



River Jubilee

After the spring rains' glut and drain—
the adults drove to the river with nets
and buckets tethered to pick-up beds.

At the docks they peeled off their socks,
unbuckled shoes. The men rolled up dungarees
and sleeves over the knobs of elbows and knees.

Women gathered dress hems into knots
above calves to keep their shifts from sipping
the current. Nothing to hurry: the fish

straggled in the shallows, coal-dust
catfish, striped bass, and the glass
of sunfish along the bank. A convergence—

men and women came twisting down woods-
trails from the bluff until river mud sucked
their feet. Nets swooshed over fish-bodies,

they'd twitch and writhe until slapped
into buckets, and still more, flip-flopping
in the shallows. The wet, mouthy odor

of water, river-grit spangling ankles. The adults
crooned *I'll be damned's*, as they met the flesh
shouldered up on the waters.