

ANADRAMOUS REX

I live in salmon country now
but each year my thoughts turn east
then south and I head upstream
looking for the muddy Kentucky,
the verdant Cumberland. There
I know places to hide.

A random radio tune, an old country
something, runs through my blood
like hormones, and I can no more
shake redbud and dogwood out of my head
than a bottom feeder will leap for flies.

Summer nights out here are cool,
but I lie in the dark listenin' for crickets
and watching for lightnin' bugs - not
fireflies - and I sweat just remembering,
wondering if it's fever, hope.

Then one night I meet Rex and his wife.
He's somebody's cousin out here
since '44 to work the shipyards.
Slicks his hair back forties style (although
that war and those shipyards are finished
now), jabs his teeth with a matchstick,
and smiles a stranger at me across the table.
We have nothing in common. No matter.
He knows where the road curves in front
of the old Fraiser store down below
Aunt Mag's house up on the hill.
I tell him I will sleep better knowing
someone from home lives just across the river.
That night I do.

Next morning
I would not have been surprised to read
in the newspaper an account of a Columbia River
salmon striding right on up

out of the Cumberland River fin-in-fin
with one of those legendary walking catfish,
the prodigal's son's sister
 surveying the land she never left.

— Trecia R. Greene

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