The Metaphysics of Vandalism

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The Metaphysics of Vandalism

We had no words
to give weight and form
to the feeling
of cool October nights
in Detroit.
After we smashed
the winking eyes of streetlights,
the dark on the streets
pressed its body close
and wrapped its cloak around us;
and we could not speak.

We had no words
dark enough for the Devil’s Night moon—
fat, full, and silver—
that we could not smash.
It shined white on us
as we crept between hedges and houses,
crawled onto roofs,
and dashed through alleys.
It slashed at our heels
as we hopped rattly, metal fences
silently as alley cats.

We had no words
for these:
the feel of dark,
the moon weaving silver
onto the metal webs of city fences,
the ships screaming
into the mouth of the Rouge River,
and the lights of tall buildings
blinking through the stinging
smoke of a burning Detroit.
We had no words
but we were gods in dark
and we made the Word flesh:
we ran for the sound
of breaking glass;
we threw for the joy
of egg, tomato, mud, and brick
smacking the bloodless sides
of houses and cars;
we danced for the hissing
passion of fire.

We have no words
for the feel of October Thirtieth,
but we are gods creating, making
the Logos material.
And in Detroit
this is poetry,
for we have no words...

Carmen Lowe
Oldenburg Winner

Devil's Night is an unofficial holiday, occurring every
October 30 after dark in the Detroit area. Children and
teenagers "celebrate" Devil's Night through vandalism:
the damage ranges from soaped windows to houses burnt down.