

## MICHAEL WATERS

### *The Catfish*

Once I hauled a catfish home from the river  
and felt its cold heart beating  
against my ribcage, its  
green blanket of moss  
slipping, scale by scale, back into the earth.

The sun blazed off each perfect  
sequin stitched to the fish  
and death became simple:  
a falling into earth  
accompanied by a wilderness of flame.

But that catfish was bigger than my arm  
when it leapt onto the lawn.  
The red gills opened and closed,  
brilliant stigmata.

I gathered the catfish full-length beneath me  
and pressed it hard against my chest,  
until its deep black river chill  
beat clear back to my brain,

until that miraculous catfish was still.