

Robert Handicott

BLUE HEELER

Each morning at the car park, small and slight,
But compact as a charge of dynamite,
 He prowls to count us in —
The guard no bribe or flattery can win.

One eye's gone west; the other, coldly blank,
Takes aim as at a bandit in a bank.
 You turn because you must,
Arrested by invincible distrust.

His master's bought the place beside the school:
Twenty-six perches, in-ground swimming pool.
 Blue frets. It's on the cards
He'll never learn the language of back yards.

Daily he clears the gate and scouts afar,
Head lowered, as in readiness for war.
 Domestic canines flee him;
Pound officers pretend that they don't see him.

Our janitor, retired Royal Marine,
Turns *his* blind eye, expanding with a grin:
 “He'll take no bloody nonsense!”
They're comrades from the same side of the one fence,

Each toughened by a trade and proud tradition;
Success, defeat; endurance and discretion . . .
 I follow down my road,
Respectful of an older, nobler code.