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About the project

Exhibits from the

Maritime Museum

&

The City

BECCA DRAKE

About the project

Housed in the old Dock Offices building at Victoria Square, Hull's Maritime Museum sits in the middle of the city. Across the street, Queen's Gardens fill the space that used to be Queen's Dock, until it was filled with concrete in the early twentieth century. The museum's south-facing windows open onto docks no longer in use, and past them to the shores of the Humber, where wading birds fish for worms in the mud. Beyond, Spurn Point is the last piece of land before the North Sea.

Inspired by the objects, history and surroundings of the Maritime Museum, these poems explore how people, animals, and plants become objects behind glass. They invite you to question how the city exists in the same space as nature, by viewing exhibits from the museum side by side with exhibits from the city and its surrounding natural spaces.

The Museum

In passing this is aquarium
light, a question of fish, bones
and shadows silvering casements
in silt, of letters pooling the page.

The City,

where octopus limbs, undulating,
grow up from mud

where salt-gnawed branches
claw at the lock

where Zimmer frame & breathless
plastic lung form

imprints

swept away.

Mermaid

My maker held me in his arms.
A meeting of land and sea
beyond the wanting mouth.

He stitched me at the neck.
He twisted of fish tail and primate mask
this skeleton of wires, stretched the net,
stuffed me full of sailor's stories,
and called me a body. A piece of land
above a slip of sea.

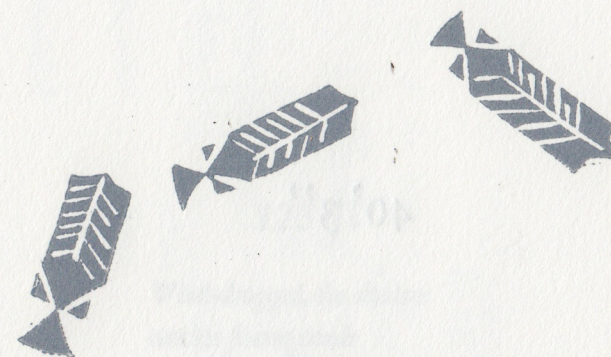
 Did he wake
one day, envision this elemental
tearing, myth reborn,
a monster, a grotesque?

Eel grass

Waving tower blocks.
Subaquarium bottle-green.
Gelatinous fingers, buried hands — among
skim silver fish in skeins.
Humber's shadow.
Fleeing sands.
Wind-dragged.
S c a t t e r i n g
A littoral littering,
Pole-snagged plastic fluttering,
taking flight.
The city in a box.

Questions

I spy a flock of answers, folding
in on themselves, sea-foaming,
and back to the lodestone, soaring
home, then out to question again.



& Answers

*At the docks is
gulls' chorale of:*
STOCKFISH! STOKFISH!
STOKFFYSSHE! STOKFISSHE!

*And the calling
screech of cars is:*
STOCKFISH! STOKFISH!
STOKFFYSSHE! STOKFISSHE!

*And the creaking
slippered footsteps:*
STOCKFISH! STOKFISH!
STOKFFYSSHE! STOKFISSHE!

40' 3"

half line by
in metre obsolete ----- in measured & sutured
sounding words, which seek to work
a whale.

of *balaena australis*:

half line, bones meet,
which seek to work

128 ft

Wind-dragged, the shadow
catches fleeing sands

from the lighthouse, darkened,
where his evening stands.

Teredo Navalis

absence	wonder	Infinite	small
	wormed	Unwanted	indentations
How I want		These	indrawn
gasp		waves, rasping against	shingled
shore. And these are		if this	a beach, and cal-
ciferous mouths	sea-gestated		and spat
gnawing	earth		a soft
and			consume
consume	'all is left		behind glass.

Lord Line Trawler Building

At the end of the line, the old Lord windows wide. This wizened hoarder folds shadows in his gap-tooth smile. They vine into letters, words, sentences, which parenthesize (crumbling brick), inscribe grass in wild-flowered ash, rewrite sea; shadows slit the walls with words. These unuttered cacophonies chafe catacombs from the old man's hardened shell and out he spits them, one by one, thieves off in the night licking his gap tooth's whistle from their fingers.

Figurehead
of H.M.S. Albion,
1842

Regarding the open sky, it might as well be ocean,
she lies supine, her back against a crate,
cresting concrete. This is her
new prow, the smooth rock of the city
her new sea, of which the keeled caress, her profile,
forms keen incisors, rocks to scythe the ocean floor.
She could be petrified.
Perhaps, the long days seeking over
the seas have hardened her
skin, which glints, salt-burnished
like the shells of barnacles, withholding
her worn and weathered heart,

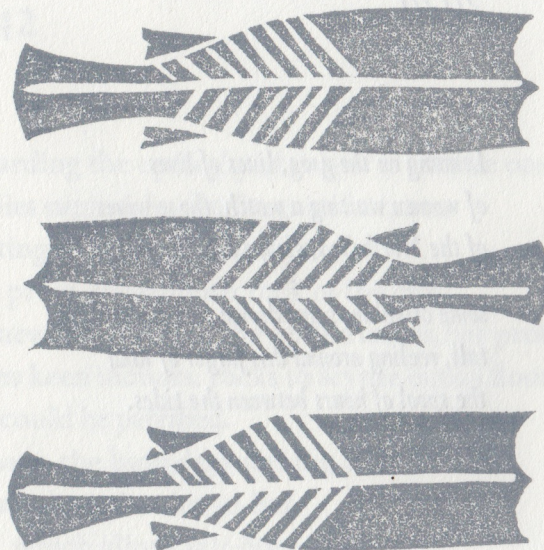
*Figures of wood
at Spurn Point,
2020*

*Leaning on the grog, lines of lives
of women waiting a watch, those wives
of the North Sea, stooped. Some fall,

some crumble, some drown, and some stand
tall, reeling around this finger of land
the spool of hours between the tides.*



Figurehead of young female Southern Right Whale,
of HMS Albion, 1842



Findings

The following items are taken from the 1956 *Catalogue of the Maritime Museum, Kingston Upon Hull*.

40' 3" —

25. Skeleton of young female Southern Right Whale, *Balaena australis*, 40' 3" long, captured off the southern coast of Long Island, New-York, USA, near the village of Wainscott.

Figurehead —

250. Figurehead of HMS *Albion*, 1842 (exhibited outside)

Questions —

277. Lodestone, which has the property of attracting iron. When suspended was used by mariners (primarily Chinese) to give a rough indication of magnetic north,

Teredo Navalis —

427. Piece of wood, bored by *Teredo navalis* (a marine boring worm)

Answers —

Incorporates found poetry based on *The Customs Records of Hull, 1453*, edited by Wendy Childs.



This chapbook has been created as part of the *Hull: Yorkshire's Maritime City* project.

It was set by hand in Spectrum metal type, and was printed letterpress on a Golding Jobber No. 6, at Thin Ice Press, University of York.

Jointly funded by Hull City Council and The National Lottery Heritage Fund, *Hull: Yorkshire's Maritime City* is a transformational project that seeks to promote and protect Hull's incredible maritime history, architecture and collections.



This chapter has been created as part of the Hill's Jubilee's
celebration of the project.

It was set in hand to produce a new type and was printed
in partnership with a leading printer, Hill's Jubilee
University of York.

Jointly funded by Hill's Jubilee and The National Library
of Medicine, Hill's Jubilee's Jubilee City is a transformational
project that seeks to promote and protect Hill's Jubilee's
national history, architecture and collections.