



Photo by David Dennis

Associate poetry editor Kelsey Lueptow on today's poem: *Hilary S. Jacqmin's "Day of the Dead" illuminates the eerie moment when one is forced to confront cultural interpretations and tributes. The poem's liminal atmosphere seems to ask whether we are preserving history or suffocating it. The poem begs to know what happens when the boundaries aren't so clear cut.*

Day of the Dead

—*The Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology*

On All Saints' Day, when hammered darkness peels
 the layers of the underworld
 apart like gold, the corn-smut dead come back.
 Parched cartoon bones, they scull Divinity
 and scale the Peabody with chalkstick feet,

drawn in by desiccated sugar-skulls
 and crumpled marigolds that glow like quince:
 our *Dia de los Muertos* detritus.
 Beneath *papel picado* skeletons,
 they mill around the Hall of the Americas,

inspecting the pottery of their lost lives.
 They miss mezcal. Like us, they love sweet bread

inlaid with sesamoids, and washed-out Polaroids
of relatives who drowned on honeymoon.
Abandoned by their dog's-breath psychopomp,

their husked-tamale prayers go up in smoke.
They are the lonely dead, electric stiff.
We living are the ones with second sight,
the seedbank in the locked Herbaria.
We give our mottled light to everything.

Hilary S. Jacqmin grew up in Shaker Heights, Ohio. She earned her MA from the Johns Hopkins University and her MFA from the University of Florida. She lives in Baltimore, where she works at Johns Hopkins University Press.

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Blog post by [Jennifer A. Howard](#)

Jen Howard is also the editor-in-chief of her fantasy football team, The Pretty Little Kitties.

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