

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.