

## Heart of the Garfish · *Kathy Callaway*

One thing you don't talk about in Minnesota  
is the meaning of water. You can say  
what a lake did to you, or  
what you got away with in spite of it,  
solving that equation where one whole side  
equals zero. It's done over beers, at night,  
safe from the gravity that keeps us  
stupified and turning during the day.  
A lake's the lowest thing around,  
filling up all the best hiding places.

Our houses keep their backs to it.  
We drift down anyway, push out in our  
thin ribbed boats, oars beating away  
at the surface. We know that underneath is  
freedom from the body. It's why we're here.  
We push bait on like penitents for the garfish,  
because they never die, because we're  
full of love. The shoreline turns hourly—  
our local zodiac, shapes we live by  
when we're out of this.

So when someone goes under we can guess  
what he's got: the bottoms of our boats  
and things overboard, shouts and blear faces,  
innertubes, apologies, all we have. He'll have  
the lifesaver of the sun wholly dissolving,  
and years of regrets, like two stones tapping  
under water. We'll wrap him in white, for everyone.  
He's everybody's. That's why we're back the next day  
rocking over water, jamming worms on hooks *kyrie eleison*,  
pulling the living teeth out of the lake.