Albemarle Clay

He was old and sick, and now they can bury him,
settling once and for all
the gnarled grey fingers that picked at the knots
on his cotton print quilt, twice covered over
during fallow illness
and tacked with green silk twist,
double-knotted.

Restless old hands,
plucking out of memory chunks of hard red clay
and pitching them down the creased
and quilted hills
to break on the slope of another
dry-springed year.

Now they can bury him
in a pink silk quilt, pale and soft
as the palms of his hands, and leave him
under the side of the hill, growing
older each day, the same
as the dry and knotted Albemarle
clay, and powdery as diamond
dust.

Joyce Colony