

THE CEMETERY OF PÈRE LACHAISE IS CLOSED

Ken Smith

Arriving late, I find
high walls draped with ivy
hide the final hiding place of Baudelaire.
There is nothing to be done—
the cemetery of Père Lachaise is closed.

Baudelaire's keeper, the custodian,
must be a man immune to sentiment—
though three good hours of light remain,
the stated time had come,
so he made the rounds of the gates,
turning locks smoothed by use, and on his face
a look as final as the sound of the lock.
I see him leaving the dead ones for a wife,
two years his elder, heavy now, like him,
full of news of one son who has called.
The bread is on the table, like a bale
of straw in a small pasture, a stone
on a small hill, a loaf of bread beside wine
whose cork slides out like the key.