

A Man in the City

He came slowly up out of the subway
as if he had just been born,
white skin
and wrinkled clothes in the sun.
He walked a few steps
to the shade of a building, reading
a bronze plaque which said
CHEMICAL CORN EXCHANGE BANK,
and stopped reading, looked
down at his shoes, across
at the cars which moved
rapidly into the streets,
and in the windows
of other buildings. Then,
when his eyes
seemed no longer to hurt,
he walked
down into the subway again.

Both his coming and his going
made no sound, and no
addition to the streets or buildings.
Out of the subway, squinting
the pale skin around his eyes,
seeming to read
the activity of cars,
he stood for just a moment

and was gone, into
the electric lights, the noise and the smell
of the subway running beneath
CHEMICAL CORN EXCHANGE BANK,
beneath taxis, police, and places
for buying a paper or an orange drink.
Under the street
he paused as he walked
and bought in the lower city
a paper and an orange drink.

He did not pause
to admire the Powers model who was
for some reason in the subway
with her hatbox, nor
did he read the paper
which could tell him
news of the world. He walked
pale as the walls
around the buried city,
the lockers, bakeries, and telephones.
Then he saw, on a white cubicle,
CHEMICAL CORN EXCHANGE BANK,
and he sat down, on a bench,
to eat a sandwich
which he found in his pocket, then
throwing the paper from the sandwich,
and the newspaper, into a can,
he went up to the street again.