

THREE POEMS



David Constantine

THE CREM

This is a ragged place. Nothing fits.
I suppose the cemetery was put there first
Then someone in Planning, because of the railway
And knowing of the coming of the expressway,
Made it the zone for light industry

With a plot for the crem. The cars arrive
Sighing down the old roads at a decent pace
And leave on the new, unburdened, fast.
Announcements of smoke. This is no place
To come and sit with your trouble in working hours.

The roses mean well but the ashes look ghastly
And the dedicated benches put you on show
On a little hillside, they make you spectators
Of every delivery. But come out of hours
With nobody else to look at it's even worse.

Everything's been tried here and did no good.
There are walls of tablets of stone you can stand and read,
And urns and uprights as though if they could
They'd be next door in the old style, as though
Ash isn't enough. Lately there's cellophane

And dead bouquets on the earth like murdered birds.
They look a mess but the Council lets them lie.
Electrics, remoulds, a couple of scrapyards,
Roar of the living on the expressway,
Lift up your eyes to the hills and the empty sky.

[UNTITLED]

I like these men and women who have to do with death,
Formal, gentle people whose job it is,
They mind their looks, they use words carefully.

I liked that woman in the sunny room
One after the other receiving such as me
Every working day. She asks the things she must

And thanks me for the answers. Then I don't mind
Entering your particulars in little boxes,
I like the feeling she has seen it all before,

There is a form, there is a way. But also
That no one come to speak up for a shade
Is like the last, I see she knows that too.

I'm glad there is a form to put your details in,
Your dates, the cause. Glad as I am of men
Who'll make a trestle of their strong embrace

And in a slot between two other slots
Do what they have to every working day:
Carry another weight for someone else.

It is common. You are particular.

ASHES AND ROSES

She is size 10 again like the girl under her banns
But so disconsolate the falling of her hand
I worry the diamond will slip to the grey earth.

These are only the bare bones of roses
This is a garden of little twists of iron
The dressing of ash does not look nourishing.

Let me look away at the sunny hills and you
Look at nothing for a while against my heart.
You feel as breakable as things I have found on the hills

After the weather when their small frames are evident.
You need to put on again
The roses need to flower. Come home

To your empty house. He is more there than here.