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Feeding

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When I dropped bread, they swam
Out of nowhere, the fingerling
Catfish, even darker
Than the pool lying dead calm
Over them and around them.

Those inches of black ribbon
All held white crumbs like eyes
And wavered themselves away
In schools and disappeared
Again into deeper water.

When I dropped more, what came
Was an altogether stranger
Nature of moving slow,
As though the elders knew
They could be slow to swim

But would still be in time
To take what was their own
Into their own gloom
Of soft-barbed opening
And closing jaws and turn

Away in easy curves
With a sinewy suppleness,
Undulant, fading down
To what they might become
Somewhere still more dim.

When I broke the final crust,
What rose to the underface
Of the pond (so slow, it seemed
Too slow to lift a form
That huge from so far under)
Has kept its place in the night
Of my mind since I was four,
Moving its perfectly sure,
Unhurried, widening mouth
Toward whiteness to darken it.