

The First English Poems Written in the Western Hemisphere

*A Collection of Poems Written by 16th Century English
Poet M. A. Sempine with Annotations By Sir Edmund
Dredsky, 20th Century Archaeologist and Scholar*

Edited and Further Annotation Provided

by Mac Wilkey

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This is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to persons living or dead, or any similarity to events depicted herein to real life incidents, are purely coincidental. A colony of 16th century settlers similar to those that settled for a short period in Roanoke, Virginia is represented in this work of fiction. The names, John White, the leader of that colony, and Virginia Dare, allegedly, the first person of European descent to be born in North America, are referenced in a completely fictional representation of those courageous and honorable settlers who heroically founded our country. To further emphasize the fictional use of the Roanoke colony, a change in the spelling to Roanoake as been invoked in this text.

Poems from the New World with Footnotes

This text is intended to be a scholarly document although its readers should be duly warned that M. A. Sempine was one of the most daring and resourceful characters in any century. His keen wit and bold willingness to challenge impossible odds have continued to amaze this old scholar for over half a century. I have been criticized for an earlier work for sensationalism and exaggeration; therefore, this text is limited to the actual poems written by the poet and recovered from St. Hubbard's monastery in England. The scholarly annotations, though provided by me, have been reviewed by other scholars of equal or greater stature than myself. The scholarly integrity of this work has been judged by all parties to irreproachable and unimpeachable.

I must provide, by way of introduction to this work, a very brief synopsis of M. A. Sempine's origins and a chronology of his life up to the point that he 'disembarks' from the Spanish ship near the lost colony of Roanoake (Virginia).

The sixteenth century English poet, Marie Antoinette Sempine was born in London in 1559 to at least one noble parent, Sempine became a rogue scholar, attending several educational institutions, specializing in languages, history, and literature. Although he received

no formal degree. Unrestricted by conventional class scheduling limitations and able to simultaneously attend multiple educational institutions, Sempine advanced rapidly through the curriculum and achieved a level equivalent to a doctor of philosophy by the time he was seventeen in 1576. At that time he left London when invited by his friend, John Rhodes Hubbard, who was twenty one and soon to become the Earl of Hubbard near Nashville, England.

At the Hubbard estate, J. R. Hubbard and M. A. Sempine became quite accomplished at all aspects of agriculture, but specialized in animal husbandry. Following several romantic disappointments and a hint of scandal, Sempine left England with a small fortune for Madrid, Spain. Similar to Joseph in Egypt, Sempine's alleged involvement with Queen Maria ended his stay in Spain and started him on his voyage to the New World, the events described in the first poem that follows. It should be noted that unlike Potiphar dealings with Joseph in Egypt, King Ferdinand III of Spain did not imprison Sempine but provided him with an official decree granting him sweeping authority in the king's name in the region known as North America.

Editor's Commentary

This introduction and the poems and annotations which follow are as prepared by Sir Edmund Dredsky as his planned scholarly text on his discoveries at the ruins of the English monastery near the Hubbard estate near Nashville, England. To the extent possible, the text is presented as intended by Dredsky with annotations only when deemed absolutely necessary to retain the reader's confidence that this text is based on actual scholarly documents. Only those annotations shown in italics have been added by the editor. Dredsky's annotations are shown in plain text.

Dredsky never demurred from his claim that "M" and "A" stood for Marie and Antoinette rather than being an unauthorized addition by one of the monks who lived at St. Hubbard monastery during the 18th century. Dredsky has never budged from his assertion that Sempine's father most likely gave him a lady's name to prompt ridicule early in his life and thereby make him a stronger man. Based on the events as depicted in the following tales, his father's alleged strategy was very successful..

Disembarking¹

The artist's easels² were secured
When I broke from the rank³.
I gathered up his canvases⁴
Then sprang forth from the plank⁵.

I hoped I'd heard my dive's critique;
The Spanish judge evoked
The Spanish word for 'cannon ball.'
I saw the splash; I stroked⁶.

My hopes were spent as canvases
Just wrapped around my legs⁷.
My savior was my pal, Miguel
Who tossed those 'poison' kegs⁸.

¹*Editor's Note: This most controversial of Sempine's poems is also one of his longest, there being only one other three-stanza poem. Those who support Sempine authorship of the middle stanza credit his long time adrift in the Atlantic as the basis for the extraordinary length. Most later critics attribute the middle stanza to Edmund Dredsky, a frustrated diver on the 1952 Oxford swimming and diving team. They argue, quite convincingly, that the terms 'cannon ball' and 'Spanish judge,' in relationship to diving competition, would have been foreign to Sempine in the late 16th century. His most avid admirers merely smile and say, "More evidence of his prophetic foresight and inimitable wit."*

²Sempine was on a voyage from Spain to a point near Roanoake on a Spanish ship whose name Sempine never revealed (*Editor's Note: although some argue that its name is clearly encrypted into this particular poem. Arguing with such beliefs (and believers) is pointless – see note 1*). The ship captain had ordered Sempine to walk the plank rather than complete the voyage to Roanoake as ordered by King Ferdinand III of Spain. The Portuguese painter and Queen Maria's emissary, Miguel Batista, was preparing to capture the event on canvas.

³Awaiting the captain's command to force Sempine onto the plank for his 'final walk,' the crewmen assigned escort duty for Sempine were surprised when Sempine unexpectedly bolted from their grasps and out into the Atlantic.

⁴Using the element of surprise to his advantage, Sempine was able to grab the canvas on which Miguel was painting as well as an unknown number of fresh and finished canvases.

⁵*Editor's Note: Dredsky once noted in an early lecture that the Roanoakians would have fared much better if the poem had ended with 'sank' rather than 'plank.' Such gibberish, even by a notable archaeologist and scholar of Dredsky's stature is inexcusable.*

⁶*Editor's Note: The middle four-line stanza has none of Sempine's poetic style and lacks the nebulousness of his verse to such an extent that its authenticity might be questioned even without the 'untimely' references – see Note 1.*

⁷The canvases that Sempine meant to use as a make-shift raft did not fare well when immersed in salt water. Had Sempine been more familiar with the deleterious effects of salt water on parchment, more of his poems written at sea would undoubtedly have not been bidden 'farewell,' as well.

⁸All of Sempine's possessions were stored in wooden kegs which were labeled with skull and crossbones symbols. Although Sempine had argued that the kegs contained an experimental pesticide, the crew and the captain were reportedly skeptical. However, once the kegs were tossed overboard by the artist, Miguel Batista, Sempine was indeed 'saved.' The captain feared that the poison might be dispersed by a cannon ball through the water to one of the Spanish colonies. Just as important to Sempine, the kegs floated and provided the components to the raft Sempine needed (when bound together by the 'poison' rope Sempine removed from a specially marked keg.

My Turn In the Barrel¹

My awful habit² should have been
A portent to my plight³
For to these barrels doubly bound⁴
I cannot float aright⁵.

More gee and haw⁶ than starboard-port⁷
Shall I escape the sea?⁸
I see a scapegoat⁹ on my bow¹⁰;
Methinks he'll bow to me¹¹.

¹Editor's Note: Sempine's penchant for plays on words seems forced somewhat since we cannot imagine him being 'in' any of the barrels which surrounded him in the water. More of the contents 'in' the barrels must have been guzzled and thus 'in' him than he in them. Regardless, he clearly was in quite a predicament and may have felt that he was in God's giant barrel although 'turn in the barrel' was not a common phrase in that day.

²The poet seems to be saying that his drinking habit was a precursor to finding himself adrift amidst the kegs of rum which surrounded him, and no doubt supported him as he clinged to them.

³Adrift at sea. See note 2.

⁴He was bound to the barrels of rum by his drinking habit and by their value as floatation devices

⁵Sempine had gained little nautical knowledge during his recent voyage. Most likely, he taught the crew more than they taught him.

⁶Terms used with mules on a farm. Although Sempine spent some time at the Earl of Hubbard's estate, one can hardly picture him at the helm of a plow.

⁷Sea terms for right and left when facing the direction that the ship is traveling. When looking to the rear of the ship, starboard and port do not shift.

⁸Sempine must have wondered if he would reach shore since he had been adrift for many days. Had it not been for a reunion with Miguel Batista, his concerns might have been fulfilled.

⁹He spies Batista whom he blames for his dire straits. Batista's innocence was hardly defensible since he had been the messenger who had given the ship's captain Queen Maria's letter requesting that Sempine not be allowed to reach shore safely.

¹⁰The 'bow' of his makeshift ship presumably. Most experts agree that Batista's presence aboard ship was considered a liability when Sempine thwarted the orderly execution of his walk from the plank by leaping from the plank. Although the result may have been the same, Batista was unable to capture the event on canvas (as Maria had contracted with him to do) and his account of the proceedings might prove to be embarrassing to the captain. Apparently Batista foresaw this precariousness and began throwing the kegs from the ship, hoping to claim Sempine as an ally should he be cast adrift as well. To his dismay, the captain waited until the ship had sailed a nautical mile or two before binding Batista to the last barrel and casting him over the side of the ship. Sempine's travels in the 'wrong' direction allowed him to view the hapless Batista on his 'bow.'

¹¹Neither Sempine or Batista lacked confidence in their ability to connive and convince others to follow them. *Editor's note: It is here that Dredsky first introduces the notion that Batista rather than Sempine may have become the poet and teller of this tale. He does it subtly with his use of 'Sempine or Batista.'* Those who argue for Sempine's authorship offer little 'evidence' and just smile knowingly. Those who argue for Batista's authorship note the absence of Sempine's pompous English and the change to a style which is more narrative and easier to understand. Dredsky, in his lecture series, proposed that Sempine became more American and less English every day that he remained abroad. Others, who often stood to challenge Dredsky before being ushered outside, argued that Batista and not Sempine finally arrived in Europe with the other's whereabouts and consciousness unknown (or at least unrevealed). More information on this 'ongoing' debate is provided in the footnotes and editorial notes that accompany poems particularly relevant to this controversy.

Prized Sedative¹

I've heard it called the devil's brew
But know he's not that kind²
It lets me end each bout with him
And flush him from my mind ³.

¹An obvious plea that his prized rum not be considered as a tool of the devil, this poem is the closest to religious thought in Sempine's poetry. At least, he sees the devil as an enemy even if he claims rum as his weapon against that infamous foe. *Editor's note: Although placed between other poems of debatable authorship, this poem is never attributed to Batista. Its style is consistent with that of Sempine's earlier poems and its content and unusual perspective is clearly that of one who loves his rum but keeps his conscience clear.*

²'Kind' is used to indicate one who regularly offers kindness rather than 'kind' as a synonym of 'type.' Sempine argues that the devil could not be the provider of his precious rum since doing good deeds would be out of character for him. *Editor's Note: Although Dredsky's interpretation of this line is correct, he fails to note that Sempine could have intended BOTH uses of 'kind' (i.e. the devil's not the kind of character to be kind).*

³Sempine's final argument is that rum is his final weapon to escape the devil when he is being attacked by that villain. The logic is 'pure' Sempine and is undoubtedly two-hundred proof.

My Mate, Afloat – I'll Call Him Bob¹

Ahoy there, mate, you seem to be
In such an addled state².
I'd like to tie a line to you
And let you mind my bait³.

Then I could watch you from afar,
And should you disappear.
To signal that we'd caught a fish—
Would feed us both a year⁴.

¹Batista is sighted by Sempine who sees him strapped to a barrel, adrift but afloat, and bobbing on the Atlantic. The play on words with 'bob' is a common attribute of Sempine's poetry which seems to become even more frequently used in his poetry from the New World. *Editor's note: At this point in time, Sempine would not have known Batista's full name was Roberto Miguel Batista. Batista, of course, would have known.*

²Having been cast adrift in the middle of the Atlantic, tied to a barrel, and hoping that a scoundrel of Sempine's reputation would find him and save him, 'addled' might be the ultimate understatement.

³Sempine was picturing Batista as a float to which a giant fishing line might be tied. *Editor's note: Even if Batista wrote this poem, he clearly is describing the thoughts voiced by Sempine.*

⁴A fish big enough to pull Batista clearly out of sight would have been a large fish indeed.

Roberto Miguel Batista Survives¹

Bob must have seen some hope in me;
Our lives seemed so entwined.
He saw right though the taunts I cast
And reeled me in 'in kind².'

He told me that the ship had turned
Before they cast me out
So that I'd swim toward Spanish shores³
And Neptune's lair⁴ no doubt.

¹*Editor's note: Batista seems to be announcing his 'coup' and authorship of the remaining poems. As previously noted, Sempine would have been unlikely to have known Batista's full name at this point though he could have edited the title at a later date. Dredsky offers no annotation at this point, which is remarkable in itself.*

²One of the great lines in Sempine's poetry (*Editor's note: Or the first great line in Batista's poetry*). Having been assigned a fishing tackle role, Batista is said to have 'reeled' Sempine in 'in kind.' As the beginning of their two-year duel is first acknowledged by the poet, he also uncharacteristically acknowledges that he may have met his match. As can be seen in later poems, one must wonder which of these two stranded adventurers eventually got the upper hand

³Sempine is informed that he is headed in the wrong direction. Using the ships heading at his own 'cast off' as his bearing, Sempine was 'sailing' toward Spain with the whole Atlantic in front of him. Unknown to Sempine, the cruel captain had turned the ship back toward Spain before bringing Sempine up on deck.

⁴A watery grave

Wrongs to Rights¹

Though twice this 'savior'² changed my course³,
He truly was the cause
Of my misfortune⁴ – doubly too;
I weighed each gain and loss.

Should I release him from the kegs⁵
Or keep him bound awhile?
No matter when I loosed him, he
Was bound to make me smile ⁶.

¹*Editor's note: This is another poem that retains Sempine's style. Either Batista tried to emulate his style in some of his earlier poems or Sempine's style was changing. The chronology of events supports this poem being of the same authorship as its predecessor and successor. 'Wrongs to rights' suggests that Batista is defending his earlier 'betrayals' of Sempine by proposing that his ultimate good was furthered by Batista's 'saving' of the scoundrel who would have been doomed without him. As the poem brings to light, the opposite argument weighed heavily on Sempine who chose to punish Batista as long as he could.*

²Sempine obviously doubted the 'good intentions' of Senor Batista.

³The first course change had occurred when Batista had 'innocently' translated Sempine's mocking poem to Queen Maria of Spain and ended the poet's affair with the queen. Her husband, King Ferdinand III, considered Sempine's service to the crown so valuable that he dared not let it go unrewarded. Sempine was given a royal decree which allowed him to claim any English settlement in the New World for Spain. The second course change related to Sempine's misdirection when cast adrift in the Atlantic. (*Editor's note: Dredsky fails to mention that King Ferdinand was busy with other ladies of the court while Sempine was keeping Maria occupied. This was the great service for which Sempine was being rewarded. Maria, of course, was not quite so appreciative; she sent Batista aboard the ship with very different royal orders for the captain.*)

⁴Had it not been for Batista's first interference, Sempine might still be enjoying the benefits of Spanish court as the Queen's poet laureate. His second interference, though authorized by the Queen, had been the cause for his early departure from the ship.

⁵Batista had been tied to a keg or kegs by the ship's crew when they determined that his presence on board could be a liability on their return to Spain.

⁶Note the double meaning of "bound." Sempine was determined to enjoy either Batista's discomfort or his sense of obligation. On the second count, he may have miscalculated – see "All Ashore That's Going Ashore."

All Ashore That's Going Ashore¹

We washed ashore amidst our kegs;
He coughed and tried to roll².
His face was facing all that sand;
I owned him – flesh and soul³.

His anger flared until a wave
Crashed over him, and I
Saw him get water in his lungs –
I got some in my eye⁴.

¹Some have argued that I, Sir Edmund Dredsky, may have titled this poem because it parallels more modern ship disembarking terminology. I would have been more likely to write the entire poem than to have added a missing title. *(Editor's note: Some, including myself, consider this an admission that "All Ashore That's Going Ashore" is a Dredsky concoction from title through 'eye.' What evidence he may have seen in the Dredsky Scrolls that would have authenticated the chain of events described in this poem is unknown. The thought that such an eminent scholar would have destroyed any material uncovered at the historic monastery site, is much more unbelievable than that he added his own poem to the chronicled story of the misadventurer.*

²Batista was tied to a keg and unable to move freely – assuming that Sempine's decision from the previous poem had not been to free him while still at sea.

³Batista was completely within Sempine's power in every way.

⁴What a contrast! The hapless Batista almost drowns when a wave covers him. To the contrary, Sempine gets a little water in one of his eyes.

When Vengeance Took a Nap¹

I'd seen some hens at Hubbard's place²
As mad as Bob³ that day.
"You've got your freedom⁴, man!" I cried,
"Let go my neck I say."

My strangled cry he may have heard;
But in his weakened state,
His anger couldn't fuel him long⁵.
A patient man; I'd wait⁶.

¹Batista's anger at Sempine for prolonging his time bound to the keg while at sea was dissipated by his weakened state, also due to his prolonged time bound to the kegs while at sea (most likely for many days.

²The Earl of Hubbard's estate. (*Were Sempine's supporters in need of evidence to support his authorship of the later 'new world' poems, the reference to Penelope, Hubbard's pet hen (whether chicken or goose) would have been an unlikely reference for Batista to make since Sempine spent his time at Hubbard's estate several years before Sempine and Batista met in France.*).

³Roberto Miguel Batista or 'the man who had bobbed on the ocean blue.'

⁴The furious Batista had (*Editor's note: presumably*) finally been released.

⁵See note 1

⁶Sempine's patience was legendary although some attribute his penchant for putting his concerns aside for long periods of time to his need to sleep off his hangovers rather than his patience.

The Way to a Man's Heart ¹

When he awakened to a fire
Of marinated hen²,
My faith in him again renewed
Was never lost again³.

¹Most likely the first use of this phrase in the new world.

²Marinated in the rum which had been contained in Sempine's barrels. The hens had either been salted away or were prey for the wily Sempine while he awaited his mate's awakening.

³Batista awakened with an awareness that the two must join forces rather than fight. The bond between them, now secured by their victory over their trials, would last until they were separated on their return voyage to Spain in 1589. (*Editor's note: Or Batista had decided that the best way to deal with Sempine was an indirect and deceitful approach – a plan that undoubtedly was also being considered by the poet, and vice versa*).

Wheel Barreling¹

No one will find those kegs of mine²
A treasure map eschewed³.
I drew a false one in the sand
He ogled as I stewed⁴

My final hen upon the coals⁵
Then when we'd wined and dined.
I almost said, "It's fake⁶, you fool."
But coughed⁷ and "Never mind⁸."

¹ Perhaps Sempine should be credited with the invention of the wheel barrel since he undoubtedly attached a wheel in some fashion to transport his barrels to their hiding spot. *Editor's note: Or perhaps Dredsky added this title to an untitled poem. The wheelbarrow (note the proper spelling) originated in first century China and the Chinese wheelbarrows had two wheels and required two men to propel and steer.*

² Sempine stealthily stored his kegs while Batista slept after their initial meal, sumptuously prepared by Chef Sempine.

³ Sempine relied on deceit rather than memory. Most likely he had produced a 'paper trail' to allow him to find the kegs filled with rum, parchment, and other precious commodities. Stating that he had 'eschewed' making a map was more damning than ignoring the issue altogether. Whether Batista was fooled or not at the time, one can be sure that he soon learned to take Sempine's assertions with as much sand as was beneath their feet on the beach in Virginia.

⁴ Most likely 'stewed' refers to the task at hand rather than Sempine's state of mind. The poet loved double meanings, but the next line supports the notion that his reference was to stewing the hen rather than becoming more angry.

⁵ There could have been several days between the initial meal and this 'final hen' if Sempine had indeed been able to cross the Atlantic with hens preserved in rum, as some believe. Otherwise, a much shorter interval (not more than twenty-four hours) is indicated if the 'final hen' was one of the two or three that Sempine might have trapped or captured while Batista lay passed out on the beach after his tiring disembarkation from the Spanish ship.

⁶ A reference to the map drawn in the sand that may have been fake or a genuine map (called fake by Sempine). Two of Sempine's

favorite phrases were 'seeing they do not see' and 'hidden in plain sight.'

⁷ The crafty Sempine accomplished more subterfuge by 'almost' calling the map a fake than he would have generated if he had directly stated his claim. Batista, at this point in their relationship, was baffled by Sempine's illogic and no match for the 'master of stealth and double meanings.'

⁸The poet of the sixteenth century, or later centuries for that matter, had no means to capture the tone and innuendo that accompanied Sempine's "Never mind." Perhaps only the effect of the raven's "Never more" (*Editor's note: Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven"*) on its fictional listener could approach the haunting effect that these two words must have had on the addled Portuguese traveler.

What the Band Saw¹

Unrolling the document ², Spanish words glared;
My Portuguese friend uttered, "Whoa!."
The rights that it promised might be null and void³
Although it might do just for show⁴.

Since Bob⁵ must have read what I thought from my gaze
His visage immutable stayed.
To addle him further would be not be for gain⁶
For savages⁷ watched our charade⁸.

¹The tool now commonly called the band saw was invented in 1885. Dredsky added the title 'tongue in cheek' or Sempine was indeed simply referring to the scene viewed by the Indian band.

²The one by which King Ferdinand authorized Sempine to take control of North American lands for Spain.

³Without the captain and crew to support his endeavor, Sempine seemed to be powerless to invoke his royally ordained privileges.

⁴With the royal seal of the king of Spain, it remained an impressive document nonetheless.

⁵Batista

⁶An indefinite truce was silently agreed upon by the co-conspirators

⁷Native Americans

⁸The savages did not realize that they had been observed and were watching a staged performance.

A Fork in the Road¹

We made a pact, Miguel and I
To hide our tongues² from native sons
With forked tongues³ to frustrate him
Whose arrows fly and deer-like runs

Each action earned an English name
And so did words which modified⁵
But names of places, folks, and things⁶
We taught in Spanish – simplified⁷

Don't Fight; Join⁸

Our plan prepared, I let him see
The hiding place⁹ and from it brought
The coloring for face and hair
To join them¹⁰; zero battles fought¹¹.

¹Two options were available (honesty or deceit).

²Spanish (Batista) and English (Sempine).

³Part-Spanish and part-English

⁴Verb.

⁵Adjective or adverb.

⁶Nouns.

⁷Hardly

⁸Early form of "If you can't beat them, join them."

⁹Location of Sempine's stash.

¹⁰The pair prepared to paint their faces red dye their hair black
so that they would appear to be natives.

¹¹Joining; not fighting

Challenging Their Doubts¹

Disguised as they though bearded² we
Were up to challenging their doubts
Their language foreign as could be
We greeted them with grunts and shouts³.

Their little captain⁴ seemed perplexed
The sign I sought; my gold well spent
For more than beads⁵; my rum so smooth
Left faces red, asleep, content⁶.

¹Batista and Sempine were staking everything on pulling off an untested hoax on the unsuspecting savages.

²American Indians did not have facial hair

³Faked an unknown Indian language. With Sempine's aptitude for languages, he most likely was conversant in their tongue within minutes.

⁴Sempine may have erred in assuming that the smallish member of the tribe was their leader, but it was not a factor in the outcome of their ruse.

⁵The usual trinket used to barter with people thought to be ignorant savages.

⁶Taking advantage of the Indian's confusion was only a temporary tactic; getting them drunk and 'fond' of rum was the *coup de gras*.

Extraordinary Extortion Stationery¹

There seemed a link between our brains²
I thought but did not say "black mail"
But with the colors and some stains
He captured them on parchment well³.

It mattered not what they had done;
The rum would cloud their minds enough⁴.
The weight of guilt; nay we felt none⁵.
The first word that they learned was 'rough.'⁶

¹A parchment on which Batista depicted the savages performing shameful acts of some sort

²They seemed to read each other's thoughts.

³See note 1.

⁴The effect of the rum made them unsure and unable to refute what the drawing depicted

⁵Batista's conscience was becoming a clone of Sempine's.

⁶Refers to the effects of the hangover. Sempine used this word to begin teaching them the new hybrid language.

Linguists Extraordinaire¹

We learned their words; but never spoke
Their native tongue 'til day was done².
We spoke the forked tongue 'til they
Knew it as well as anyone³.

Let the Fly Eat Cake⁴

Our names⁵ one day they had to know
And both of us knew what that meant
Another tribe or part of theirs
Would meet with us; had one been sent?
Miguel I termed the Spanish Fly
Rephrased in forked language yet ⁶.
I kept the M and A for mine
They'd meet Marie from Antoinette.

Speaking in Tongues⁸

Our strategy was doubly grand
We spake our forked tongue to them
But one to one, he Spanish words
While I spake English back to him.

¹Batista, like Sempine, was no slouch at picking up new tongues.

²At night the two practiced the native's language

³The natives became highly proficient at their 'forked tongue.'

⁴*Editor's Note: Most agree that 18th century monk, Father Fatimus Fryar added this title as a play on Marie Antoinette's infamous "Let them eat cake."*

⁵The pair decided on fake names as a precautionary measure.

⁶The Spanish word for fly is *mosca*.

⁷The ever-cautious Sempine most likely left the poem M____ of A____ to hide even this new 'fake' identity.

⁸This rather straight forward poem describes their ploy explicitly. If the natives overheard them speaking, they would understand only the verbs and modifiers used by Sempine and only the nouns used by Batista

Bewitching a Witchdoctor¹

We sense great majesty² approach
And thus, alert, and in disguise
We turn our backs³ and blow more smoke⁴
And make some mournful, awful cries

I doubt but once⁵ and tremble some⁶,
But Spanish Fly the tribe perturbs
He interlocks our arms and shakes
And yells out only Spanish verbs⁷.

The tribe's grand majesty prostrates⁸
Himself and with him all fall flat
The Spanish Fly then leaps and twists
My artist friend turned acrobat⁹.

¹The witchdoctor failed to fall for their trickery, but did not quickly follow through on his suspicions either.

²The witchdoctor was checking on the members of his tribe who had been missing for several weeks.

³They hid their bearded faces from one they feared might be less gullible than the rest of the tribe had been.

⁴Blowing smoke figuratively and literally most likely.

⁵Sempine is apprehensive, but has no choice but to carry out the elaborate charade.

⁶His fear causes him to shake, but Batista adds 'shaking' to their act.

⁷Batista, renamed Spanish Fly (literally Spanish mosca in the hybrid language) rattles the tribesmen by yelling out Spanish verbs (unfamiliar to the tribesmen who had heard only English verbs to that point)

⁸Even the witchdoctor senses that these are supernatural beings.

⁹From the tribesmen's prostrate vantage point Batista must have appeared to leap out of sight and then re-appear.

Which Doctor is In? ¹

To school they came from miles around
To learn this forked tongue we spake².
His majesty held back we saw;
Revision one for that old snake³.

The mimic's trade I knew quite well⁴;
His covered face⁵ by rum undone⁶.
I donned his mask and skins⁷ and 'sins';⁸
Left him to rot in barrel one⁹.

¹This poem reveals how Sempine steals the witchdoctor's identify.

²Apparently, more tribes from the outlying area were exposed to the hybrid language concocted by Sempine and Batista.

³Seeing the witchdoctor's hesitation, a revised plan is formulated.

⁴Sempine was a master of disguise and adept at mimicry as well.

⁵The witchdoctor wore a mask

⁶Abstinence would have been a wiser choice in this case.

⁷Clothes made from animal hides.

⁸Short for moccasins although Sempine may have enjoyed the double meaning effected by the abbreviation.

⁹His body was hidden in the rum barrel first emptied by Sempine.

Get Away Old Fly¹

Since to me had the king's decree
Left in a grant these native lands
If by some chance the English were
Dispatched abroad by native hands².

From then the Fly was never seen
Though I grew shorter, gained some grace³.
In native tongue, I eulogized
And left no tearless, native face⁴.

¹The Spanish Fly identity is no longer needed and Sempine has assumed the witchdoctor's *persona*; and, as explained in the poem, Batista becomes Sempine. (*Editor's Note: The explanation for Batista's passing given to the tribesmen is not revealed. Since Batista's appearance was not that much similar to Sempine's one can assume that the persuasive Sempine merely declared that the red-faced, black-haired character with Sempine's features passed away in such a convincing fashion that the tribe accepted that Batista was now M_____ A_____ (Sempine).*)

²Since the king's decree authorized Sempine by name, someone carrying that name was a must.

³Batista, as Sempine, was a few inches shorter but (as Sempine himself admitted) more graceful.

⁴Mimicing the witchdoctor flawlessly, Sempine public mourned the passing of the one known to them as "Spanish Mosca" while he was standing in plain sight. When finished, there was not a single dry eye in the forest except for a few owls who didn't give a hoot.

I Know Whose Woods These Are¹

Whose forest rises as our band
Tops ridges never seen by man
With hide so pale²— perhaps some ghost
Who's pale within³, who covets most

Will lead this band for Ferdinand⁴
And foster in each maid and man⁵
Allegiance to this parchment held⁶.
But to the ghost, the future's veiled⁷.

¹Editor's Note: Dredsky most likely was exposed to Frost's poem with a similar title and couldn't resist this unauthorized entitlement. When asked, throughout his life and again on his deathbed, he staunchly affirmed his scholarly integrity. Draw your own conclusions.

²Underneath the red paint worn by Batista/Sempine and the mask worn by Sempine/Witchdocotor

³A reference to Sempine hidden by the witchdoctor's mask and clothing.

⁴Ever an opportunist, the poet aligns his personal ambition with that of King Ferdinand III of Spain.

⁵Those men and women who certainly were just ahead at Roanoake colony.

⁶Ferdinand's decree— held by Batista/Sempine.

⁷Only the ghost (Sempine, hidden as the witchdoctor) can foresee the events that will occur. Of course, Sempine relies more heavily on his confidence that he can alter the future to meet his purposes than relying on any prophetic sense that he may possess.

Blowing Smoke¹

Ho, bearded one², wait with the rest
While I perceive what meaning gives
Yon smoke that rises past those trees.
The smoke declares that white man lives³.

All gasp and shake; the tales I told
Unsettled them and caused them fear⁴.
And now when I run fearlessly,
They will but see the sounds they hear⁵.

¹Dual meaning perhaps. Although the smoke from the camp is mentioned, the 'smoke and mirrors' tactics of Sempine are the reason this title was selected (*Editor's Note: Most likely by Dredsky, himself*).

²Batista/Sempine.

³Sempine/Witchdoctor takes little time interpreting the smoke as that from a "white man" settlement.

⁴Apparently, Sempine/Witchdoctor has been regaling his 'fellow' tribesmen with campfire stories in which 'white men' are terrible monsters to be feared.

⁵He plans to gain even more respect from his tribesmen by single-handedly attacking the white men's camp. From a distance, their minds will 'see' the images that Sempine creates by his shrewd choice of English verbs and adjectives.

Giving Counsel to Campers¹

While 'man with beard' tends to their fears,
In English only do I speak;
The folks around the campfire know,
But native hearts go grim and bleak².

I trust the bearded lips to shape
The thoughts in minds I left behind³
And trust my smile with mask removed
To show these campers I am kind⁴.

¹Having removed his mask on his approach to the camp, Sempine carefully chooses English nouns and verbs in such a way as to soothe the campers and gain their confidence while (taken out of context by the Indians who only understand only the verbs) convincing the tribesmen that he is firmly dealing with the campers and bringing them under control.

²He initially allows the tribesmen to wonder if he will be successful – a ploy similar to a juggler dropping an item to reinforce in the minds of his audience that his task is indeed difficult.

³Sempine acknowledges (in a rare glimmer of humility) that he is somewhat limited and must rely on Batista/Sempine to 'help' the natives 'understand' what is happening inside the camp.

⁴In addition to carefully choosing his English words, Sempine's mannerisms calm the White folks in the camp.

A Knowing Smile¹

To celebrate our union he
Has shaved his beard save upper lip²
But razor never was so sharp
To take his smile; man, get your grip!³

He only bows his head amazed;
"I know 'tis done," he saith to me,
"But only thing that holdeth in
"My laughter is the grin you see⁴."

I Wonder If He's He or I⁵

He's taken to my name so well
I wonder if he's he or I.
Is he now taller? I can tell
When back to back, we're eye to eye⁶.

¹Batista/Sempine cannot believe that Sempine has simultaneously beguiled two separate groups of people with vastly different objectives with only his words and mannerisms (overlooking his own contributions). He 'knows' what has happened but cannot wipe the smile from his face.

²Leaving only his mustache.

³Sempine seems to be concerned that Batista/Sempine's constant smiling will foster suspicion among one group or the other.

⁴Batista/Sempine argues that he can either smile or break into laughter. The grin is the preferred option.

⁵Sempine, himself, seems to be on the brink of losing touch with reality as their subterfuge and their switched identities forces him to 'become' his role.

⁶Although Batista/Sempine was several inches shorter than he, Sempine is 'imagining' that Batista is actually becoming more physically similar to Sempine in stature as he 'grows' into his role. *(Editor's Note: One should not forget that Sempine is not the only crafty scoundrel in this charade).*

The Doctor Is In¹

They say their leader's name is White²,
That is return is imminent³.
His vacant cabin has become
My quarters; barrels fill my tent⁴.

¹Sempine, alias The Witchdoctor, moves his unmasked identity into the camp along with some provisions (barrels) that he has somehow transported with him alone through the forest, if his ploy perpetrated on the campers is to be believed.

²John White was the leader who brought 117 men and women to Roanoake in 1587.

³White left with the ships so that he could later return and re-supply the colony. His return was delayed and actually occurred in 1590. By then, there was no sign of the lost colony except for the "CRO" stenciled on one tree and "CROATAN" stenciled on a post. The best guess by historians is that Croatan was an Indian name for a nearby island.

⁴Never without his precious resources stored in skull-and-crossbones-marked barrels, Sempine moved into White's cabin since his own tent was completely full of barrels. What precious commodities Sempine shared with the campers to endear himself to them is, as yet, unrevealed.

Census, 1589

We took a count, myself and I¹;
Found thirteen brave and colored men²
And sixty three pale faces where
One hundred seventeen had been--³

The toll before that White man left.
Three men were lost from sight ⁴; the rest
Were lost to sickness — all but four
Whose dueling had failed the test ⁵.

Breaking Camp⁶

Since I am colored red and tan⁷
And each of me controls his band,
I chose to leave; they follow me
Or both of me; we leave this land⁸.

Some beg to leave a message for
The White man should he not them fail⁹.
I urge we leave a pointer to
A clearer message down the trail¹⁰.

¹Sempine and Batista/Sempine.

²The tribesmen who accompanied Sempine and Batista.

³Of the 117 original colonists, 63 remained.

⁴Three had become lost and never returned.

⁵Except for the four who were killed by superior marksmen in duels, the other 47 died of various illnesses.

⁶Sempine leads the mixed crew from the Roanoake campsite.

⁷Thought to be red-skinned by the natives and tan (tanned by the sun) by the colonists.

⁸Sempine must have convinced the Roanoakians that the mask was necessary to be worn to control the savages.

⁹Among the campers there was still hope that John White would fulfill his promise to return.

¹⁰Sempine easily convinces them that a sign pointing to another sign is more reliable than a single sign. The Roanoakians fail to realize that the chain is only being made longer.

Signs of the Times¹

I have to smile with all four lips²
As half of me with artist's eye³
Carves letters into tree and post
To point tow here my barrels lie⁴.

The deeper message⁵ he prepared
With input from the lot of them.
I knew no man would read the plaque
Or see the nod from me to him.

¹*Editor's Note: This poem is about signs and about it being time to move on. Really, no one other than Dredsky would have made up such a title.*

²Two per character. In this case, Batista/Sempine and Sempine/Witchdoctor rather than Sempine's own 'dual' personality under the mask.

³That would be Batista, the artist.

⁴To save some steps later on, Sempine has Batista use the Indian name for the island where his treasure is hidden as the intermediate location where the more 'complete' plaque will be placed.

⁵The directions to the colonists' final destination. In their minds, that final destination may not have been Spanish occupied territory to the south, but that misconception mattered little to Sempine who planned to destroy the plaque as soon as he had sent the colonists on their way.

One Bumpy Ride¹

In three-months time our² fleet set sail
More barge than ship I must admit
Poles hewn for masts stand tall and strong
While bow-to-stern the others fit ³.

With pitch-filled cracks, the kegs support⁴
Those horizontal poles supplied
By former White folks now on board
With baby Dare⁵ – one bumpy ride.

¹The voyage along the Atlantic coast from Virginia to parts unknown (or as is later evident – New Spain).

²Although Sempine had overseen the construction of the ‘fleet,’ he remained safely on land.

³The industrious Roanoakians cut down trees to serve as masts and to form the structure to which the empty barrels were attached.

⁴The kegs added to the vessels buoyancy.

⁵Originally named Virginia Dare, the first baby born in North America, one must wonder if she was renamed when the colonists relocated. Her mother is said to have comforted the child when she first gazed up at the masked Sempine with “Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus” since she, like the other Roanoakians, thought this red-skinned benefactor was enabling them to fulfill their wishes for prosperity in this new land. (*Editor’s Note: Scholarly integrity, my foot!*).

And Whom Should Appear

And as the ships¹ sail round the bend,
The face that's grinned and grinned and grinned
Looks grimly past our red-men band
At thirteen female craws with sand².

As twelve pair up and walk away,
I look at 'Four Eyes' as I say,
"If she's not yours, she must be mine³"
As bearded one says, "My, she's fine⁴."

The Doctor Is 'In' ⁵

I took her hand; she smiled at me
And squeezed my arm; I heard her cough⁶.
She clearly thought my mask obscured
Her lover's face; I took it off⁷.

A glance behind confirmed Miguel
Had ushered Four Eyes to the cave⁸,
But when I shoed my face to her,
She seemed to really like her brave⁹.

¹Those fabricated by the Roanoakians per Sempine's instructions

²The arrival of thirteen angry native women finally wipes the grin from Baptista's face.

³When the native labeled Four Eyes does not 'pair up,' Sempine realizes that the one left standing must be the witchdoctor's mate.

⁴Batista allows that the remaining Indian lady is stunning.

⁵Playing on the title of a previous poem, the poet relates how he gained the affection of the witchdoctor's widow.

⁶Clearly suggesting that he remove his mask and greet her appropriately.

⁷Sempine boldly complies with her unspoken request.

⁸Batista has distracted Four Eyes.

⁹Perhaps an unhappy union existed between the stunning squaw and her former brave.

Reminiscing on a Sunday Afternoon

At night our band when reconvened
Now numbered twenty six and two¹.
I puffed a pipe and blew more smoke
And burned the plaque; obscured the crew²

Though they no doubt on Spanish shores
Will land and thrive and gain great gains³;
Far south they'll speak a foreign tongue
While no reminder here remains.

A Queen Regained⁴

So fair my queen with silken hair.
No doubt my predecessor screams
And curses me with lifeless tongue--
His nightmare now my wildest dreams⁵.

¹Four Eyes and Batista were the odd men out.

²In addition to his usual practice of adding to the general confusion of all concerned, Sempine generated more "smoke" by burning the plaque which would have served as a pointer for John White to find his lost colonists.

³Sempine wished the Roanoakians no ill will and no ill winds. In fact, he expected them to thrive under Spanish rule and further adding to the reputation he was building for his expected return to Spain.

⁴Having lost the affection of Queen Maria of Spain, the poet proclaims the beautiful native 'princess' as his new queen.

⁵Unable to 'roll over' in his grave, the now-deceased witchdoctor can only suffer in silence – his body having been stuffed into a barrel hidden in a cave.

Embarking¹

Although I chanted at the moon
And bribed White's man, my courier²,
I was quite pleased when Spanish sails
Appeared at dawn—a worrier³.

We packed our treasures on the beach
And boarded with the captain's aid.
The bearded one, Four Eyes, and I,
Unmasked but on my arm my maid⁴.

¹As opposed to disembarking, the title of the first poem related to Sempine's arrival in the Western Hemisphere. Sempine and Batista now board a Spanish ship destined for Spain, completing the round trip.

²Sempine had sent a message, and perhaps the royal parchment itself, via one of the Roanoakians, whom Sempine had bribed, to the Spanish authorities. The colonists must have appeared to be a neatly-packaged and highly-prized bounty to have earned such a timely reward (i.e. a special detour and passage on a ship bound for Spain).

³Hardly.

⁴Four Eyes was now an accomplice *post-mortem* to the scheme regarding his witchdoctor.

Farewell, Miguel

I wanted so to trust my friend;
But as we sailed the past returned;
And though he twice had set me straight,
He twice betrayed; no fool, I learned¹.

But knowing me, he formed his plan
And waited 'til he thought my rum
Had me unconscious then I spoke.
The shock I saw; his mind went numb².

As Four Eyes grabbed him from behind,
My lady struck. To his surprise
We strapped his body to a keg³;
Long gone he was before sunrise.

¹Sempine wanted nothing to stand in the way of his return to Spain as a hero, especially not a third betrayal by his nemesis, Batista.

²Batista, thinking that Sempine had returned to his drunken ways, learned, too late, that Sempine had him figured out perfectly.

³Sempine left Batista as he had found him, adrift and afloat in the Atlantic and strapped to a barrel.

Prologue

Upon his return to Spain, Sempine received a hero's welcome although Queen Maria watched with displeasure in much the same manner that Michal, King Saul's daughter despised King David as he danced his way into Jerusalem. During one of his visits to England, Sempine must have hidden these poems and related documents, most notably Batista's journals in the monastery near the Hubbard estate. Those documents, known today as the Dredsky Scrolls, remained hidden until discovered by me in 1956.