

## Mad Cows and Standing Stones

Shod in plastic to ward off  
Mad cow disease, lashed lie sails  
By the wind and rain, we tourists  
Stood freezing, bending back until  
Our glasses blurred, to scan  
The tops of stone slabs set upright  
Like wide-spaced bottom teeth, some broken.

The guide said this forlorn corner of the Orkneys  
Was the O'Hare of its day, Picts, Norse  
And Romans standing in line  
For position to follow the fish and the iron,  
And before that some fellows like us,  
Minus the slickers and corrected vision,  
Chewed hazel nuts, harvested barley,  
Brewed booze, built fires and brought them  
Inside their earthen shelters  
As comfy as Thoreau's Walden.  
They scratched symbols on the wall,  
Sat on furniture, made love,  
And our kind survived.

Wishing it were dawn not twilight,  
We shuffled back to the van,  
Wearied of our protective footgear,  
Afraid of our livestock, asking each other  
More with obligation than enthusiasm  
Where we should eat that night.

***Mark Trechock** writes from western North Dakota. He published his first poem in 1974, then stopped publishing for many years until he began publishing in 2015. His poetry has been recently accepted for publication by *Pembroke*, *Mobius*, *Triggerfish* and *Weber—the Contemporary West*.*

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*The Pangolin Review, Issue 15 (17 March, 2020)*