

POEM

Whalefall and Boneflower and the Deep Sea Snow *Osedax mucofloris*

BY PHILIP GROSS

Great whale, grey whale
with the map of all the oceans
and their long songs in your brain,
 where do you go
at the end of all your singing?
 Weary one, oh

great, grave, gone whale,
who wove from that glittering string
a net so strong it held the sea's heave
 to and fro,
you were always the deep diver, deeper now
 than we can know

down and into the world beneath the world
 with *whalefall*
 and *boneflower*
 and the deep sea snow.

What falls as snow
a mile deep
is skin and scales

the food we eat
the food we are

one and the same
dropped crumbs
the body's waste

into the dark
forgetting

of ourselves
the flakes and cells
of life let go

to drift to fall
though stranger weather
than we can imagine

sleepless
dreamless
deep

sea
snow...



Kind worms, blind worms
whom no one has seen or could love
how do you work, so dark, so cold
 a mile below
as delicate as seamstress fingers, to unpick
 the knots of bone?

Great bones, whale bones
that sank through blue green twilight
like an evening deepening forever
 slow on slow,
to lie like spars of galleons
 down where no

light comes, and nothing
lives, except... *Osedax mucofloris*,
swaying like a pale bouquet of petals,
 the worm-flowers grow.

This is the world beneath the world.
where all life came from, maybe, maybe
 where we go,

where we come home

to *whalefall*
and *boneflower*
and the deep,
 the deep,
 the deep
 sea snow.