**O Pug!**

*To the Brownes’ pug dog, on my lap, in their car,*

*coming home from Norfolk*

O Pug, some people do not like you,

But I like you,

Some people say you do not breathe, you snore,

I don’t mind,

One person says he is always conscious of your behind,

Is that your fault?

Your own people love you,

All the people in the family that owns you

Love you: Good pug, they cry, Happy pug,

Pug-come-for-a-walk.

You are an old dog now

And in all your life

You have never had cause for a moment’s anxiety,

Yet,

In those great eyes of yours,

Those liquid and protuberant orbs,

Lies the shadow of immense insecurity. There

Panic walks.

Yes, yes, I know,

When your mistress is with you,

When your master

Takes you upon his lap,

Just then, for a moment,

Almost you are not frightened.

But at heart you are frightened, you always have been.

O Pug, obstinate old nervous breakdown,

In the midst of *so* much love,

*And* such comfort,

Still to feel unsafe and be afraid,

How one’s heart goes out to you!

—Stevie Smith

**Dogs in the Park**

The precise yet furtive etiquette of dogs

Makes them ignore the whistle while they talk

In circles round each other, one-man bonds

Deferred in pauses of this man-made walk

To open vistas to a past of packs

That raven round the stuccoed terraces

And scavenge at the mouth of Stone Age caves;

What man proposes dog on his day disposes

In litter round both human and canine graves,

Then lifts his leg to wash the gravestones clean,

While simultaneously his eyes express

Apology and contempt; his master calls

And at the last and sidelong he returns,

Part heretic, part hack, and jumps and crawls

And fumbles to communicate and fails.

And then they leave the park, the leads are snapped

On to the spiky collars, the tails wag

For no known reason and the ears are pricked

To search through legendary copse and crag

For legendary creatures doomed to die

Even as they, the dogs, were doomed to live.

—Louis MacNeice

**Dogs are Shakespearean, Children are Strangers**

Dogs are Shakespearean, children are strangers.

Let Freud and Wordsworth discuss the child,

Angels and Platonists shall judge the dog,

The running dog, who paused, distending nostrils,

Then barked and wailed; the boy who pinched his sister,

The little girl who sang the song from *Twelfth Night*,

As if she understood the wind and rain,

The dog who moaned, hearing the violins in concert.

—O I am sad when I see dogs or children!

For they are strangers, they are Shakespearean.

Tell us, Freud, can it be that lovely children

Have merely ugly dreams of natural functions?

And you, too, Wordsworth, are children truly

Clouded with glory, learned in dark Nature?

The dog in humble inquiry along the ground,

The child who credits dreams and fears the dark,

Know more and less than you: they know full well

Nor dream nor childhood answer questions well:

You too are strangers, children are Shakespearean.

Regard the child, regard the animal,

Welcome strangers, but study daily things,

Knowing that heaven and hell surround us,

But this, this which we say before we’re sorry,

This which we live behind our unseen faces,

Is neither dream, nor childhood, neither

Myth, nor landscape, final, nor finished,

For we are incomplete and know no future,

And we are howling or dancing out our souls

In beating syllables before the curtain:

We are Shakespearean, we are strangers.

—Delmore Schwartz

**Dream Song 14**

Life, friends, is boring. We must not say so.  
After all, the sky flashes, the great sea yearns,  
we ourselves flash and yearn,  
and moreover my mother told me as a boy  
(repeatingly) ‘Ever to confess you’re bored  
means you have no

Inner Resources.’ I conclude now I have no  
inner resources, because I am heavy bored.  
Peoples bore me,  
literature bores me, especially great literature,  
Henry bores me, with his plights & gripes  
as bad as achilles,

who loves people and valiant art, which bores me.  
And the tranquil hills, & gin, look like a drag  
and somehow a dog  
has taken itself & its tail considerably away  
into mountains or sea or sky, leaving  
behind: me, wag.

—John Berryman

**Pink Dog**

[*Rio de Janeiro*]

The sun is blazing and the sky is blue.

Umbrellas clothe the beach in every hue.

Naked, you trot across the avenue.

Oh, never have I seen a dog so bare!

Naked and pink, without a single hair . . .

Startled, the passersby draw back and stare.

Of course they’re mortally afraid of rabies.

You are not mad; you have a case of scabies

but look intelligent. Where are your babies?

(A nursing mother, by those hanging teats.)

In what slum have you hidden them, poor bitch,

while you go begging, living by your wits?

Didn’t you know? It’s been in all the papers,

to solve this problem, how they deal with beggars?

They take and throw them in the tidal rivers.

Yes, idiots, paralytics, parasites

go bobbing int the ebbing sewage, nights

out in the suburbs, where there are no lights.

If they do this to anyone who begs,

drugged, drunk, or sober, with or without legs,

what would they do to sick, four-leggèd dogs?

In the cafés and on the sidewalk corners

the joke is going round that all the beggars

who can afford them now wear life preservers.

In your condition you would not be able

even to float, much less to dog-paddle.

Now look, the practical, the sensible

solution is to wear a *fantasía.*

Tonight you simply can’t afford to be a-

n eyesore. But no one will ever see a

dog in *máscara* this time of year.

Ash Wednesday’ll come but Carnival is here.

What sambas can you dance? What will you wear?

They say that Carnival’s degenerating

—radios, Americans, or something,

have ruined it completely. They’re just talking.

Carnival is always wonderful!

A depilated dog would not look well.

Dress up! Dress up and dance at Carnival!

—Elizabeth Bishop

**Walking With Jackie, Sitting With a Dog**

Jackie on the porch, shouting for me to come out.

It’s Saturday, and I am in a sweater that’s

Too large, balled at the elbows, black at the collar.

Laughing, we slam the screen door on a strained

Voice, and run down to the street, sticks

In hand, shooing pigeons and the girls

Who are all legs.

We cross the gray traffic

Of Belmont, and enter an alley, its quick stream

Of glass blinking in the angled light. We blink,

And throw rocks at things that move,

Slow cat or bough. We grin

Like shovels, and continue on

Because it’s a Saturday, early as it’s ever

Going to get, and we’re brothers

To all that’s heaved over fences.

Our talk is nonsense: Africa and trees splintered

Into matchsticks, handle bars and the widening targets

Of his sister’s breasts, staring us down.

The scattered newspaper, cartwheeling across

A street, is one way to go.

And we go into

Another alley, where we find a man, asleep behind

Stacked cardboard. The sun flares

Behind trees and it means little.

We find a dog, hungry and sad as a suitcase kicked open

And showing nothing. At a curb we drape

Him across our laps and quarter an orange—

The juice runs like the tears an onion would give,

If only it opened its eye.

We lick our fingers and realize

That with oranges now and plums four months away,

No one need die.

—Gary Soto

**Vita Nova**

In the splitting up dream  
we were fighting over who would keep  
the dog,  
Blizzard. You tell me  
what that name means. He was  
a cross between  
something big and fluffy  
and a dachshund. Does this have to be  
the male and female  
genitalia? Poor Blizzard,  
why was he a dog? He barely touched  
the hummus in his dogfood dish.  
Then there was something else,  
a sound. Like  
gravel being moved. Or sand?  
The sands of time? Then it was  
Erica with her maracas,  
like the sands of time  
personified. Who will  
explain this to  
the dog? Blizzard,  
Daddy needs you; Daddy’s heart is empty,  
not because he’s leaving Mommy but because  
the kind of love he wants Mommy  
doesn’t have, Mommy’s  
too ironic–Mommy wouldn’t do  
the rhumba in the driveway. Or  
is this wrong. Supposing  
I’m the dog, as in  
my child-self, unconsolable because  
completely pre-verbal? With  
anorexia! O Blizzard,  
be a brave dog–this is  
all material; you’ll wake up  
in a different world,  
you will eat again, you will grow up into a poet!  
Life is very weird, no matter how it ends,  
very filled with dreams. Never  
will I forget your face, your frantic human eyes  
swollen with tears.  
*I thought my life was over and my heart was broken.*  
*Then I moved to Cambridge.*

—Louise Glück