

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