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KIM BRIDGFORD

Misery Loves Company

Misery is having a party tonight.
Bent-Out-of-Shape is there, and so is Malice.
Everybody's looking for a fight.

Whose marriage has fallen? Whose field has blight?
Gossip prances in between Bitter and Jealous.
Misery is having a party tonight.

The hors d'oeuvres are laced with bile and plight,
And the wine that is served is Napa Salacious.
Everybody's looking for a fight.

Misery is married to Just-Served-You-Right;
The children are bitchy, each argument specious.
Misery is having a party tonight.

Come in, and sit down. You're a welcome sight.
Lust swings through the door, and hits on Curvaceous.
And everybody's looking for a fight.

In walk Small-Minded, Cold-Blooded, and Hate.
Martinis are handed to Sterling and Cautious.
Misery is having a party tonight,
And everybody's looking for a fight.

Benign Neglect

The King looks out upon his enterprise.
He's mild and good, and saddened by the lies
Of those who try to take his kingdom. He tries
To rule by inspiration, and through ease.

Yet envy drives the force of others who
Take every opportunity to do
A wrong to him. The lawyers try to sue;
And those with malice undermine what's true.

Meanwhile, the King, whose vision sides with grandeur,
Presents the world, much like a teacher does.
The people love him, while the huntsmen swarm.
Which is better: life dreamt or as it is?
They want to see him fail, this kindly leader.
How else see fear as comfort and the norm?

LESLIE MONSOUR

Forbidding Fruit

Resigned to wheelchair life, too weak to stand,
She swore her body had become her hearse.
The family stopped eating from her hand
The day she put her mortgage in reverse.
Likewise, her mood regressed from foul to worse:
Restricted diet, ill-prepared and bland,
The mortifying mop-ups by the nurse –
She killed a kind word with a reprimand.

Still, fleeting joy could take her by surprise,
As when she bit into that Bartlett pear:
Sweet recognition danced across her eyes,
Glad juice spilled down her cheek into her hair.
She held the bitten fruit out like a prize
That none, not one of them, wanted to share.

BRIAN STANLEY

Op. posth.

One cello more to swell the string quartet
to five unfretted fingers on a hand
and carve, with three parts joy and two regret,
a monument, lace-delicate and grand.

One cello more to spite the Viennese,
their self-regard, their smug *Gemütlichkeit*:
"Herr Schubert can be counted on to please
but greatness never grows from work so slight."

One cello more to solo after death
before new candles light the music room,
intoning into silence, soft as breath,
five pizzicato notes – ta dum, *Te Deum*.

DOIREANN NÍ GHRÍOFA

Tritina for the Muckross Abbey Yew

At dusk, I watch shadows' birth, a slow black growth where daylight retreats. Within the abbey's walls, silence swells with each step that leaves. In twilight cold, the past breathes and returns within reach.

Now, my boughs become wands. Murmurs turn where my roots reach – in this earth, chieftains' and poets' buried bones whisper again. Moonlight moves over me, paints me silver. Dew drenches my roots, my leaves

grow lush. In the hush just before dawn birdsong, I am still. As night leaves, a last star dances, twists a silent, icy goodbye, far from my reach. All around, old stone settles. The past grows quiet as starlight.

Dew fades in warm light, as my leaves reach towards a new day.

KEVIN CASEY

Villanelle: The Sound of the River

Éist le fuaim na habhann, agus gheobhfaidh tú breac.

Irish proverb

I heard this from a mayfly, and that should leave no doubt.
Spring lasts but a moment, and Autumn won't be long:
Listen to the river, and you will catch a trout.

Plan all that you'd care to, but before your line is out,
You'll need to reach the bank so you can find where you belong.
I heard this from a mayfly, and that should leave no doubt.

The otter is devoted, though he never was devout.
Still, he's caught more fish than Peter, so be mindful of his song:
Listen to the river, and you will catch a trout.

From the rapids to the shallows, the answer moves throughout,
Slowly in the pools, to where the current's flow is strong.
I heard this from a mayfly, and that should leave no doubt.

In summer it's a murmur, in spring a deafening shout.
In winter it's the crush of ice the north wind would prolong –
Listen to the river, and you will catch a trout.

And netting him, you'll understand what this is all about;
To join in with that music was the lesson all along.
I heard this from a mayfly, and that should leave no doubt:
Listen to the river, and you will catch a trout.

Summer Logging

We plotted against those pines the week before.
Tallest on the road, he'd spied them driving by,

and so we talked stumpage price and the like,
sitting on the dooryard grass, like children.

Coming to harvest the trees, the old man
wore no helmet, no ear plugs, wore no shirt

throughout that hot July week. When the low
rumbling whine of the chainsaw would pause,

he'd walk from the woods to ask for water,
sawdust covering his rough, sweating trunk –

a sculpture his saw made by addition,
a tree fashioned from a knobby old man.

STEWART SANDERSON

Doggerland

Perhaps they gathered on a hill
and watched their valleys fill with water,
lamenting, in their doggerel,
a drowned son or a missing daughter
carried out to sea by waves
which swept away their mother's grave.

Or maybe they had left by then,
compelled to choose between two coasts
across which they had often been
on foot. Each way, their dripping ghosts
return to us, infrequently,
caught in the gleaming nets which we

haul up out of their sunken realm.
Amidst the dying mackerel, flints
glitter, still sharp. Air overwhelms
the lumps of ancient woodland sent
us by the Earthshaker, to prove
his power, and his capricious love.

CHRIS O'CARROLL

Romeo & Juliet

Although they had been (well, you've got to be) carefully taught to
Hate all of the people their relatives thought that they ought to,
At first sight they fell hard. They played passionate, eloquent scenes,
Then they died for their star-crossed love – silly, impetuous teens.

Some scholars insist we can't rate them authentically "tragic"
Because they were done in by chance, not fate's classic bad magic.
But still, they've acquired a mystique that few couples can equal.
And how many love affairs since theirs have written their sequel?

If you were born, say, white or black, Muslim, Christian or Jew,
Such that someone's been brought up to hate you because you are you,
And your heart strays to some place your tribe would prefer it not go,
Then you know what those kids from Verona paid dearly to know –

That the yes of two souls tells more truth than the no of two factions,
That hatred and love can be equally fatal attractions.

Brothers Wright

Hail, Wilbur! Hail, Orville! The Wrights got it right.
They learned how to steer, and our species took flight.
Now the portliest wight is a wind-wafted sprite
Who can soar like a kite to a fabulous height.

We can't blame the Wrights for the Geist of the Zeit –
For in-flight cuisine that is unfit to bite,
For seating that packs us sardine-ishly tight,
Or detritus heaped up by the hijackers' spite.

Those brothers from Dayton we cannot indict
For slights at the airport security site,
Where uniformed personnel seem to delight
In pat-downs that strike us as quite impolite.

Air travel today is a nightmarish rite,
But those two are in no wise at fault for our plight.
Which is why I write *Hail!* Which is why I invite
You to join me in hailing. The Wrights got flight right.

LOIS WILLIAMS

The Coat

Some nights when I can't sleep I think of Paul
at Pittsburgh's 24-hour Cleaners, who
the first time I went in regarded me
a friend – the coat I'd brought him doing all
the introductions: broken blue suede coat
a friend had gifted me, her illnesses
too numerous to bother dressing for.
Paul said he hadn't cleaned a coat like that
since Jimmy Carter won the White House, said
whoever left you this was living large,
said he could tell a garment's provenance
by how it draped: this coat was sapphire bred
with steel, its split lapels two fighting fish;
suede aphrodisiac, a deep blue wish.

GEORGE SZIRTES

The Voices

One voice was picking itself off the floor,
another was ringing bells at the front door,
a third was shouting nonsense. There were more.

The voice of the old woman on the stairs,
the voice of Goldilocks and the Three Bears,
the voice of the man minding his own affairs.

The voice that held itself like a frail glass,
the voices on the train that we watched pass,
the breaking voice at the back of the class.

It was the night. A crowd of voices. Streets
with dogs and poor, the barks and brays and bleats,
reiterations, cries, endless repeats.

We heard the voices speaking very low,
familiar voices that we didn't know,
the voice that stuck, the voice that once let go.

Let go, the voice said. Letting go is best.
Stray lines, the overheard, the voice addressed,
and so into the night with all the rest.

CONTRIBUTORS

Kim Bridgford is the director of the West Chester University Poetry Center and the West Chester University Poetry Conference, the largest all-poetry writing conference in the United States. As the editor of *Mezzo Cammin*, she founded The *Mezzo Cammin* Women Poets Timeline Project. She is the author of eight books of poetry, including *Bully Pulpit* and the recently released *Doll*.

A native of Los Angeles, California, **Leslie Monsour** was raised in Mexico City and Panama. She is the author of *The Alarming Beauty of the Sky* (2005) and *The House Sitter* (2011) as well as the recipient of three Pushcart nominations and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. Her poems, essays, and translations have appeared in numerous journals, including *The American Arts Quarterly*, *Poetry*, *Measure*, *The Dark Horse*, *String Poet*, *Mezzo Cammin*, and *Able Muse*.

Brian Stanley was born in Madrid and educated in French until high school. His poems have been longlisted for the Montreal International Poetry Prize (2011) and published in the *Literary Review of Canada* and *Encore*. He lives in the Eastern Townships of Quebec.

Doireann Ní Ghríofa is a bilingual poet based in Ireland, writing both in Irish and in English. Her poems have appeared in literary journals in Ireland and internationally (in France, Mexico, USA, in Scotland and in England). The Arts Council of Ireland has twice awarded her bursaries in literature. Doireann's Irish language collections *Résheoid* and *Dúlasair* are both published by Coiscéim, and her bilingual chapbook *A Hummingbird, Your Heart* is available from Smithereens Press. Doireann was the winner of a Wigtown Award (Scotland) in 2012. She has also been nominated for a Pushcart Prize (USA) and her pamphlet of poems in English *Ouroboros* was longlisted for The Venture Award (UK). www.doireannnighriofa.com

Kevin Casey is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and received his graduate degree at the University of Connecticut. His work has been accepted by *The Orange Room Review*, *The Milo Review*, *Small Print Magazine*, *Tule Review*, *Turtle Island Review*, *The Monarch Review*, and

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Stewart Sanderson is a second-year PhD student at Glasgow University, writing on modern Scottish poetry. His poems have appeared in various magazines, including *Gutter*, *Magma*, *Irish Pages*, *Poetry Review* and *The Dark Horse*. He is currently shortlisted for the inaugural Edwin Morgan Award.

Chris O'Carroll is a writer and an actor. In addition to his previous appearances in *The Rotary Dial*, he has published poems in *The Higgs Weldon*, *Light*, *The Spectator*, *Tilt-a-Whirl*, *The Washington Post*, and other print and online journals, and in the anthologies *The Best of the Barefoot Muse* and *20 Years at the Cantab Lounge*.

Lois Williams is a writer and conservationist. Her poems and essays have appeared in many venues on both sides of the Atlantic, including *Verse Daily*, *New England Review*, *Antiphon*, and *Granta*. She lives in Norfolk, UK.

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.