

At Nightfall / Jon Silkin

Night-fall unfastens the door, and the font
baptises the raw body; womb
and its flesh pule to each other.

The mother's milk: clear and sweet
dropping from the soft pointed opening.

It's the stars count, and they flee us
inundating their absences
with our terse lives. When we die
we are dead for ever.

It comes clear finally. The Milky Way
vents its glowing hugenesses over
what's not there. The galaxies
pour their milk away.

Nothing's going to last

the clear baptismal water, twice welcome,
like two good hands

like the olive with
its stone of oil.

Shadowing / Jon Silkin

Upon one straight leg each steps up-hill and burgeons
through a year's ring;
their leafs breathe.

'Clothes.' No, not clothes.

Arboreal men, shadowed
by leaves, so

shadowing us
we sliced our flesh from their shades

that cut away, the trees lie
acquainted with the shadows of death:
for which there are words
and no language.

Give me your branches: the woodsman
handles their deaths: a blade and its haft.

Then us. Earth washes away. Leaf,
leaf leaf

like treeless birds

Painting / Peter Wild

You left us with the frog pond
and instructions to feed the horse meat
two times a week, merely to sit
if necessary, showing someone was there.
each night I sat under the dried tamarisks,
starved men in raincoats, drinking my one beer,
watching the lightning form and dehisce
along the granite tops of the Catalinas, walked
through the rakes and chained carts,
the toppled, unsurprised statuary, checking
the studio, the side gate by the Mormon church, imagining
in that house put together from everywhere
some cousin mad with a desire she didn't understand
romping naked in the attic, her eyes,
as in the movies, following me through the slits,
while you sat on vacation in
the flagstone lodge on the North Rim
watching your husband before sunset
peer out wide-eyed over his moustache
through the medieval crenellations,