

THE FEELING OF *US*

ANDREW OSBORN

The whale must go up for air at all hours.
He never wholly sleeps.

When the ocean push becomes too much,
When the fluked tail tires,

Still he must manage the full-body gesture
Of breath, rising to clear and then fill

The bungalow lungs the weight of the lungs
Alone would flatten were he to run aground.

Always some station of brain stays on:
Wakefulness rolls from side to side.

Is rolled.
Like something round in a ship's hold.

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And yet when Orpheus surfaced it was not
That absentmindedness shot

A glance like an arrow into his lover's face.
When she was alive, between them all space

Drew taut as a bow- or lyre-string.
Now, as he climbed, like an intuition bubbling

Up his own brainstem, he thought what he loved now
Was her unleashable lagging-below,

Involuntary: *getting the better of us*
(he thought), *this splendidest feeling one tries*

To bear as high as one can, alone,
To secure it—already the buoyant pronoun

Lost, the belonging-feeling of *of*
Abysmally freed, slack sinew.