

I see him thinking now: Why do they breach?  
 Why do they roll and wave a flipper skywards, ~~or~~  
~~Sing, sound,~~ pound the surface, curl their tails, beach?  
 He'll drudge for each small truth, ignoring bywords.  
 I wish him countermedley, not just my words.  
 He figures weight, age, girth and length. He spooks  
 A cow and risks too close to sweeping flukes.

The turbulence in-folds him like a pillbug.  
 He unrolls, tries to glimpse the calf's baleen.  
 But does he also see the flying prayer rug?  
 The nephrite chinoiserie, the muraled screen?  
 He labels, sorts, bypassing damascene,  
 Chiaroscuro, Monet hues and light,  
 The minor-key cantata I must write.

*Beneath what genus does he classify*  
 With what rare genus does he classify  
 Those mermen in the distance? How do they  
 Fit food chains? Are they sailors' incubi?  
 And the crowned one with the trident? I admit  
 It's time to head for ship and shore, acquit  
 My goggled eyes. Ascend is not the word--  
 I'm higher now than any frigate bird.

As Michael signals for a final shot  
 My belly tightens; I move in and nod.  
 He paces with a humpback, finds a spot.  
 We're both encircled deep within the pod.  
 He sidles closer. Touches! RIDES, wing-shod.  
 All know he's there. They gentle their slip stream.  
 They graze-- content to grace our wildest dream.

*my marks*

This is a masterful creation. You've woven a singing story  
 vividly, within challenging bounds. The form has not kept you  
 from carrying us where you wanted to go, into a world and  
 experiences that must be vicarious for most of us.  
 Breaks in meter ~~to~~ enhance a poem, especially one of this length,  
 and your use of language leads me to believe you know  
 what you're doing; however, in a few lines (marked -)  
 I'd encourage you to polish the meter. Even though a number  
 of other poems better satisfied my ear for meter, this brilliant  
 narrative clung to its place by power of the language, the  
 story, the feeling within it. Yours is one of the very best  
 titles in this contest.  
 nit-picky suggestion, line x: What would you think of simply  
 "The beauty...?"