

CELEBRANTS

Who'll drink the dead man's whiskey? Don't
all swear at once. Give us time
to count his faithful and their years.

Aunt Karen says besides a quart one
quarter gone he left two more
he'd never touched. Oh hadn't he.

Unscrewed for us the bottle tops
like clowns' hats, his laugh gurgled
in our glasses, we heard it, didn't we.

Drank him for hours and drank again,
maybe by much raising of arms to hurrah
our way to where he lasts forever.

Because he was a miniature, wasn't he?
of the big all-God who got his feet
on the ground at last and when of course

we killed him levitated into rumors
of peace, peace (and war) repeated
around the earth two thousand years.

So Uncle Emil's blood amber-live
melted all the ice cubes we could
freeze. Yet how somber he glowed

lifted to our mouths for light,
for once not drunk, but being drunk,
and for the first time not good company.