

A JOURNAL OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA  
WESTVIEW



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Volume 26  
Issue 1 *Spring/Summer*

Article 20

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6-15-2007

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### Recommended Citation

Hattrup, Carol A. (2007) "Speaking with the Fish at Boston Aquarium - Before Scuba Lessons," *Westview*: Vol. 26 : Iss. 1 , Article 20.  
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol26/iss1/20>

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# Speaking with the Fish at Boston Aquarium — Before Scuba Lessons

by Jane A. Banks

Why do I stand outside  
your aquarium  
tank walls  
when I could be  
breathing underwater  
like a living miracle  
among 3,000 strong,  
circling in your dark  
rising cylinder,  
searching for that elusive out—  
out there, you know, it will still be nighttime.

Can the turtle read the graffiti  
on his own shell?  
Does that ugly fish know he is?  
He wouldn't mind  
if I climbed in  
that sandy bed, curled up as  
still  
as the rock  
turns-into-fish as it moves; the audience  
cries out collectively:  
It was a creature after all.

Last call  
for contemplating penguins  
was hours ago. I'm ready  
to dive in, float  
in a fetus-like ball,  
warm and lovely as a fluid cell,  
white in your ink-black world.

I will be pulled in your wake  
as you swim for sea,  
adapt to salt  
water waving us toward those wide  
steaming cracks in the crust,  
and as we pass together through the ocean floor  
I will think: silent, the fish understand me.



*Photo courtesy New England Aquarium*

