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Coil

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Coil

These hands, crooked by the icy wind,
hold two fistfuls of smelt.
Steaming, hardening as they freeze.
Each pulled from the five gallons
of Lake Michigan, where the smelt stream,
circling, towards some point up river,
unbroken, the pupil of an eye.

I watched the net disappear
as the tow line rubbed the hand,
out where the weighted edge
plunked the water like a skipping stone.
Habit coiled the line back through the fist,
the net jumped sideways as fish sparked
beneath the skein. The fist raised
the gnarl of the twitching net.
This urge, dump them back in the water, but no
—see here they are—in these bent, shaking fists.