

## **THE WHALE**

*Time's black tide will catch us soon,  
then we'll both be sleeping. – Joel Deane*

He drove us to Warrnambool on weekends.  
This was my father's favourite corner,  
knowing where to fathom under the waves,  
he too could dive deep and hold his soft breath,  
rise unannounced from sleep to the surface.

He had knack for old sea tales like Conrad,  
could feel the jagged tension of a coast  
from far out, hoisted square rigs for Melville,  
lived three days in the creature! A loner,  
he calmly whistled and was secretive.

He prevented me seeing behind him,  
that vast scale rippling inside small haiku.  
Hell-bent on fulfilling the last mission,  
befitting dark hull of a compelled whale,  
his body marooned unexpectedly...

The faithful try in vain to push it back  
speaking to it as gargantuan phone.  
At other end, receiver is ripped out.  
Left in a world without his tutelage,  
it hits, stark belief, the finality.

I remember my mother quietly  
shrinking all big questions in her own way  
pouring tea with a ghost in the parlour,  
a face appears like darkroom photograph,  
a poem from memories of water...

Gulls stare ahead to pitch-black sky and tide,  
not perturbed, braving it to do its worst.  
Sitting beside them on the windswept shore,  
finding solace in icy southerlies,  
I pick up a dial tone, and listen in...