



The writer who has journeyed to the limits of truth (where lies feed on our fears)

Raúl Quinto, winner of the 2024 National Narrative Prize, publishes *The Blue Whale*. Inspired by a macabre viral game that terrified half the world, the book delves, through horror, into the boundaries between fiction and reality.



Raúl Quinto

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If there were a short, simple, and direct path to literary success, **Raúl Quinto** would crawl down it on his knees, his hands tied behind his back with a sisal rope. Because this writer from Cartagena is the kind of person who likes to make life difficult for himself. Not content with writing poetry (we all know there are more poets than readers of poetry), **he decided to take the leap into narrative with hybrid books. Hybrid!**

Hybrid books are not novels, essays, stories, biographies, or poetry collections, yet they hold novels, essays, stories, biographies, and even poems. Whatever you like. Hybrid. Two fine examples are [La canción de NOF4](#) and [Martinete del rey sombra](#)—two fascinating works, if you ask me. The latter, about the **attempted extermination of the Roma people** in the Spain of Ferdinand VI, earned Quinto the **National Narrative Prize in 2024**.

After winning the National Narrative Prize, Raúl Quinto publishes his most experimental and strange novel yet.

Now, at the height of his career, he has chosen to publish what is probably **his strangest and most experimental work**—and therefore the least commercial. Something only **a writer in a state**

of grace can allow himself (with the support and trust, of course, of a publisher willing to turn a deaf ear to the demands of the publishing market).

The Blue Whale

In *The Blue Whale*, there is no plot. It's a succession of fragments: some span several pages, others just a few lines or words. All are held together by eerie scenes and by **an authoritative, omnipresent voice** that addresses us directly: "I am reading you. Today is the first day of your life. You are going to become a blue whale. Terrible, enormous. Beautiful. Today the game begins" it tells us.

And then the commands start: spend a night watching psychedelic horror videos, pick up a razor blade and cut your arms, prick your hand with a pin over and over... and so on through **fifty challenges**, each more disturbing than the last. It functions as a kind of handbook for **disconnecting from reality**—just like the **macabre game that went viral among teenagers worldwide in 2017** and ended with the suicide of several of them. One of its creators, a 22-year-old Russian man, was **sentenced to three years in prison**. He claimed that his goal was to "**cleanse society**."

The Blue Whale is based on the macabre viral game that drove teenagers across the world to

Raúl Quinto draws inspiration from the unsettling Blue Whale Challenge to **drill horrors into our minds—horrors taken from everyday life**. Each trial becomes a chapter and a pretext to illuminate

the darkest corners of the human condition. Always **with a touch of lyricism and a frenetic rhythm**, the author weaves "a display of atrocities," as **Mariana Enriquez** writes on the back cover, blending myths and urban legends that once seemed real with true stories that we wish had remained legends.

These latter ones are the most chilling. Over 200 pages, the book revisits cases such as the **Utoya Island massacre** carried out by **Anders Breivik**; the sinister story of **Adolfo Constanzo**—the drug trafficker who punished his enemies with witchcraft rituals; or **Josef Fritzl**, the man who locked his daughter in his basement, raped her, and fathered seven children with her over the 24 years she was held captive.

The Limits of Truth

And yet, the most terrifying aspect of *The Blue Whale* is the idea Raúl Quinto hints at: how internet forums and social media, which once merely opened the door to monsters that remained on the threshold of fiction, have now become machines capable of **turning any lie into truth**. All it takes is to repeat it and spread it until it takes hold and begins to affect reality. This is called **hyperstition**.

Raúl Quinto drags us to a dark frontier on a harrowing journey through violence, horror, and madness.

One example: **Pizzagate**. According to the legend, in the basement of an American restaurant there was a satanic cult that raped and murdered children. It was a conspiracy theory. But Edgar Maddison Welch, 28 years old—like so many millions of others—believed it. So he traveled to North Carolina, showed up at the place armed with an assault rifle and a pistol, and opened fire. **A fake story turned into real violence.**

“Everything is a lie and everything can be true,” we read. **“Fiction is always real. Or it makes itself real.”** And that is where we find ourselves: installed in a gray zone, a malleable space where facts mean nothing. To the very edges of that dark frontier, the author drags us on a **harrowing journey through violence, horror, and madness**. And when it’s over, one can only hope that Raúl Quinto will keep entangling himself—and complicating his life.

This article is adapted and translated from an original piece published by La Sexta. You can read the full article (in Spanish) [here](#).