

Leaving Lisbon

Crossing the ferry to Cacilhas
I think of Byron, how he swam the estuary
And loved oranges more than English people;
Noted in his letters to Hodgson, how the *ruas*
Were crooked and filthy, the monarchy
Detached, and certain monks amazingly venal,
Though witty, who joked in Latin, and walked
About in broken sandals. He talked

About a sweet docility of light over-
Hanging everything, Pombaline masonry,
Trellises, shuttered sills, and spilt
Like after opium, in a wave of *papaver*
Oriental. And since poetry
Is a descriptive art, built
To enliven fact and let the luminous
Particular loose in the House

Of Fancy, he talked about being Byron,
Gone for good, from Albion.
Though not forever. After all, his mom
Was by no means dead at Newstead; and he was overdrawn
By not a little—London, Brighton, women,
What would have whittled a weaker poet down
To spittle, set a standard for all future endeavour.
“In the Spring of 1813 I shall leave England forever.”