DEATH

While birth is generating the young songster, and gradually the young lover, death is sleepily waking at the other end of the tunnel of being, sensing some glorious aroma, and wrinkling a disgusted nostril. Wormlike the shadow of death works its way downward and inward, cleaver sharp into the milky tissue of time, until it comes face to face with its own antithesis, the gentle and thriving round faced optimist who is just emerging into the grassy meadow of midlife. At once, but without warning, a violent electrical spark slashes into furious combat. Death is at grips with its foe!

So it is with poetry, as you know! It fumbles with detail, but chases the point like a bulldog with red meat on its plate. It gnaws on the ugly questions. Why the bright gurgling smile on that cootchie-coo squirmer in the bassinet? Is he dumb? Didn't he read the account at the beginning of Milton's Paradise Lost—

Of man' s first disobedience and the fruit of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste brought death into the world and all our woe…

Did nothing inside him declare that life is only a preface to death? Did he draw no existential conclusion from the fact that he or she existed as greed, as gimmee gimmee, as lack and dissatisfaction? Didn't he ask himself why all he could do was urinate on himself, cry for more liquid, and clutch at the breast? Didn't he ask himself what he had to offer to the story of the world?