
Child Stretching

—After Santu Mofokeng's photograph "Vaalrand Farm"

This is not my child.
This is not my child's stretching shadow.
Not my enamel basin,
wedding ring, torn dress,
not me bending to wash
the breakfast plates, the boy on his toes
or the other small torso who waits a turn
for water or attention.

I think this is the boy who may grow tall
—he is already practising—
who will stride through Africa
—look at his sturdy legs—
this Vaalrand boy with his joyful stretch.
Never mind the cold morning,
Never mind the colder water.
Never mind the corrugated curtain.

This is not my child.
Nor is his assiduous mother my friend.
But her loving proximity
makes me, here just outside the frame,
(I know, you don't have to tell me,
in the simplest, most suspect way),
makes me want to be her sister,
her child my buoyant nephew.

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