

## The Scene at Taiji

After the Japanese fishermen  
drive the leaping dolphins  
into the cove by beating  
on metal rods held in the water,  
and their high horsepower engines  
jerk and churn and whine  
as babies are separated from parents,  
and the friskiest *Flippers* are auctioned  
to sea aquariums for pleasure models,  
the fishermen drink and congratulate and leave  
hundreds of captives overnight  
to click and cry and turn in shallow waters.

And the next morning  
after they make a beach fire  
and warm their hollow hands  
and tell stories of conquest  
(whales from horizon to horizon),  
they step into their boats  
with their gaffs and harpoons  
and imperial pride and render  
this high-walled ancient cove  
with its leaves fluttering like Buddhists prayers  
and its gentle crush of turquoise waves  
a torrent of blood and frantic slapping.

And after the gasping bodies  
are hauled into boats  
and taken away as meat for market  
and the cove is crimson and still  
and a bucket of red seawater  
is thrown on the smoldering coals,  
the Japanese fishermen light cigarettes  
and take the numbing smoke deep  
into their gray lungs.