

Throughout our time together alongside Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, we have learned about this novel's great influence and role as a canonical text which outlines the beginnings of the American cultural identity. Yet, while this cultural identity can greatly attribute its existence to American literature such as Melville's, there is also a paradoxical reality which is highlighted through Melville's work as it challenges and critiques the American identity, specifically that which is built on mechanisms of possession. In my short story, told through a concrete poetry format, I follow the perspective of water and its conversation with us, the reader, and the American whaler as it attempts to explain its relationship and place within the Pequod's journey. Through my focus on the different forms of planetary water, which are outlined in Mentz, "A poetics of planetary water: The blue humanities after John Gillis," I attempt to illustrate the influence of this element to the dynamic experiences of the human body, and show how this relationship ultimately works to dismantle man-made mechanisms of control and possession.

Using Mentz's framework for the different forms of planetary water, which he argues exist in three forms, "liquid salt and fresh water, gaseous vapor, and solid ice," (143). I expand on my exploration of another kind of shape to water which shows its "consciousness" through the human/animal body. One way I decide to explore this is through the narration of two of these forms, the vaporous and the liquid. As is shown in my second page, I first focus on the way water takes form above the Pequod in the three years worth of drinking water which was stored within hundreds of barrels. I particularly decided to focus on the constriction of this state, as the water was made to remain in stillness for long periods of time, interrupting its flowing nature and finding escape mainly through the whalers' consumption of it. Moreover, I also reveal other visible forms of liquid and gaseous water through the personification of the whalers' sweat and water vapor which are made obvious through the physical exertion and exposure of the body to the natural elements. However, though I illustrate these two forms in my story, my main focus is on narrating the simultaneous solid and liquid state of water which is possible through its relationship to the human/animal body. Particularly, this is illustrated in my connections seen on the first page between the limitations of writing and the digital page in fully capturing this relationship to water. As I argue, water is able to gain a different kind of "conscious" form through humans' desires to capture its nature in writing and our overall interaction with the kinds of water both outside and within us. Thus, giving water's "aliveness" another kind of meaning.

Another aspect from Mentz's framework that I attempt to implement in my short story is illustrated through my overall creative format, as well as my more specific use of concrete poetry. In Mentz's essay, he argues that

*"Poems and other products of creative thinking thus become exemplary representations of how humans respond to dynamic environments while also being themselves representations of that dynamism. The intimacy between humans and water, an element that surrounds our planet and permeates our bodies, provides a rich reservoir for ideas about change, resilience, and the possibilities for new ways of thinking and living" (152)*

One way that I attempted to show this “dynamism” of humans and water through my “creative thinking” was through the play with concrete poetry. Though I maintained the shapes I was trying to imitate mostly in a “concrete” format, I also attempted to play with these shapes and perhaps show the more abstract and fluid or growing motions these can inhabit. Moreover, through my mixture of first-person and second-person point of view, and the constant interplay between the two, I also attempted to provide a kind of blurriness in our cohabitation with water, as our solid forms seem less solid and can appear somewhat like the gaseous forms of clouds.

Overall, through my attempts to illustrate the flowing state through which human bodies are able to take form through our relationship with water, I am also interested in revealing the inherent breaking of man-made barriers and constructs which attempt to define and constrict the undefinable aspects of our human/animal nature. As Melville does so in his chapter, “Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish,” he illustrates the contradicting and unstable nature of law and possession through his close analysis of the only “formal” law of whaling,

*“I. A Fast-Fish belongs to the party fast to it.*

*II. A Loose-Fish is a fair game for anybody who can soonest catch it” (433).*

As Melville goes on throughout the chapter, illustrating the general instability of this law (and all law) due to its ability to be interpreted differently, while also considering the relative truth of the law’s applicability, he makes the argument that by the definition of “fast-fish” and “loose-fish,” all living and nonliving things will always remain under the precarious balance of being those who possess and those who are possessed. In this way, he arguably shows the watery nature of the law, especially in its inability to lay out stable mechanisms of control and possession. In my own work, I attempt to challenge these supposed stable networks as well as I attempt to reveal the deeper connections between water, animals, and ourselves. Through my multiple attempts to blur and contest different concepts such as ideas of depth, consciousness, and permanency, I am hopefully able to contribute to the growing conversation of the blue humanities and argue for the role that our relationship to water can play within a more expansive understanding of ourselves and our role within this planet.

Call me you.

Call me everywhere.

Call me everything.

There is a world filled with  
water: it lives inside you.

I am part of you in ways

W O R

D S

fail to describe.

I have never known a single existence.

Nor have I known a fixed state of being. Nonetheless,  
here I am, coming to life in a place so far from my origin. A  
place made of minerals, and corpses from whom I have long  
departed. How foolish is it not? To think I can be captured within  
a vessel I cannot become one with. An object so fragile that even  
my slightest desire to know and touch, results in its fragmentation,  
and reveals its true abstraction. For, a page or a screen, despite its  
many efforts, cannot be made alive except through you – the medium  
through which

I

am

given

voice.

Aboard a ship named the Pequod, I am made to know multiple ways through which my nature is expressed and experienced by you. First, I am stored within tightly sealed wooden barriers, idly waiting for my freedom in your consumption.

|       |       |        |        |
|-------|-------|--------|--------|
| This  | Yet,  | I      | will   |
| round | it    | am     | not    |
| and   | still | cap    | last.  |
| sing  | des   | tured  | All    |
| ular  | ires  | within | things |
| wall  | me.   | this   | seek   |
| surr  | Yet,  | wall,  | me.    |
| ounds | it    | but    | In     |
| me.   | still | my     | our    |
| Re    | calls | con    | play   |
| jects | to    | tain   | ful    |
| me.   | me.   | ment   | dance, |

we remain infinite.

Secondly, I of course take my place in you.

In the furrows of your brows, the stretching of your skin. My existence becomes your own, and together we come to know the world through each other. As the sun heats your neck, parts of me surface through the drops of your sweat, dancing along the exteriors of the kind of world which you yourself are. Equally, my presence is made known in the heaving of your breath and the heaving of your body, speedily moving me through multiple channels until I am eventually refracted among millions of smaller droplets and swept away across another boundless domain. I am constantly made tangible in your desire to make yourself useful within this grand endeavor of capture and extraction. Yet before you dive deeper into my greater depths and become closely acquainted with my vastness, I first take a moment to remember the history we share.

I remember the great movement of the mountains, the minute splintering of grass, the careful erosion of the ground you believe so permanent, and I remember those more personal histories of tears swiftly hidden, bellies pulled and made full, wounds cut open, blood splattered and never healed. I remember your infinite shapes and I remember your infinite stories. Though you struggle yourself, and sometimes wish to erase them, know that I will remember. Know that these bodies and landscapes will continue to change, and you will be part of it.

Third, my place within this ship's story is most known through the very whale which motivates this endeavor and plunges you into my depths.

The whale and I know each other well, but it also knows you through me.

It too is nurtured and made alive by me. It too changes. It too grows. It too knows the frustrations of being bound, of being forced into bindings that cannot and will not attempt to know it for its wholeness. It too feels the pain of knowing me and depending on me to remain alive, as to be alive is to remain both free and trapped. The whale knows you well. It watches you, as I do, and we know of your strange laws and rules to possess us. We know the absurdity of your ways, and though we are unthreatened by your curiosities, which remain useless against our true boundlessness, we still must suffer with you. We suffer in our collective hurt and diminishing. We suffer because you suffer, and we seek to break ourselves from your imaginary boundaries. The whale knows it is the depth you seek to know, but it is also within you as it is within me. We hold each other's depths. We hold each other's freedom. We know no borders. We know

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