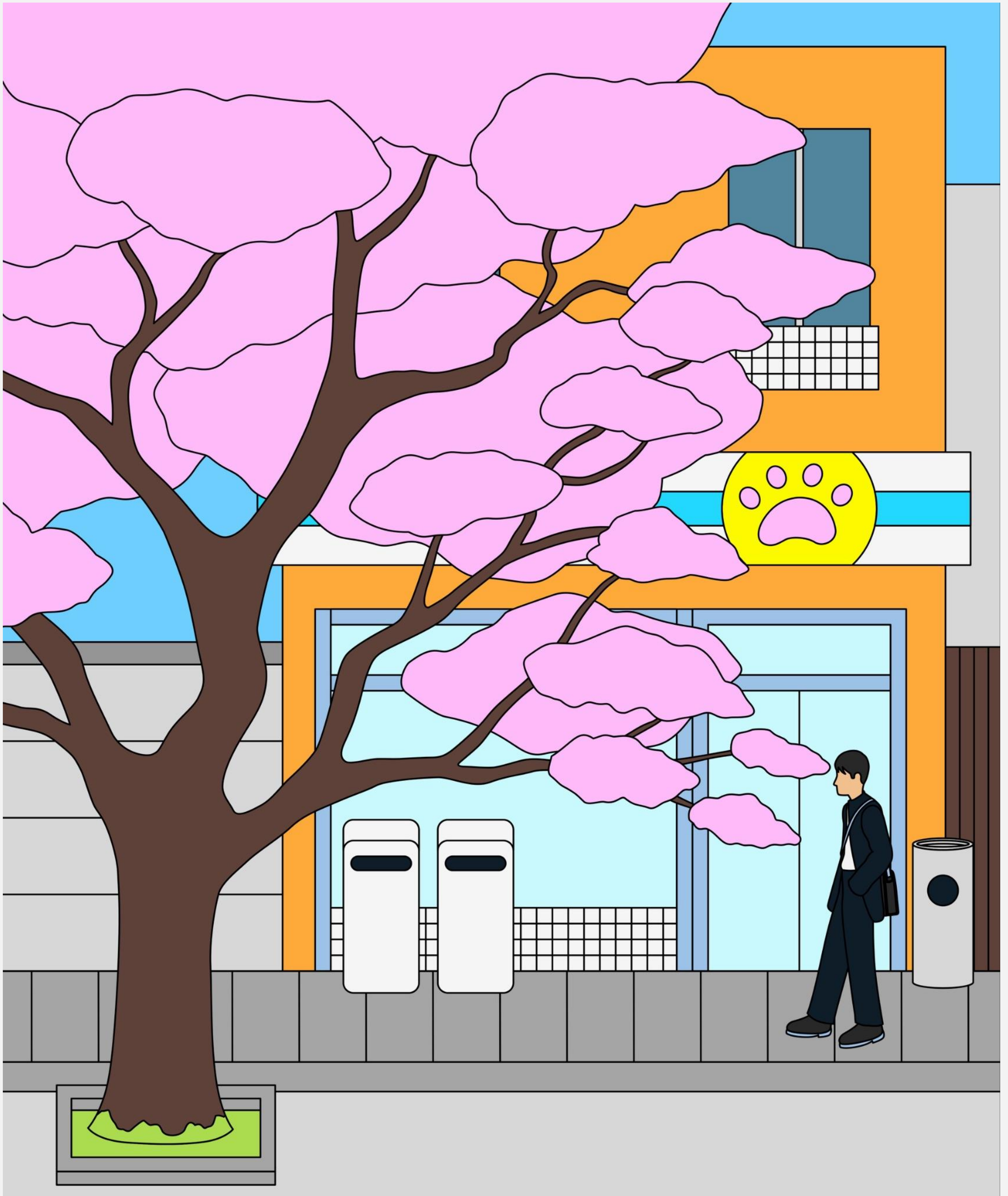


Sideways

poetry magazine



Issue 11 - Summer 2025

Sideways Poetry Magazine

London & Manchester, UK

Issue Eleven, Summer 2025

Founders/Editors:

Richard Gilbert-Cross
&
Richy Campbell

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At *Sideways*, we don't believe poetry should exclusively live behind a paywall. It belongs in hands, hearts and conversations, from small villages to huge cities.

If a poem has moved you, pass it along. Print it out, leave it at a bus stop for others.

All rights remain with the poets... but the words? They're already floating out into the world. Let them go.

**"We are homesick most for the places
we have never known."**

— Carson McCullers

Poems

Ellis Dickson – *Adieu Berthe*

Kira Rice – *Happy Birthday & My Favorite Color*

Daniel P. Stokes – *Bedtime Story & Off the Seafront*

Ingrid Wong – *Unbound & In Your Image*

Robin Wilson – *Bar Room Blitz*

Adam Kelly – *A Holmfirth Barbecue*

New Poets

Emer McDermott – *He Has a Name*

Max Lodge – *To Be Whispered in Confidence*

Daniel Simons - *Peregrine Falcon*

Jazmine Harding – *Watching Love*

Ellis Dickson

Ellis works on identity and home concepts through poetry, short stories and novels. He's interested in colours and light and their representations. A few texts of his are published from time to time in general literature, science fiction and poetry.

Adieu Berthe

brains for breakfast
and then steak

in the dark yellow-orange neon light above the sink
the atmosphere of my grandmother's kitchen

the night outside the wind in the walls
and the cars
passing, passing

my mother's car
she goes off to work,
I'm going to wrap myself up in the ribbed plaid of the armchair

in front of the TV

we'll bring out the horses
in blue and red

and I'll cheat

and then i'll stick my legs out straight
in the tiles
to tell my stories of swamps and witches

while she peels the vegetables under her floral apron,
while she prepares the stuffing and then

it's time for the secret mini sandwiches
that I carefully prepare for her and myself

and the game show host's voice will come out of the TV
until the end of the meal

when the smell of vervain replaces it

today this smell is just an idea
I'm a vegetarian
I make my own choices

I wear the ring my grandfather used to propose to her
To be lucky enough to remember love

the wallpaper has been replaced
and the ingredients in the fridge
the name on the letterbox has changed

not in my heart

today my grandmother died
it's been ten years

Kira Rice

Kira Rice is a Chicago-based poet and creative writer. As a spiritually curious intersectional feminist, and a polyamorous pansexual, she likes to write poems that challenge thoughts on the self, the universe, femininity, and love in all of its forms. Her previous collection of poems, "Love Language" was self-published on Amazon.

Happy Birthday

29 years and nothing has killed me,
Not the scraped knees or stomach flu,
Or the time I didn't make varsity,
Not cosmopolitan magazine, MTV music videos,
Or heroine chic,
Not playing house or playing doctor or
Truth or dare, spin the bottle, 7 minutes in heaven,
Not the time I got caught stuffing my bra,
Or the time I got caught smoking weed,
Or the time I got caught shoplifting,
Or being expelled, or being depressed,
Or being so anxious my entire body has a pulse,
Not my mother, not my father,
Not the loss of my grandfather or best friend,
Not dropping out of college or
working in the service industry or
working in the sex industry,
Not the sexual assault or the years after,
or the old, horny man at the neighborhood bar
That spit on me after I rejected his advances,
Not Donald Trump or Roe v. Wade or
Climate change or my grandmother calling me fat,
Not the recurring nightmares or unhealthy doses of melatonin
Or the perpetual fear that I am simply unlovable.
29 years and nothing has killed me,
Although many have tried and come close.

My Favorite Color

My favorite color is the way that old wood sets into itself,
And rises again, painting patterns that mimic human skin
across the floors.

My favorite color is the sun's reflection against the full-moon,
Early enough in the night that it's close enough to touch,
you think.

My favorite color is the first California sunset I ever saw,
The first uncomfortably large body of water I ever swam in,
The first time I scraped my knee after riding my bike.

My favorite color is the inside of your mouth,
The way my face glows after your hands have been on it,
Glimpses of you between covers and sheets.

My favorite color is all grown-up, now-
The way that berries grow darker over time.

Daniel P. Stokes

Daniel has published poetry widely in literary magazines in Ireland, Britain, the U.S.A. and Canada, and has won several poetry prizes. He has written three stage plays which have been professionally produced in Dublin, London and at the Edinburgh Festival.

Bedtime Story

You washed. I waited reading.
You emerged. “You’ll turn the lamp off,
won’t you, very soon?” I grunted,
constrained again to follow my intent.
Kissed fingers touched my forehead.
Heard a slipper, then the other, shed.
But second leg *en route* towards the sheets
you stopped a-straddle, perched,
mouth pursed in concentration, buttocks clenched.
To no avail.
Out sparked a ping,
A single syllabled contracted fart.
Your eyes above your hand dilated
and you gasped, “Oh!”
The stench was noxious, sour,
pervasive; I shook the sheet
to waft it elsewhere, and you,
you skipped – a schoolgirl giggling –
to the toilet. That’s it,
I told myself, that’s it.
The honeymoon is over.

Off the Seafront

“Over there,” you pointed, tired of walking.
“Let’s sit and see what gives this side of town.”
A bar just off the seafront, sparse on splendour.
Plastic chairs and tables on the pavement,
A grizzled barman serving with a grin.
Below us, Friday evening burbled
on the plaza - balls and skateboards
and families in clumps around its fringe.
But, over your left shoulder, I saw
Penthos in a checked shirt, hunched and ashen,
fidget with his brandy and viciously
suck a fag beneath his palm. Hopeless,
helpless, stupefied by fate, he nodded
at a spot that beamed back horror
and mouthed nothings.
But, before surprise succumbed to speculation,
before I thought to nudge you
he crushed his stub, slugged his drink,
slipped money on a saucer and,
unwitting as he entered, left my life.

A pigeon nodded to our table. Poddled
past. No pickings. You sat forward,
wound a wrap around you, smiled.
The evening had clouded. ,
I’d not noticed. Perception
is provisory and fickle.
A sideways glance can open curious vistas.
At other times from all directions
everything’s the same.

Ingrid Wong

Ingrid Hana Wong's poetry has been published in Voice and Verse, OTHERWORLDS and other indie literary anthologies, as well as featured at the 2022 Wells Festival of Literature. She lives and studies in Edinburgh, where the myriad street-birds are giving her more ideas than she can write down.

Unbound

Though we were dressed the same, I used to ogle the belt that
cut you cleanly in two, a Prussian blue scar
against the whitewashed linen of our
uniforms. When it rained they'd
cling, unsullied fabric kissing
skin, and part of me
wished the dye would run
and you would bleed where
we were cinched. You were so uneasy in
a lady's skin — I would have flayed you alive to save you, guts
spilling on the cream-coloured corridors we longed to leave.

In Your Image

I turn away from every mirror our face
appears in, if only to keep
myself from plunging elbow-deep into mercury,
skin burning, to wring the neck shaped just
like mine. I think you prefer this, for me to
gash my fingers reshaping glass and the image it shows,
even if it twists your flesh like lead the way you shaped mine.
Have you ever felt this way? Have you drawn womb's blood
to destroy your reflection with its matching bruised knuckles, are you
trailing glass dust with every glittering step?
I feel I should do the same, but the mirror
I resent the most — that I will never dare to crack — is yours, the one
I first stepped out of.

Robin Wilson

Robin was born in South Australia. He is a lecturer in acting & performance at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh. His work has been published in many UK poetry magazines and journals, including Magma & The Rialto. He has three collections of poetry published by Cinnamon Press.

Bar Room Blitz

I was playing crazy
in a covers band –
spilling beer,
dripping sweat,
well, it was a small town.

I got wasted
every weekend
with heavy metal,
as Saturdays bruised,
Sundays staggered,
into suture land.

Office hours took years
of rage and squealing
up and down the fretboard,
to free themselves
from A & E.

Oh, the wildness!
Oh, the damage done!

My small town
never wished bigger,
but it was tight
at the end,
between my edge
and my frayed suit,
when I was promoted
to supplies manager.

Adam Kelly

Adam Kelly lives in Devon. He has written poetry on and off for a few years.

A Holmfirth Barbecue

Sunday 19th May 2024

We sat in silence, half tired, half measured
Ten years of friendships taut in our minds
Staring at the dogs raking up the garden
For a moment nothing was needed
Nothing to be said.

We aren't a lost generation, just tired
But my own energy can be patched up
Repaired by these craftsmen around me
I first met, long ago now, in our shared
City of chocolate and dreams.

They take their time with their work
And the quality shines through
Even if the quantity is less and less
Than those days. No. Not quite Arcadian
But close enough.

New Poets

Emer McDermott

Emer resides in Clare, Ireland and works as a post primary English and Religious Education teacher. She enjoys travelling, hiking, and contemporary dance.

He Has a Name

His hands were blue around the edges
As though someone had just drawn him.
One dangled over and floated in midair.
He lay immovable on the park bench.
A darkened slump, unable to process time.
His hood sheltered his face and dignity
From passerbys. A layer of protection,
Upholding his humanity. If his face was
wasting away, we were none the wiser.

Anchorage air smells sweet and cool,
Clear cold skies with sun piercing through.
Outside the museum he made his habitat.
Some decisions are inscribed in pencil and others in ink.
His acquaintances, friends or enemies occupied opposite territory
- the other park bench.
We walked along the path.

I still see his draping hand,

the colour draining away like the last drops of a pen.
I still feel the hesitancy – to help or hide away.
Under his skin and within his bloodstream
lay foreign powers taking siege. An internal scream rings through his
bones.

He endures alone.

Chaos is his home - the only certainty in the unknown.

Powerlessness. I don't want to be a spectator,
a hesitator, prying now and crying later.
How do I help? How do I make it better?
I do nothing for fear of being wrong.

After looking at a snapper turtle and fish skin boots
and glacier paintings and Inupiaq people,
Brenna and I went to the gumbo house across the way.
Out the window, I saw he had found a new place to lay,
en route to his final resting place.
A body bag, shielding his face and name.

Go Play Outside

There was a strange shape slung near the kerb,
I looked closer and saw a baby bird.
It was not quite born yet – but still alive,
Lopsided in the egg that his mother left behind.
It was underdeveloped, with a sticky hue,
And I felt such sadness because his life was due.

It lay prematurely on the concrete
Forlorn and empty
Maybe snatched by an enemy?
He needs his mother – did she not miss him too?
On the cold ground – he won't be found...

“Don't touch it, it could have germs.” Mam said.

Dying without a comforting touch, flickering like a light.
What a way to meet death's clutch, with no love in sight.

Max Lodge

Max has never been published before. He works in a shop somewhere in the countryside. Nothing much else has happened in his life.

To Be Whispered in Confidence

I am thinking about the insects in summertime:
Yellows, brilliant iridescent greens meeting
Purple halfway at blue.
In among the gentle flowering plants
Richer greens, not so skin deep -
Moments of red, lilac, a baby blue
Pointlist impressions of sprouting beauty.
And

I am thinking about the insects in summertime:
How they hang in the hot air...
It must be like swimming or floating,
I wonder if they too love each other -
If girl ants get on their ant knees and pray
To other girl ants, thinking them more beautiful,
For a summer,
Than anything they have ever seen.
And

I am thinking about the insects in summertime:
And how they coalesce around fallen fruit
Rotting on the floor, sugars coagulating, fermenting,
And I wonder if the bugs ever smoke one last cigarette
And hang themselves from the ceiling
For fear of what is and what isn't going to happen
Not knowing they only live for a week anyway.
And

I am thinking about the insects in summertime:
I wonder if they sunbathe,
If they laugh,
If they fuck
And then think god I will never have sex
With someone so gorgeous again this
Will ruin it for me
And
If they look at the bug sitting next to them
And want to tell them everything they have ever thought
So maybe they could understand,
Knowing it would be futile
And

I am thinking about the insects in summertime:
And I wonder if they ever want to carve another
Bug into stone

Daniel Simons

Daniel is a writer from East Anglia. He has a PhD in Philosophy and has written on Wittgenstein and film. In his poetry, he is interested in the uncanniness in identity, nature, and the everyday. This is his first poetry publication.

Peregrine Falcon

Commotion corners my eye
to the corner of the window:
a torn pillow in a tumble dryer
spits puffed feathers grey and white.

When the melee settles
your plumed blue-grey shoulders
and white undercarriage (flecked grey)
stand tall like a bottled brooding sea.

It only makes sense backwards.
The princely Falcon, nested amongst gargoyles,
who roamed ocean blue skies
with the earned authority of a lighthouse.
You – without even thunder as warning:

Darted with a flute of violent air
A moon shaped brain with
murderous intentions
flashing synapses
the slash of snooker yellow talons turned red
all in the intangible it takes a life to pass
through a bird's breath:
my garden?

It was fierce June.
I muckraked Pigeon bones,
exposing signs of my grandfather
whose heart attack was lightening
and just as senseless:
me?

Jazmine Harding

Jazmine is in her late 20s and lives in a small village in Somerset. She has read and collected poetry her whole adult life and, in this past year, started to find her feet in writing. She has never been published before but would love to share her work.

Watching Love

Watching a grown man
Shouting, high pitched
Running back and forth
Down on the ground
Fawning
Over a little Jack Russell
There is no shame in this love
No audience beside the grass could dampen it
She runs and he follows
An adoring fan
Devotion like this in public, unabashed

For the thousandth time I wish
I was a small, pet dog

Thank you

If you're here, thank you for staying with us until the end.

And to the writers: thank you for giving us something real, something human & something worth slowing down for.

Allen Ginsberg once said, "Poets are damned... but see with the eyes of angels."

Maybe we all need those eyes now more than ever.

Haiku Corner

'Goosey' by G.S.

Graceful curves extend
goose with a slender neck glides
Slow across the pond

Have something to say?

We'd love to read it.

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We're deeply grateful to the poets featured in this issue.

Submissions for the next issue are now open, and we're eager to welcome new voices from our readers.

We accept poems on any topic and in any style. Please keep your submission to a maximum of five A4 pages.

Whether you're published or just starting out, we'd love to read your work. Please note that all submissions must be previously unpublished.

Don't forget to include a short biography or publication history with your poem.

The deadline for submissions is 31st December 2025.

Please email submissions to: sidewayspoetry@gmail.com

So many thanks to our wonderful contributors:

Ellis Dickson, Kira Rice, Daniel P. Stokes, Ingrid Wong,
Robin Wilson, Adam Kelly, Emer McDermott, Max Lodge,
Daniel Simons and Jazmine Harding.

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award-winning poets from around the
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