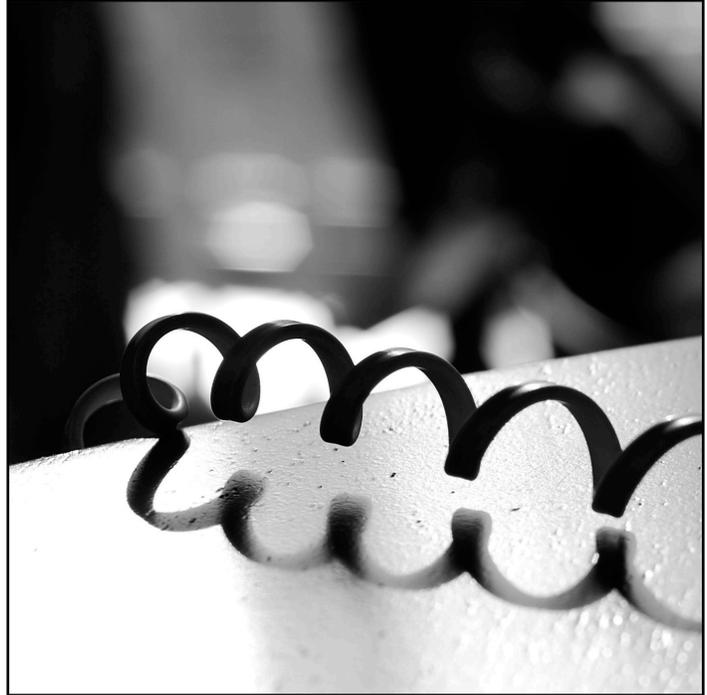


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GEORGE SZIRTES

The Thirties

It was the Thirties once again. Shop doors
opened on hunger and long queues for soup,
the poor, clothed by the same half-empty stores,

stood round in doorways in a ragged group;
the unemployed were drunk in railway stations,
rumours of war played on a constant loop.

The Furies were running out of patience
reduced to muttering curses and the lost
were lost in their own preoccupations.

In feral offices, the running cost
of living was calculated down to pence
by those who needed least and owned the most.

Imperial glamour was the last defence.
The cinema played all-out games of doom
on borrowed power. Even our dreams were dense,

crowding us out of every empty room.
We threw each other out for lack of rent.
We were the bust remains of what was boom.

And knowing this, that none of it was meant,
not quite precisely as the world turned out
but as a fanciful presentiment,

was of no consolation. None could doubt
what was happening. The sea was emptiness
out of which light emerged. One distant shout

and it was here, the water's fancy dress
of time as tide, the crowds along the street
jostling to hear a demagogue's address.

Where else was all the troubled world to meet?
Why was the water rushing to the door?
At whose damp walls were the loud waves to beat?

MARK BLAEUER

An Argument for Neutering

So many good dogs in the world,
yet little in the way
of butleresque humanity
to offer them filet.

So many nice cats in the world,
so few maids in the vast
throng of our seething peoplehood
to meow a hymn for Bast.

So many morons in the world,
I wonder at Darwinian
or Providential circumstances
doling out dominion.

KEVIN O'SHEA

In the Dark

1

Under the window tree, there's something back
then gone as he looks there.

The moon's trespassing gives the boy some light
while faking sleep, aware
parents are what visit when it's late.

They check and aren't the ghost.

By lying how the smothered dolls are strewn,
he tricks who knows the most.

2

The gale on vacation can't wash away
the shore's barnacled stories
of shark attacks, in water punching bulkheads,
where boys defend the gory.

Ribs of waves reaching the hot sand were cracked
with wind and foamy arcs,
bobbing who'd put their marrow in it.

Every glare had a shark.

3

Nobody ever locked the cellar door.

The old air shivered flies.

His heart was close to jumping through his neck

when he grasped there's just supplies.

Upstairs, the parents emptied

bottles, preserved here in the dark. A light

switched and they found him seized.

TRAVIS BIDDICK

The Nape of Her Neck

The nape of her neck:
An atmosphere of hair and skin.
Where wetted cloth and sun have been.

A high relent
Of time my finger-strokes have passed,
Guiding her pains to their long last.

A steep approach,
A pedestal of quiet strength –
No terminus, no certain length –

In tending and out
On axes that our eyes relate,
On curves converting through a straight.

Within my reach
In perpetuity of stem –
An unmoved mover's healing hem.

CLAUDIA GARY

Ballet Routine

Curves on a graph controlled by x and y
express acceleration or decline.
But on your hips, what do they signify:
each muscle winning, losing your design?

Plié, et dégagé, et balancé,
you're at the *barre* with seven other girls
all beating legs in rhythm as you sway
to strict piano music that unfurls
a private wish to conquer every ounce
of flesh spanning each crested ilium,
each arc held hostage, mute as you all bounce
and stretch your bodies, hurting, healing them.

And then the class is over: time to meet
for pizzas, ice cream cones, across the street.

CONRAD GELLER

When You Are Through With Me

When you are through with me I will not pine
Like antique lovers waiting just to die
Of lust undone and passion gone awry.
Since love is neither bane nor anodyne,
We'll make our breach, dividing yours and mine,
Old stubs of pleasure, menus of desire,
Unlovely ashes of a sometime fire
Banked by neglect or smothered by design.

When we do meet, in some odd time and place,
You with yours and I with mine, let's say
The civil thing and keep a civil face
As if all happened in a different way,
As if in fact I did outdo disgrace
To falsify another yesterday.

CATHERINE CHANDLER

Off-the-wall

for Caitlin

It's late. Soon I will yank them off the wall –
these posters urging one to think about
the selfless act of signing off on heart,
on corneas, kidneys, liver, lungs and skin.
My satisfaction will be pure, perverse.

At 3 a.m., with no one in the hall,
not caring if they ever find me out,
I exercise my right to fall apart,
ask God's forgiveness for this venial sin,
and jam the jagged pieces in my purse.

It's far too early yet to know if she's
to live or die; and I shall not assume.
The day shift nurses and the orderlies
arrive as grace notes trim the waiting room.

DOIREANN NÍ GHRÍOFA

Rondelet – from a Crack between Rafter and Roof,

they fell, they fell.
As I watched from my windowsill,
they fell. They fell,
then soared to sky – bats, indelible
black blots, chasing mouthfuls of moth. Still,
they wing through my dreams. Like ink spilled,
they fell. They fell.

Rondelet On Clothes Destroyed While Making Love

I tore your shirt.
When you kissed me, I wanted more –
I tore your shirt
and kissed your throat. You raised my skirt.
Buttons popped. We fell to the floor.
Now we can never return to before
I tore your shirt.

HENRY KING

Bounds

The airport's full of people going on summer holidays, but the mood is tense. We're late. Two hours' delay, the kind of thing that's bound to happen with cheap flights. Meanwhile, a string quartet – on tour, perhaps – tunes up and plays folk songs to entertain us and kill time.

While we wait, I think how in two months' time I'll be back through here, the British summer long since finished. Nearby, a mother plays with her daughter; two men discuss their late father's funeral. On my own, I string my earphones up, and listen: "Homeward bound,

I wish I was; homeward bound..." Home, where I've been just once before. Last time was eighteen months ago, when a string of lights shone round the Christmas tree. But summer in B.C. will be different, with the sun out till late, and at the beach, productions of Shakespeare's plays –

surprising though I find hearing those plays in Canadian accents. At the furthest bound of the western world, where English is the late-comers' language, I feel an altered sense of time, as if the calendars began in summer, and history's just as long as a piece of string.

Now they've secured the wings with bits of string, or something, and we board. The captain plays apologetic. But the sky's clear, it being summer, and we cross the distances in one smooth bound, arriving just behind our scheduled time. It's early evening here, not yet late,

though with the eight hour difference, it feels late.
I can't make many trips on a shoestring
budget; I don't know when the next time
I'll come will be. However often, this place,
unfamiliar to me, to which I'm bound
by family, is my home, at least for the summer.

When I leave in late summer, I'll be bound here
by a heartstring, stretched taut across the time-zones
as the paper-cup telephones I used to play with.

Adam, Afterwards

The first gift was the garden, although it preceded me.
You could say I was the gift and the garden received me.
Either way, it was entrusted into my care.
The second gift God gave me was the power
of speech: I only had to mouth a creature's name
for it to be so present it seemed to come
in obedience to my call. I also named the plants,
bar two God had already chosen; and the fragrance
of every flower and texture of each fruit
rose to my palate when I spoke of it.

Eve was the third, the first I had to drop hints for,
and the last of all came not from God, but her.
It wasn't because she said it tasted sweet, when
she came home with a piece of fruit half-eaten,
but because she said it had no flavour
I thought it must be safe to accept the offer.
And yes: it melted with every bite, leaving
the taste of nothingness on my tongue.
At first we felt no change. Then I felt ill.
I gagged and retched, but instead of bile,
new words forced their way into my mouth
and through my lips. Disgusted, I spat them out.

What were they – 'good' and 'evil'? Nothing answered
when I called them. Worse, my strange cries scared
the other animals away. Before,
anything absent had only been elsewhere.
Now we had words for things we'd never seen,
and they revealed a world we'd never known.
When we were sent away, I think we were meant
to find out what those words referred to. We haven't;
but sometimes I think I've glimpsed them, in the shadows,
tangled together – the way God must have spied us
as He walked through the garden the day we chose
to make love secretly, behind the trees.

BRIAN STANLEY

Loon

How laughable it was to claim this land
for crown or cross, to think the seaborne peal
of progress or the apostolic brand
would bring its vast intransigence to heel.

No garden this, no paradise foretold,
an older, colder place than scripted hell,
immune to musketman and raven scold
and heedless of the prelapsarian spell.

Thus laughter was what hailed the new breed,
a spectral parody of human mirth,
and then a call of hollowness and need
as ancient as the caverns of the earth,
but still it seemed, to all who paddled forth,
a ululating arrow pointing north.

CONTRIBUTORS

George Szirtes was born in Budapest in 1948 and came to England as a refugee in 1956. He was brought up in London and studied Fine Art in London and Leeds. His poems began appearing in national magazines in 1973 and his first book, *The Slant Door*, was published in 1979. It won the Faber Memorial prize the following year. By this time he was married with two children. After the publication of his second book, *November and May*, 1982, he was invited to become a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Since then he has published several books and won various other prizes including the T S Eliot Prize for Reel in 2005.

Mark Blaeuer's poems and translations have appeared in nearly seventy journals, with the most recent acceptances coming from *Light, Measure*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, and *IthacaLit*. A book is forthcoming in late 2014 from White Violet Press. He lives about ten miles southwest of Hot Springs, Arkansas.

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Claudia Gary writes, edits, sings, and composes (tonally) near Washington DC. A 2013 semifinalist for the Anthony Hecht Poetry Prize and 2014 finalist for the Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award, she is author of *Humor Me* (David Robert Books 2006) and several chapbooks. Her poems appear in *Forgetting Home* (Barefoot Muse Press 2013) and *Villanelles* (Everyman Press 2012), as well as numerous journals. She also writes articles on health for *The VVA Veteran* and other magazines.

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