

Two Poems

by Claude Wilkinson

Auspice

On just another day when
I already felt like shit,
through the gray drizzle, I saw
on my neighbor's magnolia
some glad little warbler
choosing the wife of his dreams,
plying her favors with a constant nectar
of insects until I thought of two girls—
either of whom maybe I should've married—
one of them long dead
and the other one now dying.

Yet there was the tide of vetch
that I had let take the yard again
this spring, and also my fears
of any number of other things
over which we might've quarreled
to no end, such as my forgetting
to bring flowers home often enough,
her calling my poems "cute,"
or I wanting us to fly
to Cape Cod for the summer,
but she preferring Pine Bluff.

Remembering My Mother Cleaning Fish

How ordinary they became
in her leeching of their numb,
freshwater smell, the last
of their rainbow sheen.
Translucent scales flicked like alms
at her feet, she would then
slit the swell of their bellies
clean through to what could be
any ruffle of crimson things.

Opening a fat bullhead once,
and knowing the Bible
the way she did, my mother
more than likely thought of Jonah
when she found another whole fish inside—
in some spots above its gills
and next to fins, still as clear
as new flame, though lower,
already tinged with the rich gold
of decay—gone just long enough
to learn how infinity feels.

