

EXILE

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Exile Poetry Competition

This issue is our third poetry competition, run this year for the local hospice at Bury St Edmunds. There was a good entry with 158 poems, and we are donating the full amount of £158 to the Hospice fund.

The majority of entries were by women, and this is reflected in the gender of the first three winners, and in the general theme of the poetry which tended to the romantic, the family, or a lost child. The winning poem, Mandy's Room by Ann Rutherford is an especially poignant reminder of the Hospice.

Our especial thanks go to our judges, Jane Wardle from Cleveland, and Mary-Anne Pearce from the Hospice. They did a difficult job in selecting from so many poems of good standard.

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1st - Mandy's Room

It's just a room, with window looking west,
bright with rose-pink paint, and very small;
books and records collide upon the shelf,
pop star posters hang upon the wall.
Inside the cupboard live her tattered jeans,
frayed by her hand to fit in with the gang
who drove their lives in frenzied merriment,
the kids with whom she talked, and sometimes sang.

For this was Mandy's room, once filled with noise,
where she dreamed and cried her teenage tears,
memories of Mandy's wayward times abound
to fill my mind through all the barren years.
I see her there in times of good and bad,
wearing worn-out sneakers, far from clean,
I hear her loving words and quick rebuke
when I dare to ask her where she's been.

She was a child of bright and dismal moods,
half woman when she left, but still my own,
I climbed her mountains, dallied in her dales,
her easy changing made the house a home.
The child was one who lovingly would hug,
the woman in her fought the family rules,
she tried out shades of lipstick, brilliant rouge
and thought of them as necessary tools.

She liked to meet her boyfriends, show them off,
hand in hand they'd take a seaside walk,
there was so much of men she had to learn
while in happy innocence they'd stroll and talk.
We warned her that another world exists
where evil stalks, but we did not care
to spoil her youth, until it was too late
and she had found the darker evil lurking there.

She breezed out from here one summer's night,
leaving her prize possessions where they lay,
we did not know she kept her final date,
that her empty room would always be that way.
Now she's gone, only her earthly shell remains,
locked inside its lonely graveyard tomb,
but I still hear her whisper, feel her touch,
when I sit alone and dream in Mandy's room.

Ann Rutherford

Thornton Dale

2nd - BEST WISHES

That time of year has come again
when memories are stirring in my mind.
A wasted twelve months
hammers insistently on my senses
until pain is begging to be eased.
It shrieks an angry question mark,
"Why was such a long time lost?"
There is no answer

The ritual mass of cards
with wishes changeless down the years
never coming true. The hidden fear
that next year waits beyond,
windy and bleak like a barren moor,
deaf to all my many pleas.
A cold wind blows from nowhere
harsh and unbending.

I watch as from a rocky hill.
"Walk on" Time warns. "You have no choice"
From birth this terror lies in wait
to keep me pent up every year.
Circumstances chain my future
helping me with guilt and weakness.
Past is memory and needs no voice
filled with torment.

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Hope is a road leading elsewhere.
To travel there I must leave the route
following in the past and struggle on.
My needs are so intense
their necessity bereft of reason
leaving me gasping yet surviving
and ready for the future.
A rocky path gloats before me.

Nancy Reeves

Blackpool

3rd - Oh, Western Wind

Midnight is iced and silent, you're not there,
I in my bed, my man-forsaken lair,
churn round to form a niche, like my old dog,
Come back, come back, love, filled my arms-and hog
the best part of my too-small eiderdown.
The chill is different when you're not in town.

Come back-and slop in slippers, drop wet towels,
I shrink beneath the bedclothes, something howls,
(I think it is my heart). When you are here,
the engine of my life slips into gear
despite the times your glass sits off the coaster
and carbonated crumbs lie round the toaster.

Come back-and leave the tumble-drier on;
I weep for irritations that have gone.

Barbara Daniels

Monmouthshire

COMMENDED**Finger of Clay**

*My computer keyboard is getting old and
sometimes
fails to print the letter 'e'*

I never seem to learn to be

a typist; a miss-typist, yes. Take 'poetry'
or 'potry' as I often have it. Unlike 'pottery'

'potry' dries into a fragment only fit to bury
in virtual reality. IT Archaeologists will find

a plethora of unused 'e's. I'll not mind.
I'll be dead. Some signwriter will have l-ft

the 'e's' out of 'l-v-l crossing',
the gate will turn in on me. I'll be clay.

Some mistakes don't just go away.

Philip Burton**Bacup**

Ten Years Of Adulthood

Ten years of adulthood, you look down through a tall
glass
And watch the pictures shifting, moving:
A job that took you nowhere, a forgotten school class;
Untapped potential; marks improving.

An unshared sunrise, and the misty things you dream
about
As others build their lives around you.
The glance misunderstood you never did come clean
about.
The cocktail bar that nearly drowned you.

A perfect lover lost, a slow redeeming apathy,
The several times you gave up smoking,
A footpath unpursued, a tree unclimbed unhappily,
A log that only needing poking.

Ten years of adulthood, your glass is full and focusless,
What might you tell a son or daughter?
Ten years of adulthood, the liquids clear and odourless-
It could be vodka, could be water.

David Hill**Budapest**

Cyberman

I'm a Pentium geek, I'm a gigabyte guy,
 A website surfer on a cyberspace high,
 My brain is glinting like a CD ROM
 And my days download from life dot com.

I've DVD and rig rewrites
 From zip drives stacking up multi mega bites.
 I'm an Internet druggy on a left click spree
 From a magazine cover disk they gave out free.
 My VDU is bigger and my mouse can scroll
 And my hard drive stores my digital soul.

My brain is glinting like a CD ROM
 And my days download from life dot com.
 I'm a Pentium geek, I'm a gigabyte guy,
 A website surfer on a cyberspace high.

My sound card echoes to the megahertz rock
 And my keyboard ticks to the cyber clock.
 Integrated graphics and TFT display
 My latest streaming video in this fantastic way:
 A million graded shades of flashing pixels on my screen
 Demonstrate addiction to the cyberman scene.

My days download from life dot com
 And my brain is glinting like a CD ROM.
 I'm a website surfer on a cyberspace high,
 I'm a Pentium geek, I'm a gigabyte guy.

John Statham

Stoke on Trent

I suddenly feel normal now
and I know it's not really
right, I haven't actually thought
too much over the last week
or so. I just seem to drift
into self pity and self obsession.
I've had a drink now, is this
the ultimate thing that I have
a problem with in this world?
I hate people who drink too much,
thinking it's cool, or people
who change when they're drunk
or people who binge drink and
yet ultimately I'm all of
those. I suddenly feel normal
now.

Sid Stovold

Aldershot

Boots

A year you've been on duty
minding my two feet,
wherever I've been
you've been there for me
road, avenue, path or street.

You were reduced
in the wholemeal shoestore,
the cheapest on display
so I ditched my clapped-out sandals
and you marched me away.

Canvas uppers
rubber soles with style,
a vegan's dream
and since then you haven't had
a single day off, a bargain extreme.

But your streetwise black is fading
and the time is drawing near
when I'll seek some younger minders
in the price range that you were.

They must be comfy and hardwearing,
style is neither here nor there
for a boot that gives me blisters
is a boot that doesn't care.

Annemarie Cooper**London**

The Wall Builder

“Just setting the stones in order”,
He says, picking up the trowel.
I watch him.
Laying the out,
Sizing the space
Where each one will go.
No need for paper and pen,
Only his tools,
And a very good eye.

He feels the stones and turns them over.
Each one a jigsaw piece.
The stones, slightly leaning
Against the soil.
Weep holes for water to drain.
I watch him.
Shaping and chiselling.
“Each stone is different,”
He says. “Just like people.”

Marie Renshaw**Seaton Sluice**

All the best things start with S

*Sweet, sweet, sugar
 Sticky syrup swizzle sticks
 Sex, sex, sex
 Shopping sales summer spring sales shopping,
 Sweet, sweet sugar.*

*Summer sun, spring showers
 Star-studded skies
 Sparkling, sparkling,
 Sweethearts strolling along the seashore
 Smiling, smiling.*

*Soothing slumbers
 Sophie softly sleeping,
 Soulful sundown singing
 Silence.
 Spiritual, soul searching, silence...**SALVATION!***

Rachel Hossack

Sudbury

St Boniface Churchyard

In Boniface churchyard
The fossils lighten the aged slates
Where words proclaim
Excessive goodness for the worthy rich
and Anna
The lieutenant General's wife
Claims a ready familiarity with Christ.

But I prefer those anonymous others
Their riches lie in a merging with landscape
Their stones are lichen'd in the tones
Of the grey green sea
That washes the overhang in a slow recycling.

And their soil, mingled with evaporates,
is scorched in sun by day
Sparkled by stars at night
Eternally salted by fire.

Carol Parris**Sidcup**

I Think It's Alright Now

Time, it creased me up in panic
 erasing order as the wheels strained
 too fast, I slipped long the way
 didn't see me fall into the drain
 Somewhere in among the shopping trolleys,
 the cheque stubs of my broken dreams,
 I thought I'd paid my dues of drudging
 but the door marked exit disappeared.

But it's alright now
 (I think its alright now)
 I've got myself a secondhand
 life
 and it sure looks good to me.

I've got a little garden
 and my neighbour he's called Jim,
 I've got a satellite and a microwave
 and all day MTV.

Sometimes I remember those light years
 as a falling leaf of bonfire. Smoke
 acrid sharp calls my name in an instant
 and the world spins on its axis, for a while
 I saw the pole star shining in my optimistic haze
 I led myself towards it and took it in my stride
 it burned right through and sucked my up
 left me vacuumed, washed and dried.

But its alright now
 (I think its alright now)
 I've got myself a secondhand life
 and it sure looks good to me.

I used to be a person
 with a chauffeur driven car
 I think I had some numberplates
 especially made for me

But its alright now
 (I think its alright now)
 I've got myself a secondhand life
 and it sure looks good to me.

Zoe Bethell

Kedington

Shattered Emotions

A glass lays shattered on the floor
Close to where I stand
I felt no pain although I saw
The blood upon my hand

I felt nothing, I was completely numb
My limbs had lost their will
Emotions died, tears wouldn't come
And time was standing still

How long I stood, I just don't know
The blood formed a darkened pool
I didn't try to stem the flow
Just stood there like a fool

I read again the note you left
The words tumbled in my head
You've gone away, my soul's bereft
I wish that I was dead

I'll buy a glass a remove the stain
My body will survive
But first I have to feel some pain
To prove my heart's alive

J Johnson Needham Market

Shadows

Don't let that thin ice of the past,
Crack under the weight of what might have been.
Wait.....at the edge of memories lake
Until your new life melts away that brittle pain,
To reveal the bright ripple of love that was yours,
Before the shadows came.

Eve Sorrell**Helions Bumpstead****Returned**

In the red summer morning
When the sun burns into your eyes
And shadows of yesterday
Are etched onto the ceiling
I am returned unto you, my love
As a whisper is
To the kingdom of its calling.

Dee Rimbaud**Glasgow**

Adam And Eve It

An apple a day keeps the doctor away,
 as granny Smith's proverb proclaimed;
 A Russet or Pippin will keep a girl skippin'
 the reason that Eve gave, and claimed

she'd shaken the tree for her fellow's health sake-
 nor rebellion or feminine pride.
 She'd been scrumping the day that God was away
 to get vitamins in his inside.

God had this idea Eve had not told the truth,
 but that wasn't the point any more-
 apples opened their eyes, so to their surprise
 our innocent parents both saw

they were naked, quite starkers, yes not a stitch on.
 They were filled with alarm and with shame.
 Through eating the apple they now had to grapple
 with guilt and with sin and with blame.

Their expulsion from Eden with fig leaves to wear
 filled Adam and Eve with disgust,
 for their easy life stopped they foun Paradis swapped
 for labouring long and for lust.

So digging and delving and hoeing and such,
 they slaved, as the angel had taught 'em.
 By the sweat of their brow they learnt how to plough
 till their fig leaves dropped off in the autumn.

John Statham

Stoke On Trent

For Howard

As I look upon your photograph and behold your lovely face,
Its then my tears begin to fall, my heart begins to race,
I want to hold you in my arms, to cradle you with love,
But your no longer here with me, you reside with Him above.

He has so many with him, why did He need one more?
He knew I also needed you, what did He take you for?
I know that you'll wait patiently until we meet again,
But I don't know if I can wait, if I can stand the pain.

Of course I have my memories of a life that used to be,
And these are locked within my heart; you're always here with me,
The times we had together, were happy, filled with joy,
I loved you from the very start, you were my little boy.

No one could ever match you, I was so proud to be your mum,
But more than that, I was prouder still, to have you for my son.

R.E. Seabright**Haverhill**

The Matriarch

She comes into the yard in the rear,
The cowman's three year old
Perched on her bony back
While she steps ponderously,
A little 'footy' now;
Her great bag swinging like
A rubber glove blown up with air;
She's old, but she still milks well.

Her daughters, granddaughters, jostle round her
As she pushes on, into the yard.
No respect for age here, but her size
Holds its own, and she gets her share.
Despite this, she's thin – 'Milk's off her back,'
Waiting patiently in her corner
For her turn in the parlour.
Her black-and-white hide
Flung over the scaffolding of her bones.

Chris Buckland**Isle of Wight**