that he had caught trout in some hidden pool. At the other crossings, we speculated that the rivulets must be big enough to fish, judging from their topography; and then we imagined unplumbed pools protected by hidden passages. Few anglers would be man enough but we were sure that we could pass, if only life gave us time.

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I would have to move faster, Manuel said, or we would not get out by sundown. I tried jumping along the rocks like him and suddenly found myself on my back. The water cushioned my fall but I was not grateful. Somehow my whole torso had landed in the river with my legs above, on dry land. It was a position that I had never before achieved despite my acknowledged expertise at falling into rivers. Ego aside, this was not as bad as my conventional tumble because the hip-boots did not fill with water and my trunk would blow-dry soon enough. The bright side did not occur to me right away, though.

We came to an eddy that had created a little foothold for alders. A bird was dancing in them but I paid no attention, drifting my fly deep under the brush, troutless. The bird still danced. It was a desperate dance, but then I was getting desperate myself. The flutter came again and I saw that the victim was a pintasilgo (English goldfinch) of sweet song. I waded the stream, boots shipping water. The finch had tried to eat a trout-fly that someone had cast across the stream with a spinning rod. The float had caught in the alders, the line had broken, and the fly had dangled, a cruel trap. I unhooked the

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Flocks of goldfinches are called charms, with good reason. My damsel in distress did not say thanks but I hoped that ~~it~~ she was relieved not to be popped in a cage like most in Portugal.

My own line had been dangling in the current below me during the rescue operation. I waded back to shore, cleaned the flies of some flotsam they had picked up, and cast them to the upstream end of the eddy. My intention was just to get the line straightened out so that I could wind it back evenly onto the reel. Chances of catching anything after that commotion were slim. But the line twitched as it drifted under a limb and I pulled the rod tight. A strong trout flashed gold, hooked on the top fly. I trotted her downstream at once, keeping the angle between me and fish constant till she tired and slid into my net. She was a brown trout, Portuguese native of antecedents older than Adriano's. As I released her, my back began to feel warm and little glints reflected from the current. The sun was out.

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I knew why the trout were feeding: it was because there were mayflies to eat. I did not know why the mayflies and therefore the trout stopped all at once. Minutes after they did, however, the sun disappeared too, and Manuel told me that I must hurry to

climb the bad passagem before rain made the rocks slick. I looked for excuses. It was climb or swim, though. The river rushed through a cleft between cliffs, too deep to wade.

The passage would have been easy for a rock-climber. Even some anglers would have been competent for it. I was not, but I accomplished the thing by scraping my fingertips and taking a minute interest in patterns on the rock before my nose. I did not look at the currents grumbling down below. Having passed the throat of the gorge, I descended sloping granite casually, legs barely trembling. Manuel told me to wait, urgency in his voice. I saw the viper just before his staff hit it. It was small, by comparison to a rattlesnake. I would not have killed it. I am not much afraid of snakes, but still the poisonous kind always stirs some lost emotion.

Above the passage, light-green grass grew from rocks in the Mondego, tall and lush as pampered plants in the office of a banker. I could not remember seeing so much unused forage anywhere in Portugal. Goats can go almost anywhere, but the passage had preserved paradise, or at least stopped the people taking care of the goats. The river felt lonely, my secret. Humans had trickled through it for hundreds of generations, of course. All had been tested by the passage. Ghosts of this quality made such good company that I did not mind a thin, cold rain.

Fishing was slow. Mayflies seem to know that they should not leave the stream-bottom till the air-temperature is right, though how they can make such judgments is a mystery. Manuel and I moved

along, he looking for vipers (which he could see better), I looking for trout (which I could see better). One has to learn to see things, you know. It is not just a matter of visual acuity.

I stood on a rock sloping into the Mondego, looking at a distant side-current that had an occasional odd quiver. There was a wink of white under water, then another a minute later. I could not see the rest of the trout, but the white had to be its mouth opening to take something drifting in the current. The something would be nymphs: not the Nereid-kind but their namesake, immature mayflies. They had planned to hatch during the burst of sun, perhaps, and been fooled by the change in weather. Hatching is a dangerous passage, for nymphs.

This was a trout worth the full treatment. I clipped off my dry fly, lengthened the leader with a fine strand, and tied on a nymph that I had dressed for the occasion. It had an abdomen wound of two pale fibers from the tail of a late-season pheasant. The thorax was spun of guard-hairs from a hare's ear. The thread that held the dressing together was Pearsall's silk and the hook a Partridge, strong for its size. The magic and the science were both studied, you see.

I waded till I was cross-stream from the trout and some thirty feet away. The fly was in my mouth, soaking, and it sank instantly when I cast it. The trout did not move. It did not move on the next two casts, either. On the fourth, there was the little pale wink when the fly had drifted to the right position. The line came tight just long enough for the fish to react and jerk it from my fingers. Small trout cannot do that. This one

made a long, wallowing jump and ran upstream -- another thing small trout cannot manage -- for the shelter of a cliff. The line angled deep and ticked twice on a rock, but the shelter that the trout found was not good enough. It came back into my net, fifteen inches long, big-jawed and not pretty. Manuel said that he had not seen a trout quite so big.

When I opined that trout are female, I was referring to those of normal size. This one was hook-jawed, a male characteristic. You admire a trout like that but you do not court it. You fight it.

The rain ended then, the breeze blew in warm gusts, and fish began rising freely, which does not happen often on the upper Mondego. I cast frantically. One small trout made a mistake at last and I derricked it in. Its mouth contained dark specks: black gnats. I tied on an imitation and hooked a better fish, but then the rise was over, almost wasted.

Never mind. We were through the narrowest part of the gorge by then, able to walk along the banks in places, and Manuel wanted to keep moving. We heard bells up above us on the canyon walls. Then we heard high, laughing voices: children trying to drive goats where they did not want to be driven. I would have laughed too but big boys don't just break out giggling with no reason.

* * * * *

Wilderness is a thing in the mind, nobly savage. I want it.

It is the last illusion I am allowed, because humans didn't work out, Lord knows, and the animals I tried to ennoble were even more ridiculous. (There was a nature-faking film, one more of a long line, in which father bear reared his offspring. In nature, that cub would have made a couple of good meals.) I want the real thing, beautiful, red in tooth and claw. I enjoy it even in bed, covers over my head. Maybe that is how I enjoy it most.

The Mondego's gorge feels right. It keeps most people out and lets me in. It gives me running water and trout. The trout are the better for having adapted to me over millennia. The laughing and tinkling of bells are also echoes across the ages.

In America, we like to pretend that there is wilderness ruled only by the balance of nature. In fact nature knows no balance and if she did, we humans would have altered it before now. Calling a place wilderness is nevertheless convenient because it lets us duck decisions on management. If it were not wilderness by law, somebody would find a way to get up the gorge with engines -- jet-boats or helicopters or something. He would drive an off-road vehicle over the goat trails to the rim. Anyone trying to stop him would be accused of violating democratic freedoms. We are a new, all-or-nothing civilization. It takes an old one to build wilderness from half-measures.

I would like to tell you that the gorge of the Mondego is safe. In fact it is known locally as the sítio da barragem, place of the dam, because for years the engineers have been wanting to plug it up and flood it. Maybe the European Community will loan them enough money for the job.

II

SINGING TO THE CUCKOO

> Now fishing requires so much attention, and so pleasant is its delectation, that the fisherman in his time thinks neither of offending God nor harming his neighbor; nor even of eating, because hunger does not tire him; nor of sleeping even if he has not slept; nor of his loves, even if he be in love.
>
> Fernando Basurto, 1539

We had looked down on the upper Zêzere from the mountains on the far side of Manteigas, as we drove into town. From that distance, the valley appeared so perfectly straight as to be a curiosity. Clearly the brook did not just erode itself lower and lower along the path of least resistance. There was an act of creation -- sudden, as geology goes. The last of the Pleistocene glaciers must have run like a scoop along the surface of ice cream, scraping deeper and deeper, unwavering. Not much soil was left. The sides of the valley, where they support vegetation at all, are steep moors for the sheep.

When you get close, however, everything changes. Zêzere is a self-made brook, embarrassed by her straight background. Ice-age boulders still stand firmly opposed to nonsense but Zêzere laughs at them, twists her way through, and gives the old granite a tickle on the way.

An angler's route is harder. Stone forms impassable waterfalls and protects banks from the uninvited. There are even

pools so defended by rock-forts that you cannot fish in them, but they are few, because you try, you try. (By our wives ye shall know us, and our wives say that we lose our senses on the stream. In fact our senses are sharper while fishing than at any other time but not devoted to our wives, and they know it. Fernando Basurto pled guilty five hundred years ago. It was probably not an original excuse even then.)

You cast over a cobweb stretched between two boulders, hoping that it will hold your leader off the water. The cobweb breaks. You retrieve your fly stealthily and clean the wadded web from it. You try again, casting side-armed to get under overhanging rock. Pale brown line makes S-shapes in the sun. After three failures your little fly lands in deep shadows. You wait while it eddies as if free. The black water shivers. The fly disappears. There is another shiver in your spine. You tighten the line and ease the trout out, splashing, straining to get back where boulder gapes like clamshell. She does not succeed. You hold her at the surface in unaccustomed sunlight and run your hand under her, deciding whether to put her back or take her home. She is old enough, but keeping is commitment.

This is the only place where you are allowed to fondle Venus. If you tried it in a museum where she is made of marble, you would be arrested. Some museum-keepers want to ban fishing too, having guessed that nothing which feels so good ought to be legal.

Zêzere gives no cheap thrills, though. The trout in open water are all too small, flickers of sun and shadow as they flee.

When they do so, you move on, because if there is a bigger one in hiding, the little ones' alarm will have frightened her too. Otherwise you try every shaded side of boulder, every still refuge near deep current, and especially every nook that might have foiled other anglers. You try to maintain concentration. You pretend that the fly is the only object worth watching in a cold universe. You cannot do it. When attention wavers your fly is sucked down. You tighten into a deep weight that surges and is gone, leaving a mercurial hump on the water, and your hopes vanish in its ripples. Despair is an ache in your chest.

At least your effort to ignore your surroundings has made you enjoy them more. The best way to appreciate anything is to tell yourself that you must not look at it. You will recall, for example, that Vasco da Gama tried not to watch Venus's slipping gown on the Isle of Love, and what happened next got him bowdlerized.

Zêzere is your private museum from Manteigas to the cirque. The exhibits are constantly changed and highlighted by a sound-and-light show. There are no rules against feeling or sniffing. Alluvial soils bear sweet dark cherries that you can squeeze between tongue and palate. The boulders are warm in the sun, cool in the shadow. They are rubbed perfect by a supple artist, buffed to gentle curves. You step on one with felt-soled boot, leaving a wet track. You mount the next by reaching to the top with both hands and pulling yourself up its flank. Shadow-lines move along the granite. Reflections from running water flutter back over the stony surfaces it has polished, light fingers checking their

work. Your fingers follow. They find every line but straight, every angle but square.

By some alchemy that no one has been able to explain to me, the rocks in Zêzere's bed are all golden. Above water they are gray, from a distance, but speckled rust and white up close. Moss grows bright green at the waterline and dark above it. Olive lichens wind through patches of blossoms red as hothouse flowers, but so tiny that you do not see them till a slippery climb presses your nose against them. Up close you also see little shiny flakes of quartz and depressions where the current has carved softer minerals out of the matrix. In one of the hollows are three pearl-sized pebbles of different colors, just where high water dropped them. Another contains a stone big as your fist. Some hollows have picked up enough sediment to nourish grass -- not the wispy, struggling stuff you would expect but broad green blades shooting from the rock like fireworks.

The biggest of the hollows carved by Zêzere lies atop a boulder on a flat surface the size of a bed. The inverse sculpture holds water from the last rain. It has no algae, and though it is shallow, water gives the curves depth. The hollow is the size of a woman and about the depth of her body, with waist and compliant curves. You remember this place because it is where you want to stop fishing now, and come back after lunch.

The brook sings you back to your car, ZEH-zeh-reh, ZEH-zeh-reh. A cuckoo sings too. It sounds like a Bavarian clock, though distant and elusive. You echo the call instantly, with a slight change in the consonants. Be ready, now.

Challenge: "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!

Reply: "You too! You too!"

* * * * *

Adriano took me to a tasca called As Trutas for lunch. It means The Trout (plural), and we liked that, our goal for the afternoon being to catch more than the trout (singular) that we already possessed. Trout shrink fast. When you slide one from the water, it is fat and shiny and full of flapping energy, but when you carry it around for awhile, even wrapped in ferns, it sheds its calories. It becomes wrinkled and scrawny, a thing that you are embarrassed to take back to your inn. If you catch no fish at all, you can at least pretend that you had better things to do. If you return with a half-dinner of trout, however, you must confess that you wanted the other half but were not good enough to get it.

The tasca was for snacks, but we were too hungry for snacks. We declined the puffy yellow chicken-feet, skinned and stewed. We did not want the escabeches of chicken gizzards or ide (a tiny relative of the carp). The woman in charge found some vegetable soup for us and then fried some strips of beef. Surprise: they were good. The marinade of wine and olive oil must have helped them. We finished off what the woman had planned for her family's dinner.

The radio was playing American music onto the sidewalk. "West Virginia," it sang, "Mountain Mama, take me home, take me

home." Three half-drunk men were standing there, swaying. Adriano sat upright at the table but I may have swayed a little too. It was a good song.

* * * * *

My last trout of the day was too pretty to dress right away, so I laid her in the creel on fronds of fern. She was still moist and glistening when I got back to the car. Adriano had three fish, one a little too small that he had kept because it swallowed the hook. We dressed them all for dinner by a spring that ran under the road. Adriano was so happy that he waved his hands (a thing no Portuguese does often) as he told me about the time at the edge of dusk. A sparse flight of mayfly spinners had come back to the river, laid their eggs, and died on the water. The trout had sipped them down. Adriano had been ready with his fly.

Each of us told his story not so much to help the other understand (though perhaps he did), but so that the actor could remember his own performance. We created ourselves no less in the telling than the doing. This is not to say that we lied. We would have thought poorly of our lives if they had been too small to keep. What we created in the telling was not the event but its structure and memory. We made each trout happen twice -- once in the stream and once in the hand, once in death and once in love -- before we were sure that it would last.

III

WATER NYMPHS

Trout-fishing is, in Portuguese, apaixonante. The translation would be "passion-inducing" in our tongue, which is shy in curling around such thoughts. This kind of passion lets you make a fool of yourself without witnesses. It has nothing in common with courtship except sleepless intensity, which is resemblance enough to lead angler after angler to the same symbolism. You like this or you hate it, but passion it is, passion without dilution, passion without unfaithfulness, passion uninterrupted by commercials.

Passion was interrupted by the donkey and the miller, in that order. The burro was plodding up the trail under two sacks smelling of ground maize. The miller was still cleaning his millstone. I told him that his burro had gone off on a lark, at which he and Adriano both laughed. The donkey could have been turned loose in dense fog with no danger that it would fail to find the village, which was more than I could claim. The miller was old and said that he would have no successor. The trail pounded by hoofs over the centuries would grow back into brambles soon, because no young man would work for the meager profit in this business. I tried to talk longer. I wanted miller's tales, which had been extinct in English for some time, but might as well have tried to interview a dinosaur at the Cretaceous-Tertiary boundary. My victim was as taciturn as most Portuguese and one of the poorest residents of a poor village. He had neither status nor stories.

And besides, I was in a hurry for trout.

The first came under an old stone bridge. It looked lost -- the bridge, not the trout. Perhaps the local lord had ordered this construction in the time before governments, when peasants preferred a route near water. The only life there was in a small run beneath the arch. The water was not deep but every bridge shelters either trout or troll, and one or the other pulled my little floating fly down in a wink of water. There was a flashing and flopping and a fine fat fish in my net. It was a brown trout from a family going back to the time of the glaciers, here to give me a courtly welcome. I kept the trout in the water and thanked it with such gentility that Adriano, who was listening, complimented me on my command of his language. Then I unrolled my tape-measure and found that this trout, this one-fish welcoming delegation, this chief of protocol for the Duke of Alvoco, was only eighteen centimeters long. The legal minimum is nineteen centimeters. (I do not translate this into inches because it would sound even smaller.) A single centimeter is no serious deficiency, in the minds of most Portuguese anglers, but I felt the weight of a different culture. The trout went back. Surely there would be bigger ones ahead anyhow.

Above the bridge, granite walls bounded the Alvoco on both sides, sometimes right in the water, sometimes a short distance back. The wall on the right supported the millrace; the one on the left held up the edge of a field. Little white and pink flowers grew from the chinks of the rough gray stones and tumbled over the top. I asked Adriano the name of this blossom that

squeezed so much emotion from the hard heart of granite. It was, he said, a mal-me-queres, from the Portuguese equivalent of the English "Love me, Love me not."

Mal me queres;	Poorly dost thou love me;
Bem me queres;	Well dost thou love me;
Muito me queres;	Much dost thou love me;
Pouco me queres;	Little dost thou love me;
Nada.	Not at all.

Love, then, had gradations with these flowers. They did not demand decisions, yes or no, like big American daisies (or like American anglers who want to catch a fish and move on). And besides, the mal-me-queres were delicate. A lover needed the most gentle touch. If he rushed, he would pluck several petals at once and merit a slap in the face.

High above us in the village, the church clock chimed once. I took this as a call to arms, or fishing rods. Adriano said "one o'clock," as if the gastronomic consequences were obvious. I fished faster. He selected a table of granite with hummocks of sweet-smelling anise for chairs. I fished on. A flock of goats trotted down the hillside and right into the pool where my fly floated, preferring grass growing on river-rocks to the lush green of the hillsides. I glared at the goats. They paid no attention. Neither did their goatherd. I gave up and retired for lunch.

Adriano and I opened our trout-and-cheese knives, each of

which had a blade for dressing fish and another for lunch, if one remembered which was which. We pulled off chunks of bread and alternated them with bites of cheese and chouriço. Adriano produced two oranges that he had smuggled into his creel, and we peeled them with the knives. The mite of a bird called a pintasilgo hopped in a cluster of olive trees on the terrace behind, giving us a little day-music. Maybe he just wanted us to move on, but he made me feel benevolent even toward trout-scaring goats.

* * * * *

There is a modest claim that I may make: I have liberated myself from trophies and scores. It was not difficult -- not like liberation from fear, which only a few heroes like Nuno Álvares achieve. Mostly I just grew older. Once I had dreamt of catching big trout, read books about how to do it, and chased them from Patagonia to Donegal. When I catch one now, I am still pleased. It is a gift, but it is not a triumph.

The scores were a phase too. I had learned to return most of my trout to the water, unharmed, and thought that numbers were needed to document my prowess. It was non-consumptive consumerism, a competition without messy dead fish.

Now that my affair with trout has progressed through sophistication to the primitive, I am free to pursue a two-little-fish dinner in bliss. I take comfort in the relationship enjoyed by the first people who hunted food in these

streams after the glacier. The method is different and the restraints are stronger -- must be, in these days of fewer trout and more fishermen -- but the emotion is the same. I feel sure of this. Fishing is a kind of anthropology, a way of excavating layers, digging into strata built by my ancestors, finding an underground river.

In the same way, I know that my trout is a Nereid. Female is nourishment, be she trout or nanny-goat or Camões's nymph with breasts like moulded lemons. My trout would be male only if I had the "desire to latch onto a monster symbol of fate and prove my manhood in titanic piscine war." That's how John Steinbeck put it, and he did not have the desire. "But sometimes," he wrote, "I do like a couple of fish of cooperative frying size.

* * * * *

The lady was not for frying. I caught trout, to be sure, but not many, and none bigger than the first under the bridge. Even the little ones demanded my best. I cast far upstream, keeping my line out of the water by draping it on boulders. I made sure to throw slack into my leader so that the fly would drift like a real beetle caught in the surface tension. I watched my tiny fly float down the edge between deep, still shelters and the currents that carry food. The trout, such as they were, all came from places that few fishermen would have probed.

Adriano explained the problem. We were, he said, in the waning quarter of the moon, and trout do not take then.

Every Portuguese fisherman and every Portuguese farmer believes in the influence of the moon. The farmers even plant by its quarters, which shows that the old-time religion is good enough for them. The fishermen profess devotion but are not bound by it. I deplore this moral decay. It is just as bad in America, though we have several lunar theories, one or another of which offers fishing at any given time. If each angler would choose his own lunacy and stay with it, there would be more space on the streams for me. (It is true that I fish whenever I wish, but afterwards I consult the tables till I find one that explains my impotence.)

* * * * *

Adriano stopped casting and started looking for a trail up the hill. I fished with redoubled ferocity. He told me that he knew of a field of wild strawberries and would have a look for it on the way back to the village. He would just take his time and mosey along. I was to feel free to fish as long as I wished. I did wish, for some reason of incomprehensible hunger, but pretended that I did not and tagged along.

The strawberries were almost as scarce as the trout. We had to get on our knees and search through the grass for red beads. They were good but they did not flee like a Nereid, so I lost interest. (Adolescent males, including overgrown ones like me, are all hunters. Older men are content to be gatherers. Gathering may require a higher level of consciousness, if by "higher" you

mean older and therefore closer to heaven. Then again, some of the things we call levels of consciousness may be layers of platitudes.)

We worked our way up the hill in stages. Adriano, as usual, did not remove his tie and coat; I, also as usual, worried when his face turned from pink to red. The first time it happened, I stopped and asked him about a curral built with walls and roof of shale. It was to shelter the animals in bad weather, he said -- not just to hold them, like a corral in Montana.

The next time I really wanted to stop. A little boy somewhere was calling for a strayed kid, urging it back to the fold before night came, and the wolves. Closer to us, a blackbird sang to the setting sun from a thicket of pines. There was no hint in his song of complaint or aggression. The melody rippled out like goats' bells across the valley, or like the bright Alvoco over its boulders. I did not care what the ornithologists thought: that blackbird was singing the song I hum when I fish for little wild trout.

1345 Avenue of the Americas, 34th Floor, New York, N Y 10105, (212) 956-4055

May 14, 1992

Mr. Datus C. Proper
1085 Hamilton Road
Belgrade, MT 59714

Dear Datus:

I have just reread the three excerpts from Looking for Portugal as edited by Nick Lyons. They are very unusual, interesting and beguiling.

I have actually got the Spring edition of the Anglers' Club Bulletin to the printer on time; your copy should reach you around the end of the month. It features a wonderful introduction by Craig Mathews to fishing in Montana.

I hope to get the Fall issue out around the end of October and the 1992-93 Winter issue out in February. I would dearly love to publish the three excerpts seriatim and hope that Simon & Schuster will let me publish at least one of them in an appropriate issue. I sensed from a conversation with Nick that publication in the Winter 1992-93 Bulletin is a possibility. I will look forward to hearing from you one way or another come the Fall.

I opened the Stone House on the west branch of the Neversink last weekend and expect to do some serious fishing this coming weekend in what I hope will be the Henderson* hatch. You have a standing invitation to stay and fish anytime that you are in this part of the world.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

R. Palmer Baker, Jr.

cc: Nick Lyons

* I like "Henderson"

Calo Nick -
Does he want
do 3?
I
II
III

Lyons & Burford
Publishers
Nick Lyons Books

call Knox

23 March 1992

out of fashion? Yes

Dear Datus:

This is so good, and so carefully woven, that it's a pain in the ass to try to weave new little pieces from it. So I've mostly taken your good indications and cut three sections out of the whole.

Why don't you look them over and see if they'll hold together like that, if you'd like to cut a sentence or two here or there, or add some.

As you can see, I still use a Royal Standard, so I'd have to cut and Magic tape the sections to new sheets. (I can live with such extra mischief and probably will never change.) I think what you have on your desk will create a new document, lacking the deletions. Would you run me out these two or three sections and I'll get them to Palmer.

You're writing brilliantly!

I have done a little thing called Spring Creek, mostly about Herbert's creek, with a lot of Herbert thrown in. Mari has done a jacket for it and about thirty-five drawings (or, rather, found stuff in notebooks from our trips that will work). I enjoyed doing the thing a lot and Atlantic Monthly Press will bring it out in the Fall.

Herb has still invited us out, after a having read the manuscript, so I suppose he's not too mad. I guess we'll be there the last week of June, first week of July. I'd love to catch up with you.

Best, always,

31 West 21 Street New York, New York 10010 212·620·9580

About 990 Words

Datus Proper
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LIBERATION

There is much to be gained from letting go of things.

THE MONDEGO RIVER PLUNGES from Portugal's highest range, cuts through the steepest gorge, and dawdles past the oldest university. The flow sections the nation's land and people: granite and shepherds at the top, then terraces and peasants, bottomlands and farmers, streets and students, salt marshes and shipyards.

Adriano and I drove from ocean to headwaters in one afternoon, climbing through all the strata, determined to drink from the Mondego's source and cower in its canyon. Next day at dawn we looked down at the river -- half blue, half foamy-white, and small at the bottom of its canyon. Adriano showed me the goat-trail down through the rocks.

I rushed to assemble my rod and tie on a team of three Portuguese wet flies. They should have been good before the sun warmed the water. I cast upstream through the pools, letting the flies drift back past me, deep. Then I fished cross-stream and watched the line swing around in the current. When all else

failed, I teased the top fly along the surface, the two below it serving to keep my leader straight. It is a good method for eager trout, but these weren't.

We came to an eddy that had created a little foothold for alders. A bird was dancing in them but I paid attention only to my flies swinging under the brush, troutless. The bird still danced. It was a desperate dance, but then I was getting desperate myself. The flutter came again and I saw that the victim was a pintasilgo (English goldfinch) of sweet song. I waded the stream, boots shipping water. The finch had tried to eat a trout-fly that someone had cast across the stream with a spinning rod. The float had caught in the alders, the line had broken, and the fly had dangled, a cruel trap. I unhooked the bird and held it for a moment to calm down, soft black and yellow body quiet in my caress, scarlet face looking at me. When I opened my hand the finch lay for a moment, not realizing that it was free, and then flashed off through green leaves.

My own line had been dangling in the current below me during the rescue operation. I waded back to shore, cleaned the flies of some flotsam they had picked up, and cast them to the upstream end of the eddy. My intention was just to get the line straightened out so that I could wind it back evenly onto the reel. Chances of catching anything after that commotion were slim. But the line twitched as it drifted under a limb and I pulled the rod tight. A strong trout flashed gold, hooked on the top fly. I trotted her downstream at once, keeping the angle between me and fish constant till she tired and slid into my net.

She was a brown trout, Portuguese native of antecedents older than Adriano's. As I released her, my back began to feel warm and little glints reflected from the current. The sun was up.

THERE IS A MODEST CLAIM THAT I MAY make: I have liberated myself from trophies and scores. It was not difficult -- not like liberation from fear, which only a few heroes achieve. Mostly I just got older. Once I had dreamt of catching big trout, read books about how to do it, and chased them from Patagonia to Donegal. When I catch one now, I am still pleased. It is a gift, but it is not a triumph.

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of a field of wild strawberries and would have a look for it on the way back to the village. I was to feel free to fish as long as I wished. I did wish, for some reason of incomprehensible hunger, but pretended that I did not and tagged along.

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For a longer piece, could do 1-2 and 7-15, with deletions.

Chapter 12

SECRETS OF NATURE

"So, you daring race .... You have come to surprise the hidden secrets of nature and of its watery element, that to no mortal, however great, however noble or immortal his deserts, have yet been revealed. Listen now to me and learn what perils have been laid up against such excess of presumption."

Camões, The Lusiads, Canto Five

The Mondego River plunges from Portugal's highest range, cuts through the steepest gorge, and dawdles past the oldest university. The flow sections the nation's land and people: granite and shepherds at the top, then terraces and peasants, bottomlands and farmers, streets and students, salt marshes and shipyards. This stream is to Portugal's natural history what Sagres is to its human achievements.

Adriano and I wanted to drink from the Mondego's source and

cower in its canyon. We were in no hurry, however. I was working up courage for the passage -- a translation of passagem, meaning a place on the gorge's cliffs where one passed or one didn't. Adriano the Fearless just wanted to work up to the best part gradually, enjoying the preliminaries.

"I like to watch the brooks," he said. It was what he had said about the meninas back in the Alentejo, but for streams we got out of the car and stared without shame. Had we rushed, we might have driven from Anadia to our lodgings near the upper Mondego in three hours, but Adriano chose to spend the afternoon admiring nature.

We were not disappointed. The rocks below the bridges were round and smooth. At their bases, fringes of grass shaded the dark places that we coveted. Upstream, arms of water spread out into the hills. Two or three times Adriano told me that he had caught trout in some hidden pool. At the other crossings, we speculated that the rivulets must be big enough to fish, judging from their topography; and then we imagined unplumbed pools protected by hidden passages. Few anglers would be man enough but we were sure that we could pass, if only life gave us time.

You might think that the topic would run dry. It doesn't. Not even when the river shrivels. Men see nature's sculpture on women, women's bodies in nature. We are not deterred when the notion is ludicrous. (There was a movie, once upon a time, that compared Marilyn Monroe to Niagara Falls, and I went to see it anyhow.) Nature is always female. This confession is embarrassing, today, and we might be persuaded not to talk about

our vision, but in the dream time we paint her on our cliffs, up beside the mammoths and elands. There is no future in father nature -- not for men, at least. Women may have any vision they wish, though I hope they won't stick fishhooks in it.

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We had better call on Oomph and Whoopee to untangle this. You did not know that there was a tangle? Well, look at Sigmund Freud's twisted sheets. Not that he didn't do good work. The problem was that he lived in turn-of-the-century Vienna. What was a nice Jewish boy to do in that decadent town? Not fishing, surely. There was scarcely a chapter of Trout Unlimited in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Freud was squeezed into the only re-creation [sic] permitted: sex. No wonder he got carried away. In that hothouse, everyone was steaming the windows. But here is what Freud would have seen if he had wiped them off.

There are two drives: hunting and sex. Hunting came first. Our forefather, Oomph, kept himself busy on the trail of elands, which are the largest of antelopes. The pursuit was so demanding that Oomph did not have much time for our foremother. At least that's what he told her. What he did not say was that the chase was exciting and the company good. Deciding which of the men was in charge could be awkward, but once that point was settled each of them could be counted on to help his comrades without making complicated demands in return.

One hunt led to another and Oomph covered a lot of

territory. He seldom saw Whoopee, his woman (and everybody else's). It was a good arrangement, for Oomph. It was not so good for Whoopee. Her breeding cycle came around only every three or four years, after the last baby stopped nursing. At such times she was a celebrity. At other times the men were somewhere far off, perhaps hunting, perhaps visiting other camps, who knows? Whoopee had to get by on such roots as she could dig up with the rib of an eland. She found enough to eat. In fact (as she reminded Oomph), she often produced more food than him and his damned antelope. But the whining. No sooner was a young anthropoid weaned than she, or especially he, would announce that he hated vegetables. Whoopee would reply that all the children loved vegetables in the good old days. This had no effect. The brats always complained and Whoopee always threatened to toss them to the hyenas, but she didn't. She had a better idea.

Whoopee developed an innovative estrous cycle. Instead of making her attractive to Oomph almost none of the time, it made her appealing almost all of the time. The change scandalized the rest of the mammals and especially sister chimpanzee, who said that, for her, once every few years was more than enough. Whoopee replied that she liked the new arrangement, sort of, and was even thinking of growing breasts. Sis Chimp walked off in a huff and the two have not conversed since.

On Sis Chimp's behalf, it must be said that Whoopee's innovation did open Pandora's box, if you will pardon the metaphor. Some generations later, Freud tried to catch all the odd creatures that had flown out of the box and decided, with Sis

Chimp, that sex was to blame for them. What Freud disremembered (or never had a chance to discover) is that sex had been caused by hunting.

Whoopee got some changes made. Oomph started hanging around the camp, going off for just a day or two at a time. He didn't get as many elands but there were bushbucks closer to Home (which was the name of the camp), and if the bushbucks failed, there were always wart hogs or dik-diks or something. Whoopee and Buster (the latest brat) were getting more protein, salt, and fat. On the new diet, Buster's brain grew uncontrollably, leading him to invent prepositions.

By now, however, the deal was better for Whoopee and Buster than for Oomph. He was getting nothing that he had not had before -- just getting it more reliably and without hiking so far. He felt tied down. It made him moody. Whoopee thereupon persuaded Oomph that he had exclusive rights to her person. She didn't want to monkey around with the rest of the men, she said. She preferred Oomph even when he got hurt by an eland. (They are not wee timorous beasties, you know.) She bandaged him up with a zebra-skin that she had chewed till it was soft. She told him that she liked him as much as she liked the latest baby. Nobody had liked him that much that since his mother was eaten by a leopard. He did not admit it, but he liked being liked.

It may be, as Whoopee suspected, that Oomph got frisky when he recovered and visited the distant camps, but he always came home afterwards. Later, as the sea shrank, the two of them hiked across the straits of Gibraltar, still together (some of the

time). They became the first Portuguese. Oomph learned to hunt mammoths, which were very large but not very bright. When they were gone, he guddled trout in the Mondego River. He found fishing one of the slower varieties of hunting, modern and decadent, but it beat sitting around the cave while Whoopee thought up useful projects for him.

You see, now, why the peculiar human estrous cycle has little to with making babies. It has to do with persuading Oomph to take on a commitment. But perhaps you find this history, or prehistory, abominably sexist. Be assured that I could do a better job if it had been left to me rather than a couple of primitives. The anthropology here is consistent with behavior of known hunter-gatherers like the Bushmen, consistent too with the paintings in caves not far from the Mondego. Of course there are other versions of prehistory -- but the burden of proof is on those who think that progenitors were radically different from their descendants.

Let us take it, then, that hunting and sex are competitive drives. Of the two, the hunting drive is the easiest to sublimate. The hunter can turn into a soldier, scientist, or even a writer without losing his Oomph. What has not changed is the way Oomph and Whoopee are put together. You can dress them in fashions instead of skins but you cannot alter their genes without selective breeding, which is frowned upon for our species. You can take Oomph out of the elands but you can't take the elands out of Oomph. (I shall not venture to guess what the equivalent of elands is for Whoopee.)

One scholar points out that "an accurate account of human history in 30 minutes would devote 29 minutes and 51 seconds to hunter-gatherers, more than 8 seconds to settled agricultural society and a fraction of the last second to the modern, fossil-fuel-fired industrial world."[1] No wonder that Adriano and I had a useless old urge to hunt for trout.

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We climbed the Range of the Star not far from the Alvoco's Nereids, but in a different watershed. We parked for a drink of the Mondego up where it was small enough to spout from a fountain. On impulse I bought a cup from a peddler who was waiting by the spring for live ones. The cup was of tourist-pottery, ugly and green, with a shepherd and his Mountain Dog in relief. I baptized it in the fountain, drank from it, and kept it to help me remember the taste.

We stopped at a hotel that Adriano remembered as having been good, once. The ancient couple in the bar seemed surprised that we wanted to spend the night. On my room's wall hung a framed, faded photograph of a British ship -- one of the Queens on her maiden voyage. Over the porcelain washbowl was a shelf with a drinking-glass and a water-flask. I set out to take a sponge bath (useful skill, in Portugal) but stopped when I got a close look at the flask. It was yellowed by a crust inside: mineral deposits from old plumbing. Next door Adriano said <u>O diabo</u> -- The devil -- which is his strongest language. I looked in and saw him standing

at the washbowl, socks wetter than his face. The water had poured onto his feet from its rusted-out drain pipe when he pulled the plug.

Next day at dawn we stopped in Videmonte, but not for long. It was the village closest to the Mondego's gorge. Everything was stone: The walls of the fields, the narrow road that twisted through them, and the houses. The chapel and a few of the other buildings had coats of cement covered by paint. The house of José Sequeira Mendes had no such cosmetics, but it had Adriano's friends. We greeted them -- briefly, because there was a long walk ahead, and we would have to hurry to get out of the canyon before dark, even in the long twilight of late May. José loaned his son Manuel to the expedition. Manuel stowed his staff in the car and jumped in with us.

Adriano would fish near the ford across the Mondego, he said. But first he dropped Manuel and me at the bottom of the gorge. The young man would be my guide. He was lean and strong from a stint in the army, brown fist curled around the staff.

The river was half blue, half foamy-white, and small at the bottom of its canyon. Manuel showed me the goat-trail down through the rocks. I rushed to assemble my rod and tie on a team of three Portuguese wet flies. They should have been good before the sun warmed the water, but the trout paid no attention. I cast upstream through the pools, letting the flies drift back past me, deep. Then I fished cross-stream and watched the line swing around in the current. In desperation, I teased the top fly along the surface, the two below it serving to keep my leader straight.

It is a good method for eager trout, but these weren't.

(River my love, you are cold. You shove me when you're close. You grumble when you're not. Don't push me away: Give me a fish. I've been faithful to you, in my way, so now be kind.)

I would have to move faster, Manuel said, or we would not get out by sundown. I tried jumping along the rocks like him and suddenly found myself on my back. The water cushioned my fall but I was not grateful. Somehow my whole torso had landed in the river with my legs above, on dry land. It was a position that I had never before achieved despite my acknowledged expertise at falling into rivers. Ego aside, this was not as bad as my conventional tumble because the hip-boots did not fill with water and my trunk would blow-dry soon enough. The bright side did not occur to me right away, though.

We came to an eddy that had created a little foothold for alders. A bird was dancing in them but I paid no attention, drifting my fly deep under the brush, troutless. The bird still danced. It was a desperate dance, but then I was getting desperate myself. The flutter came again and I saw that the victim was a pintasilgo of sweet song. I waded the stream, boots shipping water. The finch had tried to eat a trout-fly that someone had cast across the stream with a spinning rod. The float had caught in the alders, the line had broken, and the fly had dangled, a cruel trap. I unhooked the bird and held it for a moment to calm down, soft black and yellow body quiet in my caress, scarlet face looking at me. When I opened my hand the finch lay for a moment, not realizing that it was free, and then

flashed off through green leaves.

Flocks of goldfinches are called charms, with good reason. My damsel in distress did not say thanks but I hoped that it was relieved not to be popped in a cage like most in Portugal.

My own line had been dangling in the current below me during the rescue operation. I waded back to shore, cleaned the flies of some flotsam they had picked up, and cast them to the upstream end of the eddy. My intention was just to get the line straightened out so that I could wind it back evenly onto the reel. Chances of catching anything after that commotion were slim. But the line twitched as it drifted under a limb and I pulled the rod tight. A strong trout flashed gold, hooked on the top fly. I trotted her downstream at once, keeping the angle between me and fish constant till she tired and slid into my net. She was a brown trout, Portuguese native of antecedents older than Adriano's. As I released her, my back began to feel warm and little glints reflected from the current. The sun was out.

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I want my Nereids shy and seductive but ardent when I catch them, like those of Camões. In the Latin countries -- and even in Germany, of all places -- trout are assigned a female gender. You can, of course, find scholars who will tell you that the gender of a noun has nothing to do with sex. I do not fish for scholars. I fish for a truta, la trucha, la truite, die Forelle. English-speakers may say of a trout "look at 'im jump!" But everybody

knows that we're odd. Who else would give trout a gender suitable for making war instead of love? I am grateful to have lived in the Latin world long enough to get these matters straight.

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The trout the finch gave me had a secret: mayflies. Her throat contained two of them, caught before they could fly or mate. They are called duns, in that stage, and I recognized them from their sober dress, the color of olives turning ripe. I stowed my wet-fly leader, put on a finer one, and fastened to its tip a single floating fly resembling the real thing. Then I rushed back to the fishing with no time out for contemplation. When Nereids are ready, they must not be kept waiting.

A poem from the mid-fifteenth century addresses the problems of "a man that lovith ffisshyng and ffowling both" and uses them as metaphors for the pursuit of love. It was a "pleasaunce" or "dysporte" with rules,[2] not constant love. There are only so many poetic words, even in English, and I suppose that the anonymous author wanted to use the best of them for his strongest passions.

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I knew why the trout were feeding: it was because there were mayflies to eat. I did not know why the mayflies and therefore the trout stopped all at once. Minutes after they did, however, the sun disappeared too, and Manuel told me that I must hurry to

climb the bad passagem before rain made the rocks slick. I looked for excuses. It was climb or swim, though. The river rushed through a cleft between cliffs, too deep to wade.

The passage would have been easy for a rock-climber. Even some anglers would have been competent for it. I was not, but I accomplished the thing by scraping my fingertips and taking a minute interest in patterns on the rock before my nose. I did not look at the currents grumbling down below. Having passed the throat of the gorge, I descended sloping granite casually, legs barely trembling. Manuel told me to wait, urgency in his voice. I saw the viper just before his staff hit it. It was small, by comparison to a rattlesnake. I would not have killed it. I am not much afraid of snakes, but still the poisonous kind always stirs some lost emotion.

Above the passage, light-green grass grew from rocks in the Mondego, tall and lush as pampered plants in the office of a banker. I could not remember seeing so much unused forage anywhere in Portugal. Goats can go almost anywhere, but the passage had preserved paradise, or at least stopped the people taking care of the goats. The river felt lonely, my secret. Humans had trickled through it for hundreds of generations, of course. All had been tested by the passage. Ghosts of this quality made such good company that I did not mind a thin, cold rain.

Fishing was slow. Mayflies seem to know that they should not leave the stream-bottom till the air-temperature is right, though how they can make such judgments is a mystery. Manuel and I moved

along, he looking for vipers (which he could see better), I looking for trout (which I could see better). One has to learn to see things, you know. It is not just a matter of visual acuity.

I stood on a rock sloping into the Mondego, looking at a distant side-current that had an occasional odd quiver. There was a wink of white under water, then another a minute later. I could not see the rest of the trout, but the white had to be its mouth opening to take something drifting in the current. The something would be nymphs: not the Nereid-kind but their namesake, immature mayflies. They had planned to hatch during the burst of sun, perhaps, and been fooled by the change in weather. Hatching is a dangerous passage, for nymphs.

This was a trout worth the full treatment. I clipped off my dry fly, lengthened the leader with a fine strand, and tied on a nymph that I had dressed for the occasion. It had an abdomen wound of two pale fibers from the tail of a late-season pheasant. The thorax was spun of guard-hairs from a hare's ear. The thread that held the dressing together was Pearsall's silk and the hook a Partridge, strong for its size. The magic and the science were both studied, you see.

I waded till I was cross-stream from the trout and some thirty feet away. The fly was in my mouth, soaking, and it sank instantly when I cast it. The trout did not move. It did not move on the next two casts, either. On the fourth, there was the little pale wink when the fly had drifted to the right position. The line came tight just long enough for the fish to react and jerk it from my fingers. Small trout cannot do that. This one

made a long, wallowing jump and ran upstream -- another thing small trout cannot manage -- for the shelter of a cliff. The line angled deep and ticked twice on a rock, but the shelter that the trout found was not good enough. It came back into my net, fifteen inches long, big-jawed and not pretty. Manuel said that he had not seen a trout quite so big.

When I opined that trout are female, I was referring to those of normal size. This one was hook-jawed, a male characteristic. You admire a trout like that but you do not court it. You fight it.

The rain ended then, the breeze blew in warm gusts, and fish began rising freely, which does not happen often on the upper Mondego. I cast frantically. One small trout made a mistake at last and I derricked it in. Its mouth contained dark specks: black gnats. I tied on an imitation and hooked a better fish, but then the rise was over, almost wasted.

Never mind. We were through the narrowest part of the gorge by then, able to walk along the banks in places, and Manuel wanted to keep moving. We heard bells up above us on the canyon walls. Then we heard high, laughing voices: children trying to drive goats where they did not want to be driven. I would have laughed too but big boys don't just break out giggling with no reason.

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Wilderness is a thing in the mind, nobly savage. I want it.

It is the last illusion I am allowed, because humans didn't work out, Lord knows, and the animals I tried to ennoble were even more ridiculous. (There was a nature-faking film, one more of a long line, in which father bear reared his offspring. In nature, that cub would have made a couple of good meals.) I want the real thing, beautiful, red in tooth and claw. I enjoy it even in bed, covers over my head. Maybe that is how I enjoy it most.

The Mondego's gorge feels right. It keeps most people out and lets me in. It gives me running water and trout. The trout are the better for having adapted to me over millennia. The laughing and tinkling of bells are also echoes across the ages.

In America, we like to pretend that there is wilderness ruled only by the balance of nature. In fact nature knows no balance and if she did, we humans would have altered it before now. Calling a place wilderness is nevertheless convenient because it lets us duck decisions on management. If it were not wilderness by law, somebody would find a way to get up the gorge with engines -- jet-boats or helicopters or something. He would drive an off-road vehicle over the goat trails to the rim. Anyone trying to stop him would be accused of violating democratic freedoms. We are a new, all-or-nothing civilization. It takes an old one to build wilderness from half-measures.

I would like to tell you that the gorge of the Mondego is safe. In fact it is known locally as the <u>sítio da barragem</u>, place of the dam, because for years the engineers have been wanting to plug it up and flood it. Maybe the European Community will loan them enough money for the job.

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The canyon flattened till there were pastures on its right side, and in one of them a bored shepherd sat on a rock. His dog lay beside him, then sat up, glared, and charged us. It was very big, a real Mountain Dog (Cão da Serra). I waded into the river. Manuel stood his ground, braced his legs, and raised his staff. Only then did the shepherd give a command. He was happy to liven up the day, but not if it meant risking a working-dog's bones. The beast paused, watched us, growled. The shepherd called it back and we heard its name: "Arombo". It sounded like the growl. Mountain dogs are bred to attack wolves, which requires dim wits and large size. Portuguese shepherds would not waste food on a big dog with no function. I would have been glad to see this dog's man get a clout with the staff.

(Odd, is it not, that wolves survived in Portugal but died out in the wilder spaces of Montana? I suppose that the European wolves had a chance to adapt to man -- hide from him or prey on him -- before modern weapons evolved. In America, wolf met man and bullet at the same moment.)

Manuel guided me to Adriano's car by a route that I would never have found, well away from the river. We walked extra miles, but quickly and for the most part downhill. We passed shepherds' cottages far from any road. In one field we greeted a woman who sat on the grass, watching a small herd of cattle, while her young son ran around playing with grasshoppers and rocks. His nose was running but he looked happy. He was not

lonely. She was.

Adriano was searching a field near his car, catching crickets for his grandchildren. We climbed in, lazily, and drove off, diesel engine putt-putting in the contented way it always did when we had caught our trout. It did not even frighten a quail calling beside a small field of green wheat.

We stopped near the village of Taberna to buy a wheel of mountain cheese for dinner. It was expensive, in a land where most food was cheap, but Adriano thought it good value for the flavor. We went with the shepherd who made the cheese into a windowless stone hut used for this purpose alone. Real queijo da serra could be made only in this region, at this altitude, and in this kind of building, Adriano said; the bacteria or something did not prosper elsewhere. No trace of goat's milk could be allowed to overpower the mild odor of milk from ewes grazed on rock-rose shoots. And we paid extra for a cheese made from the shoots before the plant came into bloom. My stomach started to rumble.

It did not stay empty in Videmonte. Mrs. Sequeira Mendes took us upstairs to a kitchen -- far from any plumbing -- where things were cooking in an open fireplace. After reflection, I am still of the opinion that this was the best-smelling meal ever cooked. There was medronheiro wood sputtering under a cast-iron cauldron. There were chestnuts drying in a wooden rack around the fireplace. There were lichens steaming on granite walls. Dinner started with caldo verde (a soup of tall cabbage, potatoes, and sausage). Then came rice with kid, more kid in a sauce, two kinds

of pastries, and a cheese redolent of rock-rose shoots in spring rain. There was red wine in a clay jug covered by a white cloth. There was -- well, there was the fragrance of years gone by, because everything in that room would have been the same in the Middle Ages.

We should have taken time to enjoy ourselves, but we were too busy, between sniffs and bites and sips, eulogizing each trout that had brought us here.

(1)The thought is attributed to Clive Pointing, a "British environmental historian." The source is an article by Jessica Matthews in The Washington Post, January 4, 1991.

(2)Hoffman, Richard C., in Speculum 60/4 (1985), pp. 898-9.

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

SINGING TO THE CUCKOO

> Now fishing requires so much attention, and so pleasant is its delectation, that the fisherman in his time thinks neither of offending God nor harming his neighbor; nor even of eating, because hunger does not tire him; nor of sleeping even if he has not slept; nor of his loves, even if he be in love.
>
> Fernando Basurto, 1539[1]

If I had a baby daughter, I would call her Zêzere, if my wife would let me. Zêzere is a brook that sounds as good as it looks: ZEH-zeh-reh, ZEH-zeh-reh. What other stream rocks you to sleep when you murmur its name? The word must have meant something once, in a language that died when the Romans poisoned Viriato. Suppose the whole world was mapped then by songlines, as Bruce Chatwin suggests.[2] The first Europeans would have slept by this stream running over these rocks and called it Zêzere, Zêzere, because that is what it calls itself.

Manteigas is the Zêzere's town. It lies in what we would call a hole, in the Rockies: a valley crowded by mountains, with

one rift where the water leaks out. If there were a dam instead of a town, it would hold the stream in a dungeon and we -- Adriano and I -- would have to settle for a glutted lake instead of a thrifty brook. As it is, the town divides headwater-music from the lower, slower roll of a river. The inn has shady rooms that look east over a watercourse lit by evening sun. Insects rise from the stream and make little points of light in the low rays. Swallows circle and dart. We swing open the windows and hear Zêzere, Zêzere floating up to our beds.

We got there in late afternoon, twisting down from a pass 2,500 feet higher. We saw the town, and beyond it the upper Zêzere valley, at every hairpin turn. We took our bags to the Paragem Serradalto (meaning, roughly, the High-Mountain Inn), found out that the dinner would be worth waiting for, and walked around town long enough to be sure where we were.

Among Portuguese towns, the Vila of Manteigas has one novelty: it was founded rather than just evolving forever. The date was 1188. Before then the site was a last refuge of Viriato's warrior tribe -- according to one of those traditions that everyone knows and no one can substantiate. It makes sense, anyhow. A shepherd on these rough slopes would not have had to be civilized till he got good and ready.

The town that Adriano and I explored was almost a geological feature: granite houses fronted by granite roads that passed over granite bridges above the Zêzere's granite tributaries. I could have taken photographs that would convince you of the residents' sense of beauty. These old houses looked better than the best in

Beverly Hills -- unless I focused on the ravines below, flecked with empty bottles and cans and chickens picking at refuse. It was hard to understand. Were these people unable to cope with the flux of civilization? Or, as Adriano seemed to suggest, did they not define filth as I did? (John Steinbeck went out of his way to avoid driving through American cities because they were "like badger holes, ringed with trash -- all of them -- by piles of rusting automobiles, and almost smothered with rubbish."[3] But we like our yards neat.)

I was overtaken by an afflatus, or possibly just a message from an empty stomach. Here it is: Manteigas's beauty is a testament to impeccable thrift, not impeccable taste.

These people had ignored problems that time would cure. (Zêzere's floods cleanse filth.) They had built the simplest structures that would do the job. (Zêzere flows down the easiest channel.) They had made no statements (Zêzere has no ego), but they had not flaunted austerity, either. (Zêzere is no minimalist.) And they had built for the ages. (Zêzere's shape is economy prolonged.)

The effect is that the old houses seem as much a part of nature as their river.

* * * * *

Manteigas being a respectable town (<u>vila</u>) instead of a casual village (<u>aldeia</u>), there were no sandy streets with children romping in them, and Adriano seemed subdued. He could

not play Pied Piper where there was no one to be piped. I wondered if Viriato's hideout was really hidden in the mountains nearby. I asked what hepatic insufficiencies and neurasthenia were, and whether the local mineral water could cure them as claimed. Adriano showed no interest in my diversions. He approved of two blackbirds singing on, respectively, a branch and a television antenna, but he was not moved to poetry. He was a family man with no one to father but an American full of questions that had no answers.

Enter Diphthong. We concluded that he was a dog after ruling out the alternatives. He was not big enough to be a bull and lacked the mane of an ass. A hyena would hardly found its way to the Range of the Star. No, Diphthong had to be a canine built by a committee. Sometimes mongrels turn out right like Pirolito, back at the Alvoco, and sometimes they turn out like Diphthong, who was trying to be several things in the same syllable. His head was too big for his forequarters. His back curved to one side. His hind legs marched to a different drummer, perhaps because they were thrown out of time by an enormous, wagging tail. Adriano made an instant conquest and Diphthong trotted along with us rather than waiting for whomever else he had in mind.

Diphthong cleared the way. The few people on the sidewalks at dinner-time flattened against the walls with a nice-doggie-don't-bite look on their faces. Diphthong had no interest in biting but his tail must have bruised a couple of shins. We noticed also that his testicles hung low between his hocks,

swinging with the ponderous grace of Foucault's pendulum. It seemed a fair guess that Manteigas's puppies were going to resemble Diphthong in coming years.

Adriano asked if I had bred my dog Huckleberry, back in Montana.

I had not and tried to explain why.

"Egoism," Adriano said. "You should think of your dog, not yourself. He will never be happy if you do not breed him."

Diphthong was happy, anyhow, and so was Adriano.

* * * * *

The evening turned cool and Adriano changed into his tweeds for dinner. I stayed with jeans and a flannel shirt but put them on over skin washed of travel. The bathroom down the hall had prewar faucets polished down to bare brass, cracked floor tiles smelling of bleach, and a fresh coat of white paint on the walls. The stairs down to the ground floor had worn the bristles off generations of scrubbing brushes. The dining room's shortage of dust seemed miraculous, given that the walls held one stuffed head of boar, one of ram, two of goats with dry grins, some quart-sized cowbells, several old hand-held scales, and a vast, gleaming copper cauldron.

There was also one modern decoration: a frame containing large-denomination Angolan banknotes fanned out in artistic display. I guessed the story and was probably not far wrong. A young couple had gone to Angola when Salazar called it part of

Portugal, worked hard, made some money, lost their business in the revolution, returned to the mother country, and found that even their currency was worthless. They had turned it into a wall-display and spent the rest of their youth turning the inn from a wreck into an opportunity.

The scrubbed thrift was consoling. So was the smell from the kitchen: faint wood-smoke and powerful dobrada. (You wouldn't get tripe in a modern place. It has to be made by people willing to scrub the wrinkles of a calf's stomach.) Dona Manuela brought us the steaming bowls. The strips of tripe were bubbling in white beans, slices of chouriço, and chunks of black blood-sausage. The trimmings included a bottle of Dão red, not too subtle for the tomato sauce. Afterward there were pieces of chocolate cake, solid and not too sweet. It would be incorrect to say that we ate more to please Dona Manuela. I had been smelling dobrada all the way from Montana, where my wife, though in other respects perfect, will not cook it.

Dona Manuela talked to us after dinner. Her son had come home from school for the weekend, she said. He was a good boy and handsome too. If she were ever to forget that he was coming home -- though of course she wouldn't -- she would have only to look out the door to be reminded. The girls always started strolling around in front of the inn on Friday evening.

We had noticed, Adriano said. Even Diphthong had not frightened them off.

Mother Manuela was not displeased that her son was worth the girls' attention. She did not understand their behavior, however.

In her day, young ladies had been modest.

Adriano agreed. Decency had been forgotten.

I joined the chorus. The girls had not loitered at my door, damn it.

But if it's food you must settle for instead of girls, never pass up the contents of a bubbling pot brewed by a good mother to keep her eighteen-year-old son off the sidewalk.

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"Make yourself at home," hosts say. It is the kind of decision that no one can make for you. You are home or you're not. If the place is old and scrubbed, if the pretty little trout are flirting their tails in the Zêzere just outside, and if mother Manuela is simmering dobrada, you are home.

Adriano and I (as I have already confessed) are no travelers. We are not even pastoral wanderers. We are foragers, hunter-gatherers. We must have both field and home -- the one for the catch and the other for the cooking. Travelers cannot bear home.

Travel is extensive, hunting intensive. Travelers escape; hunters arrive. Travelers look for divertissement, like Pascal. Hunters don't want to be distracted. Travelers think hunters are primitives. Hunters think travelers are lost. Chatwin the traveler wrote that "If you walk hard enough, you probably don't need any other God."[4] It must have been a hunter-gatherer who wrote that "the kingdom of the father is spread upon the earth

and men do not see it."[5]

This is meant to be honest, not smug. The world looked right to Adriano and me because it was a big, old, ramshackle inn with well-scrubbed nooks. We happened to fit in them, that's all. No amount of searching would have made us happy otherwise. Bruce Chatwin would have looked for the ghosts in the attic.

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I asked Dona Manuela about the great copper cauldron on the wall of the dining room. You don't find kettles like that in the gourmet-cookware departments these days. It belonged on a moor at midnight, with crones to help it double, double, toil and trouble.

It was used three times a year, Dona Manuela said. Had been for generations. Its only purpose was the matança do porco, killing of the pig, or rather the scalding of the pig after it had been killed and drained of blood for the sausages. And then the kettle was hung back on the wall. (She did not mention that it always had to be polished first. If you have polished a copper saucepan, imagine the labor in shining up a vessel big enough for your bath.)

I asked, then, how much of the inn's food was made from scratch. But that is an idiom, and I probably did not translate it well. She did not mention the plucked chickens, anyhow, or the vegetable garden or fruit trees. She did say that she gathered most of her own herbs. She mentioned bay leaf, oregano, savory,

coriander leaves, thyme, cumin, and anise; plus lavender for the moths.

Dona Manuela rushed off to the kitchen, then, and Adriano listed the food that he got at its sources in the villages. There were the chickens and eggs, he said, and the ducks, turkeys, kid, and occasionally beef. There were apples, oranges, figs, and pears, if they were extra-good. Of processed products, there was bread, chouriço, cheese, olive oil, vinegar, and wine. With these he was cautious. He would wait till something was served to him at a meal and then, if it were of superior quality, buy more to take along.

Adriano did not purchase food for its associations. I'll buy a jug of wine if it is grown on the banks of a trout stream, but it seldom tastes as good at home. Adriano was beyond souvenir-shopping. Dangerous man, Adriano. His ideas would destroy the American economy if they got around. He bought for (1) flavor and (2) thrift, though the two concepts seemed inseparable in his mind.

Some moderns would see goodness and cost as different, even opposed. And the Australian aborigines might see even Portuguese habits as mindless materialism. But then I might be less eager for a tripe dinner among the aborigines.

* * * * *

At breakfast, Zé Francisco stopped by the paragem to meet us. He was the best fisherman in Manteigas. He was curious about

dry flies (the kind that float, though they are not literally dry). Adriano reported his experiments, which were favorable, but said that I had tied the flies. Zé Francisco believed what he heard but did not quite understand. Why, he wondered, would a fish rise to the surface of the water, exposing itself to predators, when it could eat in comfort down below?

The Zêzere, I guessed, offered hard choices. It had a stony bed, low in alkalinity and nutrients. It could not produce much food. Vegetation on the banks, however, held abundant insects that would be blown to the water, where surface tension would hold them prisoner at the metaphysical boundary between trout's world and ours. Such casualties were easy prey. Brown trout had evolved to exploit them.

Zé Francisco said that he had in fact found trout stomachs full of grasshoppers and other land-based aircraft. (Fisherman check trout stomachs as the Romans consulted entrails of sheep.) But he told us that there were few decent trout left in the Zêzere. The local men killed too many before they reached legal size.

Adriano and I were not dissuaded from trying. We said what anglers always say and sometimes feel: Well, if there aren't any trout, at least we'll spend our day in a good place.

This section might work, with some adaptation

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We had looked down on the upper Zêzere from the mountains on the far side of Manteigas, as we drove into town. From that

distance, the valley appeared so perfectly straight as to be a curiosity. Clearly the brook did not just erode itself lower and lower along the path of least resistance. There was an act of creation -- sudden, as geology goes. The last of the Pleistocene glaciers must have run like a scoop along the surface of ice cream, scraping deeper and deeper, unwavering. Not much soil was left. The sides of the valley, where they support vegetation at all, are steep moors for the sheep.

When you get close, however, everything changes. Zêzere is a self-made brook, embarrassed by her straight background. Ice-age boulders still stand firmly opposed to nonsense but Zêzere laughs at them, twists her way through, and gives the old granite a tickle on the way.

An angler's route is harder. Stone forms impassable waterfalls and protects banks from the uninvited. There are even pools so defended by rock-forts that you cannot fish in them, but they are few, because you try, you try. (By our wives ye shall know us, and our wives say that we lose our senses on the stream. In fact our senses are sharper while fishing than at any other time but not devoted to our wives, and they know it. Fernando Basurto[6] pled guilty five hundred years ago. It was probably not an original excuse even then.)

You cast over a cobweb stretched between two boulders, hoping that it will hold your leader off the water. The cobweb breaks. You retrieve your fly stealthily and clean the wadded web from it. You try again, casting side-armed to get under overhanging rock. Pale brown line makes S-shapes in the sun.

After three failures your little fly lands in deep shadows. You wait while it eddies as if free. The black water shivers. The fly disappears. There is another shiver in your spine. You tighten the line and ease the trout out, splashing, straining to get back where boulder gapes like clamshell. She does not succeed. You hold her at the surface in unaccustomed sunlight and run your hand under her, deciding whether to put her back or take her home. She is old enough, but keeping is commitment.

This is the only place where you are allowed to fondle Venus. If you tried it in a museum where she is made of marble, you would be arrested. Some museum-keepers want to ban fishing too, having guessed that nothing which feels so good ought to be legal.

Zêzere gives no cheap thrills, though. The trout in open water are all too small, flickers of sun and shadow as they flee. When they do so, you move on, because if there is a bigger one in hiding, the little ones' alarm will have frightened her too. Otherwise you try every shaded side of boulder, every still refuge near deep current, and especially every nook that might have foiled other anglers. You try to maintain concentration. You pretend that the fly is the only object worth watching in a cold universe. You cannot do it. When attention wavers your fly is sucked down. You tighten into a deep weight that surges and is gone, leaving a mercurial hump on the water, and your hopes vanish in its ripples. Despair is an ache in your chest.

At least your effort to ignore your surroundings has made you enjoy them more. The best way to appreciate anything is to

tell yourself that you must not look at it. You will recall, for example, that Vasco da Gama tried not to watch Venus's slipping gown on the Isle of Love, and what happened next got him bowdlerized.

Zêzere is your private museum from Manteigas to the cirque. The exhibits are constantly changed and highlighted by a sound-and-light show. There are no rules against feeling or sniffing. Alluvial soils bear sweet dark cherries that you can squeeze between tongue and palate. The boulders are warm in the sun, cool in the shadow. They are rubbed perfect by a supple artist, buffed to gentle curves. You step on one with felt-soled boot, leaving a wet track. You mount the next by reaching to the top with both hands and pulling yourself up its flank. Shadow-lines move along the granite. Reflections from running water flutter back over the stony surfaces it has polished, light fingers checking their work. Your fingers follow. They find every line but straight, every angle but square.

By some alchemy that no one has been able to explain to me, the rocks in Zêzere's bed are all golden. Above water they are gray, from a distance, but speckled rust and white up close. Moss grows bright green at the waterline and dark above it. Olive lichens wind through patches of blossoms red as hothouse flowers, but so tiny that you do not see them till a slippery climb presses your nose against them. Up close you also see little shiny flakes of quartz and depressions where the current has carved softer minerals out of the matrix. In one of the hollows are three pearl-sized pebbles of different colors, just where

high water dropped them. Another contains a stone big as your fist. Some hollows have picked up enough sediment to nourish grass -- not the wispy, struggling stuff you would expect but broad green blades shooting from the rock like fireworks.

The biggest of the hollows carved by Zêzere lies atop a boulder on a flat surface the size of a bed. The inverse sculpture holds water from the last rain. It has no algae, and though it is shallow, water gives the curves depth. The hollow is the size of a woman and about the depth of her body, with waist and compliant curves. You remember this place because it is where you want to stop fishing now, and come back after lunch.

The brook sings you back to your car, ZEH-zeh-reh, ZEH-zeh-reh. A cuckoo sings too. It sounds like a Bavarian clock, though distant and elusive. You echo the call instantly, with a slight change in the consonants. Be ready, now.

Challenge: "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!

Reply: "You too! You too!"

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Marcel Proust thought that "we never fully experience anything except retrospectively .... The presence of the beloved person or object or landscape activates the senses; the imagination functions only in their absence."[7] This is a child's way of relating to things. By that I do not mean that it is good or bad, only childish.

I had no idea that I was experiencing anything when I was a

child running around in the Minnesota woods. I was simply doing what I had been shown by two wiry old hunter-gatherers named Grandma and Aunt Mary, who knew where to find wild bluberries for the pies and pine-knots for the fire. We lived near the town of Pine River, then, on the shore of Woman Lake. I liked all the things that nature had created for my amusement. For the old women I was, no doubt, a beloved nuisance. But I can go back in a moment, just by tossing a knot in the flames or tasting a wild berry.

It is different when you grow up. Unlike Proust or Camões, you do not settle for long-range passions. You'd rather make scratchy love to the Venus of the rock. You live in the present, not the past, and your experiences fade with time rather than becoming more intense. The loss of a nine-inch trout turns from ache to smile. You are no longer sure, after all, that you were in the best of all possible places doing the only thing in the world worth doing. Zêzere runs somewhere inside you -- a smell or sight or sound can jerk you back on a dizzy trip -- but the memory is just an echo, like your song to the cuckoo.

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Adriano took me to a tasca called As Trutas for lunch. It means The Trout (plural), and we liked that, our goal for the afternoon being to catch more than the trout (singular) that we already possessed. Trout shrink fast. When you slide one from the water, it is fat and shiny and full of flapping energy, but when

you carry it around for awhile, even wrapped in ferns, it sheds its calories. It becomes wrinkled and scrawny, a thing that you are embarrassed to take back to your inn. If you catch no fish at all, you can at least pretend that you had better things to do. If you return with a half-dinner of trout, however, you must confess that you wanted the other half but were not good enough to get it.

The tasca was for snacks, but we were too hungry for snacks. We declined the puffy yellow chicken-feet, skinned and stewed. We did not want the escabeches of chicken gizzards or ide (a tiny relative of the carp). The woman in charge found some vegetable soup for us and then fried some strips of beef. Surprise: they were good. The marinade of wine and olive oil must have helped them. We finished off what the woman had planned for her family's dinner.

The radio was playing American music onto the sidewalk. "West Virginia," it sang, "Mountain Mama, take me home, take me home." Three half-drunk men were standing there, swaying. Adriano sat upright at the table but I may have swayed a little too. It was a good song.

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Water-music is never nostalgic or erotic, strictly speaking, though a fisherman in Zêzere's embrace can be both. Her song is more soothing than the best of imitations, can be just as stirring when thunder keeps time, and is more frightening when

the flood scours soft rock from granite and drops pebbles into the cavities. But part of the emotional range is missing.

Art is an improvement on nature, say we humans. There is no humanity without art. We can judge when a hominid became sapient man by his paintings, which have the power to make us shiver twenty or thirty centuries later. The Grão Vasco's vision of Sebastian at least makes us shudder. The pictures we buy in the mall are at the other extreme -- possessions small enough to fit in our décor. They spare us the inconvenience of going outside to look at nature.

Art that falls between the extremes is the real thing, for its creator, an original vision. Other adults may see it too but it is invisible to children, every one of whom would trade a Renoir for a madeleine. Do you know why there are no windows in art galleries? Curators will mention lighting problems, but the truth is that windows make paintings disappear. Where there is a window, children run to it and poof! Art is gone, pre-empted by nature.

I don't know. If art must be original, then another person's vision cannot be <u>my</u> art. I am obliged to create that for myself. Zêzere helps. As compared to the exhibits in museums, she is usually more beautiful and always more interesting, because she changes. She is new with every cloud, every trout. I tire even of Beethoven faster than Zêzere. Her music is part of a multi-media presentation and the conductor is me. I have been in training for a couple of million years and what I have learned comes flooding back on the flow that sings Zêzere, Zêzere.

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My last trout of the day was too pretty to dress right away, so I laid her in the creel on fronds of fern. She was still moist and glistening when I got back to the car. Adriano had three fish, one a little too small that he had kept because it swallowed the hook. We dressed them all for dinner by a spring that ran under the road. Adriano was so happy that he waved his hands (a thing no Portuguese does often) as he told me about the time at the edge of dusk. A sparse flight of mayfly spinners had come back to the river, laid their eggs, and died on the water. The trout had sipped them down. Adriano had been ready with his fly.

Each of us told his story not so much to help the other understand (though perhaps he did), but so that the actor could remember his own performance. We created ourselves no less in the telling than the doing. This is not to say that we lied. We would have thought poorly of our lives if they had been too small to keep. What we created in the telling was not the event but its structure and memory. We made each trout happen twice -- once in the stream and once in the hand, once in death and once in love -- before we were sure that it would last.

(1)My translation, faithful but not quite literal, of an old Spanish text published by Richard C. Hoffman. ("Fishing for Sport in Medieval Europe: New Evidence", in Speculum 60/4 (1985), p.898.) Fernando Basurto was Spanish, despite the spelling of his first name in the modern Portuguese style. His Diálogo is of high quality. It captures sport-fishing -- including fly-fishing -- independently of the English literature, though the latter had more important consequences.

(2)Chatwin, Bruce. The Songlines. NY:Penguin, 1987. pp.281-283.

(3)In Travels With Charley, p.25.

(4)Chatwin, Bruce. In Patagonia. NY:Penguin, 1977. p.33.

(5)Campbell, Joseph. Historical Atlas Of World Mythology. NY:Harper & Row, 1988. Volume I, Part 2, p.xvii. Campbell's source is The Gospel According to Thomas, Coptic text, as published by Harper Brothers in 1959.

(6)See epigraph.

(7)From Proust, a biography by Ronald Hayman. (Edward Burlingame Books/HarperCollins.) Quoted by Michiko Kakutani in The New York Times Nov. 13, 1990.

Chapter 15

Chapter 9

WATER NYMPHS

Limpid streams flowed from their summits, murmuring over white pebbly beds .... A pleasant valley set between the hills caught the pellucid waters .... the air was redolent with the odor of delicately moulded lemons, like a maiden's breasts....

The stalwart Portuguese, eager to be touching land once more, were now hastening .... The nymphs fled through the foliage; but, more cunning than swift... and desire, battening on the sudden glimpse of lovely flesh, grew more ardent still. One stumbled, by design, and ... her pursuer fell over her and made escape impossible.

Some of his fellows, taking another direction, came upon the nymphs who were bathing naked and drew

from them a startled cry, as though such an invasion were the last thing they looked for.... There was one youth who dashed into the water fully dressed and booted as he ran, there to quench the fire that consumed him.

Camões, The Lusiads, Canto Nine

Camões had been at sea a long time, I surmise, when he wrote Canto Nine. He called his desire a Nereid because, if he had called her Your Royal Highness, he would have been exiled again.

I too have been an exile and I remember what I wanted. It was a trout, a fat little pretty tasty trout. Make that two trout, which is enough for dinner with green wine, boiled potatoes, asparagus, and a pudding of fresh oranges. Camões was exiled for seventeen years and I for only the same number of days, so my ambition was smaller. I wanted to catch my trout where the Alvoco flowed from its summit, pellucid water in a pleasant valley set between the hills. I had dreamt of the Alvoco and its shy little trout even when fishing a bold big river with too many trout in Montana. I wanted my desire hard to get, like that of Camões.

The poet's nymphs were expurgated from at least one edition of the national epic. Some editor decided that readers should not be exposed to the Isle of Love that Venus built in mid-ocean -- Camões's idea of the perfect reward to Vasco da Gama and his crew for discovering the sea-route to India. Canto Nine is, of course, the one that I turn to first in every edition of the poem.

Illustrators over the centuries have failed to produce art as sublimely outrageous as the text, but their struggles are worth watching. Naturally, then, I discovered the deletion while leafing through Adriano's several editions of The Lusiads. Three or four were intact but one -- that with the most wear -- had been censored. It had belonged to the young Adriano when he went off to high school in Aveiro. Its covers were loose, its pages yellowed, and its flyleaves covered with stanzas written out in pencil. Here and there were good sketches of fellow students. These changes to the book were all improvements, but the passages that adolescents would have liked best were missing. Young women were modest in those days, Adriano explained. It would not have been right to tell them about the sport of sailors and Nereids.

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Adriano grew talkative as his Peugeot climbed the Range of the Star, and I boiled with questions. I did not bounce on the seat -- as far as I know -- but the feeling was the one I used to get just before my mother told me to calm down. I welcomed it back. Looking for other men's myths is good; entering my own dream time was better.

Think of the Range of the Star as Portugal's Colorado. Altitudes are lower but the Serra da Estrela is where water begins, forming on the peaks in little trickles, becoming clear streams for a few leagues, and then growing into the turbid rivers that water the nation's midlands. As in Colorado, water is

the mountains' most important resource, though you would not guess it from casual conversation. People talk to you about everything else: sheep, cattle, tourists, trees, tillage, fish, and wildlife -- derivatives of water, every one. Of them all, trout get closest to the source. Where trout thrive, there are innocent currents, clean and cool and flowing even in the dry season. To write of trout as water nymphs is to be as precise as a symbol can get.

The mountains of central Portugal remind an American of Colorado in another sense: The Range of the Star is young landscape. Most of the country, even further north, was unaffected by the Pleistocene glaciers, or at least by the last of them. The Serra da Estrela is a child of the ice. A Yankee (as opposed to a Southerner) feels at home. The mountains and valleys are steep but slightly rounded, scraped by the glacier. There are little roads with no cars on them. There are cloudy distances, smells of heather, diggings of boars, and slithers of vipers. There are even wolves: not many, but enough to work up a shiver if you try. This is the best place in the world. I may have told you that about the Alentejo in October, but the best place migrates with the seasons.

The parallel to Colorado does not work for the human geography of the Serra da Estrela. Colorado is new, even in American terms, and largely populated by refugees from the east coast or California. The people of the Portuguese mountains have been there since the glacier left.

"The Serra da Estrela is the highest Portuguese range, prolongation of the [Iberian] peninsula's spine. It divides the two halves of Portugal, so different in countenance and temperament. Finally, [the Serra] is the heart of the country. Perhaps in the breaks and slopes, valleys and mountainsides, there remains a true representative of the ancient Lusitanian. If there is a human type that is properly Portuguese, if across the happenstances of history there survived any pure example of the prehistoric race from which we can claim descent, then here is where we should look ...."[1]

She was climbing the road with a stack of loose hay balanced on her head. She had not looked like a Nereid for thirty years but still had the proud neck and back of a dancer. The rest of her body was square and muscular, draped in a black dress with sweat-stains between the shoulder blades. Adriano pulled in just ahead of her, parking at a fountain fed by the mountain's springs. There were many such along the roads, because until recently all travel had been on foot. He and I drank a toast to the Nereids and felt better for scouring our plumbing with innocent water. Adriano filled a bottle, then, and handed it to the woman with the hay when she arrived. She drank with deep, eager gulps, hay still balanced. Muito obrigada, she said: much obliged. And then she trudged on into the mountains.

The road was narrow and steep with a bend every few yards. A cottage stood back just enough that a vehicle cutting one curve

too tight would not scrape the stones around the door. Into this small space was squeezed a truck, its driver, a peasant couple, and a litter of pink, huddled piglets. The people must have been dickering over life and death. Before leaving I wanted one dinner of suckling pig, but I did not want to remember how pretty even swine are for a few weeks.

Adriano turned downhill onto a road even steeper and narrower. It led to a village of few streets and one praça, an open, wedge-shaped polygon. (We would call it a square in English. It is the kind of confusion Latins expect of us. Square, square.) The small end of the wedge had just enough space for parking Adriano's car. Two houses fronted on a long side of the praça and one on the opposite end. From the remaining side, steps led up to a church. Next to the steps but lower than the church in altitude and dignity was a tasca. Outside it were tables, parasols, and an invisible waftage of fresh-baked bread.

Lunch-time was close and Adriano confessed that the tasca smelled good, but we kept to our plan and filled our creels with bread, cheese, and lean chouriço sausage. The scent encouraged one of the seven deadly sins and I popped a chunk of chouriço into my mouth, washing it down from a fountain on the square -- just to stave off hunger pangs during the hike to the Alvoco River. It was not a long walk, but it was steep. Adriano descended slowly, pausing twice to look back, worrying about the return trip uphill. Not me. I was in a hurry to get to the bottom of things.

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Trout-fishing is, in Portuguese, apaixonante. The translation would be "passion-inducing" in our tongue, which is shy in curling around such thoughts. This kind of passion lets you make a fool of yourself without witnesses. It has nothing in common with courtship except sleepless intensity, which is resemblance enough to lead angler after angler to the same symbolism. You like this or you hate it, but passion it is, passion without dilution, passion without unfaithfulness, passion uninterrupted by commercials.

Passion was interrupted by the donkey and the miller, in that order. The burro was plodding up the trail under two sacks smelling of ground maize. The miller was still cleaning his millstone. I told him that his burro had gone off on a lark, at which he and Adriano both laughed. The donkey could have been turned loose in dense fog with no danger that it would fail to find the village, which was more than I could claim. The miller was old and said that he would have no successor. The trail pounded by hoofs over the centuries would grow back into brambles soon, because no young man would work for the meager profit in this business. I tried to talk longer. I wanted miller's tales, which had been extinct in English for some time, but might as well have tried to interview a dinosaur at the end of the Paleocene. My victim was as taciturn as most Portuguese and one of the poorest residents of a poor village. He had neither status nor stories.

And besides, I was in a hurry for trout.

The first came under an old stone bridge. It looked lost -- the bridge, not the trout. Perhaps the local lord had ordered this construction in the time before governments, when peasants preferred a route near water. The only life there was in a small run beneath the arch. The water was not deep but every bridge shelters either trout or troll, and one or the other pulled my little floating fly down in a wink of water. There was a flashing and flopping and a fine fat fish in my net. It was a brown trout from a family going back to the time of the glaciers, here to give me a courtly welcome. I kept the trout in the water and thanked it with such gentility that Adriano, who was listening, complimented me on my command of his language. Then I unrolled my tape-measure and found that this trout, this one-fish welcoming delegation, this chief of protocol for the Duke of Alvoco, was only eighteen centimeters long. The legal minimum is nineteen centimeters. (I do not translate this into inches because it would sound even smaller.) A single centimeter is no serious deficiency, in the minds of most Portuguese anglers, but I felt the weight of a different culture. The trout went back. Surely there would be bigger ones ahead anyhow.

Above the bridge, granite walls bounded the Alvoco on both sides, sometimes right in the water, sometimes a short distance back. The wall on the right supported the millrace; the one on the left held up the edge of a field. Little white and pink flowers grew from the chinks of the rough gray stones and tumbled over the top. I asked Adriano the name of this blossom that

squeezed so much emotion from the hard heart of granite. It was, he said, a mal-me-queres, from the Portuguese equivalent of the English "Love me, Love me not."

Mal me queres;	Poorly dost thou love me;
Bem me queres;	Well dost thou love me;
Muito me queres;	Much dost though love me;
Pouco me queres;	Little dost thou love me;
Nada.	Not at all.

Love, then, had gradations with these flowers. They did not demand decisions, yes or no, like big American daisies (or like American anglers who want to catch a fish and move on). And besides, the mal-me-queres were delicate. A lover needed the most gentle touch. If he rushed, he would pluck several petals at once and merit a slap in the face.

High above us in the village, the church clock chimed once. I took this as a call to arms, or fishing rods. Adriano said "one o'clock," as if the gastronomic consequences were obvious. I fished faster. He selected a table of granite with hummocks of sweet-smelling anise for chairs. I fished on. A flock of goats trotted down the hillside and right into the pool where my fly floated, preferring grass growing on river-rocks to the lush green of the hillsides. I glared at the goats. They paid no attention. Neither did their goatherd. I gave up and retired for lunch.

Adriano and I opened our trout-and-cheese knives, each of

which had a blade for dressing fish and another for lunch, if one remembered which was which. We pulled off chunks of bread and alternated them with bites of cheese and chouriço. Adriano produced two oranges that he had smuggled into his creel, and we peeled them with the knives. The mite of a bird called a pintasilgo (English goldfinch) hopped in a cluster of olive trees on the terrace behind, giving us a little day-music. Maybe he just wanted us to move on, but he made me feel benevolent even toward trout-scaring goats.

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Across the Alvoco, the goatherd leaned on his staff, watching everything and nothing. He was a man of about my age -- the prime of life. He wore a wool suit that had probably been brown or black once, and used with a tie for going to Mass. It was just dark, now, and worn with knee-high rubber boots. When he moved, the goats moved with him, though he gave them no command. I suppose they saw him as the head of family.

Once I had asked a Portuguese shepherd about this relationship. He was prosperous, for his profession, with a sizable flock of sheep and a few goats. He was also more talkative than the miller. The sheep, he said, were only sensate as lambs. As adults, they were just a sort of bush that walked around producing milk and wool and meat. The goats, on the other hand, were clever, the brains of the flock.

I asked what happened when they grew too old to produce kids

and milk.

They had to be killed, of course. His words rushed out. It was hard, he said, but there was no getting around it. Middle-aged nannies had given what they had to give. They could only waste forage for the rest of their time, growing tougher and tougher of flesh. He was obliged to collar a member of the flock in the prime of life, roll her on her side, thrust a knife between her ribs, and hold it there till she bled to death. She would keep her eye on him and cry like a woman. She had been a kid not long before, hopping from rock to rock and running to him for a rub of the head where little horns were trying to sprout. He was god, and he was killing her. It was very hard.

It was not my image of the shepherd. Where I grew up, he had existed only in church, as a metaphor for eternal care. Portugal has the real thing everywhere, dotting the landscape like trees. It is poor man's work. A shepherd's mission is to keep himself fed, not to provide ovine geriatric care. It makes sense. I would not care for the job.

The Alvoco flock moved off uphill, away from the stream, winding in and out of invisible trails between terraces. The nannies' brass and steel bells sent ripples of sound across the valley. It was as much music as a meat-animal can expect to make before the knife.

I don't mind killing enough trout for dinner. They are beautiful and they may know something about music, because a trout stream makes it; but I am not their god and their eyes do not ask questions. They do not even look at me.

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There is a modest claim that I may make: I have liberated myself from trophies and scores. It was not difficult -- not like liberation from fear, which only a few heroes like Nuno Álvares achieve. Mostly I just grew older. Once I had dreamt of catching big trout, read books about how to do it, and chased them from Patagonia to Donegal. When I catch one now, I am still pleased. It is a gift, but it is not a triumph.

The scores were a phase too. I had learned to return most of my trout to the water, unharmed, and thought that numbers were needed to document my prowess. It was non-consumptive consumerism, a competition without messy dead fish.

Now that my affair with trout has progressed through sophistication to the primitive, I am free to pursue a two-little-fish dinner in bliss. I take comfort in the relationship enjoyed by the first people who hunted food in these streams after the glacier. The method is different and the restraints are stronger -- must be, in these days of fewer trout and more fishermen -- but the emotion is the same. I feel sure of this. Fishing is a kind of anthropology, a way of excavating layers, digging into strata built by my ancestors, finding an underground river.

In the same way, I know that my trout is a Nereid. Female is nourishment, be she trout or nanny-goat or Camões's nymph with breasts like moulded lemons. My trout would be male only if I had the "desire to latch onto a monster symbol of fate and prove my

manhood in titanic piscine war." That's how John Steinbeck put it, and he did not have the desire. "But sometimes," he wrote, "I do like a couple of fish of cooperative frying size."[2]

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The lady was not for frying. I caught trout, to be sure, but not many, and none bigger than the first under the bridge. Even the little ones demanded my best. I cast far upstream, keeping my line out of the water by draping it on boulders. I made sure to throw slack into my leader so that the fly would drift like a real beetle caught in the surface tension. I watched my tiny fly float down the edge between deep, still shelters and the currents that carry food. The trout, such as they were, all came from places that few fishermen would have probed.

Adriano explained the problem. We were, he said, in the waning quarter of the moon, and trout do not take then.

Every Portuguese fisherman and every Portuguese farmer believes in the influence of the moon. The farmers even plant by its quarters, which shows that the old-time religion is good enough for them. The fishermen profess devotion but are not bound by it. I deplore this moral decay. It is just as bad in America, though we have several lunar theories, one or another of which offers fishing at any given time. If each angler would choose his own lunacy and stay with it, there would be more space on the streams for me. (It is true that I fish whenever I wish, but afterwards I consult the tables till I find one that explains my

impotence.)

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Bowdlerizing Camões's national epic is a mild offense compared to the suffering inflicted on poor Ernest Hemingway for fishing in Spain. A scholar (I shall not provide her name) has written that when Hemingway threaded a Spanish worm onto on his hook, he intended for the reader to understand that he was really impaling a portion of the male anatomy. No fooling. This is what happens when students deprave a noble sport. Writing is meant to be done, not spied on. It is an active pursuit like fishing or sex. When you try to pin it down and dissect it, you addle your brains.

For the record: No human male (even Hemingway) wishes to stick a fishhook in any part of his anatomy, especially the one resembling (in the mind of overwrought and underprivileged scholars) a worm. Ouch.

I am in charge of the symbolism around here and will brook no confusion. Adriano and I fished the Alvoco not with worms, for whom I find myself developing sympathy, but with flies. A fly is a representation of a real insect, but tied on a hook with silk and feathers and other materials as filmy as a Nereid's gown.

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Adriano stopped casting and started looking for a trail up

the hill. I fished with redoubled ferocity. He told me that he knew of a field of wild strawberries and would have a look for it on the way back to the village. He would just take his time and mosey along. I was to feel free to fish as long as I wished. I did wish, for some reason of incomprehensible hunger, but pretended that I did not and tagged along.

The strawberries were almost as scarce as the trout. We had to get on our knees and search through the grass for red beads. They were good but they did not flee like a Nereid, so I lost interest. (Adolescent males, including overgrown ones like me, are all hunters. Older men are content to be gatherers. Gathering may require a higher level of consciousness, if by "higher" you mean older and therefore closer to heaven. Then again, some of the things we call levels of consciousness may be layers of platitudes.)

We worked our way up the hill in stages. Adriano, as usual, did not remove his tie and coat; I, also as usual, worried when his face turned from pink to red. The first time it happened, I stopped and asked him about a curral built with walls and roof of shale. It was to shelter the animals in bad weather, he said -- not just to hold them, like a corral in Montana.

The next time I really wanted to stop. A little boy somewhere was calling for a strayed kid, urging it back to the fold before night came, and the wolves. Closer to us, a blackbird sang to the setting sun from a thicket of pines. There was no hint in his song of complaint or aggression. The melody rippled out like goats' bells across the valley, or like the bright

Alvoco over its boulders. I did not care what the ornithologists thought: that blackbird was singing the song I hum when I fish for little wild trout.

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Lots of men will tell you that they just go fishing as an excuse to get out and enjoy nature. Don't believe any of the young ones. Adriano, however, was seventy-seven years old. He was relieved when we hit the outlying houses, and I was sorry that I had kept him on the stream for so long. He wanted a cold beer. Usually he did not drink it, he said, but this evening he would savor one glass on the terrace of the tasca while he looked out over the valley.

A yellow dog was rubbing his back lasciviously on a small patch of green grass. It smelled good (even to me) and the rubbing clearly felt good right up the spine. This was a fulfilled dog. He was of about the size and shape of a coyote, with shorter hair of the same color. He was, perhaps, close to the ancestral Asian wolf, thanks to generations of breeding at random and survival of only those ancestors who needed no attention from veterinaries. I liked this dog. He felt about his rub on the green grass the way I felt about massage by Nereid.

"Anda ca, Pirolito," Adriano called. The first part of that means "come here," and Pirolito is just a name that a Portuguese dog might well have. This one trotted along behind us, ready for adventure.

The next house but one had a quintal of packed dirt big enough for a two-person soccer game. One of the persons was a teen-aged boy and the other a girl half-tomboy and all Nereid. She could kick a ball as well as the boy but she was wearing a plain white dress and pale purple hose. She was almost as flushed as Adriano. The effect was no doubt inexpensive, in her case, but actresses spend large sums to achieve it.

"Who makes the most goals?" Adriano asked.

"I do!" the girl shouted.

"I do!" shouted the boy a moment later. He was a believer in ladies-first, at least for pretty ladies.

Adriano chatted with the couple and discovered that Nereid's dress and purple hose were for church, where there was to be some special occasion of a significance lost on me. She and her escort did not exactly walk along with us, but they just happened to head for church right behind us.

Three houses later, the same thing happened, except that the new couple was younger. Ana was eight, she said, and Nuno nine. When asked who made the most goals, both shouted at the same time. Ana thumped on Nuno with an open hand, disputing his claim to equality. Nuno made no attempt to thump back. One day, I thought, he would make a good husband.

"O Ana," said Adriano. "You should not hit Nuno. He's a nice little boy." Ana looked at Nuno and giggled. And then we all walked to the car, Adriano doffing his hat to any lady in a doorway or window. I walked beside him, apprentice to the Pied Piper, imagining the reaction in America if a couple of sweaty

fishermen hiked off with the town's children. Ana ran circles around us. Nuno watched Ana. Pirolito tried to frisk with smaller dogs, which ran into their houses and yapped at him. The adolescent couple followed.

At the fountain, Adriano was taken by an idea better than cold beer. He paused and drooped. He told Ana of his long day's journey into the lower reaches. He confided the depth of his thirst. She listened. Her eyes were alternately suspicious and sympathetic, but always big and brown. And then she ran back to her house and brought a glass. Adriano accepted it with a bow, filled it, and drank deeply, eyes raised to the mountains. He sighed as the liquid quenched the fire that consumed him. He grew in height, shrank in years. He refilled the glass and raised it for a toast. The eight-year-old Nereid watched. Adriano gave her a speech of gratitude, words murmuring like limpid current over white pebbly bed.

She smiled.

(1)Attributed to Oliveira Martins by Simões, Viriato. A Serra da Estrela. Lisbon:Self-published, 1979. p.44. I have altered the nonstop punctuation.

(2)In Travels With Charley, p.102.

Chapter 10