

Reidemeister Moves

Last time we fished this spot we spent the day
repeatedly untangling both our lines.

Those fluorocarbon mains don't often fray
or snap, but they keep records of each wind

around their arbors. Memory, it's called.
You see it in the way they spiral through
the guides, each turn reliably recalled,
then recapitulated in full view

and clear down to the surface of the pond.
I think it's when you reel it in too fast
and one loop snags a ferrule, that beyond
the bail it doubles on itself. You cast

again, and all those reams of history
pile on behind a single ampersand.
It's never simple, but the mystery
is not so much the jumble on your hands.

No, it's that experts say each one's the same
and that a sequence of three local moves
will bear this out. They use a suspect name,
"unknot," referring to this thing that proves

impossible to solve. Eventually
I cut the line. I'll save enough to tie
a leader to. A blood knot's mutually
supporting twists, pulled tight, conceal the lie.

They say we're living in the complement
of every knot we face. If they're all one,
then so are we. There's just one ambient
expanse, one skein from which each tale is spun.

I know what theory can't admit, how much
is lost with just one snip. Good riddance, though.
I cut the tag-ends close. There's always such
anachronism. Only thing to know

is how to use it best to catch a fish.
Today I'm throwing braided line with just
a yard or so of mono at the tip.
It makes me wonder why we ever fussed

with all that memory. You can't forget
a thing you never meant to know. Just snell
a hook or tie a Palomar and sit.
A catch you won't recall works just as well.