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## WHITECAPS

John Tranter

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# WHITECAPS

## **Abstract**

To be a stroller, taking in the city from the street, that clamour and bumping rush with pools of silence in eddies under escalators and so on, that takes lots of money, or the dole- a good cigar, or a rolled cigarette stuck to the lip.

# John Tranter

## WHITECAPS

To be a stroller, taking in the city from the street,  
that clamour and bumping rush with pools of silence  
in eddies under escalators and so on, that takes  
lots of money, or the dole – a good cigar,  
or a rolled cigarette stuck to the lip. Now we see  
shopgirls in failed department stores embarking  
on their evening dreams like a silver boulevard,  
sometimes they lie about it, the dim wishes –  
if they don't, poverty gets them – so,  
a handsome doctor, whimpers by the beach,  
moonlight tinted to expose a cheat at supper  
on the lawn by the pool, lots of waiters, so we  
made love she said, during the afternoon siesta,  
outside, thunder, a man sweeping the yard –  
a set of gestures called employment – perhaps  
a detective hired by my husband, she said, no,  
it was just motel security – I could hear  
something like a distant marimba playing  
through the sonic curtain of the rain.  
I grabbed the bottle, held it to my chest,  
brilliant thoughts imprisoned in green glass  
explicating, in a morning, the follies of philosophy –  
I didn't become disillusioned about drink,  
it had its job to do. She only seemed immune –  
ash littered the table and the carpet – a snapshot  
of a room – she explained the gloom, it's  
part of how the whole society sinks into the future –  
once you had hope, now you see what happens.  
And romance novels sucked in a crowd  
sobbing and laughing on their way to work,  
and now a boat tips over on the windy lake,  
whitecaps materialising and disappearing quickly,  
bungalows tumbled and floating in the brown flood,  
as the upturned dinghy drifted past a countryside  
made up of acres of tawny grass combed by the wind,  
chilly and quite uninhabited. That lack is awful,  
the sky just as empty and uncaring. Now we see  
the whole horrible scene printed on the plate glass  
of a shop window, now the crowds obscure it,  
busy, rushing to their individual fates, now

as we turn away to contemplate the fateful mess,  
now that the meaning of it sinks into my stomach  
like a crowbar – ash your cigar – I am here,  
I am still here – printed on my memories, a watermark –  
I remember we paused now and then to keep  
our intimacy on the backburner, and most  
Friday nights were rough, noisy, cattle in the bar,  
gangs of cowboys – she reached into her past,  
that silent maelstrom, too late, desperate to find  
a future she could live in forever.