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The Hopkins River, Warrnambool

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The Hopkins River, Warrnambool

Andrew Taylor
Edith Cowan University
2000

Plover calling through silent fog
an invisible gull unable to settle
a brief night-time squabble
plover call again out of the dark
there's no wind and fog
heavy damp chill wraps the river
where rocks unburden their coral
on tide-flats and mud.
This is where
he hauled mullet and bream
into brine air where he dragged
at rough oars and the rowboat
sloshed black water with its flapping load
and a few streetlights wriggled on the slick
and a moon rose orange and huge
and I hung at the stern exhausted and small
in a smell of shrimp and a dying shiver
of mullet and salmon trout and bream
year it seems now year after year
night after night like strokes of oars
pulling him closer each puddle of swirl
to the graveyard where I paused before him
this afternoon
laying a cross of two flowers
one for him one for the woman my mother
who lived for twenty six years
beyond him together perhaps once more
where the cemetery slopes to the shore
and the river ebbs to a fogbound sea
where whales have returned which rarely sang
when I was a child on that heavy tide.