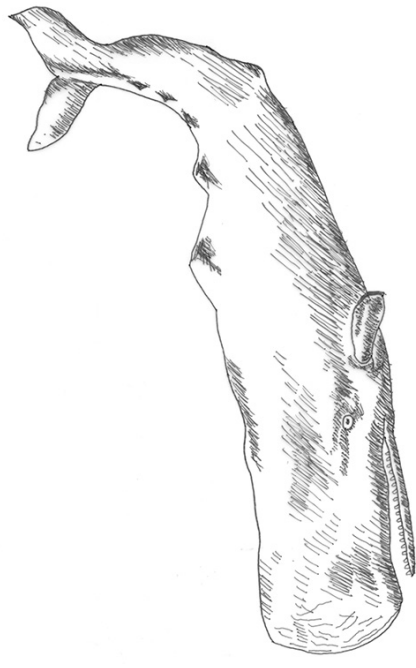


A rabble of uncertain, fugitive,
half-fabulous whales



by
Rena J. Mosteirín

Dedicated to Jed

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*The following text is an erasure poem that takes the
“Cetology” chapter of Herman Melville’s great American novel
Moby-Dick as source material.*

*I would like to thank the two brilliant women who make the
Little Dipper glow in the northern night sky, Rebecca Siegel
and Shari Altman. – RM*



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Colophon

The text of this chapbook is set in Goudy Old Style, which was created by Frederic W. Goudy in 1915 for American Type Founders. Goudy Old Style's letter forms are inspired by the printing of the Italian Renaissance.

The cover is letter pressed using Emerson, which was designed by printer and book designer Joseph Blumenthal in 1930. The typeface's name comes from its first use: in a privately printed edition of Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay *Nature*.



We want to thank everyone who has helped us make this first edition a reality, particularly Sarah Smith, Deborah Howe, and Bob Metzler of the Dartmouth College Book Arts Workshop, who are wonderfully enthusiastic and patient teachers; Jane Steger-Lewis, who knows how to wield InDesign and draw a sperm whale like nobody's business; and Rena Mosteirín, who is simply one of the best human beings and poets you will ever meet.



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The Pequod's weedy hull
the barnacled hulls of the leviathan;
appreciative and understanding
revelations and allusions
are to follow. no easy task. the classification
of chaos, nothing less
Listen

utter confusion (sperm whale), says
to have one's hands among the unspeakable foundations,
ribs and very pelvis of the world;
What am I that I should essay to hook the nose of this leviathan!
Will he (the leviathan) make a covenant with thee?

I have swam through libraries
I have had to do with whales with these visible hands
lungs and warm blood;
a spouting fish with a horizontal tail.

There you have him.
The leviathanic brotherhood
the grand divisions of the entire whale host.



2



Sperm Whale

used for light,
an ounce of rhubarb
in the course of time,
to enhance its value by a notion so strangely significant.



3



A rabble of uncertain, fugitive, half-fabulous whales,
which, I know by reputation,
by their forecastle appellations;
following whales according to Leviathanism stated at the outset,
be here, and at once
see that I have kept my word.



Mealy-Mouthed Porpoise

the only English porpoise,
less jolly
quite neat and gentleman-like
sentimental Indian eyes of a hazel hue.
distinct as the mark in a ship's hull.
he just escaped

Right Whale

the most venerable of the Leviathans, he is
The Whale; True Whale;
it is the whale some pretend to see
they precisely agree
the Right Whale.

Fin Back

a monster
Tall-Spout
the whale so often described in New York
in his baleen, His great lips
his name, a conspicuous object projecting from the surface.
He seems a whale-hater as some men are men-haters.
a tall misanthropic Leviathan Cain
bearing upon his back. the fisherman or hump or fin
to defy all whale-naturalists in his anatomy
into the bowels of various Leviathans
the whales bodily proceed.

Huzza Porpoise

All over the globe I call him
They are the lads that always live up before the wind.
Heaven help ye; his jaws in request
among jewelers and watchmakers.
It is you that a porpoise spouts.
It is you
Algerine Porpoise
in the Pacific.
he will buckle to a shark
I have lowered for him

Thrasher

He mounts the Folio whale's back
he works his passage by flogging him,
some schoolmasters get along in the world by similar process.
Both are outlaws even in the lawless seas.

Hump Back

is often American. He has towed a peddler;
Elephant and Castle distinguish him, a hump,
oil
baleen
gamesome and light-hearted
making more gay foam than any other

.....

Razor Back

off Cape Horn
of nature both hunter and philosopher
coward, Let him go.

6

.....

Killer

the Nantucketer
the professed Naturalists
we are all killers

11

Narwhale

his peculiar horn sixteen feet in length,
it does not seem like the blade of the sword-fish and bill-fish,
the Narwhale employs a rake Charley Coffin said
an ice-piercer; for the Narwhale breaks through.
But cannot prove in reading pamphlets
of the Unicornism in every kingdom.
Queen Bess did gallantly wave her prodigious long horn
in the castle at Windsor of the Unicorn nature.

Sulphur Bottom

Gentleman with brimstone
the Tartarian tiles
profounder seldom seen; the seas study his countenance.
He is chased; he with rope walks
Prodigies can say nothing more that is true of ye, Nantucketer.

Grampus

a proverb to landsmen, a denizen among whales
possessing all the grand distinctive features
He is moderate
fifteen to twenty-five feet in length,
swims in herds;
hunted, for light.
regarded as great

Black Fish

the Hyena whale, voracity well known
an everlasting Mephistophelean grin on his face.
He has a peculiar Roman nose.
the Sperm capture the Hyena to keep
for domestic employment—as frugal housekeepers,
some of these whales will yield