Still Life

So the new cemetery’s
   out of bounds,
   entrance draped

with a candystripe helix
   of incident tape,
   chain and padlock

wreathing the gate.
   We’ll edge past
   on a path that slaloms

the hawthorn hedge,
   exchange stares
   with the astronaut

in a hazmat suit
   and visor and mask
   and over-shoes

and white leather gloves,
   propped on his spade
   at an open grave.

The universe
   breathless and
   muggy tonight,

a cold-blooded moon,
   marooned villages
   under the hill,

a stagnant dusk
   that parts to allow
   an ambulance through.

Simon Armitage