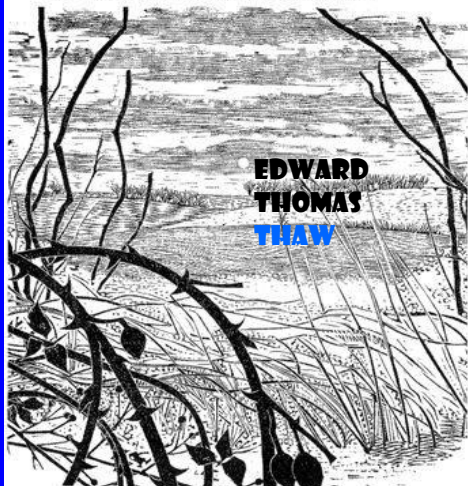




65

THE
FREE
POETRY
MAGAZINE

Over the land freckled with snow half-thawed
The speculating rooks at their nests cawed
And saw from elm-tops, delicate as flower of grass,
What we below could not see, Winter pass.



EDWARD
THOMAS
THAW

WE'RE NICE, WE'RE ONLINE
AND WE DON'T ALWAYS
RHYME

I close my eyes
I breathe in deep
Fish and chips,
And salty sea
I breathe out
And open my eyes
Appearing before me
Scores of tangled lives
My ears are always open
So tell me about yours
Where do you come from?
What do you do?
I wish I could get to know
Every single one of you
For this is a shared experience
I'm so grateful just to be here
The warmth of loving families
Offsets the windchill on the pier
Moving before me
Scores of tangled lives
You stepped right out of the crowd,
So let me tell you about mine.

Adam Davis

DECOY

The stranger at the door
distracts him with tracts
of promises without horizons.
The voice has settled into
memorised routines,
laying out its mysteries
like knicknacks on a shelf.
He listens as he knows he should,
projecting courtesy,

while at his back
beyond the kitchen
beyond the garden gate
above the woodland on the ridge

the Aurora is putting on airs
flaunting her exotic silks.

Gregory Woods

Summer Wind

It crept in through the window
behind my back.



Ruffled the paperwork on the desk;
Lifted the corner of the tablecloth;
Skittered around my bare ankles;
Reverberated the strings of my
Spanish guitar;
And the flowers seemed to
lift their heads for a moment.

It caressed the back of my neck,
Then it was gone.
That playful summer wind.

Holl

Me against

Me against the world.
Me against me.
Me against the ghosts.
Me against the miseries.

I trawl inside years past,
to unlearn the hurt
I stitched into my skin,
unpicking the threads
to remember breathing.

John Humphreys

Neighbour dispute: a breathless moment

In...and out.

In...and out.

Tangled, twiggy fingers point from the skeletal branches of next door's old and damaged tree. Invading ivy gleams green in sunlight, shifts tree's shape to a swollen bulge. My winter garden's home year-round to robins, blackbirds, blue-tits, and amorous pigeons that claw-cling to the fence.

In...

Black and white bully bird barges noisy, branch to branch, pugnacious beak thrust out. Squawks clacking defiance at the mighty rook, dismisses size, defends both hearth and home. Bully bird prevails in the battle of the branches, struts away, stiff legged and victorious.

and out...

Sun returns. Ivy's invasion edges ever on. Robins blackbirds, blue-tits go about their day and as for the pigeons ...

Helen Sadler

A siren song

I was in the garden bringing in the washing before it got wet by the rain,
when I heard a sound... a song...a tinkling jingling refrain.

I thought I've heard that song before; such a haunting melody,
it made me want to follow it wherever it might be.

A siren song to tempt me, to entice and lure me if it can.
Should I abandon my washing and run off after the ice cream van?

This song that's so beguiling me, It's enticements weaves,
a song of unrequited love done-wrong, this song for Milady Greensleeves.

As I stood there amidst my washing, I pondered and I thought,
about Henry the eighth and his many lady loves at court.

And I wondered about Henry, the king, the tyrant, the lovesick man,
what would he think about his song playing on an ice cream van?

Would he march after it and attack it with his chopper?
Or would he ask for a ninety-nine and make it a double whopper?

Joy



Below

Dolgellau, ancient settlement,
our Porthmadog ancestors,
Bala and Machynlleth, meeting
below the mountains, trading
animals, tools and building stone,
revealing slates, sanctuary from
wet or wintry sky gifts, North
Wales then and now, sacred stone
circle confirms our cycles,
forever complete, forever changing.

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DREAM?

And even now I sit and dream
Not knowing how it might have been
Exactly where we two did meet
Which hour, which second, on which street
Perhaps in summer, spring or fall
Or even if we met at all
Eventually my dreams of you
May one day prove to be untrue

© **Don Holmes**

My Father Teaching me Times Tables - Pantoum

He tried to make me learn,
into my memory burn
the numbers, the patterns, the sums.
Love served up in crumbs.

Into my memory burn.
Rubbish at counting himself,
love served up in small crumbs –
at least we stopped at the twelfth.

Rubbish at counting himself
the numbers in all the right turns,
(at least we stopped at the twelfth!)
my tummy, it would churn.

The numbers in all the right turns
he tried to make me learn.
My tummy, oh, it would churn!
The numbers, the patterns, the sums!

Clare Stewart
September 2024



My first Ode to hip hop

A lot of tales can be told
From this old kinda gold

The swagger was infectious
Check this AYO check this

Or maybe you couldn't bring it to the table cus
your mates where like
What's this AYO what's this

I didn't have my juiciest catch
Until I learnt my first verse

I was like ten kicking mad flavour to them ears

I think I had my brother gobsmacked
He couldn't believe what he heard

Now I do know this what it taught me was price-
less like no money no problems

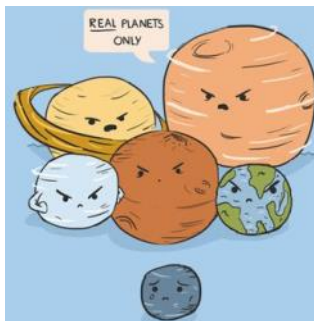
While jamming to mo money Mo problems

By richer prioritys

Before Denim and Leather

Before denim and leather
Helped me burst me
From my mind made tethers,
Everything I did was timid.
I liked reading about dinosaurs
But the bullies were scarier
Than T Rex and the bus ride home
Was scarier than a woolly Mammoth.
I like reading about the solar system
But I was Pluto small,
A dwarf planet on the edges.
I liked reading about arms and armour
But the chain mail of my self esteem
Had too many weak links.

Frank McMahon



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This body

A life sentence in this body,
serving time on the inside,
looking out through the bars
wondering if there is anything outside.

Not catalogue bought, this body.
you never ordered life,
but you got it anyway, in this body.
so be grateful, for this body.
You got it for free, but
there is no money-back guarantee.

As it ages, it needs to go to the repair shop
more.
Check the bodywork on this body for it to work.
It used to run from standing, even on cold
mornings.
Now it needs coaching: be gentle with the
clutch and
test the brakes. It is still the only one you will
get to drive.
So cherish it, this body, and a lifetime's work; it
keeps you alive.

Stuart Whomsley

A foreign language

Hear someone speak a foreign language.

The sounds I know have meaning,
but I cannot touch them.

It is like they are objects below water,
that I cannot touch.

I see the hazy outline of something familiar,
but the water is too deep.

Learning a foreign language

is like turning a tap,

with each lesson, the level of the water drops.

Suddenly I reach for an orange,

and find una naranja in my hand.

Stuart Whomsley



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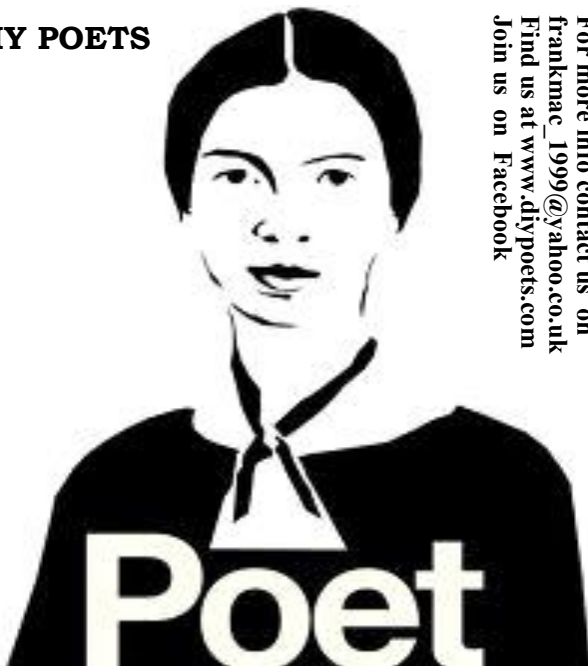
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frankmac_1999@yahoo.co.uk**

We are currently open for submissions for **issue 66**
Poems can be on any theme. They should be short,
(25 lines or less) to fit onto a page of A6. Your poem
may be brilliant but if it's as long as Paradise Lost
then it won't get in.

The deadline for submissions is 30th December
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