

Inside the house, Ethel moved about busily in the kitchen, unaware of the yells that taunted her son. She didn't hear the swish of a clothes-line-rope as it whirled and tightened about Eddie's body, nor did she hear the rattling crash as boy and horse were dragged down the steps, nor did she hear Eddie as he lay on the sidewalk in a whimpering and blubbering lump; she only heard, at that moment, the mix-master as it screamed its final beating of the cake icing, and turning toward its warning sound, she spilled twelve red and blue birthday candles onto the floor.

BIRTHRIGHT

John R. Foutty

Go, sing for your unborn sons and daughters,
Ring out the bell from every lonely tower,
And feel a heat-searched shudder in the womb
Defy the cell to give the rock a flower.

The joy-guised deed is done; the rampant seed
Squirms feebly when the fickle bee is gone
From moist black hollows to the light. It leaves
Tomorrow's moment on a dying lawn.

A wrinkled hand pulls forth a reddened ape—
Slap-roused to test the shape and wake a soul.
The stained spread falls, and sunken flesh is still
As sight comes dazzling to the startled mole.

The caveling seen, a chirstening date is set—
Cross-sheltered blaming of tomorrow's woe
For past: ungendered is the unseen glass
Reflecting in a child's eye from the snow.

A cold-eyed falcon falls on folded wing
Amid the joy; a mocking beak will bring
Its birthright like some strange forbidden toy
To sheltered places where the mothers sing.

The vague smiles fade; the brazen beak is fled
In wild confusion, youth is left alone.
But once-marked, the deserters are not prey;
The blood urged babe must feel the bitter bone.

The babe waits captive in a pen of sheep
Who wait immobile, bleat beneath the claw;
While others, shepherds, feel the gate go down
And pluck out splinters from the bloody straw.

So like a beast in bedded joy we play
An ancient part, fur rubbed against the tree,
And wait below the shadow lost in awe.
The blood-borne babe must pay the falcon's fee.

SUMMER STORM (TEUTONIC)

John R. Foutty

The earth is writhing on its rack, and shadow falls
 Grotesquely raveled out from wires of flame.
 Burning, burning on defeated walls,
 An aged prophet calls an aged name.
 Quick,

The black hammer batters sunlight, sweeps
 A path for darkness, and sacks the sullen sky.
 When its burst has sputtered down, the steeps
 Still proudly flaunt eroded stone; the sigh
 Is whimpered through the coils of ruined grass
 And surged between each pebble it could pass.

A flicking fork of fire, insatiate, licks
 The flesh-rent earth for scent to please
 The bloodless maw of Thor; still tricks
 The jaws that snap on vacant memories.
 He thunders out as if He could disjoin
 Eternal lust from his fast-withered loin.

Upon the upmost dais there is raised
 One fleshless, boneless, flame-blind hand; its fear
 Was by prolific Loki welded, blazed—
 His venomed pain bolt-wedded, and his tear
 Immortal in the infinitely restless birth
 Of lesser sons who tread a less ambitious earth.

ONLY THE LIVING

Robert Petty

Only the living know of death.
 Only the living dare to know
 That sunless void. Only their breath
 To frost the mirror of dread, and go
 Unspoken in their fear to laugh
 The nonexistence of death's epitaph.

Only the living know the grave.
 Only the wonder of their eyes
 To fill it, questioning who gave
 To them the burden of goodbyes.
 With all of love and life to covet—
 Death is theirs. The dead know nothing of it.