

**I watch you, beheading**  
**Maggie Burton**  
**Senior Poetry**

**I watch you, beheading**

capelin at the kitchen sink. Dead long before  
you gathered them last summer, they were simply  
tricked by high tide, by fog,  
by the promise of rolling  
back out to spawn in peace,  
never having known you.

I hear them, singing, rehearsing,  
lamenting, performing an ode to the freedom of oceans  
somehow still resonating, settling in my ears for me to live with.

The tendons on the backs of your thumbs startle me  
as you pop off their heads. I am struck by the quick  
parallel lines that appear only to recede once again  
under the thin skin of hands. Did you catch  
my darting eyes? I panic. I imagine you, pulling up  
the base of my skeletal self, your fingers  
tugging at it like a piece of knitting made so tight  
that it would never fit anyway.  
You smile at me, I lose it—if I shut my eyes

I see myself, joining the nautical chorus,  
all of us warbling together as my head plops on top  
of the never-closing mouths of voiceless vertebrates in the kitchen sink.