

Pondlife (a diary of aging)

Philip Porter

After Al Alvarez

It was a kid's pond,
a laughing, running,
jump-in pond. A pond
to piss in, a pond
to scare the swans in.
It's changed its colour now, more
sombre—suburban, a wine dark
pond that massages stringy
muscles into life—balms cracks
and breaks from child-hood games
in bones now hardly worthy of the name.
The swans sneer at my decrepitude my
flailing ineptitude at staying afloat.
Their yellow stone-eyes fix on me, their wing-
tips send messages in ripples to entice
me out, out to the deep.

“If you don’t
drown, old thing, I’ll hold
you under until you do.
We have a reputation
you know.”

I know, I know you hide behind
the beauty myth, the bent-necked grace
of children’s stories, parables
against ugliness.

I’ll still go in and flap about,
do my twenty metres under
the watch of youthful life-guards,
but keep my eye on the fluttering
white light of stone-eyed swans lassoing
souls in need of renewal
with the thin black rim of an iris.