

The Catch

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Hope

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Hope

Fish run in our veins, but they're slipping from our hands.
Was a time we couldn't drop a hook without pulling up cod,
and sardines came in by the boatload. We learned to take more
and the fish learned to be eaten. Thousands of flashing silver bodies,
schooling, turning with one mind into our nets, then cascading
into the belly of the ship where they shuddered
as shovelful of salt hit them, suffocated
under the crushing weight of their brethren.
Was a time you could walk the length of Water Street,
dock to dock and never step on land. The fish ran
and the factories with them, night and day—we thought
it would go on forever. There's only dogfish and urchins left.
They're harvesting the sea weed itself and harnessing the tides.
My son moved to Millinocket to find work in the mills.
Our family don't go inland. When my granddaughter was born,
I named this boat for her. She's got the sea in her veins,
went off to school, but spent summers here with me.
She's got her sights set on an old Gaff schooner,
to start up a whale watch business. She knows them
by name, as if properly introduced. Instead of thar she blows,
it's ooh's and ahh's, a round of applause, snapping cameras
instead of nets and harpoons.