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## Loaves and Fishes

Maeghan Demmons  
*Denison University*

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## Loaves and Fishes

Great Grandma worked at the first fish plant  
in Penobscot Bay—started at sixteen.  
She never liked the smell of them cooking  
after that  
hacked from the bone by a machine,  
two halves pink and vulnerable.  
Schools of haddock, mackerel, and herring  
become just plain fish,  
faceless profits fleshed out like the body broken.

Turning fish into sticks, and steaks,  
less into more.  
The weight of scales like values lost.  
Thin white veins of parasites  
pumping through them like arteries  
down the conveyor belt.  
Plucking out these worms like birds  
over-wintering, knocking their heads  
against solid ground over and over,  
hovering above their work,  
separating their minds from their bodies  
and throwing them back to the ocean  
for the gulls.  
One eye to the sky for the first time.

—Maeghan Demmons '01