

We Call Them Harbor Seals

by [Mary Lane Potter](#) in the [October 2025](#) issue

Out of the darkness they call
from the rocky islets just offshore—
basso profundo grunts snorts
honks glugs growls roars
moans—playing the silence
of the watery night world.
All shall be well. All shall be well.

They're a spirit chorus, shamans
slipping between worlds on a chant,
Inuit throat-singers lullabying their
babes or playing rhythm games while
the men hunt, Tibetan monks layering
tone over tone, tuning the universe.
All manner of thing shall be well.

They're prophets rumbling with rage
at their home fouled with sewage,
microplastics, PCBs, phosphates,
pharmaceuticals, hydrocarbons,
mercury, lead, a snarl of gill nets
and purse seines, a maze of engines
that bewilder and sly propellers;

wailers intoning a threnody for the
Salish Sea—shrinking eelgrass beds
and salmon spawning grounds, bodies
deformed, flesh wasting, heat creeping
up degree by degree; seers prophesying
the End of Days, the end of sleeking
through wild waters singing one's being.