

Judy Johnson

GROUNDS-KEEPER

He wanders the path between graves, sweeping leaves,
restoring each ersatz rose to its fallen vase. He has been
pensioned off and his hands have a Parkinson's agenda.
They bend and turn in a figure-eight, holding an invisible
teaspoon that incorporates the phlegm of his cough with
the winter air. He tells how, in the North of Scotland
there is a trade in cadavers. The cemeteries have sentry
boxes to keep body-snatchers out. He doesn't speak of
an equal need to keep things in. But now and then
he stops and turns to look over the plots with precise attention;
as if the soil's involuntary trembling could not alarm him
more than this stillness which appears contrived: and the sun
that each time his back is turned, seems to
shuffle forward in its pilled yellow cardigan.