

Butanding

In Torfno Bay, I swim with a whale shark,
gigantic creature, previously birthed
in my consciousness thanks to National Geographic,
now, an arm's length from my anima.

Its wide flat head and two small eyes watch me curiously,
brown and cream-speckled, its luminous weight weighs on me.
I lick salt and kelp rind from my lips, my goggles fog,
a cool humming radiates from ear canals into clumsy limbs.

Buddhists say, when we die, deep attachments and memories
are obstructions. But I'm like a sea horse, tethered by sea grass
to the ocean floor, and hastily, kick my fins, back away,
to halt this striking vision of the life after this one.

Michelle Betty

Note:

Butanding is the Philippine word for whale shark.