

When the breeze parts the cloud,
Ebony fades, the roof brightens.
I bathe in stars.

Eyes of light, winking tonight
Through the westerlies.

Yours is the promise of a million pearls
Each with their mute secret,
Hidden from the oyster's jaw.

Distant sun,
Beyond the call of whales
In the bent desert of space:
I would breach your wave,
Were it near me.

What is your quarry?
A thick instant of time
When every whale that ever lived
Shall pitch the same bay?

Look to the stars for the plunge.
The deepest dive is above us.

6

Don't Call the Planet 'Earth'!

Over 70% of the planet is ocean. And you call it 'Earth'!
A mere *quarter* of it is land!
Even the land is wet, with lakes and rivers spackling the
valleys.
Call the planet "Water".

7

There's No Such Thing as the First-Person Singular

Individuality is an illusion.
Who tamed fire, created the wheel? You don't know.
Only that you use flame, drive trucks.
Only recently have you begun to credit ideas: *Edison*
Electric, *Bell Telephone*...
Individuals die, species evolve. Yet collective thinking is
unimaginative.
Imagination requires nurturing—a biological charity found
within the organism; a stretching into the future at the cellular
level.
Only the generous may imagine: the ones so bemused
by spirit they will champion its cause against logic. Ego hovers
between vision and the soul like a jealous chaperone. Elope,
young lovers!
Collective thinking is a conference of minds where lone
thoughts tremble. Ego circles the pack like a sly vulture.
There's no individuality, only unique solutions.

Epilogue

Imagine alone, resolve together.
See in solitude, confirm in conference.
Privately conjure, jointly establish.

8

No More Philosophers!

Call back the hermits! Every whale a philosopher!
Philosophy is a consolation, a crumb thrown to failing
fathers. Old bulls count their days with ideas.
But now cetacea defines itself by wisdom, and the
hermits are a cerebral oligarchy.
Call back the hermits! Every whale a philosopher!
The hermits always said, "Those who know, don't sound.
Those who sound, don't know." Yet they sound to the humpbacks
who spread their message like plankton.
Those who know, don't sound. Those who sound, don't
know.
Call back the hermits! Every whale a philosopher!
Teaching is a false skill, the process by which egotists
embellish thought, so they may be congratulated for thinking.
Explore feverishly, embellish nothing, remain silent.

9

Cetacea & Land: On Again, Off Again

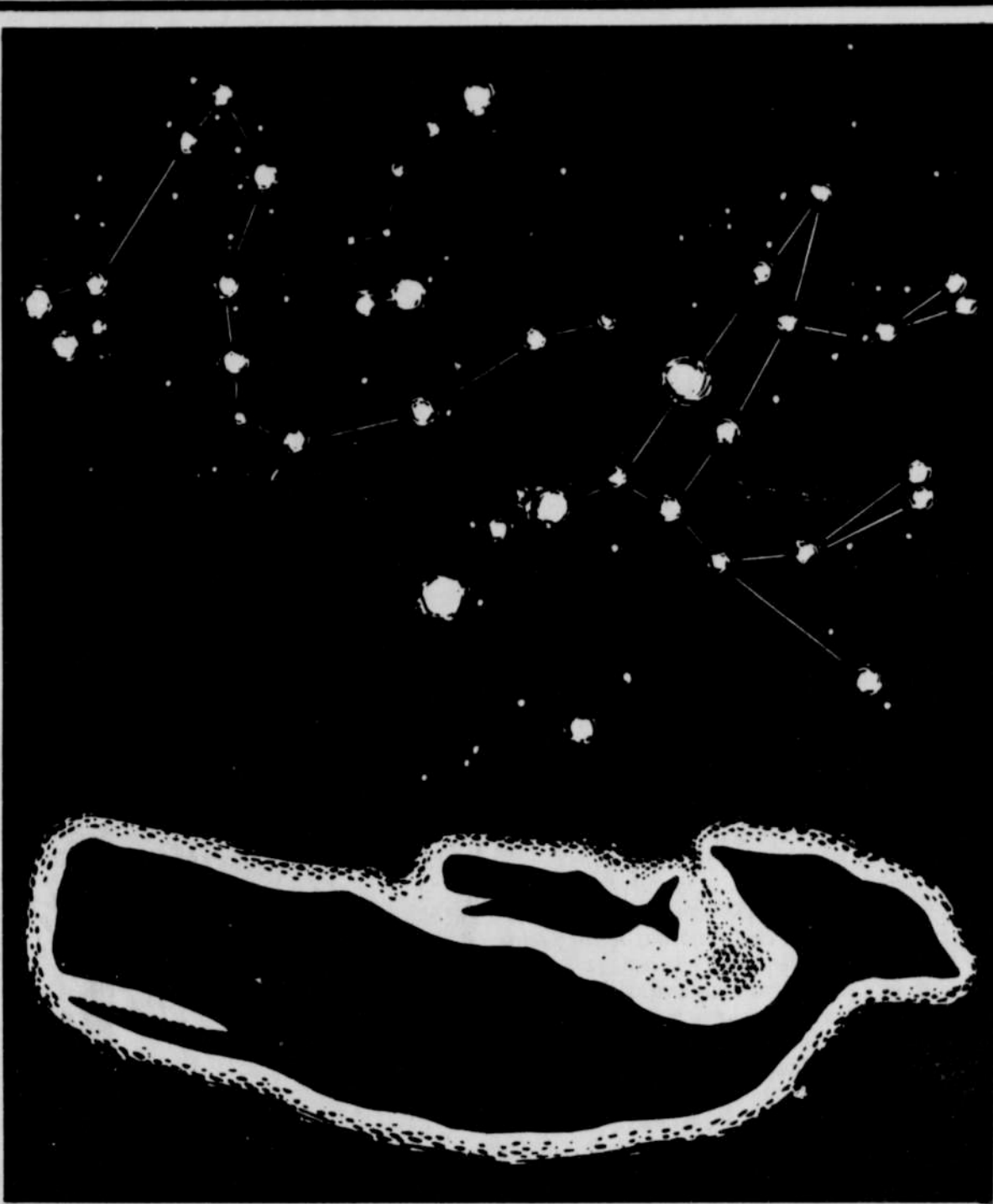
A half billion years ago, amphibians crawled from the
sea to sample the land. Land boasted four attractions: you could
see better, you could move more surely, it was safer, and the
food was delicious.
Fortunately, the expedition began at the coast. Life was
easier there than inland—no hot summers, cold winters, parched
deserts.
Some amphibians evolved into mammals, some mam-
mals into primates, and the rest is history. *Your history*. Because
50 million years ago, we returned to the sea.
Were we fickle?
Not at all. We'd gotten what we wanted.
Once we'd achieved the mammalian mode (lungs, met-
abolism, birthing, intelligence), we were in a better position to
enjoy the deep.
No, we couldn't sprint as fast as a cheetah—but in a
pinch, we could cruise 20 knots. No, we couldn't nap on the
ocean floor, but we could dive to 7000 feet and poke around for
an hour. No, we couldn't beam signals, but before mechanical
boats, we could sound a message 5000 miles. As for longevity,
no animal can outlast a redwood tree—but like you, some of us
brave 90 years.
And we've gotten strong in the ocean. Some of us stretch
120 feet, weigh 120 tons.
Fickle? No. We just knew when to leave.

V.O. Blum is the *nom de 'blum'* of a celebrated NW
writer. "Whale Song" is from his most recent book, *Sunbelt*
Stories. "Sperm Boy" and "The Farm" are also included. His
earlier book, *Equator* sold out its first edition. Both are published
by Astoria's Times Eagle Books.

Henk Pander, famous for his portrait of Governor Tom
McCall (Oregon State Capitol Building) and long considered one
the Northwest's best artists, illustrated *Sunbelt Stories*.



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LEONARD EVERETT FISHER

LEVIATHAN'S LAMENT

Singing sweet sonnets to my mistress beneath the waves,
I feel the years glide by in reverse
As my love pitches and rolls with the tides.
Proud she goes with babes at suck
As we travel together the boundless oceans
Charting our course by instinct of sea and star.
Rising, I blow foam and brine to the skies
In exchange for the savory taste of air and mist.

We plot our lives in tranquillity
Yet are named monsters and widow-makers
By those who would live and die to drain our juices.
When we walked the land we beheld the vision,
And seeing the hairless apes, knew death would be their companion.
We fled to the sea to escape their bloodlust—
But still they came.
Following with a hunger for murder and riches—
Peeling our flesh for its oil.

I've tasted the iron cast by Gloucester men
Whose wives walk the parapet, waiting and watching.
I stared in disbelief as the blade bit and blood billowed,
Gushing from within me—
And the once blue sky turned to purple spindrift.
Thrashing in mute agony I sensed the unspeakable horror
As, with arched back, did I leap and dive,
Running their longboats in a Hell-bound Nantucket sleigh-ride,
Dragging my tormentors into the sea beneath my belly.

I cannot grieve for those lost—
For I live forever with their spurs in my flesh.
My salty bride waits, and she cares not for the sailors
Who now wear pegs of scrimshaw where sinew and bone once grew.
She's known the frenzy of chase and flight
As well as I—and better still.
Widening the water between her and the faceless demons
Who pursue after the sport of the kill,
The smoldering smell of hemp running taut against the bow—
And rolling her eyes in blind terror—the barb bites!
All this mindless, senseless carnage
Of so many years of my brethren is completely beyond my comprehension.
What gods do men hold dear that would entice them to murder,
Sending them to the uncharted ends of the earth,
Sailing nameless seas—with harpoons at the ready?

We share the legends with men—told from one end in New Bedford,
And from another in the depths of the South Atlantic—
Toward a common, cataclysmic center.
And it doesn't matter who spins the yarn,
Or which of us is the monster;
The tale always arrives at the same climax,
And tears are tears on land or sea.

~ L. B. DORAN-MAURER

L.B. Doran-Maurer was a Los Angeles poet whose work was
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