

David Rivard

Pilgrim Lake

(for John Logan, 1923-87)

Now you are just a wavering, shy figure projected at no one's wall.

Can you recall you sang? Even shrunk
within the gabardine of an exasperated scholar.
And the song wore the face of a man caught hovering
between dismay & wry amusement,
behind taped bifocals,
between sorrowing amusement & merciless shame, someone
trying to relate to you everything he knew about being reborn.

And even if one day each of us will be nailed to earth,
I can't say the nail will prevent us from being reborn.

Now that you have a wider perspective,
does this fen, flooded sedges with spear-long cattails,
still seem to stand for desire & guilt?
Do the dogs, barking, closing, in a nearby clump of birch,
still warn against rest?

I stood once under the Ciniplex marquee at Sutter & Van Ness,
waiting for you to limp up
smiling the lopped, all-purpose grin of a stroke victim.
Boulevard & stereo shops & wholesalers of rattan & radials
and all the shoppers levitating as fog
blew in thicker & thicker around us in the late afternoon.

I don't know if fog doesn't corrode the nails ultimately,
all of us left floating but dispossessed of all our fears.

But I knew you, and the mist —
descendent now, over this duck-flecked pond
soon to become a temporary, portable screen.

On it a flickering figure, a little shy perhaps, & clearly amazed.