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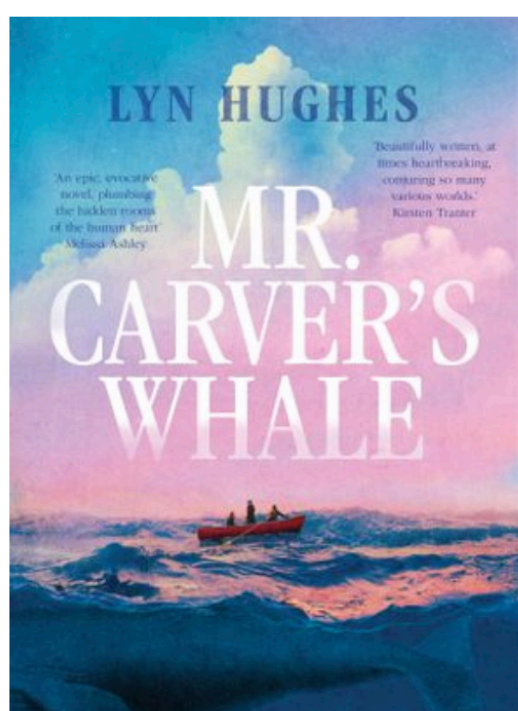
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Mr Carver's Whale

Lyn Hughes

Fourth Estate

Reviewed by Deborah Crabtree

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Category: Fiction

Mr Carver's Whale (Lyn Hughes, Fourth Estate)

7 June 2022

On the volcanic island of Pico in the Azores, a young and crippled Antonio Mateus João Carvalho Cabral is delivered a sea chest of books. Among the many books he devours is *The Mysterious World of Cetaceans*, which captures his imagination and fosters a lifelong obsession with whales. While Antonio is clever and bookish, his handsome older brother Marcelinho takes to the ocean on heroic whale-harpooning jaunts. They are two very different brothers, who as young men fall in love with the same woman, the inimitable Margarida. *Mr Carver's Whale* is a vast and generous novel that sweeps from Pico to Lisbon to a remote island off Newfoundland to the tiny Australian whaling town of Eden, where we also meet a woman harbouring dark secrets. Author Lyn Hughes's love for her characters is evident, and while wonderfully poignant and whimsical, they are not without depth. Their rich inner lives are exquisitely rendered, even as the story moves its spotlight across changing protagonists. Unsurprisingly, the echo of *Moby-Dick* is prevalent throughout the narrative, the ever-present whale as mysterious and majestic here as it was in Melville's tale. *Mr Carver's Whale* is a delightful, almost mythical novel filled with books, ghosts, poetry, oceans, whales, love, desire and death. It is recommended for fans of *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* and *A Gentleman in Moscow*.

Deborah Crabtree is a Melbourne-based writer and bookseller.

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