

A woman with long hair, wearing a vibrant red dress, is captured in motion, running through a vast field of red flowers. The field is densely packed with these flowers, interspersed with green grass. The sky above is a pale, overcast blue-grey. The overall mood is one of freedom and joy.

Sideways

poetry magazine

Issue Six

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Sideways Poetry Magazine

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Issue Six

Founders/Editors:

Richard Gilbert-Cross

&

Richy Campbell

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We at *Sideways* believe that poetry should always be accessible, with everybody having a voice.

Please support poetry and the poets in this issue by sending around copies to your friends and discussing your favourites. Whilst all poets in this issue own the rights to their poems, you are free to print and distribute the magazine yourself.

Or you could web search the poets and reach out to them if you especially enjoyed something.

“Take my hand. We will walk. We will only walk. We will enjoy our walk without thinking of arriving anywhere.”

– Thích Nhất Hạnh

Poems

Milton Ehrlich - 'Your Absence Is Present', 'Gone But Still Here' & 'Your Holy Breath'

Clive Donovan - 'Pastorale', 'Forest Walk in Central Europe' & 'The Automatic Life'

Bill Cotter - 'Of Wattles & Memories'

Joan Byrne - 'Not since birth' & 'Pretty stoned'

Judith Wozniak - 'The Boy In The Window' & 'Sparrow'

Jim Conwell - 'Weightless'

Nina Lewis - 'Star Mass'

George Freek - 'Waking On My Birthday', 'The River Still Flows' & 'Winter As a Question'

New Poets

Michael Bourne - 'Brief Encounter'

Rebecca Denvers - 'What I would tell you'

Milton Ehrlich

Milton P. Ehrlich, Ph.D. is a 90-year -old psychologist and a Korean War veteran who began writing poems after the age of seventy. He has published many of his poems in periodicals such as the Toronto Quarterly, Wisconsin Review, Red Wheelbarrow, Christian Science Monitor and the New York Times.

Your Absence Is Present

In all the chambers of my heart.
I'm locked on to your smile
as you breathed your last breath,
still humming your favorite song:
Ne Me Quitte Pas, Ne Me Quitte Pas.
For a moment, it was like a religious
experience—I was lifted out of this world—
and could feel no pain.

Gone But Still Here

You are always by my side
even though I know you
may be far away.
I slowly inhale
your remaining scent
My head turns in our bed
to see you loving me
as I still love you.
Love matters
more than anything else.
How can a crumpled pillow
speak so loud and clear?

Your Holy Breath

Merges with mine,
alone in my despair
as I wait in a year of
days for your return.

We never had problems
we were unable to solve.

Who are we without
each other?

You were everything
I always wanted, and
I filled a space in you.

We could laugh at ourselves
in our own soft belly lingo—
endlessly caressing the delight
parts of our bodies until we slept.

Your smile radiates my empty room.

Clive Donovan

Clive Donovan devotes himself full-time to poetry and has published in a wide variety of magazines including Acumen, Agenda, Fenland Poetry Journal, Neon Lit. Journal, Poetry Salzburg Review, Prole, Sentinel Lit. Quarterly and Stand. He lives in Totnes, Devon, U.K., quite close to the River Dart. His debut collection 'The Taste of Glass' was published by Leaf by Leaf in November 2021.

Pastorale

Men are cutting the meadows:
Green and sweet and bruised.
Blown husks of seeds stick to my skin,
Oiled by summer's luxury heat.
I follow dusty paths through flattened grass.

I walked a forest winding trail to get to this place;
Dappled, cool, dry, the light and shade dancing
Under the molten disc of sun.
And there were many roots, as if petrified,
Exposed, polished, I trod.

And now, by this river, great oaks and willows drink and lean,
Their crowns dip to the water and drown
Creating catastrophic little scenes of slow decline;
Coves, where ducks and grebe graze in oozing shallows,
Along with little thoughts of mine, dibbling in black mud.

Forest Walk In Central Europe

The hieroglyphics on birch bark
Semi-peeled, curling, scratched, split
Some message there, surely,
From the wild, blunt, world
About what did happen here?

A sea of livid poppies, blood-red, white, merging
– Its nervous flux makes me ill – what meaning,
Oh, what hidden outrage does this signify?
Root-bound, the mute heads scribble in air
flower screams.

The wind blows the slant poppies.
Trodden, the tainted paths of woodland,
The ones the deer take of an evening;
I hear them bark at a big old mound
By the lake.

The Automatic Life

No longer do we have to press
As in the button age:
A simple wave or stroke will do.

No more wrestling with taps:
Just approach...
And dryers roar

And the best of urinals activate
After every ten sprays
And flush! I've tested it!

Flash goes the glare of intruder lights,
Startling foxes at your bins,
Gnawing yesterday's bones; all guilty with grins.

But today the supermarket door doesn't open
And I stand there
Fluttering against the glass

Like a foolish bird
Looking in
Not knowing what to do

Because it is shut
For a bank holiday
And my phone forgot to tell me.

Bill Cotter

Bill Cotter's poems have appeared in Australia, New Zealand, England and India. He has won a number of literary awards, including the Melbourne Shakespeare Society's sonnet competition. He has also published a novel exploring the gold rushes in Victoria in the 1850s, a collection of short stories and a short play for voices. He has conducted creative writing classes for adults and children. He lives with his wife, Kaylene, in Bairnsdale, a country town in Victoria, Australia.

Of Wattles and Memories

The wattles remain,
As always, untidy along the road,
Their branches knotted,
Their trunks rust coloured, twisted
And weeping brown sap,
Sap that became nectar for me in my childhood.
The scent remains, too, almost hypnotic
And the wattle blooms, mini bomb bursts bunched together,
Are no bigger, no more numerous, than they were last year.
The bees are still here, as well,
Printing their ephemeral calligraphy in the dusk
And skipping away.
I have walked past, many times, barely noticing.
But, today, I stop, I look. I listen,
Sense with a sudden, cold shock,
That, if septicaemia had done its worst,
I would not be standing here, now,
Watching these beautiful blooms,
Capturing the last rays of the sun.

Joan Byrne

Joan's poems have been published by The North, New River Press, Obsessed With Pipework, Orbis, Dawntreader, Eye Flash Poetry, Dream Catcher, Ink Sweat & Tears, London Grip, Poetry Shed, StepAway Magazine. She was placed third in South Bank Poetry's urban competition, and nominated for the Pushcart Prize. She performs regularly with the Rye Poets, a south London trio.

Not since birth

We stood, mother/daughter,
at the window, hearts thumping
in a way we hadn't known since birth.

Usually he's here by nine.
Don't let him be late on this
day of days. More tea, you said.

Which left me to witness,
sliding through the door's maw,
a letter set to change everything.

You tore open the envelope
and, as one, we screamed.

Pretty stoned

I picked you up on the beach –
we got tactile straight away.
I stroked your curves, whispered
salty sounds, rubbed you
between palms of glisten and sweat.

Brought you home, moved you in.
But your luster languished –
you needed constant buffing.
Attention sneaker. I returned you
to the sea, only there could you shine.

Judith Wozniak

Judith Wozniak has an MA in Writing Poetry from The Poetry School and Newcastle University. Her poems have recently appeared in, *South*, *The Alchemy Spoon*, *Fenland Poetry Journal*, *London Grip* and *These are the Hands* NHS Anthology. She won first prize in the Hippocrates Competition 2020.

The Boy at the Window

Most days she sees him at the upstairs window,
watching children run and tumble on the green,
his small hands pressed against the glass,
Looking out at other mothers rocking their babies,
soothing toddlers, cradled on the crest of a hip.
Most days she sees him at the upstairs window.
She tries waving to him, playing peek-a-boo
with her broolly, hoping for a smile from the boy
with his small hands pressed against the glass.
Once he made faces, squashing his nose flat
against the pane, pulling his mouth in a grimace.
Most days she sees him at the upstairs window.
A hot summers day, children run shriek with joy
dodging sprinklers in the park. The boy, inside,
his small hands pressed against the glass,
One day he isn't there and again the next day.
Someone knows about the boy locked in his room,
the boy she saw most days at the upstairs window
his small hands pressed against the glass.

Sparrow

Her prom dress hangs
in the spare room.

A cage of stiff petticoats,
the bodice droops in folds
like ageing skin.

At each meal
it's the same tricks.

She pecks at the insides
of sandwiches, tucks
morsels under her fork.

Always a baggy jumper
thumbs poke through
frayed cuffs. Her face
dusted with down
soft as feathers.

Hollowed out,
she locks her pain away.

We watch, worried
to startle her, waiting
for her fall.

Jim Conwell

Jim Conwell's parents were economic migrants from the rural west of Ireland and he was born in London, England. He has had poems published in a wide variety of magazines, in two anthologies and has had two poems shortlisted in the Bridport Poetry Prize. He is married to Annemarie and they have eight grandchildren.

Weightless

Martha,
who weighs almost nothing,
lies in bed like a fragile queen.
She doesn't have a crown.
She has a migraine
and a poignant guilt towards the servants,
who toil on her behalf.
Martha's father,
far, far away,
will know she's dead
when charges for hotels
and private medical prescriptions
stop appearing on his statements.
She will know he is dead
when the machine eats her card.
She is surrounded only by horizon.
She isn't in a lifeboat.
She just doesn't look down.

Nina Lewis

Nina Lewis is a poet from the Midlands. Her poems are published in a variety of online/print magazines and anthologies including *Abridged*, *Under the Radar*, *Paper Swans Press and Ink*, *Sweat & Tears*. Her pamphlets *Fragile Houses* (2016) and *Patience* (2019) are published by V. Press. Twitter: @Neenso7

Star Mass

When I learn our bodies are made
from the remnants of stars,
I am stunned.

How body can be water and dust
at the same time. A constant flux

of regeneration and decay,
lost planets revolve –
undiscovered, on our insides.

Massive explosions in the galaxy
bore us, not the Garden of Eden after all.

I will take star fire over apple seeds
and snakes any day.

George Freek

George Freek is a poet/playwright living in Illinois. His plays are published by Playscripts; Blue Moon Plays and Off The Wall Plays. His poems appear in numerous Poetry Journals and Reviews. His poem "Written At Blue Lake" was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Waking On My Birthday (After Liu Yong)

The moon is a crooked thumbnail,
clawing through a hollow sky.
I stare at the lonely stars.
One by one, I watch them die.
When I look back,
the moon is hidden by the
withering leaves of a tree.
Life is short and often cruel.
Sympathy is rare, and
compassion is a mystery.
I've lived long,
and pointlessly,
but I do know that.
And I long for things
things that are never to be.

The River Still Flows (After Tu Fu)

It's time to part ways.
My home again becomes
an alien place for me.
I see you disappear
into an unfriendly night.
When I look in a mirror,
I still see you there.
In my garden weeds
choke the flowers.
I have no energy to plant
new seeds. Lethargy becomes
a way of life for me.
Drops of rain stain
the window. Beyond it,
the wind howls unmercifully,
as the river flows,
twisting like a snake,
only to be swallowed
by the eternal sea.

Winter As A Question (After Tu Fu)

Summer's flowers are gone.
All that is left are
their decaying remains.
The trees are now bare.
I can hardly remember
when the leaves were there.
In the garden an empty hammock,
where my wife used to lie,
creaks in a bitter wind,
under a ghostly sky.
Like a sneak thief,
Winter now approaches.
I talk to my elderly cat,
to the moon and the stars.
As is their way,
they have nothing to say.
I think of the aroma of roses,
on this icy winter day,
but I'm unable to make it stay.

Michael Bourne

Mike lives in South East London and works for the civil service. He started writing poems in a vain attempt to 'process grief' and, after a while, decided to try writing about some more cheerful things. He now writes most when out exploring, which is one of his favourite things.

Brief Encounter

(August, 2018)

Our eyes first meet on platform 3
Southbound overground, Canada Water.

You holding hands with another man,
Me guided home by my lifelong partner,
Far too far past both our bedtimes
for us each to be this chirpy.

Our two companions start up chatting

I'm a little jealous if I'm honest

So partly just to make a point,

and partly cos I like your smile

I toddle your way, put my hands

on both your knees and stick my face

in, right up close, my usual way

to get acquainted. You, delighted,

poke my nose. Your smile

gets wider, makes a noise.

I, encouraged, clap my hands and start to sing

As up above your pram our parents

Swap their stories and their numbers.

Rebecca Denvers

Rebecca is a new poet, living in Yorkshire, who started writing for sanity with two toddlers during lockdown. She is interested in the connection between writing, self-expression and well-being and writes to explore emotions, relationships and the world around her.

What I would tell you

If I could go back to that April day
on the Tyne, dressed in white, us
standing under an arch of flowers,
candles golden,
and a hundred happy faces,
I would tell you that real love
won't always feel like this.

I would tell you that it will feel like
hot coffee carried up the stairs at 6am,
your lamb tagine on a tired Tuesday,
holding tiny hands through white cot bars,
eyes closing on the settee before 10.

It will feel like arms around each other
when the world around us is spinning —
a blur of little people, never silent,
a sea of plastic littering the floor.

It will feel at times we are lost in it all,
piles of washing, putting out the bins,
but real love feels like a selfless task,
whereas arches of flowers and candles don't last.

It will feel like it is hard,
and tiring,
and heart-wrenching at times.
And if I could go back, I would tell you,
truthfully,
that real love will be better
than anything that we could dream up
on that perfect April day.

Credits

A massive thank you to the talented poets of this issue. Without you, there would be no magazine. To the readers, we really hope you enjoyed reading. Your support means so much.

Sideways x

Cover Photo by Freddie Addery on Unsplash - thank you

Haiku Corner

‘Mr Andy’ By G.S.

In bleakness of life
sunshine is always waiting
behind dark grey clouds

Feeling inspired?

Get your poems published in *Sideways*

Issue 7 coming August 2022!

Sideways
poetry magazine

We are so excited for Issue 7. Issue 6 was our biggest and best yet & we cannot wait to start reading your submissions.

Poems can be about any subject and in any form. Length-wise, most poems we view are up to 5 pages of A4 at the very maximum.

We welcome poetry from both published and unpublished writers. All we ask is that each submission has not been previously published elsewhere.

Also, do include a brief biography/publication history.

Please email submissions to: sidewayspoetry@gmail.com

With thanks to our contributors:

Milton Ehrlich, Clive Donovan, Bill Cotter, Joan Byrne, Judith
Wozniak, Jim Conwell, Nina Lewis, George Freek, Michael
Bourne, Rebecca Denvers

Sideways is an online poetry
magazine. Each issue features
poets from around the world.

It is always an absolute pleasure
welcoming submissions from
established writers, and we
especially encourage poems from
those who are yet to be published.

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