

## THE BONE BANQUET

**Roxanne Hoffman**

Poets Wear Prada  
C/O Roxanne Hoffman  
533 Bloomfield Street - 2nd Floor  
Hoboken, NJ 07030

*Ophryotrocha craigsmithi*, is a bristle worm species that dine exclusively on dead whale bones—a limited diet made palatable by the fact that a single whale can provide a twenty-year food supply sustaining generations of bristle worms. The species was first discovered on a minke whale carcass in Sweden in 2009, and is named after Professor Craig Smith of Hawaii, one of the first scientists to look into whale-fall organisms.

after the flesh eaters have feasted  
the sharks have devoured; the hagfish have vacuumed  
after these scavengers have picked the bones clean  
when all that remains  
are the skull and the ribcage  
assorted fragments of whale bone  
sucked dry of their marrow  
generations of bristle worms come to harvest their bounty  
so that nothing is wasted nothing is lost  
all is recycled  
in this watery kingdom of sea

these are mother nature's natural cleaners  
scouring the mud floors at base of the ocean  
where the tiniest dine on those once greatest  
and the meek truly inherit the earth  
but when the whale carcass  
is disposed of  
some twenty years later  
when every bit of debris  
is whisked clean  
they must wander for miles  
ride out the tide  
riding the currents  
remain dormant for  
what could be  
a millennium  
before finding their next meal  
and always at the risk  
of becoming  
the next course

on the food-chain menu