

1977

# Shadowing

Jon Silkin

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## 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,