

## Some with Shadows

*Dixie Partridge*

A day of long-walked silences,  
waterless red gullies and hard-rock  
plateaus. We've met few on the trails  
this summer past my father's dying.  
Now we drink slowly,  
clay of our tongues softening.  
I lean into a twist of dry cedar,  
strain to remember far-back stories  
of a creature losing its shadow,  
a native taboo against crossing another's shade,  
of slippings between worlds.

Once my father worked as a guide, horse-backing  
through the Hoback wilderness  
where he could tell which canyons  
would bring you to grief.  
His horse saved him twice  
from falls deeper than any return.

When I stand, bones feel thin  
over hard ground, empty canteens and wrinkled maps  
become too much to carry.  
Behind us the sun is setting over sandstone.  
Already a sliver-moon cools the sky  
like a wafer rim of ice,

lunar sheen that could be said  
to be cold . . .  
or soothing: solace for the worn  
bewilderments of the living, a vanishing point  
before we slip to the myth of dreams.

All day, the only human things we touched  
were each other's shadows, sizing themselves  
in chameleon significance.  
What looks like an owl in the darkening  
lands in a scrub pine, turns to bark.