

Bats

By Claire Smith

Walking to Pittville Park in muted tones
they talk of shopping on Saturday,
which outfit to wear for a night
out, bantering about whose turn

it is to do the washing
up. Hold hands.
Sometimes she trails behind,
a child swimming in her own world.

It's dusk. Night an apparition,
eclipsing day with its shadow.
Loaded with tiredness, they stop to rest
on a bench in the Square, watch, witness

people in the Edwardian apartments switching on the lights,
like fireflies buzzing above. She glimpses a red
room, mock Chandelier shining
as the centrepiece.

A television roaring
and illustrating the wall. A group
of Goths, Grebos, on their way to some
seedy club night, saunter past, gossiping women

about the neighbours, giggling
small children at a contorted
face. Then out of nowhere two
bats appear, somersaulting tumblers.

They swoop and loop
so close to her head she can hear
the swish swish of their wings flapping
in the twilight. Like Dancers they flip upside

down then back again. Black
silhouettes somehow brightening
the sky. She could be in a cave,
icicle crystals in suspense,

spying on the Bats.
A Sorceress painting
illusions without brushes,
stars glistening on the walls. The Bats

grabbing at stray flies as an offering to their Mistress.
A harp chimes from a corner,
spindling fingers
strumming

on the strings.
A spell of odours
casting from a cauldron.
Green eyes glinting from the dark.

A black laugh.
Her eyes awaken. Back on the bench.
They've disappeared, these ghosts... He grips her hand,
offering to make a cigarette for the walk home.