

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,

go over to his corner to paint. when I stooped
with the soggy meat I put each chunk
rolled up and stuck along the sides as you suggested,
stepped back to let the hideous turtles glide
out of the rushes, the last brown clouds on the water,
to swallow the flesh from the world of air,
and once getting brave put a ball of it
on the string you left, dangled it
over the place where a frog bigger
than my foot emerged, snapped it away
 like a monster grabbing the
heart of a virgin from a painting,
just like you said.

Barn Fires / Peter Wild

Summers we lay awake above the sweep of the pastures
while the worms worked through the dry soil,
voices climbing chamber by chamber into the old wood
of the neighbors' barns, until they spurted
from a peak, a tuft of owl feathers
 with nowhere to go but the sky,
and below at their confirmations the horses looked up,
drew their lips back at the rafters
turning to spirit, dancing with the Saint Elmo's fire
that one sees at last as a promise on a voyage.
but no matter whose it was, we got there too late,
to discover only the jaws of a tedder glowing red in a corner
among the ashes and bones, the blowing duff, the boulders
of the foundation taking their time cracking open,
just as the firemen arrived clinging to their yellow ladders
through the forest, stood in their uniforms lined up,
though next morning like prophets we had lived through our sadness,
waking to the new cows coming toward us between the hills one by one,
the women having laid out blueberry pies and cheese
on the boards, the fresh timbers leaping into place
 before our hands as we moved them,
having the idea of it all the while in our heads.