

My Fossil Fish

by John McDowell

A fossil fresh water herring
holds itself serene
on display in my living room.

Raw to all who care to comment—
I wonder if I'll wake one morning
to find the rock's face empty?

To where will you swim
with your mineral bones
a mere shadow across time?

You hold what you've known
since chipped from a cliff wall
of Utah's Green River basin
where you swam into shale and stayed.

You are far older than anything
I'm ever likely to own, so
if you leave, I want to know

did you find pleasure in your eocene lake
swimming through sunny days
your gills lulled by tropical waters

so when you were forced to give one last
flick of your tail
did you sigh for love
or just the lack of oxygen?

John McDowell is a Canadian poet writing from College Heights, Alberta. In 1983 he won the Banff Centre for the Arts Bliss Carmen poetry award. He has been published in *Dandelion*, *Blue Buffalo*, *Insight*, and *College People*.