

The Endeavor

He whittles fish from bars of soap
and leaves them floating in a tub
of water. Puffers, platies, look-
downs. Sergeant-majors, anglers, bass.

Beneath the table, flakes like snow
accumulate in slippery mounds.
In time the fish begin to melt.
The washing tub fills up with milk

it seems, as water wears away
the scales, dissolves the imbricate
details the carver, careful, shaved;
And guppies, fan-tails, bluegill, koi

turn once again to soap: the slivers
forgotten by bathers, bones that float
to mark endeavor. Soap and fish
belong in water. It's where they make

their home the carver knows, and so
he lets them go without remorse.
Remoras, carp, and ivory cod.
The scrod and tangs and triggerfish.