

**GARY LARK**  
Wells  
Creek Run

Dawn not yet come,  
father and me in his work truck  
making for the lower river.  
Father smells of coffee and tobacco  
though he's not smoking,  
the heater pumping on our feet,  
a muzzy light starts in the trees  
and the river comes to us  
curling around the hills  
as if there was nothing  
before the living water  
and the trout upon its wet nerve.

Over half way there  
we meet Sonny and Arlene's Café.  
There's steam and smoke,  
loggers and fishermen  
rubbing the air with words,  
our feet on straight grain fir  
cut from the first hundred feet  
of a three-hundred-year-old tree  
fifty years ago.  
I feel the spring in the oiled planks  
when we walk to a table  
and order sausage, eggs and potatoes.

We pull up at the Wells Creek bridge  
and wrestle the aluminum boat  
from the top of Sonny's station wagon.  
We slide it down the creek spill  
to the ever smooth river.  
Motor and tackle and then we're moving  
out into a mirror of maple trees  
and grass and the sleeping house  
on the far side. I wonder about it,  
not seeing a road or bridge  
or even a boat. Maybe it sprouted there  
like a mushroom.  
The troll wake-lines disappear  
among the rocks and shadows.  
Sonny smokes Chesterfields  
and fidgets, checking his line,  
running the motor and talking  
about fishing the bay down-river  
when he was young.  
The sun comes through a gap ahead of us.

The chug-purr of the Evinrude,  
the bobbing rhythm of spinners,  
the suspended life before,  
the dangling life after,  
we are held in a separate universe,  
this river air.

**Gary Lark's** work includes *River of Solace*, Editor's Choice Chapbook Award from *Turtle Island Quarterly* (Flowstone Press, 2016); *In the House of Memory* (BatCat Press, 2016); *Without a Map* (Wellstone Press, 2013); *Getting By*, winner of the Holland Prize (Logan House Press, 2009); and three other chapbooks. His work has appeared in *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *the Sun*, *Poet Lore*, and *ZYZZYVA*.

**ED PENNIMAN**

*Elkhorn Slough Nocturne*, 2017  
Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST