

# Two Poems

by [James Stevens Curl](#) (March 2019)



Promenade aux Cimetières de Paris: Père-Lachaise

*aux mânes de nos concitoyens*

Basking felines elegantly draped  
on sun-warmed polished marble;  
lugubrious angels; sad *immortelles*,  
encased in glazed funereal Gothic frames,  
add Camp absurdities  
to what was Neo-Classic dignity.  
Yet these Elysian Fields are truer to the name  
than exhaust-filled, cacophonous,  
once monumental avenues . . .  
chestnuts, here, begin to shade the tombs  
of Chopin, Marshal Ney, Bellini, Oscar Wilde,  
while rusty ironwork provides no shelter  
for erstwhile living blooms . . . *einst O Wunder!*[\[1\]](#)  
*Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?*[\[2\]](#)  
Soon this necropolis acquires anew,  
less melancholy scents  
than those of faded *immortelles*:  
plastic roses, lilacs, violets, when heated by the sun,  
exude uneasy odours, offensive reeks,  
like concentrated tomcat.  
Cemeteries, disfigured by plastic flowers  
(hideous both to sight and smell),  
are home to cats: sleek dark thousands,  
fed by black-clad pale-faced widows:  
mourning cats and desiccated women,  
the sheen of marble,  
crape-enshrouded urns, black-and silver ribbons,  
seem apposite, somehow . . .  
Yet mass-produced *regrets*  
and plastic ornament offend the senses,  
cancelling the still respectability  
of *bourgeois* Death.

Paris, Easter 1976

[\[1\]](#) Friedrich von Matthisson (1761-1831): *Adelaide*.

[2] François Villon (c.1431-after 1463): 'Ballade des dames du temps jadis' in *Le Grand Testament* (1461).



*Outside the King's Arms*, Francis Hamel, 2002

## **Stout**

I shrieked one boozy, hot mid-day,  
the frightful Truth that is denied

perennially: that's to say  
that drunken man is deified.  
If with this Statement you agree,  
then I suggest the Farewell State  
dispenses *Guinni*[\[1\]](#) always free,  
to calm the soul expatriate.

*Back Bar of The King's Arms, Oxford, 1965*

[\[1\]](#) Agreed (in convivial circles in Oxford and London) plural  
of *Guinness*: a famous Dublin Stout.

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