

# Lola Tostevin / TILDEN LAKE

i

The frozen frame holds  
the lake still

small tilde on the horizon

where a canoe floats  
and the air has no weight.

A lure poised over  
the visored head of a fish.

(Any utopian dimension to these images  
is solely an ethic of reading. Everything here is dialectical.  
The frozen frames contradict the frames that keep moving.)

ii

Images set into motion again.  
Like stumbling on a nest sheltering  
four speckled eggs for the first time.

Twigs, blades and leaves molded to a bird's  
belly pressing against the nest walls. Shaped  
and reshaped by each palpitation.

(Or is it the other way around?)  
Does the body adapt to forms around it?  
To fossilized shells and bone fragments.  
Bits of wood and teeth asleep.

One perfect lithocardite carried deep inside  
a pocket. Pulse trapped in stone.

iii

(How did these prairie shots get in here?)

Space is nowhere there. Infinity  
always on the move. Towards tilling,  
towards harvesting. All that space  
in need of extension.

The forest belongs to the past.  
To the warp and weft of lichens and mosses.

(Have you dreamed of a young forest?)

Even dew drops drop full circle in this northern  
geometry where the wind cuts corners and carves  
a topography of roots laid bare. Twists  
them tight as phenomenological observations.

Fifty frogs plus fifty frogs  
makes one perfect equation.

iv

Lens scans the scummy pond.

(Alliteration happens naturally here,  
the evergreens everlasting. Cloud-clot.)

Follows an invisible presence  
to the island where waves rush.

Tracks loon's long avian bones  
as they glide into curve. Baby loon riding  
piggyback. A yodel, a slap on water  
hoop hoop to the other side.

This must be the intimate immensity  
philosophers and poets write about.

Solitude and diffused light.

v

Days when only images speak.

Hardly two words worth hearing except  
a scuffling in the brush and the hush  
of trout lilies swimming the forest floor.  
Belly up their yellow bells.

Hardly a sibilant among the warblers  
or the black-garbed woodpecker pickaxing  
the parchment bark of *bouleau blanc*  
*bouleau blanc*.

Except for snake from under  
a rock. Red panic in a blink. Shriek!

All night, bulrushes rushing  
the stooped moon.

vi

The past takes on a cartoon quality  
within these accelerated frames.  
Fanciful brackets.

(Between present and future.)

Two-dimensional slices where space-time's  
track follows a child following a caravan  
of ants down a garden path. Their prattle  
the thoughts of a multitude.

Steady hum.  
Parched voice of a crow.  
Gilded tunic.  
Midas touch.

Over there young Ishmael  
eye to eye with a beached walleye.

vii

In this light, blue  
is as true as the foliage  
of raven's wing.

Blue makes the mouth water  
cold blue in June. Bloodsucker ankles shackled  
under the *fauve* green of Elsinore.

The lake slick and pitch-dark,  
never pale cerulean swimming.

Except for a *libellule* lull  
moving the very depths.

(Oh, *barcarole barque*.)

viii

Where the dark lake soughs, marsh  
mouth frog, O little dinosaur  
its croak an ancient genre.

Throbs and swells in the purple haze  
where beaver rears its pompous head  
with Thoreau certainty.

(Tho the lake is not earth's eye  
here, the landscape sees itself mainly through the eyes  
of a child, where it is destined to become much smaller.)

Another yodel and a slap  
delivers the obvious rhyme.

Frog heads for the sun  
legs dangling.

ix

The stone wall built with the determination  
of a turtle between the house and the lake. Heroic.  
(Wall, counsel of resistance  
braces itself as snow falls slant and obliterates all forms.)

The house sheds its light, fluent and interfused,  
a negative of its summer counterpart.

The lake takes on a concrete meaning.

A reversal of dimension and perspective  
as the landscape rewrites itself.

The sudden realization that it hardly  
matters if any of this existed.

(Exaggeration is the surest sign.  
It avoids the unfortunate habit of reduction  
caused by seasons.)

x

In rewind, the house perched above  
the stone foundation moves in both directions.  
Past dwelling a dwelling for the past.

The blank screen glistens. Firefly vigil  
or interstellar dust.

The constant here is change.  
The constant here is everything stays the same.

Stars collapse. Their luminous shards ride  
the waves, scatter their elements: iron, gold,  
mercury in the blood. The stuff of generations.

These are not metaphors: we of the north are,  
literally, stardust.