



His mouth a grimace as slit as the belly
of his first catch, his Grandfather
peeling back the sequin skin
with the blade of his knife, laying open
the heart beating, the body dead

observe, he said, *it pumps the soul free*
and he lanced it, placed the heart, alive
in the palm of his hand

this, he said, *is what happens*
when you die, and he baited his hook,
dropped his line
into the water

the boy peered through his won face
bending and glaring on the waves
as he waited for the silver flash
of fish in the murky

underworld

you see, his grandfather said
giving the rod a good tug
on what he thought was a bite
this way we do not die
in vain

Charles Gregory