

Humpback Harmonies

It emerges from stone
this figure known for breaching
far beyond its element,
breaching backwards into air with a body of 25 tons,
the slap of the 15 foot fin on saltwater
the slap of a human hand
on marble. This choreography, the breath we share
perhaps all play
the pectoral fin patterns a signature,
distinctive as a fingerprint.

This carved figure hewn from stone.
The tiny lidded eyes the only window
to what mysteries may be held within
this massive body emerging before us:
the mother with her calves in Oak Bay
today I can touch the smooth speckled rock.

She swims away in a single wave
dives deep, disappears, comes up for air
as if made of motion
migrates maybe 6,000 miles, every year
north to south searching

as if made of sound
her language of grunts, groans
snorts, barks.

This mother speaks,

living off fat reserves,
surviving for a 100 years, or so
in her undersea world of soundwaves, resonances.

I stand here before this humpback shape in stone
where the animal gesture arises
the deep voice emerges
like a summons

a calling forth
the trace of a direction.

Resonance:
a frequency sent from somewhere ancient, dark.
This underwater acoustic
felt in our bodies
but not understood.

Gisela Ruebsaat
www.quadrabooks.com

Notes: *In music, the word “resonance” refers to the instance when a musical note or tone is prolonged or enriched by the synchronous vibration of a neighbouring object. An example of acoustical resonance is the vibration induced in a violin or piano string when a musical note of the same pitch is played or sung nearby.*