

## Return visit to a cemetery

Two zebra stripes of white concrete  
Advance up the hillside. Though raw  
They are confident of future shading.

A little below but progressing  
The certain declensions: settling in  
Sinking, the lack of stamina in flowers

And the problems of the householders  
They too will solve: the stone  
Heavy containers, the best are concrete

And that artificial lasts better  
(Is this language? A lesson?) This child's  
Grave of roses is replaced by plastic

Which in the flower-holder leads  
To no decay: it is the senses  
Of the appeasing need appeasing.

Finally most get it in place.  
A photograph (sometimes) attached  
Though fatal to stop at a minute

Bobbing most expensive stalks  
(The florists stock them, understanding)  
Resurrect the jam jars, allow

Us to concentrate. Familiar now  
With rows, with neighbours — our stone  
Is something different in a street

We should have picked it, coming home  
From quite a distance. Now the landscape  
Adds its patina to eternity.

ELIZABETH SMITHER