

Richard Wilbur

(1921-?)

Marginalia (1956)

Things concentrate at the edges; the pond-surface
Is bourne to fish and man and it is spread
In textile scum and damask light, on which
The lily-pads are set; and there are also
Inlaid ruddy twigs, becalmed pine-leaves,
Air-baubles, and the chain mail of froth.

Descending into sleep (as when the night-lift
Falls past a brilliant floor), we glimpse a sublime
Decor and hear, perhaps, a complete music,
But this evades us, as in the night meadows
The crickets' million roundsong dies away
From all advances, rising in every distance.

Our riches are centrifugal; men compose
Daily, unwittingly, their final dreams,
And those are our own voices whose remote
Consummate chorus rides on the whirlpool's rim,
Past which we flog our sails, toward which we drift,
Plying our trades, in hopes of a good drowning.