



Sailing without Ahab: Ecopoetic Travels

Steve Mentz

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Herman Melville—mystic, orca oracle, and madness miner—left treasures of material for poets in *Moby-Dick*, and Steve Mentz found his muse in the idea of an Ahab-less *Pequod*—a multiracial, queer, and cruiser ship on a bountifully blue sea. Mentz is the author of *Oceans* and *An Introduction to the Blue Humanities* and teaches English at St. John's University.

Lines of Succession

Why does not Q. captain the P.?

*No one on board can match him —
His indecipherable tattoos, bronzed glories,
His skill with harpoon in boat or at table,
His love and fearlessness and knowledge
Of so many watery parts of the world.*

*The tradition about harpooner-officers is Dutch,
In which the fat-cutter or specksnyder, the chief harpooner —
On the P. that means Q. —
Assumes Starbuck's role as under-captain.*

*Q. disdains rule. What means command to a body
So free? He pads the deck barefoot and silent,
Weapon always to hand, smelling salt air,
Contemplating blood.*

MATT SUTHERLAND (March / April 2024)

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