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## "Leech," "Blue Whale" and "Elephant" (poems)

Benjamin Aleshire

*University of New Orleans*

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**Award Name:** Ryan Chighizola Prize

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## **Leech**

Benjamin Aleshire

*Ryan Chighizola Prize Winner*

Call me a parasite, sure —

*I can't change the body*

I was born into.

We all must eat, somehow, no?

Me, I have learned to wait —

You'll come running to me

when you need relief

from something you don't understand,

when even your blood

betrays you.

*for James*

# **Blue Whale**

Benjamin Aleshire

*Ryan Chighizola Prize Winner*

A relic of an older world,  
they call me, but  
I have out-lived ice-ages  
& I will out-live you.  
Even when my body drifts  
to the ocean floor,  
I become a garden  
glowing in the darkness.  
I am so large  
that I have no concept  
of fear, of danger:  
I almost envy you  
your human folly, where  
everything you do is sweetened  
by risk.

*for Dierdre*

# Elephant

Benjamin Aleshire

*Ryan Chighizola Prize Winner*

If the heart is a building —

(with its chambers & atriums)

my mother my architect built for me

a palace.

But there are too many rooms

& no one inside them dancing

so many mirrors & undisturbed pools.

A beautiful thief is coming soon

to plunder me I know it

(I can feel her even now scaling up my walls,

leaving a map of her bare prints

through the rows of my hushed gardens)

*for Isabella*