

1971

# Celebrants

Ernest Sandeen

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## 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.