

# EXILE

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Another year, another Exile – thank you, readers all, for your patience at our indolent production, and our apologies especially to all of you who have subscribed to Exile. We have promised to supply you with four editions – I am sorry they are not all within the one year. Our only excuse is that Exile continues without subsidy, help or profit; it is the delight of the many poems we receive each month from around the world that rewards our efforts.

This edition contains another good selection of modern poetry, reflecting both the concerns of society, and the individual's anxieties within that society. Because of our tardiness, most of the poems were written before the September 11<sup>th</sup> events; perhaps the next edition will reflect something of the change in society's expectations as a result of that time.

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## **School**

Hated, loathed  
Gates closed,  
Playground small,  
Bullies rule,  
Dim-wits cry  
Very sly.  
Boredom bad –  
It was very sad.

Edwin Marr (age 7)      Suffolk

## **Finding**

Amongst the rubble  
we found  
a cause-  
it seem'd worthy  
then it transformed  
into something  
resembling  
all other causes  
&  
it frighten'd us further.

John Robinson      Hastings

## **Strangers at the Library**

On Monday, she took out *Wuthering Heights* and he went home with *Anna Karenina*.

On Tuesday, he chose *Troilus and Cressida* while she returned some books and left.

On Wednesday, she selected *Abelard*.  
“I’m a quick reader,” she said. “So am I.”

On Thursday, she searched for *Romeo*, but he had already taken *Juliet*.

On Friday, they both reached for *Dante*.  
“Ah, here it is,” he said; “the *Vita Nuova*.”

On Saturday, the library closed early and they compared notes at a café.

On Sunday, looking at her bookshelf, they took a deep breath and began a new page.

Stuart Flynn

London

## Salt Baptism

He left job, brick and glass,  
for the roasting of footsoles on sand.

The sea, mixed with cloud and sharp  
glints, is calm and waiting.

Heel and ankle bone reel at  
the first shock of it – a cold

that in moments seems to ladder up  
to the heart's heat, while, further in,

the others encounter a darker depth  
where the waves' hands lift them.

They are light, move free as dolphins,  
a troupe of slow-motion dancers.

the sun's arrows quiver the air.  
He ambles forward, head bowed.

The sense of himself wells and ebbs.  
Soon his wrist will taste the salt.

Christopher Allan    Crowle, Worcester

## **Business As Usual**

Thoughts invite the words,  
Emotions are ghost passions,  
They swim in a tumultuous sea;  
My head is swimming;  
Still the boy with charcoal eyes  
Sketches in the details of his life,  
Wipes a tear from the understudy's eye.

We redeem prospects of love  
With songs of endless times  
Carry our business to the busy market place  
And unwind.

Nigel Greenslade      Swindon

## **If Only**

If only I had known  
That you were going to die!  
I'm angry that I've been denied  
A chance to say goodbye,  
To tell you that I love you  
Before you passed away –  
If only I had found the time  
To tell you yesterday.

John Walton      Wirral

## Shooting Stars

You remember something like that.  
The walk in the dark  
up a winding lane when a star  
splits away from the sky -  
drops down off the edge of the World.

The two of us leaning on a gate -  
our dreams somewhere out there,  
beyond the tall tangles of trees,  
past the distant town's fading lights.

Now it's happening again tonight.  
From my window I'm watching  
stars racing off to the far corners  
of the universe, shooting away to find you.

Idris Caffrey Tamworth

## The Company Man

**W**hen, in time to come, they ask,  
At the distillation  
Of the world's long history,  
“What bad deeds did you do?”  
You shall tell them  
You lied, and cheated a man of his due.  
Then when, like cracking thunder, comes  
That great soul-searching, “Why?”  
You shall at last confess what's true:  
Such arrogance can't die.

“I served the Company,” you say,  
“What counted was their need.  
I took no thought of children's pain,  
To crying took no heed.  
I wrecked more lives than you can count,  
I fucked them through and through.  
And each one wrecked rewarded me:  
Through greed and profit's due.”

“With bonuses and shares  
My stake was held secure;  
Until that day my turn came round—  
They pushed me through the door.  
Therefore, my state is just as theirs—  
Indeed, I fare far worse,  
For I have fallen from high grace  
*And* suffered mankind's curse.”

Then spoke the calm recording voice,  
“’Tis well you have replied.  
You give an honest rendering,  
With nothing true denied.  
For many worse than you have stood  
Before this moving pen,  
With lies so red and deeds so dark  
The world was cursed again.”

He smiled, to think the worst was done,  
That nothing more was due.  
He’d paid his price while on the earth:  
Now hope within him grew.  
But came the voice one further time  
To plague him with fresh doubt:  
“This is the Company of Heaven.  
From here, you are thrown out.”

Then as he fell from that high place  
He turned once to implore:  
“Why must I fall from all you’ve said  
When others have done more?”

Through thinning air, the voice came soft,  
To haunt him as he died,  
“They each left one to care for them;  
“But you have love denied.”

John Marr

Suffolk

## Ann Elliott, Suffolk

In a flash they were gone,  
Those dear, beloved faces,  
So many shadows cast upon  
The empty chairs of cherished ones.

They are gone,  
Never more to welcome home.  
Smile and ease the weary load –  
Just photos now of souls long dead.

I wrote a little poem,  
It did not take me long:  
The phone rang in the middle,  
The Porlock link still strong.

Hubbie asked for supper,  
Son screamed for his bath,  
I put down my pen and paper  
And really had to laugh.

Mummy was a poet,  
Who used to make a rhyme.  
Now she's just a housewife  
Who cannot find the time.

Sometimes, you come to me  
When I am sitting writing  
Or even making tea.  
Sometimes something in the air  
Remembers you to me.

I hear a song, a favourite tune,  
Something to keep you near,  
'The dead are always close to us,'  
You whisper soft but clear.

'Remember me, for I am but  
A shadow on the Earth,  
A fleeting glance as I slip past  
Is all my life was worth.'

## Writing

My voice, once enabled,  
has been restrained  
by the senescence of contending.  
Anguish and disappointment  
have won the conquest  
against my tongue,  
but not my hand.  
I am every one of those women,  
who once cried aloud,  
then weeped in quiet.  
We grasp fast our passion,  
and let our pen speak,  
what we dare not...

Mary Alice Owen    Louisville, KY, USA

## nostalgia

I kneel to you as I must, the sky lowering itself along  
the river mouth of Calcutta, the sun lackadaisical and  
alone, I kneel to you as I must in the only manner I  
happen to know, your eyes like Calcutta my favorite  
defeat, our loitering along school in winter and the ice  
candies of summer like the distant city lights of  
Calcutta my ignominy and our evenings, our strolls  
and pavement trees, I kneel to you as I must in the  
only manner I happen to know

by Prasenjit Maiti    Burdwan University, India

WRITING ON LADBROKE GROVE STATION,  
PLATFORM 1.

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It is beautiful  
No joke  
It really is  
The sun is rising  
Behind a Sunday Ladbroke grey

If lucky enough to be an early bird  
Enjoyment is stamped on the silence  
These are the tube teachers  
Fantasm  
Time to spare  
For wear and tear

No one expecting  
No one expecting to arrive  
On time  
The last of the weekend  
Forgiven by the beginning  
Of each week

Joseph Rye

## Eels

Right now, with the moon that way,  
The eels are mad with timing.  
As the corpse placed in the ground  
Will naturally escape its lining  
In a gluey drip and be immersed.  
Right now, with the moon that way,  
The eels slip like a semen burst  
Into ponds and black lagoons  
And come on open earth  
When needed to.

And on this same night the moon anoints  
Lovers after sex in clubs pretend  
They do not seek the vantage points.  
Watching limbs that wriggle in the black.  
Thinking one may end up in the sack  
If she could read my thoughts.

Steve Gowen      Great Yarmouth

## The Secret Vocabulary

This is the language we do not use.  
Climbing up grandfather, amazed by this 'play',  
this anarchy, not a sermon in sight;  
or the day we came across the housemaster  
and the new Geography teacher embracing in the cycle  
shed;  
or the day Sam Frost crushed the sparrow in his hands  
having so preciously extracted it from the strawberry  
netting;  
or when the anger was so hot, so blazing that  
no words would come, the vocabulary broken by  
the burning avowals of love and lust and betrayal.  
This is the language we do not use when burying,  
hiding, destroying, denying, pretending  
that the god does not see us, will pass us by,  
will miss our tricks with destiny and leave us  
on our paltry shore of despondency.  
This is the language that has no music  
or heritage, the language that cannot be  
and must not be and will never come again.

David Grubb

Henley-on-Thames

## Ten Seashells

I play up to the cafe door, its warm louvres  
love small fingers. I post the dazzling seashells  
to hear the clink often colliding summers.  
The cafe shutters rise on bubble-flocks of gulls.  
The student leans, studying me.

Sunset flecks the broken-mirrored Sandwich Bay.  
Lonely gulls foreclose on mist-wet shutters  
at the beach cafe. The tainted Thermos flask will stay  
to blame the visitor next year. It hardly matters.  
I've done my student bit. I've studied me.

The fetid marshes pull me down  
each holiday. Tractors have pulverized everything.  
Only Solenidae, the razor-shell, hides among the crown  
of course grass near the cafe door. Evening  
calls me to my beach hotel, my notes, my reason.

I place my Autumn chair against the broken shore.  
My finger studies the long gap in elongated life:  
the child I've studied, never fathomed. At the cafe door,  
ten exquisite seashells.

Philip Burton Bacup, Lancs

## The Desert Air

I want to be the one who's chosen to play  
the solo, to stand out in the spotlight - the orchestra  
silent, the audience intent, faces uplifted  
as the notes swarm out. And then step forward,  
smiling, accept the applause, the bouquet of extravagant  
flowers. Then, at the conductor's signal, lead  
the rest from the stage.

But every player knows that chance is  
I'll be glad of a spot as the third violin  
in a provincial orchestra. Or, as an amateur,  
playing in a local band; going occasionally  
to Holland or France. And as the years go on  
I'll teach, hoping, if I'm lucky, to find at least  
one promising pupil.

And when the day is done I'll put away  
the music and the stand. But, once In a while  
I'll linger, not going at once to make supper  
or out for the evening. I'll look out of the window  
at the sunset, pick up my violin, lift it  
to my shoulder and play, carefully, savouring  
the tune and the occasion.

Pat Ransford

London

## Everyday Heroes

A homey hotel  
Cooing in daisied green  
And clovered honey  
Serenaded by a lazy lake  
Proud of clustered lilies  
As fish leap and break the dream

A heat-crazed afternoon  
Sudden swoosh of helicopter  
As bladed leaf and grass  
Gust and glide  
Through fractured air  
And smell of petrol  
Strong-arms through the open window

Two young men  
Checking tautened cable  
For invisible defect  
Spending electric lives  
Suspended in space  
Assured and low-key  
Wafted down to spend the night  
At this remembered haven  
Breaking the ceaseless calm  
To touch once more with earth

Morgan Kenney      FILEY

## Prayer Being Answered

You've got the wrong idea entirely.  
It's not a big deal,  
But you should conserve your energy.  
You'll be fighting death yourself directly.

Listen. There's a woman praying  
In exactly the same street as you.  
She is asking for her baby back.  
How do you think she feels?

Be honest. When was it that you  
Started raving at me? Was it after  
Austerlitz, or Auschwitz? It means  
Absolutely nothing.

It's an accident  
Like ketchup, or burping  
That I even noticed you.

In the moments before you, I watched  
Cromwell's men roasting live Catholics.  
Babies, dogs and cats, by the seaside  
In Ireland. They liked ....

What they liked  
Was to have them wriggling  
On pitchforks over a fire ....

Do you imagine that I could remain  
Indifferent to something like that?

Don't you think, that if I could,  
I would do something? What -

What sort of a God -  
Do you believe I am?

All I've got is forgiveness.

Steven Taylor

London

## **Monica**

I've had lots of men;  
none know me  
nor I know them.  
I leave no trace  
of myself with anyone.  
There is only one real life,  
living in the thoughts of others.  
Otherwise I am amongst the dead.

All those men  
and none gave me flowers.<sup>1</sup>

D. Parrott      West Tytherley, Wilts.

<sup>1</sup>Monica Coghlan, a prostitute killed in a car crash, April 30 2001

## Patience

I had watched the tick of the clock  
for hours. My ears had turned off  
and had left my thoughts quiet and calmed.  
Without sounds, my head was left to be filled  
like a pitcher dried by the summer sun.  
The calcification of previous thoughts  
had covered the rim and left it as dry  
as desert bones.

Cool airs of whispers circled my ears,  
left prints in the sand and left with the wind.  
Soon my eyes switched off and left  
my eyes to rest on a vacant wall-  
save a picture of geese, a country air,  
a maiden with urns and full of life.  
Not left with a clock, four walls and a sling  
to wait for another four hours.

Alistair Taylor

Wokingham