

Angela Alaimo O'Donnell

**On Finding a Copy of *The Wellfleet Whale*
in Wellfleet**

*Master of the whale-roads,
let the white wings of the gulls
spread out their cover.
You have become like us,
disgraced and mortal.*

Stanley Kunitz

I hefted you in my hands,
sturdy friend,
traced the woven ropes
 stretched across your boards,
the black ink print
 three-inch square—
blue window to the sea—
 the curling waves,
the grounded ships,
 and two dead beasts
borne ashore.

I loved your narrow sorrow
 the lore of the local
announcing abroad,
 What happened here matters, and how,
your strange tale
 pulling me in,
helpless fish hung
 at the end of each line.

Like him

*You seemed to ask of us
not sympathy, or love,
or understanding,
but awe and wonder.*

I pressed you, a promise
against my breast,
carried you down the cloister walk
of the dusty book shop,
then set you down
on the counter,
a place and a state,
as something to come back to,
a wild prize
not proper to be caught

until I saw the hand,
your poet's mark,
blue news inked across the page,
the *Master of the whale-roads*
already gone the way
of his own Wellfleet Whale—

you his song,
his signature and sign,
disgraced and mortal,
and mine.

The Song of Things

Making use of the useless—a beauty we have less than not deserved.

Wendell Berry

The feather shed (its bird fled)
dropped on an old stone
dislodged from the wall (hence its fall)
calls its owner home.

The bottle cap, the fabric scrap,
pieces good and small,
ghost their missing counterparts
each adumbrating all.

Nail clippings, lipstick tubes,
pens empty of their ink,
the chipped coffee mug
in the brown-stained sink.