

"Words' Worth" Poetry Readings

Poets at the Culture, Arts, and Parks Committee of the Seattle City Council.

Little League By Carlos H. Martinez

In the beautiful days of late spring,
mothers and fathers gather in the early evening to watch
their beautiful sons walk out to baseball fields, one hand

seeming larger than the other, the scuffed infield dust
rising around their ankles, to take their places at their positions
and for

the umpire to yell Play ball,
for a thin arm to throw
the first pitch to someone's son

who will someday be
a man and who swings with a grace appropriate to his age,
unsullied yet, unselfconscious beauty of prepubescent boys,

lanky and tall and thin or short
and still covered with baby fat stretching the cheap cotton jerseys
they wear and the balls hit and rising over the pitcher's mound

land in a glove or far in the outfield gap,
shine like the sun, are propelled or slowed by the breeze
as in the stands parents sit and cheer each at bat,

whether the ball is hit or not,
shout themselves hoarse
whenever a young body leaps up and makes the play

or not,
clap when the innings are over, when those boys
with their serious faces, believing this is life and only this,

trot back like men, stride after stride
and who cares what else is before them.
Snacks after the last out, the last run batted in

and suddenly these boys shrink back to their normal dimensions,
are boys again who have no idea what the future might bring,
don't care about tomorrow or the day after that, but that they lost

or won this game, that this one hit a home run,
that one slid along the dust past an outstretched glove.
Or one might stand apart from the others

sipping his fruit drink and crying because
he missed the pop fly, lost it in the sun's glare, or he slid short
right into a play or with two outs, two strikes,

the mighty swing he took sliced air as the ball passed him,

going into his past as he went into his future, on a day he will forget,
in a year no one will remember

when mothers and fathers sitting in the stands
pumped their fists in the air for no reason
other than

that death and the future were for a moment abandoned
and the sun on their faces was beautiful.

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