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# Pro Rege

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Volume 50  
Number 2 *Fine Arts Issue*

Article 7

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December 2021

## Funeral - Sunnyvale, California 2001

Erica Hughes

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### Recommended Citation

Hughes, Erica (2021) "Funeral - Sunnyvale, California 2001," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 50: No. 2, 9.  
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# Funeral — Sunnyvale, California 2001

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*Erica Hughes — Dordt alum, Ph.D. student at U of Illinois, Chicago*

The men wiped sweat  
from bald heads  
and the women coursed  
in black hats  
into the mouth of grief.  
The sanctuary was full of things  
I'd known nothing about:  
a vial of anointing oil  
an amethyst sweat-cloth  
slung over the sharp bishop's suit  
a twisted cross  
hung high on the wall  
a portrait of a white man—  
his eyes pale and unmoved.  
Daddy, Uncle Koot, and Uncle Larry  
pulled at their mother the way children do—

*Come on, Mama  
Come on, Mama*

—trying to coax her down  
from her daughter's casket.

I stood behind Nana  
knee deep in the anguish  
of not knowing

where the person goes  
when she detaches from  
her body.

I chewed the word died  
like neckbone meat  
and remembered how I lay  
in the grass on my back  
when Mom whispered

*—Kat died  
—Complications  
—Lupus*

—how I ran from an evening  
that burned like a wick  
and hid from god in a closet.