

The children flew in a state
of panic through the house—
among sixty white houses, all alike,
which someone had called
without humor, “a development.”
There were the baby and his sister
and the neighbor's kids.
No one asked where the grown-ups were.
They galloped on the furniture
and played at being wild Indians.
The mother of the birthday girl
was sad enough to die,
and one week later she would try it—
her daughter too small to unlock the door
so the police would have to break it down
while she stood screaming in the living room—
but now she ran among the others, in a party dress,
till the mother said tiredly
she guessed it was time to send the children home,
and the party stopped a moment, in its tracks.
“But where's the cake?”
“We haven't had our cake!” —a new fear
trilling in the voice. And yes, there it was,
with thick, pink icing, and someone
dimmed the lights. There was a hush,
the candles lit, the birthday song
and something sweet. The children grew solemn,
bowed their heads like beggar-monks, —
then they pushed back their chairs. It seemed
too little and too late, but to the children
just enough, and the went
shouting happily out into the daylight.