



dark

bill jungels

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An introduction to a young man and his work

This book of photos and poems was created by a 29 year old in 1968, a year possibly more fraught with loss and impetus to change than 2020, though we are not done with it yet.

Having made the book he knew it was unpublishable. He had just needed to work out his ideas about possible relationships between the obsessive parts of his brain/body that made poems and the parts that made images. Who would publish a book by an all but unknown that was full of expensive to reproduce photos, much less reproduce them well? Even Wright Morris, for example, had difficulty publishing his photo/text books.

And so he sent the book to Bartelby's Dead Letter Office.

Fifty two years later I am still probably in more ways than I realize that young man. But different, though sometimes I wish I still had his ear for the music of words and his playfulness. Occasionally I cringe a little at his takes on race and gender (a certain anxiety and exotification in both cases). But I usually like part of what he made of it in spite of all that. This occurred to me when I dug it out and dug in after decades of forgetfulness.

And so in this new world where we have a sophisticated production facility on our desk I decided to resurrect it and share it electronically at least with friends. A tedious task in many ways. Old negatives gone missing. Surviving prints each needing hours, sometimes whole days of electronic scrubbing and tonal adjustment after scanning. In the process I was rewarded with an intimacy with each of the images and saw things in them I never saw before and that I don't expect you will see. Unlike James Joyce who suggested you spend as much time with his books as he spent writing them I can't insist you spend long hours gazing at my images!

In spite of changes I've undergone I decided not to try to rewrite anything or substitute more recent images. I discarded a couple photographs not because of their content but because of their mediocrity and their redundancy.

The photos, most of which were taken in very dark places with long exposures necessitated, are a polar opposite to today's hyper sharp and color (over) saturated digital images we are now used to. Compensating for low light by "pushing" the emulsions sensitivity (by longer times in the developer) added grain and the long exposure time for hand held shots reduced sharpness. Take a look at Robert Frank's "The Americans" to get a sense of the aesthetic I was embracing, and still do in some of my work. I didn't try to change any of this in the digital images.

When I couldn't stop myself from responding to something in the poems and starting a little dialogue with the 29 year old I did it by the addition of a little haiku-like or tanka-like piece.

The problems in the electronic versions are manifold. First there is the issue of creating a very large PDF file in order to preserve quality in the photos. I may have to distribute a version for 27 inch "retinal" monitors that can only be practically distributed on disk. At the same time I will prepare a version that I hope will be viewable with some preservation of quality on retinal pads. Cell phone viewing won't be possible.

Some day I would like to see a print version, but I doubt that it will ever happen.

I hope that people will enjoy opening this time capsule. Certainly for those of us who lived through it, 1968 with its assassinations, Black Power and FBI persecution of Black Panther leaders has resonance in this year of the pandemic, autocratic rule and Black Lives Matter. Perhaps some of the poems and images will encourage some synapses for these connections.

Notes on relationship to original manuscript

The original was a looseleaf binder with facing pages inserted into old style fully transparent sheets that had a black sheet between the back to back inserted items. In order to preserve the sometimes close relationships between poem and photo in the digital version facing pages have been turned into a single wide page.

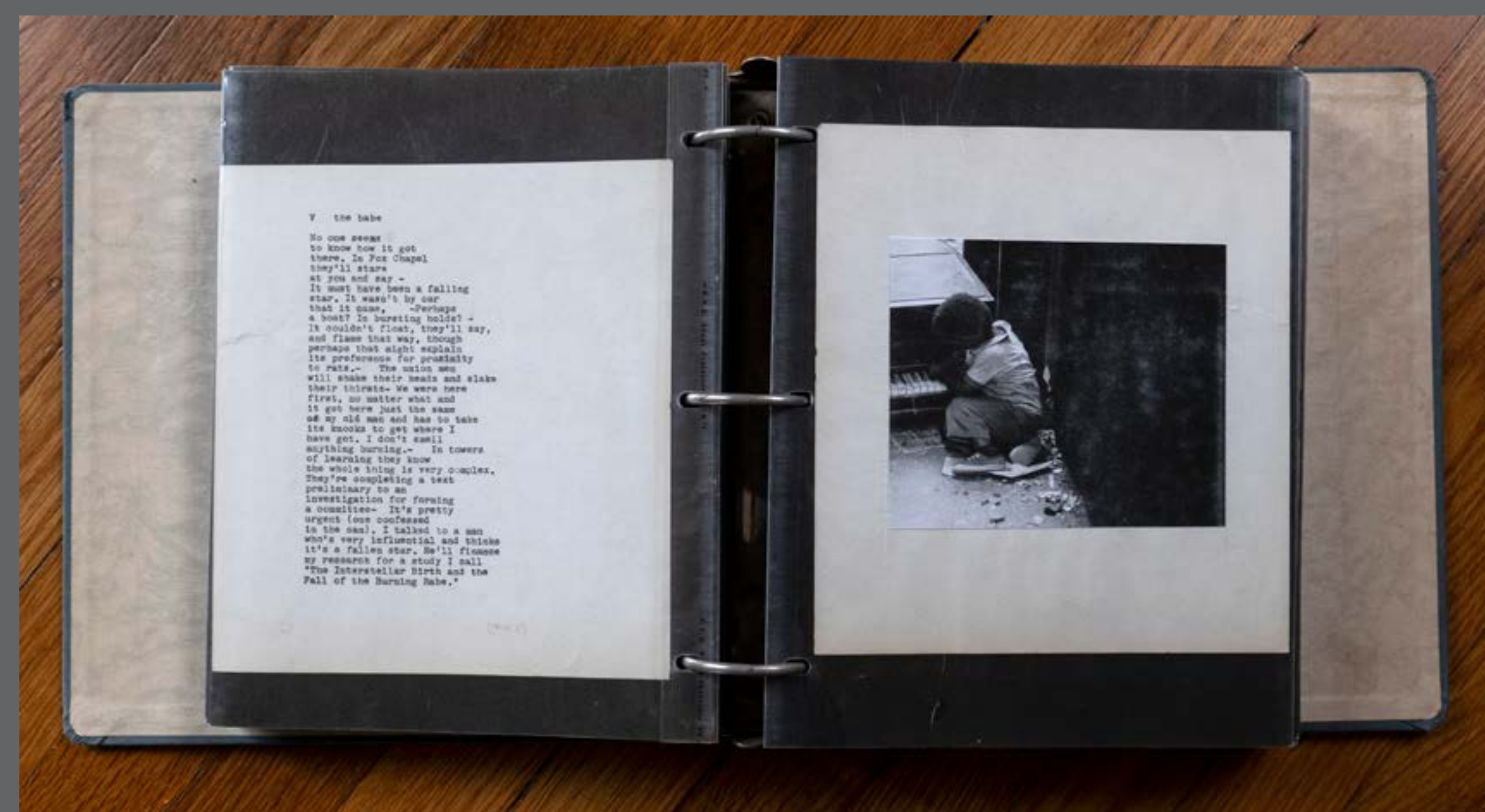
Besides the elimination of a few redundant photos, a couple of photos have been rearranged. In the original, of course, no photo could spread across the two facing pages. I have taken advantage a couple of times of the ability to do that here where the two facing pages have been combined into one.

Although I have tried to make the digitized photos close to the original prints (or negatives) which were scanned, there are some inevitable differences. In some cases I have been able to bring out tonal separations that are not so visible in the prints that were scanned, In other cases I was not able to preserve some details in the highlights.

The backcover photo collage is new.

The typewritten pages of the poems have been left exactly as they were with all their signs of aging. This will remind you that you are looking at a time capsule.

An arrow at the bottom of a text page indicates that the poem continues on the next page.



True Confessions

After having “finished” the re-creation and written the preceding I did decide to make two changes to the photographs, one substitution and one addition.

The substitution is on page 30 where I found a stronger photo of our daughter Ruth than the one that had been there. Stronger in the sense of having, I thought, more human content than the one it replaced, which had more geometric structure.

The addition is on page 19. This was among the photos I had prepared to put in the book. Then I realized it wasn't in the original, I don't know why. Since I considered it one of the two strongest images from the series I did of the kids in The Hill district of Pittsburgh I had to include it. Sometimes you have to live with a photo for a long time to come to value it.

DARK

poems and photographs
by william jungels

Sit at the edge
of dusk and watch
things become

 slowly
one, as if all
glowing with an inner
darkness. Outside, the dandelions
hold out longest. They burn
on the black grass as if
something toward the central dark
dragged air through their
tinted petals. Tomorrow
they will look like frill-bones
gone ash-white.

Metallic surfaces, lacquered
wood, cushions with
deep textures, even plastics
straight-edged on radio cases
settle to a stillness
for the eye, are kind
to nerves that dance to a jingle
behind the retina.

Between floor boards and
wall boards, inside
tiny mechanisms and
long lamp poles,
the sealed hollows
will have their say
without a knock.

(more)



Nooks left on book shelves,
pidgeon holes on the old
roll-top desk, the arc down
in the dark of my typewriter where
two by two the characters rest
are ready for the flood
which gradually expands.

Why fight it with
artificial light.
The night rolls in
to my home;
children can begin
to breathe deeply
in their beds, their heads
bob a little with the rhythm,
their bodies float
on deep, clean silences.



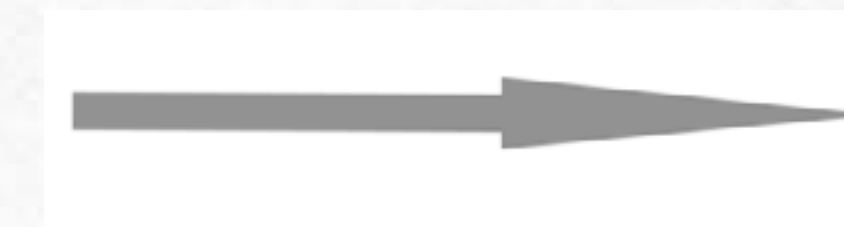
Possibility - single
things, "the sticky leaves,"
Ivan K. called them. Said
they would sustain a man
till he was thirty. I'm twenty-nine,
walked down to the bar tonight
to get some air
and perhaps a beer
and cigarettes. In the dark,
thought of death. Commonplace
enough in the calm pace
of night,
but I was a walking thesis
in search of illustrations
(and so
no poem):
the dark
should be generous; air
become visible, black, more
than a medium, should proffer
some richness. Found myself
crossing the street
to keep in touch
with lights
spilling over from living rooms.
Their oblong scatterings were a ladder
I climbed up the hill. The bar
was empty so only
bought cigarettes
from a mute machine.
The newspaper in a dispenser

clamped to a lampost
was still going over
the same dark things;
large dark headlines
about Kennedy and King.

Stars,
going home, seemed
a possible theme. Looked up
to contemplate old heavens,
the dark between.
You'd freeze
in the ether up there,
but where
find a new heaven,
new earth.

Followed the same way home
till I decided
to take
the old plank stairs
up to our house
on the hill.

(more)



The long steep way was overhung
each side by bushes you made out
from a dim light that tapered over
the top. All the way up branches and
leaves kept handling me, my face
my arms. I didn't know what
might be in the dark to either side
but kept my eyes ahead and tried
to think leaves tender and feminine.
Yet who could check his recoil from
that touch?

I slammed

the lock

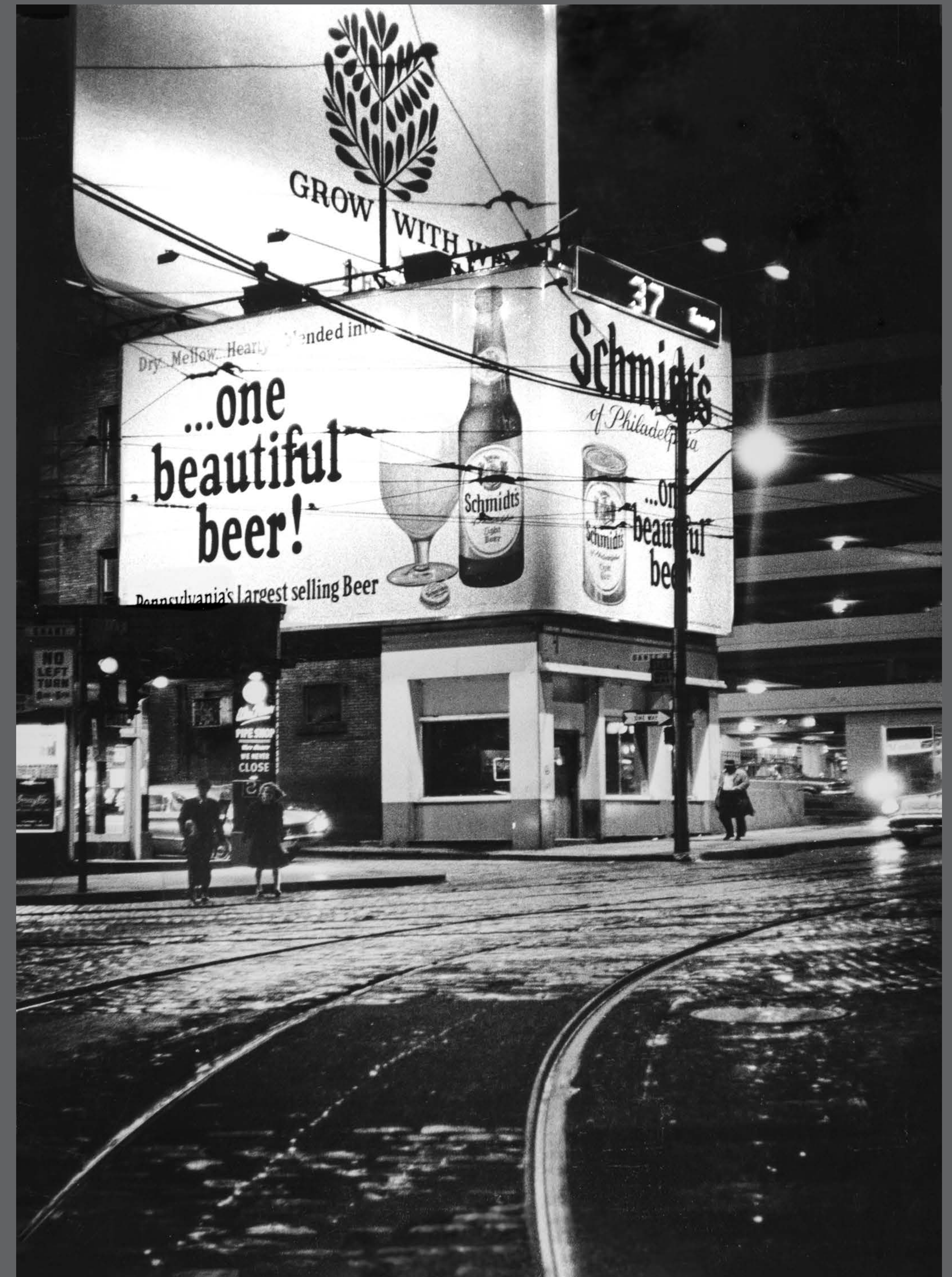
to

on the door

and found

I was exhausted.

I'd been through my single thing
but couldn't match it to any theme
I wanted.





DARK LEAVES

La nature est un temple...

Walking through a frankly metaphorical landscape

I pass the small hunched trees

the grasses down on their knees

and risk the slick of banks to find

a shirt snagged in the stream

its arms waving me back.





They have something to do with violins,
the flicking insects collected
on these two squares of light,
the upper windows of the old farmhouse.
Thousands from the dark countryside,
they strain here toward
the bare bulb that dangles
in the center of the room;
and only the music of their pop
against glass and scrape
over screens hints why;
violins, vi-
olins, why do they insist
on the violins?

And when the man within
closes his book and leaves, flick-
ing out the light, is it
the dark face of
the moon that knows what becomes
of them and their music?

Sitting here I write about what I saw and didn't see in a mirror
(that flips over) through a lens

as usual
the eye took it
in without having to see
I see it now
-but then-
a boy held up a thing a
weed
and eye grabbed
at
not what was held
but at him, no, his
holding it forth
ratherOw. The cat
lands on my lap with claws
outstretched. Eye
grabbed
at that holding forth
and, at just the moment of balance, grasp,
went black.
because just when you are
about to hold
a thing the mirror
flips over and you can't
see there's nothing but black
and you have it
and then flick the light
comes
back the cat has curled
in my lap but the light
which is continuous while I write
now because I don't look
at anything but writing
then
when it comes back
from discontinuity brings
a different thing: the boy is
not gone but gone his
holding forth
the weed perhaps
cracked now in
half in limp
hand to side.
But there is a chemical
memory seems to hold
a thing
and transferred from material
to material
through light in liquids
of a dark place
will give this



(maw)

that purports
 (how the cat's ear twicht)

that holding forth held
 no doubt of then, there
 embraced it but such

is "transformation" we all know
 each thing
 dark edge of itself

are kindled by heightened
 what plants our springing heel
 in places of origin

that renunciation of the boy's
 makes of weeds in a field
 brings many figures into a field
 from which
 the figure of the holding forth
 is held

and yet is it
 is tree

small) and that all
 commune at common
 center
 where dances that gesture
 not otherwise ever known

to mind's touch (the cat
 is perfectly still but for waves on his ribs of deep breathing



While we're here

la nature est
the time
and the materials

and both, believe
it or not,
exist.

The Balinese puppeteer
need not test
shadows

with which he moves
the eyes, the blood
of men. The time

on which he dances
is not a
line made up of tiny dots.

It is a chord
struck on successive
gongs

which fades,
still full,
from his ears.

The materials are not
things to punch each other
about and crumble

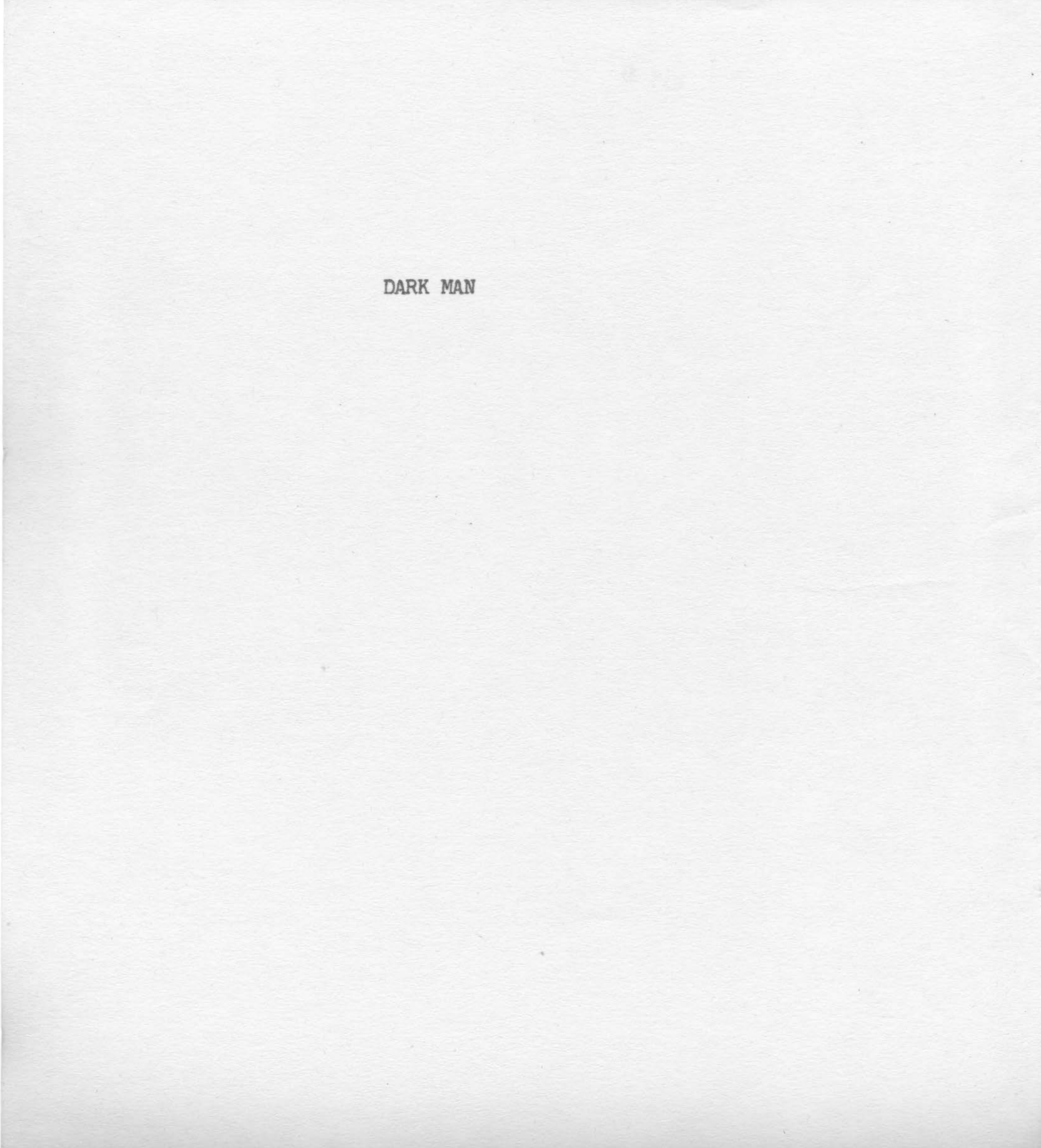
on his human hands,
but shears
to cut from light,

diaphanous
ambience of skin,
paper thin

butterfly-like
burgeoning
forms.







dark man -
what a relief !
so restful-eye and
yet so deep like
a rain
forest.

like certain states of consciousness -
Keats' negative
capability.

or the sort of dream
strains towards a poem
but waking you don't remember.

i meet you walking out of tombs,
slots of light break you
into blossom.

i follow through gangways
and yards
to hear you whistle
you "live in
now" as you
turn to let me have
your face an instant.

in the shadows i can't
make you out.

men are dark.



A black power hand
turned blue in the face?
If so, it hasn't reached
the notice of men who care
for floors and walls, and guard
entrances. They're very relaxed.
One cop even thinks
he's part of the design -
ought to pay a fine
to monsieur Soulages.
But why burden him
with prophetic sense of black
humor or of human sin
or folly or whatever. And
why pick on them. Some
of my best friends are
paid to watch the night, though
most do it for nothing. The truth
of this moment's observation is
very little. Men in the middle
of a mural by Soulages.
The mural looks elegant and
dominant and maybe even
a little angry. The men
are haphazard as men
usually are. They seem
happy.



To get there

we'd have to run
the kids the gauntlet
between the curb
where traffic swerved and
(his, hers, still
waiting for the bus)
two old black faces
which traced, it seemed,
maps of hate:
the skin looked so
slack and sad,
cheeks hollowed
in and chin
pushed
back, Her hand
was something else, smooth
against tan of
the shopping bag, black
dolphin by a backdrop
cardboard sea - She was manacled
by the bag's loop
handles she'd wear
home from there
where she can shop
and serve but not
live. Forgive me,
I was thinking, but
they didn't give a shit
about me. Still, before we
rounded the corner
he proclaimed our emancipation:
"It's like I said
in my love letters..."
As I herded them into the car
I thought my kids might
have the choice

to be free.

Fifty two years and I see
he is what we call **white**
and has loaned her his jacket,
actually white.

2020





She asked, *You black power?*
I thought a moment too long,
then said firmly, *Yes.*

*"A pretty Babe all burning bright
did in the air appear."*

Robert Southwell S.J. 1595

"Burn, baby, burn!"

Burn, child

I

funny, what won't rot
fast will burn,
like hair, quick
with a shiver of flame

listen quickly,
the trees have a hum
like those generator poles
with their strange, brown
clay fruit surrounded
by cyclone fences;
it's similar to cicadas
but whistling within;
your ear might freeze to a limb
if you put it there to hear.

(more)



II

went up on the hill
to inspect the damage
willed by a spasm,
found the expected things:
supermarket shell
charred black
smashed windows
now boarded
back up
rotting things had
burned briefly

crept by an auto parts store
head to the ground
eyes peeping round seeking
among pillars of brick
stacked to the sky like Stonehenge
a baked Ford,
King's cremated bones inside.
Would the wind
through the grille
articulate "the moolehillis
of MISS iss Ippi"?

2020

what burns
will not decay

(more)



Word drunk he said "spasm"
We look back through smoke and hope
that he meant "revolt"

2020



III

like the dwarf star junkies
of centre ave.
burning inward floating
the milky ways
of somnabulist eyes
through the spilled glitter
of refuse between buildings
where the city
lets them
accumulate, energies turning
inward burning
out hands
left a-fumble heads a-
nod while the godhead in the man
stumbles through the stars'
curved chambers
searching release
of act:
impact
against the clots
left by a lot of honky
sole. bring this dog
to heel
she'll eat her own tail
crazy bitch
till she sit still and
what still
decay.

those who will not rot
will burn,
listen:



(msd)



IV

the trees trill
with electric fire
all down the broad avenues
and consume their kindly shade.
there's no place left
for a man to rest
or hide; who would
will dig himself a hole.

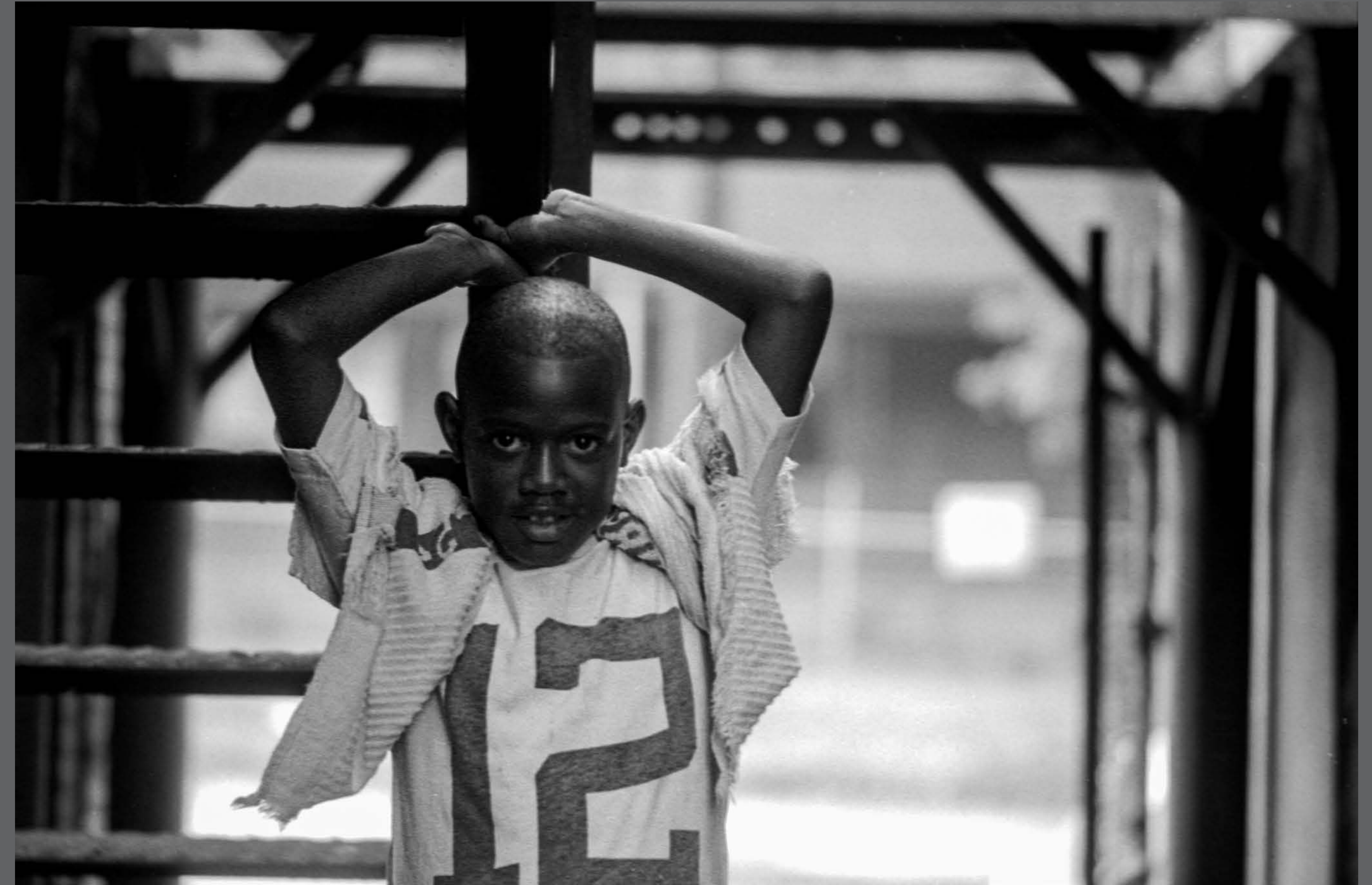
(moe)



V the babe

No one seems
to know how it got
there. In Fox Chapel
they'll stare
at you and say -
It must have been a falling
star. It wasn't by car
that it came, -Perhaps
a boat? In bursting holds? -
It couldn't float, they'll say,
and flame that way, though
perhaps that might explain
its preference for proximity
to rats.- The union men
will shake their heads and slake
their thirsts- We were here
first, no matter what and
it got here just the same
as my old man and has to take
its knocks to get where I
have got. I don't smell
anything burning.- In towers
of learning they know
the whole thing is very complex.
They're completing a text
preliminary to an
investigation for forming
a committee- It's pretty
urgent (one confessed
in the can). I talked to a man
who's very influential and thinks
it's a fallen star. He'll finance
my research for a study I call
"The Interstellar Birth and the
Fall of the Burning Babe."







DARK WOMAN

Monolith.
Center of the myth.
Tower of flesh.
Dark flower.

monolith: single
stone, but never alone,
ripe with my ^{our}
child; yet
apart and obdurate
with disciplines
of grinding life
from stone.

center of the myth:
for those reasons.
and why else
cross the desolation
of self?
where other
arrive than this
other? what circumstance
but to sow seed
upon stone?

tower of flesh
and thick with flesh's
resistance
and its mystery,
memory. cell
set upon cell
recollects becoming
not as itself a thing
but towards
some telos
we cannot yet
articulate.

dark flower, then,
menotropical, swaying
with the moon,
delivering blood
tribute, most under its sway
when exempt:
full as fullest moon
flower
sagging with freight of child,
the moon's,
awaiting deliverance.

"You're having my baby"
hated that possessive pronoun
and damn I did it too.

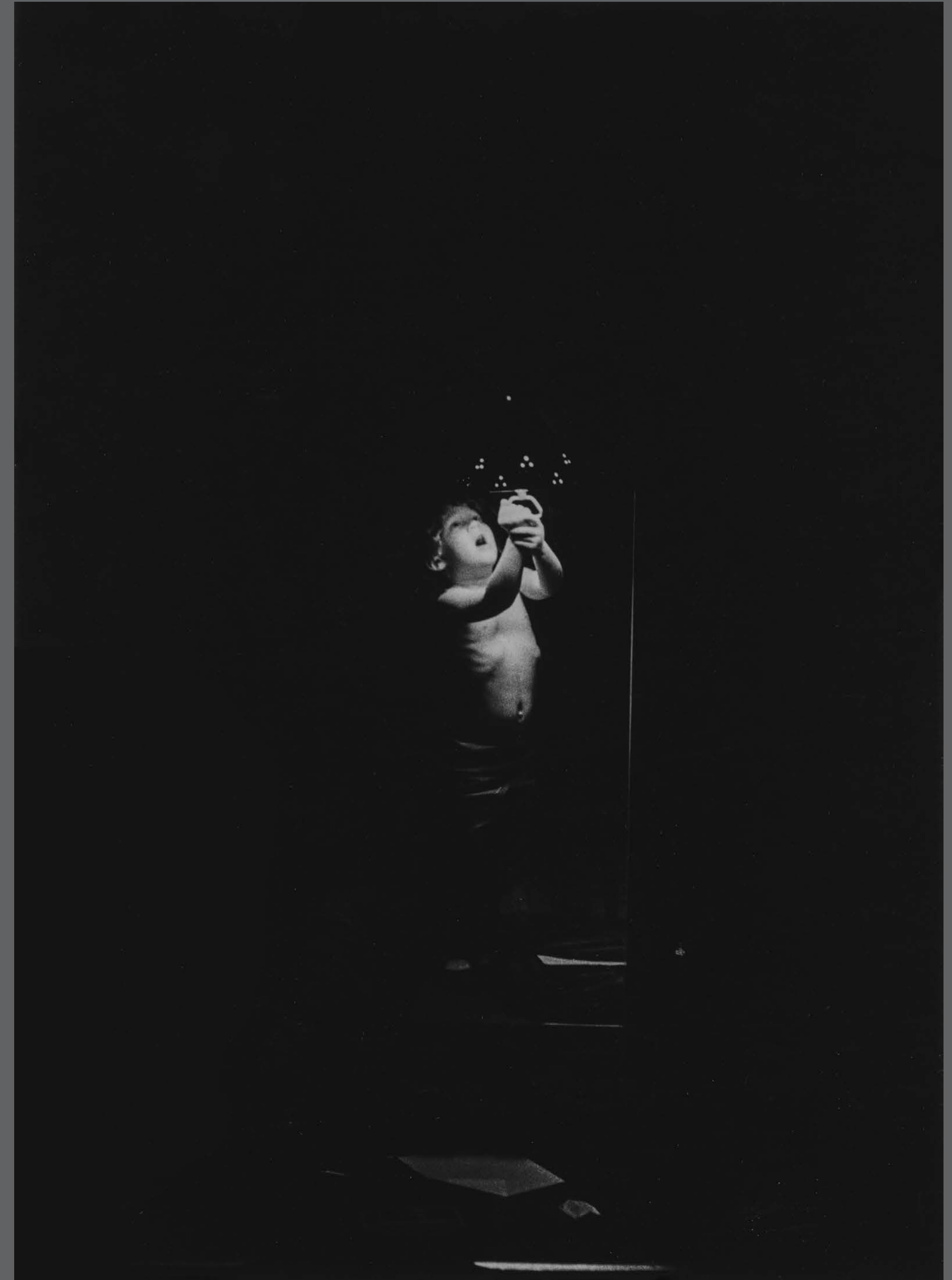
2020



You'd think that time
slicing a new piece
off the moon each night
would leave her
permanently broken.
Time takes and takes
till there's nothing left;
bereft of her
the sky is cold stars
like a virgin's body
that has just expelled
blood and ovum.

Time stands still.

The will that makes things go
again is the moon's.
It grows like a mushroom
or a belly
that has taken the dark
into itself.

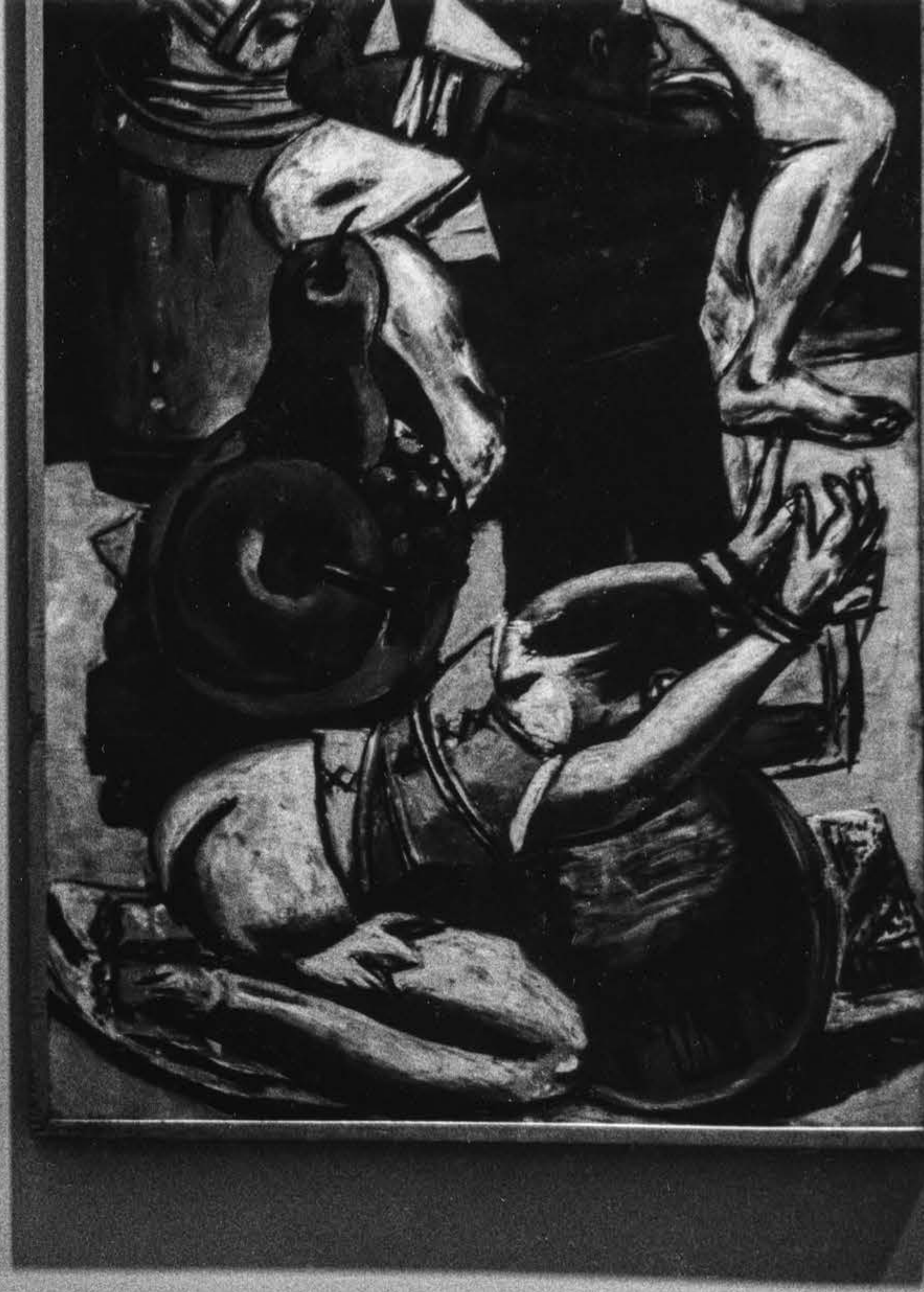




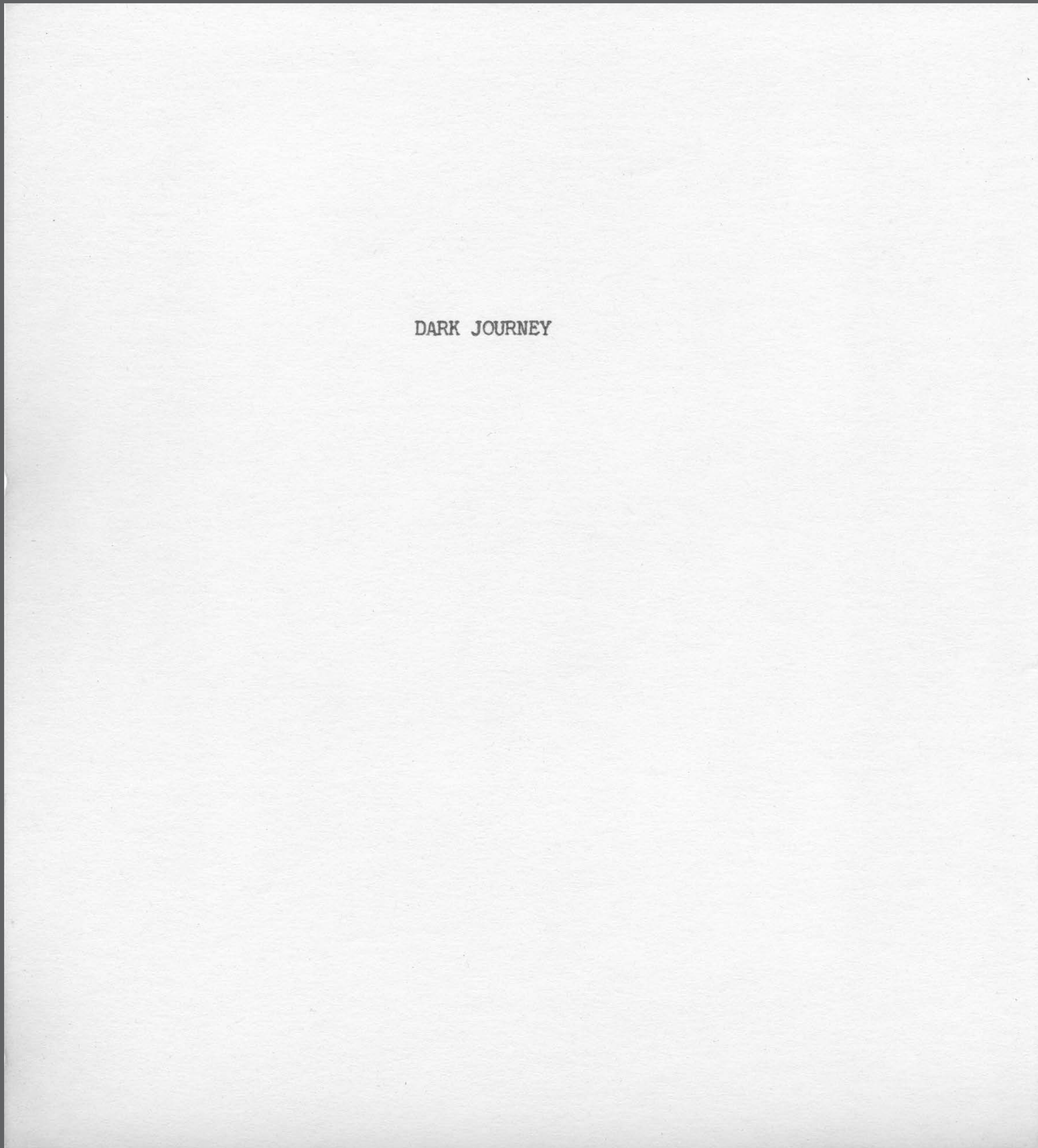












Some scenes
so old
so somberly drunk
with over indulgence
in "the human condition"
(like those old men
you see, cafes in France,
sweating leaning
over a bottle
of vin du table)
so saturated with
something
a little like nostalgia,
but purer,
that human particulars
blur and
things, scenes,
focus to a
face or hand or
thigh of our
corporate becoming.



Small girl, deep shadow, long lines

In the station
edged on the long bench,
curled there
as if tossed there;
silly peanut, unpecked
by birds near the curb there,
outside where taxicabs whip.

The glossed bench boards gleam out
like receding rails
in this dim light;
so quiet
as one of those...what
was a small animal
you find between ties
claimed by the trains.

Funny.
Fist holding head and
feet off the ground
but jacket never unzipped -
she can't be going
and so must be waiting
for a father or some
other. The station's tower's
chimes strike
two notes of some tune
and stop. Birds whirl
a moment, hover,
look like they'll settle
but don't.



O trips to Kresge's,
adoration of plastic bodies.
O penisless male manikins,
staring through glass
at your over-sexed mates,
stared at (through glass) by
adolescent initiates and potbellied
old men.

And terraces of glitter
in jewelers' windows, slashed
to half price since we've lost
our lease (on life? We ogle
engagement gems, spread like a raped body;
and glowing or shining watch faces, stopped
or never started. And we hover a hand
to darken our faces, interposing on the glass.)

Movie marquees where they are changing
the heavy steel letters at the top
of a ladder, where the clang reverberates
as all our alphabet is dropped before us.

Argus Automatic Eyes which regard us
from drug stores.

Man alone on a wooden bench
in the Greyhound bus station.





Two tenderesses
dark
in the darkness
that tenders
intimacy

caught

in conditioned reflections
of light
that lightens
the conduct
of touch

with a worn
ring
of ritual

unless
worn to witness
that darkness
you cannot give
away, cannot
give without.



Wait.
Game.
The waiting game.
Waiting room -
womb to get ready,
tomb to go
to it . The Game.
One to aim one
to watch, Steel bumpy
ball. Better than
watching the clock;
tick tock two
moments in a game
room, him and
yang, make the clock
ball, the clock go
round, blond and
black, this
and that get set
to go. For clowns know
and laugh to
gloat: there's always
more than
two - a man
with something to do

outside the game room.
And another, old
old mother of the green
face - Be born be
born on the sly
by two. Sneak by
to your train. Ride
all night through rain
and come out again into
black sleek fields
of grain. Plant your minds
by leaning stalks
to make
a new a
singlething,
you, yet
apart. Green
mamma comes
but where
there's a more
than two
you can't
divide,
one remains.
They're game.



Bus stop

Waiting.
Hands so animal anxious
in rain,
unprotected and hair wet;
it's hard.
One should hardly find fault
with the fret of your brow.
The problem
is how
prevent the plasticwrapt scowl,
the dead
hawk of a hand never
extended anymore; the
problem is how
to wait
in the rain
and still remain
open - Look!
That white bloom that
spills from her breast !

To open in sun
sometimes in heavy rain
tulips must close

2020



"An Expert at Letting go"

(for L.M., her words except
she minds her prepositions)

"I am sure it is G _____
who has helped stir up in me
this restlessness

and the questions
I have told you of. He's been
in this country about a year and a half

and traveled over, and lived in
much of it. One day
he wrote out a list

of the places he has been here
and for how long,
and in the corner

of the page
he wrote
HARD WAY TO BE HAPPY

(In Agee's Noa Noa
is 'This, of course,
silently wows Gauguin.' Well

this of course silently
wowed
me."



At Key West
as in Altoona,
ideas of order: pro-
visions for the journey.

Don't throw the wrappers on the road.



What does the light reveal?
Darkness.

The white paper?
Black characters.

What can the dark conceal?
Itself only.

To what purpose?
The cast image, the story or inference there of.

But to what purpose stand toward it?
Age. Length on the shadow. Draws in even to your standing and the black characters dance on the pulse of your eye sing to your beginning sound you to your end.









Inching of the blade's my game,
not the blight that blasts my edges,
not the cigarette burn gaps
on torn scraps of consciousness
whitely settled
in the ashes' declivity.

My mind carries the stain
of having lain in damp grass.
When I lean out of myself,
in the timing
of heart's brevity

I feel the sway of such things.
A white scrap of paper is surprised
by transport of the wind. (So many
rhythms contest to be
the paradigmatic song
of me.) The paper's levity
is snagged on the wire's barbs,
regular as a clock's tick

(more)



but flicking through randomly
as my heart's miss-firing.
New weathers drench it
and finally weigh it
loose to the litter and growth
of the ground. So many rubbings
on it: the rivulets of rust,
creases where trees clenched it,

a daisy's yellow stain, and matted
patterns of grass. Jesus, even the barbs'
piercing redeems; all markings
jibe now in near quidditive rhythm -
should love lean in to wrench it
with a final line to clinch it.





Close your eyes.

Now, what do you see?

Nothing?

wait...

Constellations, neon grids.

A world on the firmament
of your lids

born in you as that other world
was borne in you

two worlds eliciting each other
upon the dark

kissing on the membranes
of your vision.

See, this black world within now full
of that world without

and falling silently.

Now imagine that this is forever.

What else would you want?

The eyes
of an other.

Bill Jungels

I grew up in Chicago and then as a student or teacher lived in South Bend, Baltimore, rural Minnesota, Pittsburgh and finally Buffalo. This book was created in Pittsburgh.

Though I still write and have begun another photo/text book, I have devoted most of my energies since 1985 to documentary, primarily in Latin America, mostly in Mexico and mostly around social justice issues. The latest are *Broken Branches*, *Fallen Fruit/Ramas rotas, frutas caidas* and *Maya Faces in a Smoking Mirror/Caras mayas en un espejo humeante*.

The former centers on Maya immigration to the USA from the point of view of the migrants families in Chiapas, Southern Mexico. The latter focuses on Young Maya men and women struggling to preserve Maya identity and to resist, faced with the “smoking mirror” of a dominating culture that tries to commodify everything. Maya Faces can now be [streamed](#) for free on YouTube.

My [website](#) features Writing, Photography and Photo Essays and more.

In memory of John Logan

who pointed a way
laced with honest criticism
to a young writer.

To Georgiana,
then as now an assurance
that I am somehow the same
as she changed along with me.

To the children of The Hill,
may they have remained
as open and as strong
as they were then.



This picture is a fist
I feel it is a thing
Siskin had cut out of my quivering chest--
out of my huge furred stomach,
It is a fist. It is a face
In the mirror I no longer watch,
and its light flecks have now the glint of tears
I have never wept
out of the tender, bald knuckles of my eyes.

*from On A Photograph by Aaron Siskind
by JOHN LOGAN*

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