

**Come-From-Away**

(for Stan Rogers)

"I'll go to sea no more."

*Stan Rogers*

Stan, well, he was every inch,  
 & never much a sailor.  
 Bold-face, baritone & shameless,  
 Stan pure lied about  
 knowing of those boats,  
 so many them named after women:

from pulled up, rotten dories  
 through *Bluenose* & her sister,  
 that one-lung Cape Islander,  
 old, sound still but, & kindly,  
 fleets of collier, turtleback & whaler,  
 his last-run great lake steamer,  
 all those sloops & schooners,  
 all but vessels for his craft.

I take no little comfort  
 telling truths on Stan Rogers,  
 himself from down same road,  
 also, by birth, but "come-from-away,"  
 made up by wile with words.

Because, damn, so many women  
 I could name, share, deeply,  
 strange regard I'm jealous of  
 for that huge, bald & bearded,  
 bold-face, baritone & shameless,  
 pure lying son of a bitch,

(apologies to mother Valerie)

I, in smallness of spirit, relish,  
muchly, widow Ariel's account  
of turn at wheel of *Bluenose*,  
the replica, of course, which  
after couple minutes, ends, has  
Stan, green & tossing lunch.

I wish that I had had that  
tale to tattle then, so to bear  
on home to her, she earliest:  
she who wore out gift  
signed copy of *Fogarty's Cove*,  
its first release on vinyl,  
played nothing else, for weeks,

she, who made Maui print shirt,  
provoked Stan so, backstage,  
Gage Park festival, to ask for  
whereabouts its volume control.

I must, to be honest, now confess  
shame at pettiness, here obvious,  
especially to yet other Stan-besotted,  
to her I love & live with:

she, for whom I sought out,  
bought, on compact disc,  
his works, complete, her birthday;  
she, nonetheless, who mostly plays  
"Mary Ellen Carter," over & over again,

must, along with this calumnious  
giveaway of secret, expose  
myself, as neither much a sailor:

tell, how, offered helm, once,  
of C&C thirty-three footer,  
her mast off for repair,  
under diesel inboard,  
somewhere on Conception Bay, I,

a come-from-away, like idiot,  
chasing far-off whales, within  
blunders of a couple minutes,  
fouled her prop round buoy-line  
belongs to somebye's lobster trap,

how for, deplorable, my sins,  
our St. John's hosts, no choice,  
had to radio the Coast Guard,  
whose guys, despite survival suits,  
after brisk submersions to untangle  
frayed rope from prop, serious  
froze, got right pissed off.

With these Newfoundlanders  
after, so embarrassed; I,  
in chagrin myself, in galley,  
hunkered down & tossing jars, decide  
time has come to fess up,

admit, as they suspect already,  
their expenses paid freelance  
mainland magazine writer,  
here to research supplement  
flacking cod & Newfoundland,

does not, never ever, eat fish,  
any food that swam or came from  
life spent under water, not  
on a dare nor even to keep up  
blown now anyway, my crafty cover; add

how I rig up ad hoc substitute  
for lobsterman's lost marker  
with four litre jug, emptied  
but late of truly bad Chablis; insist

how absence swells need  
to invent perfect mother; cite  
example of Stan Rogers,  
himself but even worse a sailor—  
fine old salt at song's own helm;

call upon imaginary powers  
summon down on anxious waters,  
somewhere on Conception Bay, I  
made up by wile with words.

I shall, subsequent & largely, tell  
truth on us both to all his women:

she, with boy's name & the boy,  
who sings "Barrett's Privateers"  
best of anyone; she for whom  
I, scummy, pirated whole canon  
one Christmas, next year had to  
dub another for her sister

With same purpose want to say  
to women such & also to that guy  
survived his oil-rig sinking  
out in North Atlantic by singing  
"Mary Ellen Carter," over & over again,

(sometime, I think, late spring,  
of '83, just about when,  
in fluke fire & thinnest air,  
out of assumed element,  
aboard wrong sort vessel,  
down on Cincinnati tarmac,  
same time Stan did not),

hope to say, as Stan's survivors,  
let us all rejoice  
that metaphors are ocean stars  
to steer by deadly-reckon,  
do allow for reach of the lie,  
that songs perhaps may  
come from away:

from, sometimes, us, or other sort,  
any huge, bald & bearded,  
bold-face baritone & shameless,  
pure lying son of a bitch,

(no apologies, necessity, you mother)

every inch, hell,  
none us need be sailor.

*Terrance Cox*