



Rod Jellema

FROM SEAMAN DAVEY OWENS'S DIARY, 1511

Merchant Ship *Rhiannon*
12th May
Still bearing southwestward

The sea wide and endless
under the creak of the boards that pull
our twisting wake through tepid waves,
with burning skin we are hurled day after day
into and out of the stare of the empty sky.

Cut loose, we follow stars through black
that curve us toward nowhere we know.
Below deck we wrestle with damp grey sleep
while the Captain whispers mad to the moon, they say,
over charts the Padre says came right from the Devil.

Back in Carmarthen, same moon,
neighbors rise now to cut and plane and square
straight beams and planks for Jenkins's mill,
and Gwynn joins the maids upstream to pick
orange flowers, yellows, and reds, to plait in their hair.