

Nov. 2 - 81

WINGS PRESS  
RFD 2 Box 325  
Belfast, ME 04915

The winner of the Wings Press chapbook competition for fall, 1981 was FISHING FOR LEVIATHAN by Gail White. Those who submitted manuscripts may order a copy for the half price of \$1.50. In addition, we have accepted five other manuscripts, which is all that our publishing schedule will allow.

We regret having to return some good manuscripts and wish you luck in placing them elsewhere.

Arnold Perrin

Arnold Perrin

Editor

I admire your imagery and style greatly, but we much prefer short poems. When I read a poem, I am holding my breath and walking a tightrope - I can't hold that focus and concentration for too many lines, or too many pages.

We would like to use your excellent illustration on the cover of the winning chapbook, Fishing for Leviathan if it's O.K. with you. Credit will be given on the title page and we'll send a copy when we go to press.

I appreciate it.

nice of you to tell me you like my work. Glad you mentioned your preference for short poems. Next time I'll know.

as for my illustration

The best I could do would be to offer a discount price of \$30 to you or the winning author. Normally my bottom service is \$50 for a custom design. Actually, I still ~~hope~~ like to use it with my own ms. sooner or later. Interesting that its <sup>so</sup> appropriate for lens.

If you decide not to ~~buy~~ it, please return it flat with a sheet of cardboard since its camera-ready copy.

Yours truly

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Biography: Born Nashville, Tenn., widely traveled in New England, American west and Far East. Professional painter/sculptor specializing in fine art enameling and silversmithing. Hobby is photography. Articles and poetry have appeared in Georgia Review; Connecticut River Review; New York Times; Poet Lore; Voices International; Poetry Northwest; Christian Home; Poet, etc. plus many anthologies. Received many first-place awards in national competition and was co-winner of the prestigious Dellbrook-Shenandoah award 1979.

None of the enclosed poetry has been published, altho the whale narrative, the love-story ballad and COASTAL COLLAGE are all award winners. REPERTORY and the 4 sonnet sequence were written for this collection.

Probably it has something to do with being born under the sign of Aquarius (altho I'm not into astrology) but I'm always drawn to water, the sea in particular. Whenever I'm in a dry spell I can get the juices flowing with waves, wind and over/underwater adventure. Actually, most of my poems are free verse, but there is so much inherent rhythm and form, so much that is classical, elegant and traditional about the sea that the subject seems to fall naturally into patterns. To me the Mason sonnet presents a more subtle rhyme scheme than other types. Also I used a poly-rhythm and rhyme for my ballad to avoid monotony.

I've never had a chapbook. This competition encouraged me to get all my "Aquarius factor" material together. That could even be my title except it's probably been done.

I've received a number of flattering comments from judges on my whale poem. However, one chastized me for "failing the reader with a false rhyme"— referring to the word "forte". I assume he thinks it is pronounced "for-tay" as in the musical term, but in the sense I've used it, it is, of course, pronounced "fort".

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To John Masefield, poet, and Charles Vickery,  
painter— for showing the rest of me what  
only my eyes once saw

1980

THE SCRIMSHAW GENE

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THE SCRIMSHAW GENE (Index)

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## REPERTORY

Sea wind is a bright wind,  
a bleached-white wind even in the dark;  
it has a satin-shiny plane, a glinting edge,  
shaped like a boomerang.

Sea wind is a searcher that never gives up;  
it examines the cut of your clothes, the color  
of your hair. Street-wise, it hassles and hustles you.

Fridays it's a witch-wind, imprecating  
from the mouth of covens, banking riddles  
off the rocks, dervishing out of bubbling vats,  
trailing mischief through your lashes.

Sea wind is a broken song,  
fallen through the treble staff and snagged  
on ragged edges, flapping discontent.

It is a summer stalker, sneaking through crevices,  
insinuating, breaking and entering, hurling epithets,  
waking you and raking you, intimate as sin,  
indifferent as it comes and goes, nobody's confidant.

Sea wind is a thief, heisting half the moon  
for ransom, promising things it can't deliver  
and taking what you have.

Just because you hold it in a sail  
don't think it has reformed.

## COASTAL COLLAGE

We breathe silk fog that strokes the beaver-run,  
then climbs the day to flee from spears of pine.  
The lowlands blue again with twilight's rise  
describing sueded negatives of sun  
in secret brakes where deer and heron dine.  
From fir-napped hills we watch as moonshed vies  
with nimbus rings in new-ginned cotton skies.  
An artist rain will bleed the clay and sign  
the shore in red, accenting dimpled sand.  
We bloom in this kaleidoscope design:  
Sweet-salty mix alive with seasoned fun,  
where puddled whitewash opals our fruit stand,  
ourselves new textures on this ancient strand  
infusing us in patterns just begun.

## IT TAKES RHYME ROYAL FOR HUMPBACK WHALES

The salty core of my Aquarian dream:  
To slither like a seal through loose wet warm,  
Disturbing dozing bigeyes whose red stream  
Will point the way and fling a fiery storm  
Of living arrows 'cross the scooping form  
Of undulating outriders, what a pair—  
Pagliacci faces grinning me a dare!

My bubble wake is coded melody;  
Each globule rises to a treble staff  
Of long-reached elkhorn branching like a tree.  
Blue conveys whole notes from sonic graph  
To ears attuned to each breath's epitaph.  
High coral altars bless the tithes of sun  
Along the reeftop posed as Helicon.

For now the dream is real and we are here;  
Increasing time each day the sea is home.  
The flanking porpoise escort pushes near,  
Suspecting us for wetbacks, monochrome  
Against a beige and turquoise catacomb,  
Who crossed their borders holding rigged passports  
And alien marques to dabble in their fortés.

cont.

My partner's dull shadow weaves its part  
Of the collage, now sudden sequin-flashed  
With black-masked angels practicing their dart  
And pivot, ballet-tuned, pink-silver slashed.  
Here, my partner can't direct the currents cached  
Inside my racing central motor cell.  
He suffers bends outside his scholar's shell.

He has no feel for magic strewn between  
Prolonged depth rapture, (the kind that lingers  
On for days) and stolid degrees in Marine  
Biology. Beauty slips his fingers  
Like eels eluding grasp. His spinal tinglers  
Seldom work; articulation never fails  
His clinic facts. Yet he, too, dreams! Of whales!

And he who sees no nuance changing peach  
To tangerine, plies me with finest tools,  
Hires my camera eye, goes all lengths to teach  
Me what I need down here, precisely schools  
Us to a peak, aggressive, but not fools.  
He's handed me a world, made us a team.  
He's readied and reeled my whale of a dream!

Each day our boat plows ripe Bahama blue,  
Collecting dolphin dorsals in our froth-skids.  
A dozen parentheses arch on cue,  
Rollercoastering alongside just like kids  
Loose in a midway; unimpressed by grids

And charts, they trail confetti-glitter high,  
And volley fragment suns into my eye.

In Caribbean moonwake overlying  
Silver Navidad banks, we hear them clicking,  
Nattering, whistling, lustily trying  
To fill our tape— mimic Marconis tricking  
Our ears to their number, three or four sticking  
Together in rich replying din.

Could these small whalekind talk with mammoth kin?

Our week-long search ends with midnight singing.

Humpbacks! Humpbacks singing like a choir!  
Choruses, solos, duets, the reef ringing  
With gutteral chanties climbing our wire.  
We roll their voices on our spools, require  
A second playing to convince our ears.  
Whales sound like pinched chain saws and friction gears.

For days we chase horizons round a bowl  
And never see them. Goblets of glass-green  
Endlessly overflow heads of foam, roll  
And raise the brew sometimes writhing serpentine  
With shapes of life in skins of opaline.

Savant and poet daze separately  
conditioned  
In ~~sight~~ Cetaceous fantasy.

cont.

Cerulean has a taste, not rich as teal,  
Sweeter than azure. Aubergine is flat.  
  
Sun rakes a loner ray from beneath our keel  
Like housecleaned debris, a flapping floor mat.  
  
Wind searches our seams, deft as a brickbat,  
Stealing our spit before we can lick  
  
Our cracked lips, scouring our eyes to the quick.

Behind my lids my data banks recall:

Cetacea, sub order--Mysticeti--

Poised on museum platforms near a wall,  
The dusty hulls of mounted monsters lie.  
  
Their orbs suffused in facelessness, deny  
Ferocity. I walked the sixty feet  
Of male, could not mind-paint him live, complete.

The eyes aren't made for titans, (theirs or mine)  
Nondescript lenses stud a misplaced butte;  
I can't digest the precedent design.

Genus: Magoptera. Can we compute  
Intelligence through noise? Can we refute  
Old whalers' tales of boats harassed and followed  
By Jonah's curse, attacked and wholly swallowed?

My partner rubs his tiredness, mouth atwist.  
Like private involuted whelks, we meet  
An interlocking jog: Do they exist?  
Are they really there— or has young conceit  
Propelled us, squandering so much on defeat?  
Should we head home with time and money left  
Before this brine-bitch levies total theft?

cont.

The evening stirs its palette, bronze and puce.  
Proof explodes the sea to flying shards!  
As if Jehovah God would introduce  
A just-made creature launched on gold petards  
Against our gaze; unearthly bulk bombards  
The amniotic fluid it returns to.  
Then sameness swears no shock took place. No clue.

There! A primordial reef wrenching free  
From the hemisphere, and still another  
In full silhouette, destroying simile!  
We count six with a calf and its mother.  
Again they shed one world for <sup>the</sup> other!  
A finale—downpouring shattered fire-drops  
Interspangled hotly with our heart-stops.

The lead bull's spirit and mine hold the leap  
At its top in eternal dimension  
Imprinted with all that words fail to keep;  
Nothing else can enter this sealed suspension.  
And still we stare, our feet a lost extension.  
We hear our own whoops blowing astern  
While throbbing afterimages rush, reel, burn.

They come back with morning; we gear for a dive.  
In saffron gauze, they loll a mile off port.  
Our prying glasses see one more arrive.  
My tenseness quips: "Looks like they're holding court."  
"They may be waiting to try us for sport,"

cont.

My mentor grins, checking my hose and tanks.  
We row our dinghy closer to their ranks.

Near the stub-fins bobbing, we go down  
Through a glare-gilded curtain of krill;  
Festoons of light fuzz us yellow-brown.  
La Mer, the mother of us all, life's mill—  
We cling to our need for fin and gill.  
A glimpse of flipper-white in this deep allness—  
Oh, Quasimodo, forgive our smallness!

If elephants are roots of heaven, whales  
Are roots of earth, embodied in eons  
Of wrinkled metamorphic rock that sails  
Like airborne silk the inner echelons  
Of poles, their tails heraldic colophons.  
Fear has its moment, even from here we yaw  
In a flipper's downstroke, emasculated straw.

Somehow their sound should be deep gonging,  
Thunnder vibrating sarcophagus dark.  
Or even low-note blues of bass sax longing  
With andante beat to match the regal arc  
Of vertebrae amid each piston spark.  
Their four octave gamut full of reedy flaws  
Can't prepare me for soprano power saws.

cont.

They may go higher, range above our ear.  
Sometimes they're racers' engines on a speedway.  
But now more than sound is transmitted here:  
The water is charged with living interplay—  
Chain-energy aplenty to relay  
A simple message, received sure and bright,  
A welcome of sorts—We see you; it's all right.

I'm drowning in exclamations and verbs;  
My camera is heavy with disbelief.  
The nearest humpback glides toward me, but curbs  
It's thrust. Its hide hosts life in bas-relief.  
I see texture, structure; a sargasso sheaf  
Trails between us, patching reality.  
My film may convince me such things can be.

I long to thank my partner for this,  
To enhance his excitement with mine,  
Repay him with bounty he'll always miss,  
Thread him through ripe literals, then align  
Him with pulsing aura, wide-angled shine,  
Finally to implant the kaleidoscope—  
Receptors in his academic hope.

I see him thinking: why do they breach?  
Why do they roll and wave a flipper skyward,  
Sing, sound, pound the surface, curl their tails, beach?  
He'll augur every answer past the bywords.  
I wish him countermedley, not just my words.

He reckons weight, age, girth, length; he spooks  
A cow and risks too close to sweeping flukes.

Turbulence folds him like a pillbug;  
He recovers, grinning, studies tongues, teats, baleen.  
Does he also see the flying prayer rug?  
The lapis chinoiserie, the muraled screen?  
He labels and sorts, ignoring damascene  
Chiaroscuro, the solid and light,  
The minor-key shadow-play someone must write.

Under what genus do we classify  
These attendant mermen? Do they fit  
In the food chain? Are they sailors' incubi?  
And the one with the crown and trident? I admit  
It's time to leave for ship and shore, acquit  
My goggled eyes. Ascend is not the word;  
I'm higher now than a frigate bird.

My partner signals for a final shot:  
My belly tightens; I move in and nod.  
He paces with a humpback, finds a spot;  
We are encircled deep within the pod.  
He sidles closer. Touches! Rides, wing-shod!  
All know he's there; they gentle their slipstream.  
They graze. Content to grace our living dream.

Yesterday my world stopped far short of shore;  
my days were walled by brick and concrete-scape  
perimetered beyond with steepled range  
of metamorphic rock. Each night before  
sleep locked me in ancient curving shell-shape,  
I gazed at mauved and mossy hills that change  
with seasons' rituals. Despite their strange  
magnetic strength grasping me knee to nape,  
they bow to vagrant streams, succumb to green,  
humble their shoulders in another king's cape.  
Subverted each fall with false shining ore,  
they stand betrayed, decrowned and pale between  
still-sovereign heavens and the ocean's scene  
where reign is absolute and evermore.

Reluctantly I questioned my devotion  
for protean peaks that abdicate  
the throne to vagaries of fog and rain  
or yield to every avalanche's motion.  
  
A summer sea once tried to alienate  
my mountain love, persuade me to remain.  
I pulled away, pretentious in disdain.  
  
Once home, my lofty earth would dissipate  
the spell; the old romance would lift me still.  
Sweet sand that dared each foot to hesitate  
and turn again toward sprays of perfumed potion,  
seduced each wavering sole with practiced skill,  
conspired with seams and souveniers until  
my house was full of missives from the ocean.

This will be a lasting love, my last.  
It fills my admiration's need for power,  
this savage water having many names,  
hoarding the future, harboring the past,  
never changing, changing every hour,  
devouring storms when weary of the games,  
pulling down the sun to drown in fluid flames,  
retreating soft then crashing back to scour  
the cuckold ground. The reclaimed loans provide  
new beds for micro-denizens to flower;  
curious noon probes wells of life amassed  
below. Floral-feathered animals astride  
the reef, wave the line where worlds divide.  
This salty choice will always hold me fast.

Beyond the touch of tidal certainty,  
the highlands held me close for one last year.  
They grappled with the rival in my mind  
with cedar lances, granite fists, a spree  
of berries, mushrooms icy springs, mule deer—  
offerings fit for queens, new plays designed  
to levitate my senses, leave me blind  
to all but nectared now and gilded here.  
It might have worked if not for last night's dream.  
At dawn I watched exploring sun-shafts veer  
from finial to spire and quickly flee  
as I do. Without warning, without scheme  
or drama, I slip loose from ties that seem  
like arms. Nothing's sure ahead except the sea.