

Four Travel Ruminations

Tangier, 8 March 2007, 9:45PM

today in morocco
i watched a man smoke crack

up in the bus

we tourists in tangier he tangerine junkie we six feet above
he six feet below

we in backpacks he in bare feet we gawking
he smoking

we pointing
he spitting
we whispering he SHOUTING

we sneak a shot
his soles caked, soul baked spittle splayed pipe to lips except when head shaking furiously

up on the hill

we sneak another shot as thick american women pay

European money to mount african humped beasts

men in red fezzes pull their camels
up down
up down
loading and unloading well-fed american wives while well-fed american husbands snap shots

men in red fezzes push patinaed bracelets

you pay with the green money! issokay!

thick american husbands barter

no, less! no, less! fodor's said! (they are offended if you don't offer less) (it's expected, come to expect)

back on the bus

well-fed american women lament the plight of the african beasts lament cruel men in red fezzes

*up and down all day can you believe it?
the camel i was on its knees were bleeding! did you see it?
can you believe it?
i cannot believe it!
did you see it?
did you get a picture?
i got your picture!*

*i talked 'em down to 25 cents can you believe it?
how do these people make a living?
i bought this for a dollar!
that piddly piece of shit for a dollar ya shoulda let me talk to 'em i woulda talked 'em down to a dime*

well-fed american businessmen on their vacations fool

stupid africans at work the naïve men in red fezzes

everyone got their bracelet? everyone got their camel ride? let's eat lunch!

belly dancers coca-cola

*does that food look safe to you?
i'll eat that meat but not that soup what's that pastry made of? better not drink the water
order a coke.
what's wrong with that boy's arms my god his eye!
buy his postcards maybe he'll go away.*

*what's that in the street don't these people use toilets don't step in it!
real live snake charmer take a picture before he asks us for money! where'd these children come from
don't these kids go to school? look at the dirty faces get that one's picture he looks so clean!*

*real live moroccan family in their kitchen
take a picture before they close the door!
don't eat that bread you have no idea how it was made! look out for that one he'll steal your purse!
look at that one he wants money for nothing look away!*

look away, look away, our money's been pooled - what of our ethics?

back on the ferry

out on the deck an american man
models for his family the
traditional moroccan robe he purchased in the traditional moroccan market
white
pointed
hood
he is quite the southern gentleman.
i sneak a shot

we pop our biodramina
purchased in gibraltar
from an english-speaking moroccan
using spanish dinero at a
drugstore next to overpriced fish-and-chips up the hill from where
a british man and japanese woman
got married
once
before moving to new york

and crossing continents, we sleep.

The Children of This Place

The children of this place
They are not merchants
They do not sell postcards, chiclets, wooden camels Copper bracelets, hashish, whores

They are not merchants
They are students
Copper bracelets, hashish, whores They do not sell, they are students

They are students
They are athletes, they are playmates
They do not sell, they are students
These bus riders, detention sitters, dodgeballers

They are athletes, they are playmates
These scotchhoppers, ropejumpers, spitballers These bus riders, detention sitters, dodgeballers They are not merchants

These scotchhoppers, ropejumpers, spitballers
They do not hustle
They are not merchants
Hustle only from the far end of the field five minutes after recess bell

They do not hustle
Hustle the ball from one end of the court to the other
Hustle only from the far end of the field five minutes after recess bell These pond swimmers, frog catchers, wedgie pullers, sodapop drinkers

Hustle the ball from one end of the court to the other
They do not sell postcards
These pond swimmers, frog catchers, wedgie pullers, sodapop drinkers Do not sell postcards - bam! unfolded accordion style for tourists

They do not sell postcards
This town has no tourists
Do not sell postcards – bam! unfolded accordion style for tourists These children are tourists

This town has no tourists
The children mail postcards
These children are tourists
Travel to Disneyland, Jamestown, Liberty Bell and Grand Canyon

The children mail postcards
Travel to Space Needle, Alamo, Old Faithful and Hoover Dam Travel to Disneyland, Jamestown, Liberty Bell and Grand Canyon They mail postcards to their teachers

Travel to Space Needle, Alamo, Old Faithful and Hoover Dam These children have teachers!
They mail postcards to their teachers
Their teachers do not teach them to hustle

These children have teachers!
Taught to hustle only around the track behind the school Their teachers do not teach them to hustle
They demonstrate their physical fitness to their President

Taught to hustle only around the track behind the school They mail postcards to their gym teachers
They demonstrate their physical fitness to their President They never mail postcards from Morocco

They mail postcards to their gym teachers
Their parents keep them safe from places like New York, LA, Tangier They never mail postcards from Morocco
Their parents shield them from hustlers, dealers and whores

Their parents keep them safe from places like New York, LA, Tangier They are not taught to hustle
Their parents shield them from hustlers, dealers and whores
They collect postcards and eat chiclets on the bus

They are not taught to hustle
They will not buy hashish until college
They collect postcards and eat chiclets on the bus They won't see Morocco until freshman film class

They will not buy hashish until college
They'll see Morocco through the eyes of Bogart They won't see Morocco until freshman film class They'll never see Tangier through my eyes

They'll see Morocco through the eyes of Bogart My eyes, white, opaque, clouded by infection They'll never see Tangier through my eyes
My eyes see all

My eyes, white, opaque, clouded by infection
They do not sell postcards, chiclets, wooden camels My eyes see all
The children of this place

Florence, 17 March 2007, 1:30PM

give me the guidebook

she says:

un gelato per favore

cioccolato

and for him she says:

e un gelato per favore cioccolato e menta

give me the guidebook again?

she says:

pasta per favore

in salsa bianca

and for him she says:

e pizza per favore con salsa rossa

*give me the guidebook
why don't you just keep it?*

*i don't want to carry it it's heavy
then stop making me take it out*

scusi,

dove è

she says:

*il colosseo
il metro? san pietro? duomo? pietà? palazzo piti? il pantheon?*

give me the guidebook no

i'll find it

*you'll get us lost
we already passed this river twice*

no. yes. i'm not.

i'm tired of walking.

are you mad? are you sure? don't be mad.

yes you are.

give me the guidebook

scusi,

dove è

she says:

*il hotel fiorentino? un telefono?
il stazione di treno?*

she says:

vino rosso per favore

and for him she says:

una birra per favore

scusi,

dove è

she says:

una banca?

l'ufficio del biglietto? i botticellis?

where is platform six!

how do we stamp our tickets! did our train leave!

when does our train leave! what time does our train leave! who built this city!

i'm tired!

you figure it out!

the

ice cream

it's too much! she says and is told next time remember say

piccolo

then hold the guidebook.

Oklahoma, 16 September 2006, 2:17AM

folks comin' down frem de-moyne puttin' up houses

where a goat

w'unt e'en go

pay for gas

hit the toilet

grab a coke

jump in the car

copy these words on a piece of scrap paper what a hoot!

a laugh at the expense of an old truck driver in the parking lot outside the KUM&GO

in the county known for red bridges

meryl streep and clint eastwood in love

and the house where john wayne was born

pil-grim.

osceola
plattsburg
liberty
193 miles to kansas city
then a stop at arthur bryant's 18th and brooklyn a bbq joint

famous bbq joint
best bbq in kansas city! at least according to other white folks
like us (and steven spielberg on the wall)

round the corner
tank on E
those familiar colors – green yellow white the british petroleum starburst
old men in the back
huddled over a table
fixing up an engine

*a man's gotta do
what a man's gotta do.*

young men in the alley huddled over a boombox throwing dice

*if ev-er-ything isn't black and white, ah say,
"why the hell not?"*

lawrence
topeka
wichita
243 miles through kansas acres of ragweed

and oldies radio

let me tell ya 'bout the birds and the bees and the flowers and the trees

I-35
oklahoma in the dark
wrong way on the expressway and a one-hour detour
twelve-hour drive now thirteen

never say sorry – it's a

sign of weakness.

a late late check-in in oklahoma city

i'll have you spread-eagled on a wagon wheel.

and sleeping in separate beds.

*i think the government is a necessary evil,
like,
say,*

motion-picture agents.

morning spent looking at blown-out shell of a
federal building
168 empty chairs
briefcases wristwatches pacifiers left behind

and wondering
if we could ever hate the government that much
then two agnostics
moved to tears
by a weeping jesus

afternoon spent looking at tigers
tortoises
turkey vultures

trumpeter swans
and boy don't we love the gorillas they're just like us!

get off yer horse

and drink yer milk.

then a shared steak and glass of milk

*i've had three wives,
six children and
six grandchildren and I still don't understand women.*

drinks with new friends

*talk low,
talk slow and don't say too much.*

and the kids who drove all the way from minnesota

tomorrow hopes we have learned something from yesterday.

sleeping in separate beds goodnight,

pilgrim.