

***J.D. Smith***

**Lament for the Departed Muses**

Once Elton John mourned Marilyn Monroe  
And asked a seal for wisdom. (Was he high?)  
But that was lots of years and songs ago.  
The rocket man long absent from the sky,  
Sir Elton finds his fervor cushioned by  
A husband and a spare—and ample—tire.  
The circle of his life now filled with pie,  
How did contentment take the place of fire?

What turning rendered Clapton's hand so slow  
Acoustic "Layla" sounds like but a sigh,  
While Johnny Lydon joined the status quo  
As paid endorser, snarl to lullabye?  
How did Mark Knopfler find his well gone dry  
And, *On Every Street*, his straits no longer dire?  
For these and other voices since grown shy,  
How did contentment take the place of fire?

What truth did Jimi, Jim and Janis know,  
Kurt have to pull a trigger to apply?  
Did they escape the fate of oldies show  
At county fairs and comebacks gone awry,  
Less songs to play than long-time trade to ply,  
The fuel of youth but cinders on a pyre?  
No one would ever say, "Oh yeah, that guy."  
How did contentment take the place of fire?"

So Prince, where did your first funk's fury fly?  
To what condition do you now aspire?  
Though we may never know just when or why,  
How did contentment take the place of fire?

**In Fact**

*Beneath it all, desire of oblivion runs.  
—Philip Larkin*

The longing for oblivion  
Is never satisfied.

Should such nullity descend,  
The mind that would be pleased

Has vanished with its appetites,  
Once met by food or love.

This want, and thoughts of it, imply  
Its failure to be met

So that what must be settled for  
As age or pills take hold

Is languid expectation, yet  
Ensnared in consciousness.

J.D. Smith

### **Approaching Praise**

A patch of bark twitches, then  
bursts into owl-flight.

A leaf like other jungle leaves  
stirs and goes on implicit legs

as, in a fogged mirror,  
a magnified peach pit emerges  
from a chin drawn taut for shaving.