

Sideways

poetry magazine



March 2023

Issue Eight

Sideways Poetry Magazine

London & Manchester, UK

Issue Eight

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.

“I will no longer mutilate and destroy myself to find a secret behind the ruins”

– Hermann Hesse
Siddhartha

Poems

GEORGE FREEK - 'Grief (After Mei Yao Chen)'

& 'A Short Poem About A Crow (After Su Tung Po)'

KEN ANDERSON - 'Palace of the Leopards'

JESSICA SALVI - 'First Dates'

& 'Prayer to an Aching Heart'

SOONEST NATHANIEL - 'The Night (After The Bandits' Attack)'

GERARD SARNAT - 'Legacy'

JOHN GREY - 'The Unattained'

CLIVE DONOVAN - 'The Villa'

FREDERICK POLLACK - 'Lights Out'

New Poets

REBECCA FRIEND - 'What Is The Point?' & 'Grief'

George Freek

George Freek's poem "Enigmatic Variations" was also recently nominated for Best of the Net. His collection *Melancholia* is published by Red Wolf Editions.

Grief (After Mei Yao Chen)

I dream I'm a crow,
landing in a field of corn,
but pain wakens me
with a hammer blow.
The sun rises through fog.
Last night, I thought
I saw things clearly.
Today my vision is unclear.
The day is gray.
The air feels like clay.
Dahlias tremble,
in a muggy breeze,
as if they were afraid.
I drink my coffee alone.
My wife's been dead a month.
I don't know where she is.
I only know
she's very far away.

A Short Poem About A Crow (After Su Tung Po)

Walking the lake's edge,
I watch a crow
as it circles over my head.
Waves crash against stones.
The crow lands in a tree.
I look at him.
He stares back at me.
He seems unperturbed.
He's an unknown.
He means nothing to me.
I simply walk home.

Ken Anderson

Ken Anderson was finalist in the 2021 Saints & Sinners poetry contest. *New Poetry from the Festival* (anthology of 2021/2022 winners and finalists) includes four of his poems. His poetry books: *The Intense Lover* and *Permanent Gardens*. Publications: *Dawntreader*, *The Journal*, *London Grip*, *Lotus-eater*, *Lullwater Review*, *Orbis*, *Sein und Werden*.

Palace of the Leopards

You, Raja, with your turban
of hippie hair, and you, Maruska,
with your Russian-red babushka, remember
who invited you
to live
among the cats.
We threw quite a do
in our little Taj Mahal, and, at first, you didn't mind
who lumbered by. At night
they paced
beside the bed
like dreams. By day
they played
like kids
in the yard. You, a Brahmin, read, and you, a Wiccan, wrote.
The others prowled, consenting tenants
of a sly communal zoo.
Then you lost your taste
for mischief much
the way
a native strays
and winds up lunch
or a drowsy soldier drops
on punji sticks. You forgot the tune
that kept the cobra dancing.

(continued overleaf)

(continued)

Tonight, the moon (a big albino elephant) is rolling
through the bush. Hyenas practice scales.

I peel a shy banana, jaded chimp
up a tree. It's a lonely business—free.

Jessica Salvi

Jess Salvi is a Franco-English poet from Grenoble, France. She holds an MA in Politics from King's College, London. She has recently been published by Emberr Magazine and her favourite poet is T.S. Eliot.

First Dates (Inspired by Arseny Tarkovsky)

In these solitary moments,
The deep undercurrents of the sea lay still,
The breeze blows the curtain almost imperceptibly,
And the air between us holds softly
Like a fat guard, arms folded and calm,
Your hand is warm and my entirety fits in its palm.

When blessed by grace,
As your nakedness reclines into dusk
And the world is contained in your ridges and their sheen,
A small sail glides gently through cream,
The sky expands in vast shades of white hue,
And in the ridge of your nose is encased a universal blue.

Ahead of us, the future,
An unkempt man, his head titled and hopeful,
An umbrella swaying limply from his hand.

Prayer to an Aching Heart

I cradle his delicate tear,
His caress etched on my cheek,
The fragile vestige of memories,
Pray the Lord thy remnants keep.

The sun sets on the unknown,
The moon rests in a faint light,
Look down upon his restful breaths,
And safeguard him through the night.

The mourning weight of longing,
The soul laments and moans,
Love is the wilful burden,
The aching heart carries alone.

Soonest Nathaniel

Soonest Nathaniel is a poet, broadcast journalist, and spoken word artist from Nigeria. His poetry collection, *Teaching Father How to Impregnate Women*, was selected as a winner of the RL Poetry Award. A Rhysling and Pushcart nominee, Soonest was named a 2021 Langston Hughes Fellow at the Palm Beach Festival and Poet Laureate for the Korea Nigeria Poetry Festival. His poems have been included in *Rattle*, *FIYAH*, *Pedestal Magazine*, *Ilanot Review*, *Feral Poetry*, *Contemporary Verse 2*, *Coffinbell*, *Idle Ink*, *Icefloe Press*, *Tulsa Review*, *Cider Press*, *Off the Coast Magazine*, *Northridge Review*, *Qmaker*, *The Elevation Review*, *Raven Chronicles*, *Scintilla*, *Silver Blade Poetry*, *Rockford Review*, *Evocations Review*, *Praxis Online*, *Loudthotz*, *Reverbnation*, *Saraba*, *Elsewhere*, and *Erbacce UK*, among others. Soonest lives and works in Abuja. When he is not scribbling in his Milk House, he spends the time listening to the music of the spheres or reading the stars.

The Night

(after the bandits' attack)

It will rain Leopards;
six-winged Jaguars,
fire-spitting Panthers –
emerging from the red hills
of impudence.

A claw will pierce
through a mother's heart,
reap like sickle, the field of her womb,
dismember son, dishonor husband,
and leave a father's heritage divided
for the vultures delight;
legacies of love's labour
all fed to the immortal worms.

(continued overleaf)

(continued)

And there will be daughters taken away,
sisters eaten way before they are ripe,
the Pantheras' paws blotting the periods
from the sentences of their lives;
a high tide of blood, a crimson flood,
rum for besotted gods, insatiate deities
feasting from rusty tables,
the avarice of temple lechers
handed the pre-occupation –
of leading the blind
to the throne of unchartered graves,
to the kingdom under the altar of desolations.
Yes, I know the night; I have lived it all my life,
I have committed its curses to memory;
the last prayer now I recite to you,
as I too await, to be ushered
into the paradise
of dismembered souls.

Gerard Sarnat

Gerard Sarnat MD has authored *Homeless Chronicles*, *Disputes*, *17s*, *Melting Ice King*. Gerard's also published by Gargoyle, Newark Public Library, Blue Minaret, Columbia, Harvard, Stanford, Main Street Rag, New Delta Review, Northampton Review, New Haven Institute, Buddhist Review, American Journal Poetry, Poetry Quarterly, Brooklyn Review, LA Review, SF Magazine and NY Times.

Legacy

Now a year in,
though life post
DST does appear
perhaps bit brighter
at Corona's beginning,
when it was not clear If
basic supply chains'd hold
or there will be soft landings
oy, we hoarded as much toilet
paper — even overpriced harsh
but inadequate single-ply kinds
— as can find: resultantly, half of
our kids' inheritance boils down to TP.

John Grey

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in *Stand*, *Washington Square Review* and *Floyd County Moonshine*. His latest books *Covert*, *Memory Outside The Head* and *Guest Of Myself* are available through Amazon. John also has work upcoming in the *McNeese Review*, *Santa Fe Literary Review* and *Open Ceilings*.

The Unattained

This is as far as we go, says the guide.
We made it three quarters of the way
but clouds thicken, sun weakens its grip.
So we descend the mountain, retrace invisible steps.
Stiff angles retreat. Rough going recedes
into the ease of clomping through meadow grass.
Everything is threatening above and in shadow below.
My head turns, surveys what I might have
accomplished with more time, more guts,
then reluctantly follow the one whose paid
to know his business.

This is my third time attempting the ascent
and it's always the same.
Whatever the team, the experience of those
involved, we reach a point where we
unwillingly must call a halt.
The escarpment looks down in triumph.
I'm not getting any younger.
How many more attempts are there left within me.
If I'm to retire into a peace beside a reed pond
and a field of rhododendron,
I wish to earn that withdrawal from the heights.

(continued)

My problem is that I am in thrall to adventure.
It halts the slide into nothingness,
the sense that I'm losing everything I am.
If for one moment, I could be the eagle
that soars high on the thermals to its aerie in the cliff.
It doesn't even need the wings I'd trade my arms and legs for.

The mountain's always there to taunt.
Look up and my nerves near come to blows.
And yet I keep my dreams close, my failures at arm's length.
The road to the sky's not going anywhere.
Forever at hand are my compass and blue backpack.

Clive Donovan

Clive Donovan is the author of two poetry collections, *The Taste of Glass* (Cinnamon Press) and *Wound Up With Love* (Lapwing) and is published in a wide variety of magazines including *Acumen*, *Agenda*, *Crannog*, *Prole*, *Sentinel*, *Sideways and Stand*. He lives in Totnes, Devon, UK. He is a Pushcart and Forward Prize nominee for 2022's best individual poems.

The Villa

Jean and Jim sip gins at six o'clock. Clink clink.
They really do rejoice in ice this steamy evening
Their lofty terrazza has sights of seas and sierras.
With soft recliners from which to view the sunsets

They value, too, the blue of their own swimming pool;
So tranquil the lilos drift near where drowsy insects drown.
Racers buzz their two-stroke scooter-hell somewhere in the hills.
Cicadas drill their tymbal song and pine and eucalyptus ooze resin.

They really do appreciate this perfumed cliff-perched villa;
The Sky T.V., English newspapers, local cheese and figs.
Soon they will start on the wine, make dinner.
The ice has melted in the evening heat.

Frederick Pollack

Frederick Pollack is the author of two book-length narrative poems, *The Adventure* (reissued 2022 by Red Hen Press) and *Happiness* (Story Line Press); and three collections, *A Poverty of Words* (Prolific Press, 2015), *Landscape With Mutant* (Smokestack Books, UK, 2018), and *The Beautiful Losses* (Better Than Starbucks Books, forthcoming 2023).

Lights Out

I went to visit History
in his assisted-living place. Was told
he had bad days and worse –
winding down, like every system
in nature; like, eventually,
nature. Still, I expected
a combover, neat smoking-jacket,
snide aphorisms or a chilly,
lucid, positivist
precis of alternative disasters.
If he was really out of it,
some principle of hope, like
a blueprint with too many moving parts.

No locks, there. I knocked,
went in, found him puttering,
bathrobed, at a table.
As symbols, the objects didn't make it:
no punctured helmets, medals, scraps
of revolutionary posters; as for
books, they were few, with cheesecake covers.
Things like a grandma's painted china
cup, lovingly glued,
a ribbon, a switchblade. Through the
smell and gentle tin-and-plastic
rattle I heard him mumble,
"I shouldn't even be talking to you."

New Poets

Rebecca Friend

Rebecca has been writing poetry on and off since her early twenties. It usually takes an event of extreme elation or severe sorrow to occur to prompt her to unleash her creative side. The more life experience she gains, the more important writing becomes to her.

What is the point?

a fall with no harvest.

a summer with no sun.

a winter with no snow.

a spring with no blossom.

a channel with no banks.

a cliff with no caves.

a mountain with no summit.

a sea with no waves.

a mirror with no reflection.

a locket with no picture.

a cassette with no tape.

a book with no scripture.

i am lost, i am hurting.

i am bent out of shape.

i need sweet release.

i need to escape.

Grief

you were there, actually there
you, awake, conscious, present, mobile
you, with your tilted head, with your crooked smile

pink tee, ox blood Martens, black denim jeans
the best uniform to ever exist
the scent of scotch, tobacco smoke lingering in the air
i even fell in love with your wispy beard, with your scruffy hair

i bought you that new bed frame
i stayed and watched that match
i did not judge, i made you that cup of tea
i offered to cook for you, no more of that damn tinned chili

you seemed to know
i was completely oblivious
i must have been the drunk one really
you seemed to know, how silly of me
no one lasts longer than a lifetime

i will take on the baton dad, i will drink the beer
i need to numb the pain
it feels better than anxiety, dread, regret, oh the shame
it feels better than living in fear
when the reality is, you are no longer here.

Credits

We hope you enjoy reading this as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

And to the talented writers, without whom there'd be no magazine: *thank you*.

As Sylvia Plath said, "It is a terrible thing
To be so open: it is as if my heart
Put on a face and walked into the world."

Sideways x

Haiku Corner

'My Kingdom for a Crow' By G.S.

The crow sits patient
A-top the TV antenna
His Kingdom awaits

Are you feeling inspired?

Get your poems published in *Sideways*

Issue 9 coming September 2023!

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We are very grateful for the poets featured in this issue. We are proud to say we have already received submissions for issue 9 and would like to roll out submissions to more of our readers.

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:

George Freek, Ken Anderson, Jessica Salvi, Soonest Nathaniel,
Gerard Sarnat, John Grey, Clive Donovan, Frederick Pollack &
Rebecca Friend

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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