

TIM SEIBLES

## THE DEAD PLAY BLUES VILLANELLE

Feels like I'm awake, but I can't really tell  
I think I'm alive, but I'm not really sure  
Do the dead ever try to remember themselves?

High-Def is so clear, there's almost a smell  
I'm grillin' a burger and cheering the scores  
I think I'm awake, but I can't ever tell

When they want you to buy it they know it'll sell  
They just seed your head with a digital spore  
That's why the dead shop amongst themselves

The Dark holds a flush and I see His tell  
But play my bad hand like a pestering sore  
No reason to fold when you're under the spell

If that isn't water what'chu think's in the well?  
Gravediggers stay bizzy, but who's keeping score?  
When I'm dead will I still wanna talk to myself?

You know what *I* know, but let's never tell  
We'll shuffle along trailing blood on the floor  
And pretend to be *woke* while we're under the spell

Maybe I just need to pinch myself  
Would love to get out, but they left out the door  
I think I'm awake, but you never can tell

I'd rather go live with the radical elves  
I don't even look at the news anymore

But I turn on the game 'cause I'm under the spell  
And eat while the dead play amongst themselves

## LIKE IT OR NOT

the poem is growing  
older—and though fatigue  
comes sooner these days,  
the poem finds it almost  
impossible to sleep. In fact,

Sleep walks past  
the poem's house like  
Angela Bassett  
in red leather slacks,  
like Cameron  
Diaz whose mouth

makes the poem ask  
how such lips might  
flavour every word, but  
the poem's inappropriate  
thoughts are *not*

the problem. Sleep—  
which slides by the poem  
like a pickpocket, which  
pecks the poem's cheek  
briefly like a bird's shadow  
on a bright day—is.

Some afternoons with Sleep  
setting far off in the west, the poem  
thinks about dying, that last

thumbs down and shrug,  
but other than another scrim  
dimming the view, other  
than a grim tightening

in its chest, other than that  
craven urge to shriek and sob  
on the cold cobblestone  
streets, the poem remains,  
by all appearances, unaffected,

seems, in fact, coolishly  
prepared to speak  
as always: in a manner  
that insists that sanity

and compassionate  
social transformation

are on the way—  
that the poem itself

is *proof* though

the poem worries that  
this might

not at all be true,  
that

it may, in truth, be drowning  
rather than waving:

so, after tracing the dark  
half the night,

the poem lights up

the TV: people  
playing all the parts

convinced and in  
convincing ways.