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ANNA M. EVANS

The Walking Dead

The morning chill still hovers in the air
above an unraked carpet of thick leaves.
We've decked the doors with autumn-colored wreaths
and cheerful scarecrows pop up everywhere.
It's early fall, so also on display
is all the kitsch that signals Halloween.
And like a textbook page with vellum screen
the ghouls and gore stand out in overlay.

But worse, each yard's a palimpsest that shows
how, when a child matures, his taste behaves:
the horror deepens, darkens as one grows.
Those cute witch signs now shadow zombie graves –
the bitter center in a thing once sweet,
our culture's desperate scream of "Trick or Treat."

ANTON YAKOVLEV

Atonement

The man you killed is now a block of bones
in your valise. You take him everywhere.
Anytime you find yourself alone –
whether in Liverpool or in Tangier –
you peek inside to steal a look at his
mummified joints. You sneak in a bow.
Then you rejoin the others, flashing peace.
You smile. You tickle. You invest. You growl.

Your vocals always were a bit too loud.
Your words did always feel a little forced.

His parents check your Instagram account,
review your Twitter feed, your Facebook posts.
They rarely smile. They mostly dress in white.
They raise a glass to toast your health each night.

JOAN MAZZA

They Could Be Human

for Homo naledi

Let us praise cavers for their bravery,
willing to bend their slender bodies
into crevices between rocks, to see
what's present besides danger, ornery
in the face of falling or getting stuck,
(extremities swelling, getting tighter).
But these are the fearless-cautious, fighters
of their qualms. Let us praise their boundless pluck.

With luck, they find an unknown chamber
filled with shining darkness and they clamber
down, trust ropes and hooks, friends who wait above.
Fossilized long bones as if in slumber –
placed – not by chance like insects in amber.
A formal burial, sure sign of love.

SIHAM KARAMI

Difficulty at the Beginning

A thought under my tongue, one size away
from fitting on my lips, now shies away.

Avoid approaching smiles and hide the bees
where silken wax seals all my lies away.

Just one more word, but make it wicked, dark,
for love your brightness terrifies away.

O demisemi-quaver of a breath
between the lines this longing pries away...

Good morning, Killer Dream. I wish I never
heartwrecked on your stiff goodbyes. *Away!*

I drink the heady wormwood, let the spirits
lure me out to agonize a way.

To live one wingspan more or die one less.
What matters when you turn your eyes away?

I'll throw my whole self on your chopping block
and wait. Maybe we'll improvise a way.

Even walls must hold my striking point,
an arrowhead that never dies away.

JEROME BETTS

The Wingco's Pig

'Silvano Invicto Sac. . . . Sacred to the invincible Silvanus. Gaius Tetius Veturius Micianus, Commander of the Sebosian Auxiliary Cavalry Wing, set this up gladly in discharge of his vow after taking an exceptionally fine boar which many of his predecessors were unable to bag.'

Translation of the inscription on a re-used Roman altar found on Bollihope Common, Co. Durham.

The words, duly cut in discharge of his vow,
Near the end display pride as a winner.
Very likely, the when and the where and the how
Re-emerged for years after, at dinner.
Perhaps it made up for a stint on the Wall,
The North, and its wet windy flavour,
That beast of magnificent form, proof to all
Silvanus had granted a favour,
With the hounds and the hooves and the hullabaloo
And a pace that was perfectly sizzling
Congealed now in stone where the dream had come true
Between lines of a lapicide's chiselling.

CARA VALLE

Telemachus

We made a profit on the pigs we killed
this year – the first time since Eumaios died.
It won't be hard now feeding all the guests
for Mother's funeral, however long
they stay. They pitied her toward the end,
our neighbors, too afraid to visit her.
She sat there mumbling, weaving, nodding off,
then tearing up whatever she had woven.
All that waiting, just to die alone.

"He came back once, and he'll come back again."

He didn't. Now, we have to stack the pyre
before she starts to stink – slow work with no
old timber on the island. That they cut
for ships before he left, and trees grow slow.

She told me faithfulness would always be
rewarded. I believed her for a while,
until he left and she began to lose
her mind. She started calling me Laertes
and asking travelers about the war.
I never contradicted her: I knew
she wouldn't live long, and, if she could die
a hopeful death, then I was satisfied.

GAIL WHITE

If She Comes Back

It won't be like Persephone returning,
bringing fertility, the grass, the grain,
but just our old disasters back again,
the conversations that were so like burning

yourself with cigarettes, until you find
the places that were burned have lost sensation,
the everyday reminders that the mind
has marshes, tarns, depths beyond revelation.

Why do I feel enduring so much grief
is just a privilege I gained by living
with someone shining like a lost belief
with love she seemed just on the verge of giving –

Unendingly she haunts my heart, my head.
Unlike Persephone, she isn't dead.

GWEN HART

To a Young Girl Asleep Over Grimm's Fairy Tales

I find you lying on the floor,
the open book an open door.
Your mouth ajar, your forehead slick,
your slender leg begins to kick.
Is it an ogre or a bear
that has you by your golden hair?
Are you running from a wolf
or from a witch that fire engulfs?
Or are you turning pirouettes,
dancing, dancing to your death?
What led you to this wishing well –
a wicked queen? A fairy's spell?
The spindle's sharp; the apple's plump.
Were you pushed, or did you jump?

BROOKE CLARK

To a Fortunate Feline

A sweet deal, Toast, being Chloe's pet:
you hop up on her lap and get
a giggle or a happy sigh;
your paw slides up her inner thigh,
demesnes denied to human hand –
I simply cannot understand:
for me, her doors are all locked shut;
for you, though, she turns eager slut.
She holds a finger for you to nip,
drops tender kisses on your lip,
then giggles as you lick her ear,
strokes your soft flank, seems pleased to hear
you purr; she makes an answering sound
and slides her heels along the ground,
her back curves and her eyes half-close
as if she were rapt in the throes
of ecstasy – then you both freeze,
pressed taut, as on an ancient frieze,
for several silent seconds – then
you both slip into calm again.
Worn out and ready for a nap
you yawn on her forbidden lap
and, ignorant feline, coolly rest
your head against one heaving breast.
What can I say? I envy you.
I see her love is sometimes true.

(After Catullus)

BRIAN STANLEY

Notre-Dame-des-Neiges

for Louise

Above the city, mortal commerce ends
and traffic slows around the bends
past crenellated rows.

Here crops of granite grit and marble sheen
bespeak the farmer – felt, unseen –
who reaps before he sows.

Noise coils below the retrospective slope
of fields still scented with the hope
of recompense, repose.

Soon offerings of flowers will give way
to leaves, chill winds return to play
their stone-stopped tremolos.

One season all they know, the buried sleep
secure in arms that hold to keep:
Our Lady of the Snows.

ROB GRIFFITH

Night Watch

He walks the chainlink fence, the cough of chat
beneath his feet drowned out by a revel of frogs
in the tall grass and one lone mockingbird
who stitches up the dark with wire-bright song.
The arc lights, like ghostly long-stemmed flowers,
bleach the gravel lot and drain the blue
from every sleeping semi. The dark surrounds
this lonely place, this limbo held between
a fickle moon and an enervating sun,
a perfect place to dream of other lives,
of things that might have been. He zips his coat
against the chill and turns his collar up.
The trucks are menhirs in this bloodless light.
He walks among their hulks and thinks of time,
of how the world revolves around the now,
this graveyard caught between the day and night.

ANDREW PIDOUX

Starry Night

Vincent Van Gogh, 1889

The sky has turned a sickly green.
It swirls and eddies above the small town
where children with enormous eyes lean
on the ends of their bunk beds and frown,
as acid raindrops eat the glass.
Meanwhile downstairs, their mothers drown
in knitting or stand hypnotised over the gas,
whose flame has become a slow
green needle through which demons pass.
They ride out their lives on the flow
of rough floorboards and watery behinds
and hope to be taken into the know,
into the confidence of greater minds,
but end up rocking in silence, listening
religiously to what the radio finds
in its trawl through the glistening
air. On Sunday they go to church,
tilt their heads at a christening
and tend the graves where the dead perch
underground. They clean snow from the street
or carve their hearts into a silver birch.
Meanwhile, the stars move their vast heat
across the freezing heavens, freewheeling
and forlorn. Like lost sheep, they bleat
light over mountains, shedding pure feeling
by the ton, unable to convince a soul
that they're more than just a pretty ceiling.

CONTRIBUTORS

Anna M. Evans' poems have appeared in *The Harvard Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Rattle*, *American Arts Quarterly*, and *32 Poems*. She gained her MFA from Bennington College, and is the Editor of *The Raintown Review*. Recipient of Fellowships from the MacDowell Artists' Colony and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and winner of the 2012 Rattle Poetry Prize Readers' Choice Award, she currently teaches at West Windsor Art Center and Stockton University. Her sonnet collection, *Sisters & Courtesans*, is available from White Violet Press. She blogs at annamevans.com/wordpress.

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Joan Mazza has worked as a medical microbiologist, psychotherapist and seminar leader, and has been a Pushcart Prize nominee. Author of six books, including *Dreaming Your Real Self* (Penguin/Putnam), her poetry has appeared in *Rattle*, *Kestrel*, *The MacGuffin*, *Mezzo Cammin*, *Buddhist Poetry Review*, and *The Nation*. She ran away from the hurricanes of South Florida to be surprised by the earthquakes and tornadoes of rural central Virginia, where she writes poetry and does fabric and paper art. www.JoanMazza.com

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