

ON THE ORIGIN OF SEA CHANTEYS

All day his fingers moved around his nets,
mending holes with line held by a boy.
His body rocked to the feel of the sea
thick with fish. The river sang his tune.
Ask his dog, his wise ear twisted toward water.

Old man, I'm standing at your back,
and at my back the world is hunched.
It comes down three ranges inland,
then levels off to sand.
You turned just once to look at me,
just once.

STANLEY RADHUBER

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A DOGMAN

I am the whisper of a bitch,
I am a dogman.
I've seen the pasture from the ditch
And the sun of a dog day.
I'm the born breath of a dog —
Burrs in my lungs,
Thistles in my youth,
Fields in my happiness.
I went to school,
Was in the dog house.
In short, I was treated like a dog
Because I lied like one.
I had a rat friend,
Who wrote rat poetry.
He called me moondoggy.
I did it doggy-style
When I was thirteen,
When I thought I was Huck Finn,
But I ate potato salad and dandelions
With some communists,
And I ate and didn't read Lorna Doone.
I have plumes promising me a dog's life.
I smell like a dog in the rain.
I was called a dirty dog by a Benedictine.
O I am the hushness of a bitch,
I am a dogman.
I've been chained to the clothes line
in front of all the neighbors.
I was born in the greenness of a family —
Mongrels by stature.
I've seen the grasses grow,
Heard the flowers bloom.
I've heard the bells toll between Hail Marys.
Slept inside a box of books
When I thought books were bones.
Jesus was once my herdsman
Until he made me dismiss his sheep.
I was house broken on Robert Louis Stevenson,
Weaned on Shelley.
I've walked up and down the fence post
Bedrabbled by hunger.
I bit a vacuum salesman from Kirby Chicago.
I had plans for joining the future
But my navel fell through.
I am the long time madness of a dogman,
Mean and wondering.
I never run with other dogs,
But I fought one from Enterprise.
I am a dogman flying from the cranes.
I used to run with a laughing lady
Before her teeth fell out.
Now she just gums me.
I've written doggerel verse,
And I am in love with a piano player
Her kisses are euphoria.
I've roamed the earliest morning
In the emptiest streets.
I've watched two lovers in a closing retreat
Hid away in a corner.
I hate mailmen and cops.
I am a whisper of the once revolution,
I am a dogman.
I had a father bred for the pits,
He was lost at the fights
In a cloud of cigar smoke.
He never did come home
His pockets full of Christmas.
I was a young dog who wrote and won
The Catholic Daughters of America Poetry Contest —
It was depressing spending the \$25 check...
...but I was a serious young dog like I am now.
I remember burying bones on a hill of poesy,
Sheaves of verse dried in the sounds of summer.
I once joined a journeyman's opera —
A bit part —
So I picked apples in Yakima instead.
I've walked beneath the board walks
On beachless sands.
I was kissed by a first girl I can't remember.
I have always been too young to die,
I am because I'm dying.
I have never been muzzled.
But I was almost shadowed by a 5000 lb. Cadillac —
I have never looked both ways when I should have.
I've been so dog tired
I've slept the big sleep.
O I have drank and pissed like the neighbor's dog
On someone else's property.
But I was a democrat then.
I have never heard the call of my master's voice,
Nor shaken his feeding hand.
I am the wanton whisper of a bitch.
No great matter
Just a dogman.

JIM WILLIS

Steele Savage



MAKING LOVE

You can't ever remember it really.
You wake up and you do not know
where you are or who you are or
what you are, the last light of the evening is
coming up to the windows, not coming in, and it is
more like a cold mist than light,
greenish, standing there in the deep frames,
the bedpost a dark knob, not gleaming, the
heavy heavy body of the desk
between two windows — solid maple with its
curled resinous birds-eyes shining inside the wood. And you
try to think back, you cannot remember it,
it stands in the back of your mind like a mountain,
at night, behind you, enormous, or a field of
snow at night, your pants are torn or
across the room or still dangling from one leg like a
heavy scarlet loop of the body, your
bra is half on or not or you were naked to begin with,
you cannot remember, all you know is you feel
absolute, and everything is changed.
Tomorrow, maybe, taking a kid to school,
your foot half off the curb in the air you'll
see his mouth where it was and feel it and the
large dark double star of your two bodies
but for now you are like the one in the crib,
you are everyone right now,
the three milky greenish windows like
sentinels there saying Don't worry,
you will not remember, you will never know.

SHARON OLDS

TRAVEL

Sir, to find an answer
is not easy among the nervous mass.
Draw near the exile, note his fingers

manicured in pavilions, and the feet
in soft shoes shod. Often from lands
he departs in vanity's offices, knowing

the luxury of refusal; yet how easy
to mistake for courage is fear's glance.
The milk-brick walls

call the hotel creatures into form —
the hourly animals, awake at nine,
brunching at pond-side tables on carp:

a vested hippo, an Anglican giraffe,
the neurasthenic elk beneath their veils.
They too recede, with their daring clothes

and ridiculous manners, footnotes
to footnotes in the loose masonry
of scholarship. Where even accidental poise

receives the imprimatur of history's architect,
who sees beyond careless wanderings
the emotional clatterings of the age?

Fashion alters politics or love:
like sexual anxiety, what is lost
is not so much abandoned as converted

at the Bureau de Change, one currency
for another, tawdry bills commemorating
a presidential fool or dowdy queen.

WILLIAM LOGAN