ISHMAEL NA MY NAME

*Moby-Dick* poetry in *Pidgin English*

One Haiku for each chapter

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Introduction

I am from Nigeria, a country in West Africa, which has over 510 living languages currently being spoken. Growing up in the former capital of Lagos, which is a melting pot of people of different tribes and religions from all over the country, taught me the strength that is in diversity. Pidgin English is widely spoken and was developed out of a desperate need for communication amongst the tribes in Colonial times. In Nigeria, although our pidgin is based primarily off British English, many words are also coined from Portuguese and the various languages spoken throughout the nation.

If one looks back at most of the beginnings of conflicts in history, most, if not all, stem from misunderstandings or lack of tolerance. Nevertheless, the Pequod crew must have found a way to communicate despite the language barriers and differences in beliefs. Although many characters spoke in a manner different from Ishmael’s, Queequeg stood out the most to me because he spoke in Pidgin English. In fact, one of the words Queequeg uses is ‘sabee’ which means ‘to know/understand’ and it exists in Nigerian Pidgin as well. Therefore, in response to the novel, and as a nod to the various nationalities who must have had to communicate while sailing on the Pequod, I have created a haiku for each chapter of Moby-Dick using Nigerian pidgin. This idea was inspired by my fluent knowledge of Japanese, Pidgin English, and British/American English.

A haiku is a Japanese form of poetry where one has three lines with syllables of five, seven, then five respectively. In Japanese, it is much easier to work around this due to the language structure. However, for Pidgin English, it is more difficult for the poet to work with the seventeen syllables. Nevertheless, I believe that although one might not fully understand all the words used in this piece, the essence of Melville’s novel transcends language. Happy reading!
Ishmael na my name

My heart dey do me somehow

I dey go whaling

Coin no dey my purse

As cold dey catch me so tey

I go Spouter Inn

Dey give me roommate

Na so he come be savage

He come fear me o

As I come wake up

His hand come dey for blanket

Na so we be friends

As we dey chow food

People get different skin tone

Na Queequeg calm pass

We dey waka go

And admire New Bedford

Whaling be im life

I come go chapel

Na so cenotaphs plenty

But fear no catch me

Priest come climb ladder

His name be Fada Mapple

The pulpit dey fine

Na so im dey preach

His sermon dey touch my heart

I come get courage

Queequeg na pagan

But im get a good heart sha

Na padi be that

I dey comfortable

His smoke no dey disturb me

He begin dey talk

Na Kokovoko

Na im be Queequeg home town

Na so he tell me
We come go the wharf

Dem dey make jest of Queequeg

Yet he come save boy

Na from Nantucket

Wey dey very small for map

Good whalers dey come

As we come reach land

“Clam or Cod” dem dey ask us

We come chop am both

Yojo come choose ship

But I no fit meet Captain

My lay dey small sha

Lent and Ramadan

All that one na big nonsense

Queequeg no care sha

Peleg dey vex me

He no wan hire Queequeg

Skill beat religion

Prophet come yarn us

I think say im be mad man

We come ignore am

Ship go soon leave port

Aunty Charity dey fuss

Ahab never show

We come see shadows

Elijah come yarn again

Captain still no show

Peleg dey command

Bildad no wan leave the ship

Pequod come set sail

One Bulkington dey

But im come be ghost for wheel

Lee shore dey deadly

Whaling get im pride

Yale and Harvard na my schools

Honor dey this work
Na whale oil dem use          Stubb come dey tell Flask
For the coronation oil        About one dream he come dream
Britons, you sabee?           Where Ahab kick im

Chief mate na Starbuck        Cetology sha

Him be good Nantucket man     I go use am classify

Courage dey im heart          Plenty plenty whales

Stubb and Flask follow        Harpooners get pride

Queuequeg, Daggoo, Tashtego   Dem dey close to the captain
Na dem dey hunt whales        Na Ahab rule sha

One day I come see            Dem dey chow with him

Ahab on top Pequod deck       Dough-Boy come dey fear so tey

One leg dey missing           Im just dey shake oo

Him temper dey hot            When you dey mast-head

Na so im dey shout at Stubb   If you no pay attention

Stubb no like am oo           Na so you go fall

Ahab come dey smoke           For seeing white whale

He come throw pipe for ocean  The reward na one doubloon

Which kain man be dis?        Ahab talk am so
Na so sunset knack
Ahab dey look am so tey
Na so im dey think
Starbuck no get peace
Im know say Ahab no well
Him fit do nothing
Stubb too come dey think
Him laugh so he no go cry
Starbuck come call him
The sailors dey dance
The party dey make sense but
Fight and wind spoil am
The white whale story
Na so dem dey tell me so
No one fit catch am
Why white get power?
Why it dey fear men sometimes?
Moby-Dick dey white

For night noise dey sound
But we no see who talk am
Na bad food cause am?
Ahab dey cabin
He dey study his chartings
Im sabee ocean
Whale na dangerous thing
Their tales plenty for ocean
Sailors know am well
Ahab dey obsessed
Him dey use tools and his men
White whale no show face
I come dey weave mat
Tashtego sight whale
I dey for the boat
The whale come destroy am oo
We come dey water
As dem rescue us
Na so I come write my will
That na my fourth time
Ahab get im men
Na dem be the noisy ghosts
Crew fear Fedallah
Pequod dey sail sha
We sight one kain spout like this
Ahab just dey gaze
We come meet one ship
Im name na the Albatross
Dem no see the whale
We suppose gam dem
As dey no see Moby-Dick
Ahab no wan gam
Moby-Dick chop Radney
Steelkit come dey happy oo
Na Town-Ho story

As whale dey water
Na so man come try paint am
Dem make mistakes sha
Dem come try again
E never still correct sha
But some dey make sense
Many materials
Dem dey use to dey make whale
On top land and sea
We come sail some more
We come see plenty right whales
Ocean dey scary
Na so something rise
Daggoo talk say na white whale
But im be white squid
For whaling business
The line rope dey important
E fit be halter
Pequod come sight whale
Water dey churn, blood dey spill
Na Stubb wey kill am
If harpooneers bad
People go shout for their head
Their aim must dey sharp
The harpoons dey rest
On top the crotch wey dey boat
Dem dey plenty oo
Stubb dey bully Fleece
As he wan chop whale steak fast
Fleece come preach instead
Why whale no be food?
Na the fat or na the size?
Stubb come like am sha
Whale dey hang for ship
Na so shark come dey chop am
Dem fit chop humans
As next day come dawn
We come begin cut the whale
That work dey hard oo
Whale blubber dey big
It come resemble blanket
Marks get character
Ship come release whale
As dey no need im body
It come be sad oo
But the head remain
Ahab come ask am questions
The head no fit talk
We come sight a ship
Im name na Jeroboam
Dem no see the whale
Na the monkey-rop
Wey connect me and Queequeg
Him die, I die too
Fedallah come talk
Na so Pequod kill right whale
Im get influence
Two whale heads come dey
I dey look sperm whale head first
Im get symmetry
Right whale na the next
E no get sperm oil or teeth
Na difference be dat
Sperm whale head fit ram
Im also dey very tough
Like say im be wall
Heidelberg get wine
Sperm whale get oil wey dey fine
Wine no fit compare
Tashtego come slip
Him and head come dey sink but
Queequeg rescue am
Whale no get a nose
But im head get dignity
You fit read the brow?
From forehead whale brain
Get space wey separate am small
Sperm whale skull get hump
We come meet the Virgin
Dem dey race us for whale oil
Our old whale come sink
Whaling get glory
Pictures and legends show am
Club members dey great
Jonah’s story dey
Plenty plenty for history
Differences dey sha
Queequeg oil im boat
As we chase whale Stubb come stand
Im do Pitchpoling
Since before before
Whales just dey spout for ocean
Na so dem dey breathe
*Sperm whale tail dey fine*
*It fit do many many*
*Good things for the whale*
Na so for Asia
Plenty whales come dey water
We just dey look dem
*E be like say whales*
*Just dey do like human being*
*Both the boys and girls*
E also be like
All things wey dey for world be
Fast-fish and loose-fish
*Whale head na for king*
*They come give the queen the tail*
*Poor people suffer*
Pequod meet Rosebud
Stubb come use cunny cunny
Collect Ambergris
*Im dey very rare*
*Dem dey use am make perfume*
*Na from whale poo sha*
Pip dey jump from boat
Stubb warm am, e come leave am
Ocean turn im mad
*I come dey squeeze oil*
*Na so I just dey for trance*
*I come dey squeeze hand*
As mincer dey cut
Im dey wear the whale wee-wee
Im resemble priest
*Na so for try-works*
*We dey burn the whale blubber*
*No dey look the fire!*
Whalers dey enjoy
Dem just dey live in the light
As oil dey plenty
*Oil come dey barrels*
*But as we come clean finish*
*Dem fit sight new whale*
As Doubloon dey deck
Crew dey look am one by one
Dem see different things
*Captain Boomer come*
*Since e lose im arm to whale*
*Im try warn Ahab*
Amelia come set
Example for other ships
Dutch whalers get life
*Na for Arascides*
*I measure whale skeleton*
*Tattoo dey right arm*

Length, width, even ribs
I come measure everything
Flukes dey missing sha
*To write about whale*
*E fit tire person but*
*Fossils dey plenty*
E be like say as
Whale come swim the earth so tey
E no go die out
*Ahab come break leg*
*As e come pierce im before*
*Im call carpenter*
Na so carpenter
As im come get plenty skill
Im dey craft the leg
*About phantom limb*
*Ahab dey yarn carpenter*
*As im dey make leg*
Starbuck come talk but
Ahab point gun for im head
Starbuck leave cabin
*As Queequeg come sick*
*Im ask for coffin but he*
*Come recover well*
*For the Pacific*
Ahab no fit feel im peace
*As im dey the calm*
*Na so the blacksmith*
*Dey for Pequod because of*
*Im sad life story*
As im dey the forge
Na so Ahab bring metal
And baff am for blood
*Pequod reach Japan*
*Na so weather just dey calm*
*Ahab feel am small*
Ship meet Bachelor
The crew come dey jolly oo
Dem barrels dey full
*Pequod come sight whales*
*Crew come catch four, but Ahab*
*Still dey feel im gloom*
*Ahab boat dey sea*
Na Parsee wey no wan sleep
Im dey yarn Ahab
*Line season come knack*
*Ahab dey use im quadrant*
*But e come march am*
Na so Typhoon come
Fear come catch all crew members
But Ahab no gree
*Starbuck try yarn him*
*About the Pequod damage*
*But e no listen*
Moby-Dick come show

Na Ahab wey sight am oo

Im own boat no wreck

*On top second day*

*The whale come break Ahab leg*

*Fedallah come die*

Ahab shout at whale

E come drown for harpoon rope

Ship sink, crew perish

*Only me wey live*

*I come dey float for coffin*

*Rachel rescue me*