

George Jackson

Martin Robertson

George Jackson tried to break jail
—a few friends (brothers)—gun and knife—
a few men killed. The break failed.
Jackson was down too, killed.
He'd been in jail half his life.

Ghetto-bred, then cop-picked,
what hope in his black future?
What can the boy become except
a sunk thing, a wrecking wreck?
What hope? His own nature.

In the dark of Soledad
hopeless becomes hopelesser,
natural goodness goes bad. . .
one would think. But this man
can create his own star.

Jailbird, killer? . . . martyr-saint?
Just such fatal polarities,
false as this, his life constrained
him too to accept, extend.
That's not to remember him by.

Remember (remembering that death,
that life) how, out of the night,
without window, without path,
without ladder, he found himself,
climbed into his own light.