

Ode to the Electric Fish that Eat Only the Tails of Other Electric Fish,

By Thomas Lux

which regenerate their tails
and also eat only the tails of other electric eels,
presumably smaller, who, in turn, eat ...
Without consulting an ichthyologist — eels
are fish — I defer to biology's genius.
I know little of their numbers
and habitat, other than they are river dwellers.
Guess which river. I have only a note,
a note taken in reading
or fever — I can't tell, from my handwriting, which. All
I know is it seems
sensible, sustainable: no fish dies,
nobody ever gets so hungry he bites off more
than a tail; the sting, the trauma
keeps the bitten fish lean and alert.
The need to hide while regrowing a tail teaches guile.
They'll eat smaller tails for a while.
These eels, these eels themselves are odes!



Born in Northampton, Massachusetts, Thomas Lux's poetry often deals with life's tragedies, but usually employs an ironic humor. He published numerous books of poetry including *Split Horizon*, which won the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award. Lux taught at Sarah Lawrence College.