

Restland,

by Gary Hardaway

a memorial park in Dallas

1

The stones inlaid in grass defer
to mowers. They embellish and
articulate but do not interrupt
idyllic, meadowed vistas
of a still corporate world:
perpetual care beneath a grid of oaks.
No death can interrupt this landscape,
erecting cool, granitic markers of mortality.
My father lived to lie this way,
molded under weeded, lush St. Augustine.

2

He died a printer finding late
after so much selling himself selling
a craft that pleased and paid enough
though not enough to shrink the gut
or heal the heart of a Hoovered and
Hitlered American male. HoJo
and R.J. Reynolds prospered
while he kissed ass and gassed
the company Dodge.

I saw him weekends, highway-tired,
the scowling executor of the week's discipline,
impatient to use his hands,

and too impatient to watch mine used
screwing up some plywood project.
Belts and screw-ups: Saturdays and Sundays.

But he died a printer, self-schooled
and proud (quietly) of catalogs
the road men used
to sell themselves selling,
to sell at least enough to beat
the draw plus expenses
and squeeze a bonus out of asphalt.

3

I never saw him dead. I refused
the usual southern rituals.
I was afraid to see the salesman,
highway exhausted, rouged
and pumped up with formaldehyde.
I wanted to remember the printer
adjusting ink for his son's first book,
homemade, printed on quality stock
he conned from the guy
who sold him catalog paper
and not the thin, cheap, stuff
the salesmen used, selling.

