

HAWKEYE

Under a spotless blue sky and Mylar balloons,
amid the meticulous
grass, trees, and low rolling hills
designed to lull memory,
groomed, serious, well-dressed people
gathered on the flat green
that lay like a tiny stage before
the stony amphitheater
of desert hillside and dry brush
across the cemetery's property line.

The priest in white reasoned, as a hawk
circled overhead, that they should not
mourn Robert, who, fearless
in heaven as on Earth, rode
fast on horseback, although only ten
(and dived alone one day,
into his glittering backyard pool,
where his mother later found him),
and was free from sin and grief
before offering the Eucharist
as a symbol to all who wished it
and introducing a song
(Rod Stewart, "Forever Young,"
put on the public address)
as the child's favorite.

The mother could not face
the shiny, powder-blue casket
held by a mechanism of polished metal,
hiding the hole, the dirt mound
draped in AstroTurf. She lowered her eyes
but did not cry, and pressed her face
into her husband's stoic suited side.
Everyone, for a time, it seemed then,
was silent and still, permeable
to what lay before them
and forgetful of next meals, errands,
the revenge coming to fruition for a slight at work.

There were crows in the oaks
that chattered too loud, like drunks
in a bar, where the perfect grass
stopped and the lion-colored hillside began.
The ground held words to the sky~
one said: death took me in the midst of health.
A standout among the bare,
year-marked names across the lawn:
Hardy, Aguilar, Failing, Brand,
Verdugo, Jaeger, Lav.

No brass buttons wriggled there that day
with careless patience up to the light
the way they do in fields in France
where thousands of boys lie bent in the earth
who were swathed as they rose from their holes
to face the guns trained upon them.

That same earth, that eats its children,
was kept hidden within the cemetery
in the San Fernando Valley
where desert hills circled everyone,
who knew that they would someday press
tongue against mouth, and taste the earth.

ERIC HOWARD



Eric Howard is a poet who lives in Los Angeles. He can be reached at misterprozac@netzero.com

Cobalt Poets Series # 124 ~ February 13, 2007 - PoetrySuperHighway.com/cobalt