

The background of the entire image is a solid, vibrant green. Overlaid on this background are several ginkgo branches with their characteristic fan-shaped leaves. The leaves are a slightly darker shade of green than the background, showing detailed vein patterns. Some branches have small, round, developing cones. The overall composition is a close-up, artistic shot of the plant's foliage.

G I N K G O

P R I Z E

ECOPOETRY
ANTHOLOGY
2018

g I N k g o
P R I Z E

ECOPOETRY
ANTHOLOGY
2018

The Ginkgo Prize 2018
Ecopoetry Anthology

Published in 2018 by:

Poetry School

1 The Dock Offices
Surrey Quays Road
London, SE16 2XU.

www.poetryschool.com
www.ginkgoprize.com

Design copyright ©
Poetry School, 2018

The copyright of individual poems
belongs to their respective authors.

Design by Theo Inglis
Printed by Palace Printers

The Ginkgo Prize is generously funded
by the Edward Goldsmith Foundation

Poetry School is an Arts Council
England National Portfolio Organisation



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

**POETRY
SCHOOL**

CONTENTS

Preface – 5

First Prize: ‘Unripe’ by Jemma Borg – 6

Second Prize: ‘If you’re married, why do you call her Teresa?’
by Teresa Dzieglewicz – 8

Third Prize: ‘In the Physic Garden’ by Linda France – 10

Runner-up: ‘Tuna’ by Ella Duffy – 11

Runner-up: ‘Lobster’ by Julian Bishop – 12

Highly Commended:

‘Species Interactions’ by Topaz Winters – 13

‘wild causalities’ by Garry MacKenzie – 14

‘Song for the Cévennes’ by Sharon Black – 16

‘An Argument with the Town Clerk’ by Sally St Clair – 18

‘Calder’ by Theresa Sowerby – 20

‘Canary-Shouldered Thorn’ by Mara Bergman – 21

‘Confluence’ by Teresa Dzieglewicz – 22

‘Night Shifts in the Nature Factory’ by Sarah Doyle – 23

‘The Blackbird’s Egg’ by Andrew Forster – 24

‘The tall, gaping mouth of the redwood’ by Jemma Borg – 25

PREFACE

Teddy Goldsmith, in honour of whose work we have dedicated this prize, was never afraid to speak his mind. He wrote many books, and in them challenged a society which he felt to be deeply corrupted by economic growth and consumerism.

He simply did not believe that science and technology would leave us better off — our real wealth, he insisted, was nature.

In the 70s, he created *The Ecologist*, the first ecological journal in the UK, and co-authored *A Blueprint for Survival*, which declared that our planet as a life-supporting system could not survive untrammelled growth.

The book that best encapsulates his way of thinking, however, is *The Way: An Ecological World View*. It is a manifesto, shattering the scientific and economic paradigms that have created the mess we are in, and making a case for a new way of thinking.

Albert Einstein said, “A new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move toward higher levels”. *The Way: An Ecological World View* is a bold journey into that new type of thinking.

Through poetry, we can declare our faith in the wisdom of those forces that created the natural world and the cosmos of which it is part, and we can begin to believe in our own capacity to develop cultural patterns that can enable us to maintain its integrity and stability.

— **Dido Goldsmith, October 2018.**

Unripe

What can I tell my son to help him sleep?
The narratives of grief are still unripe:
a song of hammers in the pale dark.
I could tell him how the pine trees work to bear
their cones, to write the book of their ancestors
among sharp needles: the strange-looking fists

and fistulas that the slow green sap feeds.
I could tell him the shade is saner than the light,
despite what they tell us about 'gloom'.
The darkness is more honest. It listens harder, too.
He knows that, he feels that, in August's airless room
when all the world is changed by dulled

night-vision and the sparkling in his owl-ears.
I could tell him that the nascent cones break
out in the pine limbs as though sorrow
could take on form. Or is it only that I see
grief everywhere? I open the window.
Outside, the parched trees creak with the weight

of stories that are slowly losing sense.
How to be a tree without rain?
How to climb a mountain if a mountain isn't there?
He can't sleep until the story ends, he says.
Outside, the hammer keeps pounding the nail.
But what are we building, if it's not a future?

I can't tell him what I see with my eyes closed –
the many mouths pushing up against
a dry earth, as though they were fish at the edge

of a pond, and they cannot breathe.
What they say, I can't hear, relentlessly –
the membrane between us will not yield.

My son asks if it's a door banging in the wind.
He says he sees a figure standing by his bed.
I could tell him we live in a porous world
and that the door is never closed.
But we still must sleep, I say. I know you're afraid.
What ripens the cone if it is not hope?

“If you’re married, why do you call her Teresa?”

Cheri asks, practices her jingle steps beside our tent,
its open nylon skin spread like a carcass in the cattails
and gamma grass. She and Bella have ditched

their tea stand on the stump beside the porta-potties,
bored of slow business to dreadlocked weekends.
“What *should* I call her?” Noah unfolds a tent pole

into my hands. Only yesterday, I hiked the heat of the tallest hill
to call and say, “I miss you. They need lawyers. Come now.”
He threw his sleeping bag in the car and drove through the night.

“Chee, call her Wife!” Bella scoffs.

We laugh and the body of our tent wobbles up now like a calf, footprint
obscuring the tufts of seeding plants. Beneath the girls’ feet,

butterflies, communion-thin, steam from the land. Why don’t we do this
in English? Name things by relationship? When I crouch in the dirt
at the Sacred Fire, to listen to the speeches of AIM veterans

and grandmothers, the kids yell “Teacher!” This one word, a reminder
of who I am. I am ashamed to say I am jealous sometimes. Of this land,
of the word “ancestral,” which never belongs on my tongue.

I come from the body of a woman I’ve never met, call only
biological. My blood traces to a hilltop, forest, or quiet lake I’ll never
name. Maybe, I am afraid of this relationship,

of what it means to be White on this land, plant my tent
by the Ínyanwakaḡapi Wakpá, named by soldiers the “Cannonball,”
because when you know only weapons even a river can look

like a war. Across the gravel, kitchen volunteers boil blueberries
down to their sweetest syrups, the smell of wojapi
sugaring the air. A man from security walks by,

walkie-talkie crinkling like the warm aluminum wrapped
around our dinner each night. Here, everyone comes carrying
what they can, a trailer full of notebooks, a single box of crayons,

each night the circle overflows with dancing, the kids checking,
“Teacher! Did you see me?” and teenagers flirt with each other
from brightly painted horses. Here, the grasses erupt into golden

fireworks of seed. Every day, I want to be helpful.

Every day, I know I am happy here. And it is not enough,
but I am trying to close my mouth to hear the waving flags, the cattails

bending beneath the kids’ feet. Some days, I want to call this *love*. Or maybe I want
to call this *home*. Or maybe I’m hoping to call this *mine*. Maybe if I can learn
to be quiet, one day I will be able to name the difference.

In the Physic Garden

Andrew asks if spiritistically is a word
it is now I say
how do you spell it he says
and we sound out the letters together
him way ahead of me
 written down they're ghosts
of the evening primrose
throwing up its arms behind us
MOTH'S MOON FLOWER
says the sign and we lean in
to yellow like thunderbugs
drinking from wilting cups
 spiritistically we are yellow
and black when they are the same
night and day – me and Andrew
his words I want to save
and the flowers I can't
and it's okay
what does kill or cure mean he says

Tuna

Bluefin; barrel of salt; a barb
hooked to its gape; mouthful

of krill swilled between cheeks,
pooled on the tongue; last feed.

Last of its shoal, which once
blitzed through tides; a force

of tanks, in their element,
each armoured with a skirt

of yellow darts; fins, drawn
to a point like arrowheads.

Silver keg, punctured, drained;
shy organs hauled from flesh,

swollen and scored, the rings
of a fingerprint. Then sea,

the colour of tin; then sky.
Then the whole world tin.

Lobster

Pepsi - it was the brand he grew up with - the sweet memory of it, the familiar tang of aluminium. Each night cradled in a cot of cans, suckled on bottles, sleeping on a seabed scattered with plastic toys, tops spinning on the floor. Every one of them Pepsi. He dressed up in armour - it became a habit (with a Pepsi logo) - hung out with a pile of drifters, washed up types who didn't even look fine on the surface. They all drank Pepsi. He got a tattoo - festooned in red and blue, he became a brand ambassador - the extravagant fandangle spangled on a hand. But he threw it all away. Bottled it. Abandoned, he washed up on a beach - that's where I found him. Junked, with only a Pepsi filigree. Even his mother sent him packing.

Species Interactions

for Tanvi

In AP Environmental Science, my best friend speaks about sky & age & forests. Shows me a photograph on her computer of a bird she chased for an hour before finally getting close enough to touch or shoot or love. *Look, the photo's too blurry*, she tells me, points out the fuzz around the edges of the bird's wings. *I think it's beautiful*, I say, & she tells me to *shut up*, & this is our love language, this is our ecosystem dreaming into being. Today we're learning about solid waste & it's so easy to lose myself in hopeless, hearing about trash compactors & landfill seepage & all these methods of coming closer to the end, but the teacher passes around a wallet made of Capri-Sun wrappers, tells us how green taxes are becoming more effective & that our school just installed new solar panels on the roof, & everything feels a little quieter. We watch a documentary about air pollution. My friend fusses over her photograph & I want to say *shh*, I want to say *it's perfect*, but instead I crumple up the empty soda can on my desk, throw it into the recycling bin & not the trash. Outside the window it's monsoon season. The sky relearns the language of eutrophication. The rain sings over everything, divides us into individual parts. The birds sleep like saints, soundless & infinite, like they trust the storm will pass soon, like they don't realise how it has only just begun.

wild causalities

if our thoughts are no more us than water is

if words have weight and weightlessness at once

if deep time stretches forward as well as back
and the names of future ages are already known

if stopping to look at a birch leaf in the rain,
and then keep looking, is a political act

if the cobweb woven in the wind
between clumps of heather
thrumming with minute sonorities
is an extension of the spider's mind

if deer are to mountain as waves are to sea

if we're stalked by the land as a robin by a cat,
as the mantis stalks the moth on the flower head

then our souls would be forest
with earth of roots and worms, wood ants,
mycelia, the filaments and cilia
of an unmeasurable whole

then in libraries there would be bats to stitch
the dark together with the dark

then stocks and buddleia would slowly
tease apart our walls
until the stones returned to earth
and earth was once again compacted into stone

then gardening would be dissidence

then we'd walk the echoing rooms
of our imaginations
feeling for bark and moss

then every microbe in the gut and in the grave
would be precious

then the tiny, patient hammers of the world
would ring out in us, through us, all around

Song for the Cévennes

For the harvesters of sweet *châtaignes*, unravelling their nets each October
under pompomed branches, drying the fruits in thin stone *clèdes*
before trampling off the husks, scraping off the inner skins with a tiny Opinel
and turning them to *crème, purée, confiture, farine*;
for the baker with his bowl of leaven, conjuring loaves of *céréales, seigle, son*
and spongy grey *campagne*, his olive *fougasse* and his *tourte*;
for the mason swivelling schist on schist, with chocks and copes
to save a leaning terrace or replace a beaten wall.

For the *aiguiseur* on his whetstone pedal-seat, at his side a bright bouquet
for gutting, paring, carving, cleaving, boning, hunting;
for the orange-vest brigade of *chasseurs*, their rifles cocked for *sangliers,*
biches, chevreuils along dirt trails like bloodlines through the hills;
for the hound-nosed connoisseurs of *cèpes, bolets, chanterelles, morelles,*
pièdes de mouton, trompettes de mort, who surface after each light rainfall,
fingers brushing earth from cap and stipe, checking gills for forks or knots,
baskets dangling as they scour the verges, crack across the forest floor.

For the goatherd with her stick and dog, her grass-stained paperback,
her rows of moon-white *pélardons* fresh from moulds,
the dyed mohair she crochets into socks and shawls of every colour
dispatching larger hanks to creators of Parisian couture;
for the elders in blue overalls and smocks on a bench in every village
nodding to the driver of the tractor stacked with hay;
for the neighbour in her *potager* of chard, tomatoes, pumpkins, courgettes,
the towers of clustered *haricots* like keys to see her through the winter.

For the choirmaster with her *diplôme de conservatoire* who draws us out
to a school canteen or draughty hall, the voices of the gifted
and the tone-deaf clattering off the white tiled floors, her baton summoning
Balkan ballads, Brassens, Christmas carols, anthems of *La Résistance*;

for the stories visible in every patch of leveled land – terrace layered
on terrace as far as the eye can see –
of those who built these mountains from schist and quartz and sparks of mica,
who raise the sky with their bare hands.

An Argument with the Town Clerk

My allotment has offended the town clerk.
He sees what I cannot see.

Here is a carpet frayed, against a broken fence and
here are blackberries, blackened, frosted, unpicked
and hanging stiffly, little beautiful deaths.

He says, rats live under the carpet, and I say, no, there are no rats,
only a slow worm there since last March, and I lift the corner
of the carpet to show him the pewter spiral, slow in this cold air
but he spins away, unwilling to see the marvellous snake
I have magicked up, the rat-eater.

He finds the apple tree too high, the grass too long;
the edges of my paths offend him, they are wobbly, indistinct.

So I tell him about the juice of the apples, how
they are an unknown late variety, how they hang in the tree
till November, how the flesh is very dry and white
the skin turning to a buttery paleness like the sun,
flecked with pink and gold
and the juice is a sweet froth on my lips.

He says, I hate these allotments.
The noise of the road never ends.

I see the sound of his words sinking
into the black earth, the long black mounds,
the soft rows of beds. I want to say come, lie down
here in this soft bed and I will cover you
with the yellow leaves from the plum,

red leaves from the vine; you will smell the strawberries,
you will see how blue the sky can be.

I can no longer hear him, I can no longer
make out what it is he wants me to do.
I gather the last fruit into a pile, one marrow split with waiting,
dark kale, bright parsley, ripe beans,
and it's then I see the bee, dozy,
falling out of a dying mallow and I think I'll tell him
about the bees, how they are lost because
we have taken away their safe passage
between one place and the next.

Calder

You should have been born a verb.
Your roaring, scouring thrust
shoulder-charges rocks, roils over weirs,
flashes sheets of white muslin,
swallows run-off's soup of silt.
The Celt's *hard river of stones*.

Here the valley is V-shaped, hills
split by smash-zone faults. Small spits
of flood-plain drown in the storm.
Sandbags are futile as river rises
to first floor windows. On the canal
barges thrash among branches.

We play power games, raise walls,
craft culverts, drive you underground.
You purl deceptively tame over pebbles,
until geography, storm and gritstone
collude. Fast-tracked, deepened,
you accelerate. Discharged, you deluge.

Canary-Shouldered Thorn

Moths fly into our bathroom and hover,
splay unremarkable wings against the tiles:
pencil shavings, edges
of ragged paper. Woodchip beige,
they seem the same but here

among the plum trees and the pears,
yellow underwings appear, dappled carpets,
common marbled and green, garden
and spruce carpets; a shuttle-shaped dart, then
lured by the over-bright light they disappear

down the slopes of the moth trap.
By chance I saw the one
that hid in the lid of an egg box,
which seemed neither insect nor moth

but a bird
so miniature it could fit
on the end of a pen, its puff of yellow
so like feathers, those wings.
And then that beak! Its eyes were beads.

When you went to set it free
it perched on your finger,
and as it flew into the night
I could almost hear it sing.

Confluence

Here, at this half-ass state park without a sign,
with its cracked concrete bench and triangle of dying
cottonwoods, the Missouri joins the Mississippi,
meeting not like a ballet, or twisting
silk scarves, but maybe like construction workers, shaking
hands before a building forever half-built.
And what is there to do now but love this unfinished work
of the river, carrying everything it has ever been
given: snow-melt streams like a cold bandana circling
its neck, shreds of styrofoam cooler catching
in its teeth, sturgeon eggs blooming with their translucent
tails, nitrates, and phosphates, and soil glittering
with bone, and this single Mountain Dew bottle
eddyding in a green-tinged foam, the ashes
of Oceti, reddening in all of our throats. I sit with my knees
tucked to my chest, listen to the ducks call
each other from either side of what will be
the same water, and River, you and I both
know that despite your dams, you will go on
to grow deadly algae in the Gulf, to feed rich
alluvial plains, shelter alligators and hellbenders
and mudpuppies, to do the most beautiful
and terrible things. We know the word end
is never an end, but always a mouth instead.

Night Shifts in the Nature Factory

We make birds here. Crows, ducks, owls, gulls: feathers glued to papier mâché wings, legs fashioned with matchsticks. We carve seeds from plastic, beat metal until it turns to trees. We cast fossils. We tint skies with water-colour and stoke the smoke of clouds. We add salt to vats of sea, and stir. We forge rats, foxes, cows, wolves, worms – winding the cogs of their mechanisms tightly, for luck. We bake summers in a kiln and chill winters inside a walk-in fridge. We can synthesise night with the flick of a switch. Close your eyes, spread out your hands like stars: and look, we have hammered you a moon.

The Blackbird's Egg

He reached in and with an *abracadabra*
brought out the egg. Cushioned in his palm
it looked so fragile that a whisper
might shatter it. The sprinkling of gold
on the turquoise shell turned it into treasure.

I didn't know then that it was a crime
but how could taking something so precious
be right? Breaking off a hawthorn twig
he poked a hole at either end, blew out
a clear yolk with a ribbon of scarlet.

Forty years on, in this small paved space,
the best I could do for a garden round here,
I can still feel the stickiness of the shell
as I look at holes I've sheared in the privet
hoping that something might come and nest here.

The tall, gaping mouth of the redwood

is burnt-edged with tar
where the drooling sap was cooked in the forest fire
and yet the sequoia still lives, the fire
animating the tree's seeds – there, at its roots,
the miniature giants begin un-
 winding their three thousand years –
and the fire has split the tree's base with this
dark vertical tear
in the seemingly impossible
girth, in the russet-red, roped wood
and there is a secret rekindling
of ants and wood-beetles
in its dark auditorium full
of within-earth sounds, the agendas of insects
and a merriment of carcasses remade –
the forest's logic rewriting the living floor
with spores and saplings,
even within the sequoia's aromatic, hollow trunk
that still sucks up
the deep groundwater (as the snows melt early now)
into its head of green clouds – above, rising,
the redwood-empire of overseeing
that, unseen, is thinning out
and this old mammoth, this red-vowel sequoia
among the congregation
with a black word in its mouth,
which might be *thirst* – the dry word of it, full of needles,
that fire loves
 and that we are still learning

BIOGRAPHIES

FIRST PRIZE: **Jemma Borg** trained as an evolutionary geneticist. Her first collection, *The illuminated world*, was published by Eyewear in 2014 and won the inaugural Fledgling Award. She won the Rialto/RSPB Nature and Place Competition in 2017.

SECOND PRIZE: **Teresa Dzieglewicz** is the winner of a Pushcart Prize, the 2018 Auburn Witness Poetry Prize, and an Academy of American Poets Prize. Her poems appear or are forthcoming in the *Pushcart Prize XLII*, *Best New Poets 2018*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Ninth Letter*, and elsewhere.

THIRD PRIZE: **Linda France** lives in Northumberland. She has published eight poetry collections, including *The Toast of the Kit-Cat Club* (Bloodaxe 2005) and *Reading the Flowers* (Arc 2016). She edited *Sixty Women Poets* (Bloodaxe 1993) and won the 2013 National Poetry Competition.

RUNNER-UP: **Ella Duffy** is a London-based poet. Publications include Pan MacMillan's *Off the Shelf: A Celebration of Bookshops in Verse* and the forthcoming issues of *The Rialto* and *The Poetry Salzburg Review*. She is currently studying for an MA in Creative & Life Writing at Goldsmiths, University of London.

RUNNER-UP: **Julian Bishop** is a former television journalist living in North London who won this year's Lamb Festival Poetry Prize and had a poem accepted by the Museum of London for its Fatberg exhibition. He attends poetry classes at the City Lit Institute and is a member of several Stanza groups.

HIGHLY COMMENDED:

Mara Bergman published her first full collection, *The Disappearing Room*, with Arc in July 2018. She recently won an inaugural Laureate's Prize. Mara also writes for young children.

HIGHLY COMMENDED (CONTINUED):

Sharon Black is from Glasgow and lives in the Cévennes mountains of France, the subject of her fourth collection. www.sharonblack.co.uk

Sarah Doyle is co-author of *Dreaming Spheres* (PS Publishing, 2014), and is the Pre-Raphaelite Society's Poet-in-Residence. She holds a Creative Writing MA from UL Royal Holloway, has been widely placed and published, and was highly commended in the Best Single Poem category of the Forward Prizes for Poetry 2018.

Andrew Forster has published three collections of poetry, most recently *Homecoming* (Smith | Doorstop 2014). He is currently completing a PhD in Poetry and Environmentalism at Manchester Metropolitan University.

Garry MacKenzie is the author of *Scotland: A Literary Guide for Travellers*, and has won the Wigtown Poetry Competition and a Scottish New Writer Award. Find him online at garrymackenzie.com.

Theresa Sowerby runs *Real Live Poets*, a Poetry Society Stanza group based in Manchester. She has won prizes for plays and poetry and been published in several magazines and online.

Sally St Clair is a writer, biographical counsellor, mother to three and grandmother to two. Her work has been published in *Stand*, *Panurge* and *Wasafiri*, amongst others.

Topaz Winters was born in 1999, studies literature and film at Princeton University, and serves as the creative director at Half Mystic Press. She resides in Singapore and at topazwinters.com.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Poetry School would like to thank Dido Goldsmith and Alexander Goldsmith and the Edward Goldsmith Foundation for their generous support, Mimi Khalvati and Alys Fowler for judging the prize, Daphne Astor, Seán Hewitt and Dom Bury for the first-stage judging, Cill Rialaig Arts Centre for providing the winners' residency, Poetry in Aldeburgh festival for hosting the award ceremony, Hugh Dunkerley, Meryl Pugh, Kathleen Jamie and John Wedgwood Clarke for eye-opening essays on the nature of ecopoetry, *Irish Pages* for kind permission to reproduce material, Karen McCarthy Woolf and Miriam Darlington for running Ginkgo Ecopoetry Workshops, Curious Arts Festival for hosting events, Theo Inglis for design and typesetting, Palace Printers for producing this anthology, *The Resurgence Trust* for their work in the early years of the prize, all the poets who entered, and our patrons Peter Phelps, Daphne Astor and Jason Gathorne-Hardy for their ongoing support.

POETRY
SCHOOL

“The Ginkgo Prize for Eco-poetry had over a thousand entries, a testament that there are many people engaged in the art of poetry who understand and want to say something about the state of ecology and our relationship with the natural world. The best of these, we believe, are in this pamphlet.

They cover a wide sweep of issues from plastic pollution to melting icecaps, from land rights to the fragile beauty of nature around us. The winners and highly commended poems have achieved the difficult task of being outstanding poems in any context while finding a fresh language to speak searingly of the grief we feel for the loss of species, habitat and diversity in our environment, and of the hope we need to take us into the future.”

MIMI KHALVATI & ALYS FOWLER,
JUDGES OF THE 2018 GINKGO
PRIZE FOR ECOPOETRY