1. F. J. Bergmann - Cetaceae

If I were to write concerning whales, I would not write about their lessening numbers or their sadness, but their invisible harmonics and how they disguise themselves as floating islands, pod archipelagoes. Islands that sing; Kalypso had one of those.

They gather the secrets that flow away from continents on their drifting shores, water them with spray from the reliable geysers of their blowholes. Each island garden greens in the long salt years, tangling threads of root and rhizome prickling through cetacean skin into nourishing blubber, dangling into the sea. In the mat of trailing branches, multitudes gather, creatures that look like the writhing contents of an Italian restaurant menu.

The mass insanity of flowers casts away a wake of maddened petals that wash up on the beaches of crabs, gulls, and plutocrats. Palm trees shoot skyward from stranded coconuts; rising cypresses grasp the shoreline; a baobab spreads its knotted arches; lianas thread toward sun. Thickening jungle quickens with a pair of colobus, a flickering spectrum of lost birds, an errant peccary, and one leaf-green snake.

Sinbad and his exhausted sailors beach their boat, fall to the warm sand, find a fountain of clear water. Later, an aroma of roast pork and monkey-meat lingers above the empty ocean.

But whales are warm like us, and if I wrote about whales I would mention their vast journeys, the taste of plankton and giant cephalopods. I would have to say something about the currents, the dark nights, the harpoons, the cold.

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