

Andrew Payton is a Maryland native and MFA candidate in Creative Writing and Environment at Iowa State University, where he has worked as the Poetry Editor of [Flyway](#). You can read more of his poetry at [Orange Quarterly](#), [Juked](#) and [Booth Journal](#), and find it in forthcoming issues of *Fourth River*, *Permafrost*, and *Natural Bridge*.

About these poems: I suppose every writer needs an obsession, and I return often to whales, especially gray whales and the infamous whaler Charles Scammon, an obscure figure from the nineteenth century who brought populations to near extinction while simultaneously taking some of the most detailed scientific observations yet on marine mammals, collected in his book, *The Marine Mammals of the Northwestern Coast of North America*. One of the projects I have fomenting is a collection that features the writings and tragedy of Scammon prominently.