SINKSO PRIZE

ECOPOETRY ANTHOLOGY 2022



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The Ginkgo Prize 2022 Ecopoetry Anthology

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CONTENTS

Preface, Karen McCarthy Woolf - 5

First Prize: Anthony Lawrence, Red Veined Darter – 8

Second Prize: Cath Drake, Wadjemup / Rottnest Island – 10

Third Prize: Yvonne Reddick, Burning Season – 13

Runner-Up: Lydia Benson, Midday, Dungeness – 15

Runner-Up: Charlie Druce, Hounslow Swifts – 16

AONB Best Poem of Landscape: David Canning, The Bowland Sheep – 17

Highly Commended:

Andre Bagoo, Dungeness - 20

Freya Bantiff, After the Bleaching – 21

Rachel Bower, Artificial Light at Night (ALAN) – 22

Genevieve Carver, Laboratory Sample: Fulmar (Fulmarus glacialis) – 23

Grant Clauser, NASA Announces Plans for a Peopled Mission to Mars – 25

Claire Collison, A Bumper Year for Medusas – 26

Sarah Doyle, Sea Gooseberries – 27

Vivian Faith Prescott, Sonnet For Our Salmon – 28

Victoria Gatehouse, Rainforest in a Shoebox – 30

Kevin Graham, On Mutability - 31

Rebecca Hawkes, The Myxomycetes Dream – 33

Maria Howard, The House of Water - 34

Ute Kelly, Notes Towards a Poem on Earthworms – 38

Ciaran McDermott, Women Gathering Mushrooms – 39

Oluwaseun Olayiwola, Endurance – 40

Caleb Parkin, 19 Gigabecquerels – 42

Judith Rawnsley, Dragon, Komodo National Park - 43

Adrie Rose, I will write a love poem – 44

Milena Williamson, Echolocation (1943) – 45

Poet Biographies – 48 **Acknowledgements** – 56

POEMS THAT STING AND HEAL

As I write this I'm trying to avoid scratching the underside of my left arm. This is because I have a wasp sting. It's irritating. But I'm glad there was a wasp. Insect extinction rate runs eight times faster than that of mammals, around a third of species are endangered, forty per cent are declining... At this point your eyes might have started to glaze over. More global apocalypse to click out of your inbox – not through lack of empathy or desire to save our beautiful world, but from despair.

One of my favourite ecopoems anticipates this paradox.

All the time I pray to Buddha I keep on killing mosquitoes.

Kobayashi Issa (1763-1828) wrote this long before climate crisis, when global industrialisation was embryonic. As a haiku it's a nature poem, but it captures so much more in the situation it describes. I should probably say now that some of our best ecopoets would never call themselves ecopoets. They are simply 'poets'. As a writer of colour, I'm used to twirling about in my identity cape, so, yeah, bring it on. If being an ecopoet means exiting idealised Romantic tranquillity to bear witness to this current colonial, disaster-capitalist, extractive nightmare then so be it. These days even David Attenborough has pinned his flag to the mast.

This is the frame through which I read the submissions as one of the judges of the Ginkgo Prize. Prize culture is inherently subjective, with its juries and judges, tastes and proclivities, but if it can help get more people reading poems that speak to our collective plight then so much the better. Ecopoetry is, at best, what I'd describe as an, 'activism of the heart', bringing people closer, emotionally, to a non-human existence far larger than our myopic, anthropocentric orbits.

I say this, and then I make my way through the pile. The hesitancy around that ecopoet label is suddenly more understandable. A lot of the

work that doesn't make the longlist suffers from 'green saviour complex': it's worthy, eurocentric, exceptionalist, and exudes virtue signalling via carbon shaming and other evasive tropes that wallow in grief. Or it leans too heavily on research it needs to wrest its way free from to take flight as art.

These are thematic pitfalls which make it all the more wonderful when you finally encounter work that makes you sit up and lean in because you are in the presence of a Poet. An Ecopoet, even. I'm being slightly flippant, as there's something to be said in defence of prizes, not only as a means to reach new audiences but also as a way to collectively nurture craft. The Ginkgo Prize offers residencies and free workshops as well as cash, all of which contribute towards the development of the literature.

Thankfully, this year's shortlisted and commended poets bring fresh eyes and a necessary kernel of hope to a challenging vista. Yvonne Reddick's 'Burning Season' is an elegy, yes, to her father (a geologist in the oil industry) and metaphorically also to our burning planet. Yet there is a pragmatic intimacy of a ghost father and living daughter burning leaves in a garden, intent on the regenerative cycle of such a task.

Ecopoetry is often grounded in place. Cath Drake, a UK-based Australian, expands the horizon from rural England to 'Wadjemup / Rottnest Island' in the Pacific — a childhood holiday idyll compromised by ecological degradation and a hidden history of abuse enacted on the indigenous population. Drake resists the temptation to simply lament, instead opening the narrative to stake a claim amongst the 'extinct hermit crabs' and 'blown-up reefs'.

The sea as ever was a popular motif. Dungeness featured, twice: once in Lydia Benson's slight sonnet, 'Midday, Dungeness', where the poet finds herself 'inside the nuclear zone' lying back in the water, 'crowned thick with wings' of dying insects. Despite its ominous overtones, there's a meditative attention that keeps the poem afloat. The other 'Dungeness' comes from Andre Bagoo, a queer Trinidadian writer whose elegantly conjured placemaking reminds us that even in devastation there is renewal, that 'it is the boiling water from the/nuclear plant, which, through subterranean currents, nourishes the sea and brings the birds'.

Birds, and an enigmatic dragonfly also flew into the frame. Anthony Lawrence's delicately calibrated 'Red Veined Darter', a poem that is precise in the detail of its observations, zooms in to the exact moment when a dragon fly lands on the speakers arm whilst driving, holding fast to its hairs with 'fuse-wire legs'. This minutiae of scale expands to the monumental later in the poem, when 'Thunder was turning over/ its inboard engine, and the sky was throwing its switch to light its dark towers'. It's a moody, cinematic image, which could be rendered ominous, but is strangely comforting in the domesticity of that light switch, with all the energetic and metaphorical weight it carries. It's also emblematic of the poem's capacity to effortlessly shift gears as it takes flight and to speak of the planet's vulnerabilities in subtle vet affecting terms. Charlie Druce's 'Hounslow Swifts' also pivots between nature and machine, exposing their fragile ecologies of habitat, flight and migration via juxtaposition with Heathrow. Other less appealing creatures featured elsewhere, notably in Claire Collinson's 'A Bumper Year for Medusas', Judith Rawnsley's 'Dragon, Komodo National Park' and Ute Kelly's 'Notes Towards a Poem on Earthworms'. Plasmoidal slime mould also got a look in, with Rebecca Hawkes' surreal ode 'The Myxomycetes Dream' heralding a future without the nuisance us humans have made of ourselves: 'when my species dies from our loneliness' she writes', 'you will still be striving/and in your gooey filigree'.

— Karen McCarthy Woolf

A version of this piece was commissioned and appeared in *The Bookseller* to celebrate the Ginkgo Prize 2022.

Karen McCarthy Woolf's latest collection Seasonal Disturbances was a winner in the inaugural Laurel Prize for ecological poetry. She is a Fulbright postdoctoral scholar and the co-editor with Mona Arshi of Nature Matters: New Poetries by Black and Asian Writers of the Diaspora which is forthcoming from Faber.

Red Veined Darter

I can't recall my exact location the night a red dragonfly came through the window of my car

to settle on my arm.

The heart has selective memory,
and all coordinates and compass points

are more than it can manage when it breaks, but I do remember low-slung globes of cloud,

the kind my father insisted were faithful predictors of lightning and large, disfigured stones

of hail he called Chimney Fish on account of the dark crosshatching on the surface, the tapering shape and fins of ice.

As the dragonfly held fast to the hairs on my arm with its fuse-wire legs,
I thought of small aircraft awaiting clearance

for take-off, and this, by extension, led to migratory birds on a flyway after leaving winter in Siberia:

the red-necked stint, eastern curlew and whimbrel who lose more than half their body weight prior to touching down.
The dragonfly's wings were shimmering.
I'd like to say they were lit

by neon stacked over the street where I had parked outside a restaurant. I'd like to say its arrival

was intentional, a messenger with good news, not just an insect that had blown in through a window.

My research suggests its name is *red-veined darter* of the order Odonata, whose appearance has been known

to coincide with unusual solar flare activity and times of personal loss. Thunder was turning over

its inboard engines, and the sky was throwing the switch to light its dark towers. Did the rain turn to hail

and carpet the road? Did the darter make a sound like sifting, as when fine sand

is poured from palm to palm, or when long hair is combed, repeatedly, with tines of tortoiseshell?

Wadjemup / Rottnest Island

Because I grew up here, the grind of my bones in the sand, boats jiggling from jetties like strings of charms.

Because my grandparents, great uncle, great grandfather were drawn here, carrying picnics and sleeping bags

and built a railway during the war that I was told very little about, except we were entitled to a better bungalow

in the Easter holidays – I knew only the holiday island and nothing of the original name, Wadjemup,

place across the water where the spirits are, nothing of the hellish jail, even though we were the first

to hire the warden's watchhouse the summer my four-year-old foot was mangled by a bike wheel.

Perhaps I sensed we stood in blood where men captured from across Australia were chained by the neck.

Because craggy rocks split skin, bluebottles stung, stonefish lurked in the shallows and I wore seaweed

like a wreath for the extinct hermit crabs and starfish, the undersized lobsters, the blown-up reefs, the hundreds

of graves we didn't know we camped on, and fried fresh herring. Because we survived category five Tropical Cyclone Alby when all the other boats left after the radio warning while we were wrapped in towels and blankets on the soaking beach

as our boat, its little dry cabin, swung in the fit of weather, yanking on the rocks piled up on five anchors dug into sand.

Because I know my luck, my loneliness, my privilege. Because the rare marsupials that are common here

no one remembers once covered the mainland too before the whites came who said the land had no history.

Because this island holds my adolescent rites of passage though I never had a rites of passage but far from the mainland

I stumbled into the inky blur of it and kissed an older boy from Bunbury, rough, cigarette-smoking and nameless.

And because one winter here, years later, I slipped between breaths and drowned in intense pleasure I'm not supposed to have.

Because I survived many youth-crash-and-burns, leavings and returnings, my mainland face fading as the ferries headed home.

Oh, the solace of arriving on solid ground with sea nausea, learning to walk again on swaying ground! Because

taking the plane is the coward's way and I want to live eye to eye, shore to shore, take in the whole expanse.

Because I know this land, this sea more deeply, more nakedly than any other where wind blew through slotted bungalows

as we slept in sticky sea air, sun-wind-sea battered, salt hissing on hot skin, resisting showering. Because I wear it

as it wears me. I honour this Island, this *place of transition between* the physical and spiritual as my body, my touchstone.

Footnote:

Rottnest Island, just off the coast from Perth, Western Australia, was named by the first white explorer, a Dutchman. He thought the small wallabies looked like rats, hence the name is a derivative of 'rat's nest'. The original name for this island by the Indigenous Whadjuk Noongar people is Wadjemup. The text in italics in the poem is taken from the Rottnest Island website (most likely an Indigenous source, but the source isn't stated). Indigenous men, often senior men in their communities, were isolated, imprisoned and treated appallingly on the island for almost a hundred years – essentially as prisoners of war. Until recently, this history was erased and the island was known only as a holiday island. Reconciliation is ongoing. I pay my respects to the Traditional Owners of the island, past, present and future and all the Indigenous men who were imprisoned and died there.

Burning Season

Six years dead, Dad rakes the old year's rags together, the chestnut's jaundiced hands, embers of elm. His footprints thaw the frost that hoars the grass,

but, like sparks or static, he stutters in and out of focus. Sunlight amber as whiskey, stretched shadows. The Bramley lit with fruit that wasps have hulled.

An earlier October. Aberdeen. Dad called from the Emirates. "Mum picked the last pear. There was ice on the playground." "It's forty-five here – I'm sunburnt."

Other autumns. Dad standing under the conker tree, the smell of mouldering leaves. I reached the trunk's lowest knot. Bristling husks and weighty, dark-eyed seeds.

Hingeing years. Dad clipping oleanders.

Date palms, first drops pocking the sand. Desert thunder over the glass-and-tarmac city. Geckos scurried up the kitchen wall.

And later still. He sawed an infected limb of the Bramley, mistletoe creeping with white roots in the wood's veins, draining it. That tree still leafs.

Now he heaps twigs and mildewed apples. On the wind, the smell of that summer the moor caught light, mixed with mould and spores.

He pours the spirit, flicks the lighter, cusses when the flame spits, then whistles Santana as he works the rake around the stragglers.

The leaves are dank and mulching, slow to catch, but as the smoke curls, woodlice start their exodus, millipedes unscroll – dashes from a singed page,

a red admiral zigzags, the edge of a blackened letter.
"Here, chicken, help me with these logs."
The bonfire rises to my height. Sweat beads his brow,

he seems not to notice his best shirt is smouldering (he wore it to his funeral). "Keep feeding it!"

I inch towards him, until its heat is on my face,

come so close I fear my cheeks will blister.
Ash in my eyes. Ash at the back of my throat.
I reach out, although it scorches, before he leaves –
I try to throw my arms around his neck.
Three times, I'm hugged by smoke.

Midday, Dungeness

Inside the nuclear zone I step into high tide

legs suspended cavern deep

the water's surface is covered in insects dead, dying.

I lie back, crowned thick with wings.

At this time of day the power plant casts no shadow

a thin line of green hangs at the horizon

further down

the quiet drift.

THIRD PRIZE: YVONNE REDDICK

RUNNER-UP: LYDIA BENSON / 15

Hounslow Swifts

On still evenings like this that fail to shift the day's heat before it is too late, when planes seem to lumber and heave low on their path – this is when the swifts strike, their last searing raids. And what shows, as witness to their screeching at the cliff edge of sky, is the sense of their journey blazed above our own; the barriers they will break as they tear into light. Swifts, so wrought from sky that to fold the urge of their wings, even for a moment, is to fail. Soon they will sever in two a sense of time – before, as they gather the nerve of their going, then after, after they have gone, in the empty hanger of sky.

The Bowland Sheep

I hurried on some errand along the dale in a twilight, wet moss and stone, wet frigid air,

the ribbon of my road rolled out to a haze, my horizon unclear, a fog

poured down from over the fells, a ghost of grey, edged with night,

and the black trees, like the thinnest of dreams, all wintered and bare.

Then I saw them in my torchlight, resolving through the gloom, earthed and somehow ancient,

the sheep like a circle of standing stones, their green eyes gleaming like flares,

they made no sound, but their heads, as they grazed, swung low, slow and hypnotic;

I paused, and we were then man and sheep together on our small circle of earth.

And when driven back to the City, impatient, in lock step herded, time poor and brass-faced, I recall the sheep and their placid insistence, how they grubbed at damp grass on their small patch of turf, and how when the moon suddenly broke through the murk, it turned everything it touched into silver.

HIGHLY COMMENDED POEMS

S I N K S O
P R I Z e

Dungeness

It is seaword. It is salt. It is thrashing of arms and legs in dusk and low tide. It is the tern plunging into a wave to find itself and yet not finding itself. It is the six "visual scores" of the poet, the seven lighthouses, that must be retracted, revised, re-written, like the shoals beneath history. There is a desert in California where only marigolds grow. It is the idea of a desert, for the Met Office now says that, too, is a fiction. It is the world contracted thus: into an endless ocean of shingle, endlessly thrown up. It is the world's smallest railway, that playfully calls to us as we sit in The Pilot eating fish and chips. It is the pair of shells I take back with me to London, to Walthamstow, where a split leaf marks the entrance to the marshes, where cattle once grazed, where Althea McNish is on display in the William Morris Gallery and I can recognise the quality of the tropical light dappling every single shrub and flower on her fabrics and I think of the way the smaller shell fits into the bigger shell like a couple spooning and I wonder if you will keep this memento. You had always wanted to visit Prospect Cottage, you say, cupping the shell in your hand as though this is where it was meant to be. It is the unruly sun, that fades the writing on the cottage wall. It is the boiling water from the nuclear plant, which, through subterranean currents, nourishes the sea and brings the birds. It is the wave after each wave of realisation. It is the thought. It is the hope: it is not too late. It is not too late for us.

After the Bleaching

If he can capture the coral's spawn slicks in this net like dreams

in a catcher, raise them, over months, into reality and release them,

perhaps hope has a reason to be out, so round and full tonight.

He thinks he might be content if only they can keep all the colour

of the world right here – a younger memory suspended in ocean,

like strawberries in syrup, glitter in a globe, as they lose the rest –

to those things that trouble the surface but rarely break it. At least,

until now. When that happens, he might cry but he will not sink

into it. He will dive down, deeper and deeper. His feet will settle

on the seabed, gently, supported by these offspring of survivors.

The pressure will be crushing yet he knows he will breathe so easily.

Artificial Light at Night (ALAN)

In memory of Douglas Boyes*

Picture two streets: lit and unlit. One bright as icing sugar, the other velvet black. In the first you are spotlit, frozen, net raised, poised to sweep the verge. In the second, you are diffused, stealthy, charcoal shadow smudge.

In both streets, you frisk the spring flush of foliage for moth caterpillars with a well-practiced scoop, leaning in, paddling the small boat of your research through the night, ladling plump bodies for the count.

You feel the difference at once, even without running the data: the drag of dark net, wriggling, bountiful shoal, abundant. Long handle curving under the weight of your catch.

The whitewashed net remains buoyant, flimsy, a moth light haul. You stand, gauzy and skimmed, straight-handled, under broad spectrum white light.

Back at the lab, the figures concur: caterpillar abundance is substantially lower in habitat areas illuminated by streetlights. Flight to light. Moths ovipositing fewer eggs. More diurnal predators. Food plants unfit, tough.

But no-one expected the corpulence of the caterpillars of light, gorged on a 24 hour lifestyle, shiny and fat. Speed-eaters, spoilt in the spotlight. Heavier than their nocturnal kin, rushing towards unfit adulthood, brilliantly lit.

Laboratory Sample: Fulmar (Fulmarus glacialis)

the dead bird in the freezer

is a miniature albatross-omen

labelled up in ziplock bags

deconstructed birdself now existing as

tubes of blood

paper cups of stomach oil

pinches of belly feathers

turned crisp as snowflakes

what do the feathers tell?

a tale in the key of corticosterone

stress that burst from the skin

heartbreak splintering downy barbs

do they remember waltzing

with the wind

purling, foretelling of death?

past lives rise from the sigh

sucked from a hollow bone

{ skippers of whaling ships,

drowned souls wheeling the aftersky }

microbiomes sing like river sprites

inside pinprick drops of serum

long after bird-whole is

split like a beanbag

spilling out { mucus : tissue :

^{*} Boyes, Douglas et al. "Street lighting has detrimental impacts on local insect populations." *Science Advances.* 25 August 2021.

poorly digested fish:

macroplastic in the tracts:

nanoplastic between cells }

when does foreign object become assimilated?

where does birdself end

and degraded ketchup sachet begin?

ask the sea god Sedna

ask the rectal swab

NASA Announces Plans for a Peopled Mission to Mars

I want to talk about how perfect this brook trout is, not how fragile. How cold and clear the creek that ambles like a child running her fingers over the smooth stones of the mountain, not how it suffered a century of coal mines and clear cutting. Instead let's look at the rust red stripe on a salamander's back, its spine curving like the current pausing around my ankles. It's true what smart people say— every day something beautiful is disappearing. Every day another piece of hope is bleached or broken or hunted into history. I want you to know how hard this trout fought, leaping dams, dodging hawk and mink, shedding parr marks for ruby spots like wild strawberries. Today there's light hanging from hemlock branches, deer hair snagged on a thistle. Consider the smell of pine needles and rhododendron webbing the air, how fine and fleeting it all is, how the tendrils of fungus under the earth bind it all together, one breathing lumbering beast, one spectacular world, by god, dying under our feet.

A Bumper Year for Medusas

Lola winds you down the mountain's cleft to the dry riverbed, her wheels churning dust. She points out places of apocrypha and terrible accidents sudden floods—until the horizon splits in a thrill of blue, and she pulls on the handbrake. Lola knows every shift of this seashore. You reach the sweet spot—shade, shelter, cove. Someone's pressed a lump of pink gum to the rock. You unpack, folding your clothes in a pile, spreading a soft cloth. Lola shows you her medusa scar—raised white bangle around her bicep—says now she carries Afterbite, as if preparedness can ward the jellyfish off—Remember the tattooed bicep—the guy, summers ago, tending sardines over ash?—a baby's head, round and sleepy as the moon. It was at a fiesta for Santa Carmen, Virgin del Mar. It was August, and you were on a fishing boat—there were crowds of you, drinking beer, ice-chilled in the stinking hull, waiting for the virgin to be blessed, and every time you necked the last, you tossed the bottles overboard—everyone did—and although it felt wrong, you thought of the smooth sea glass you loved, reasoned it was that, in-embryo, stifled the twitch of stitches in your foot's arch, sliced years ago on bottles lobbed into the half-moon lake at a gig, where there were no tides and there was no time. Lola says this will be a bumper year for medusas, and every day as the water warms you anticipate their return. You picture and fail to bless them, beautiful lurkers, oblivious, impeding your freedom.

Sea Gooseberries

The tideline wears you like a broken necklace, sun-glittered gems strewn along its foamy contours. Plump glass marbles: stranded, stilled, alien as fallen moons. How vulnerable you seem in your naked transparency, insides on show, sand refracted through the bright lenses of your bodies. Displaced pearls sent airwards, the vagaries of navigation exiling you beyond the salt-safety of submergence. Your exposure is exquisite, for all its tragedy. You look to me like I imagine ovaries might when they outlive their use – flawless crystal ornaments, slow-fired and vestigial in death. Half gentle, half frantic, I cradle your sparkling ovoids in my palms, return you to your fold of sea: fearful you have already atrophied in the late-summer glare, hoping furiously time has not run out for you as it has for me.

The sea gooseberry (Pleurobrachia pileus) is a small, transparent, globular marine invertebrate present in the North Sea. Occasionally, sea gooseberries wash ashore in large quantities, and can be observed on British beaches.

Sonnet For Our Salmon

- 1. Windowlight doesn't fade all night. My father cannot sleep counting moments and plans until he's up early smoking out spiders from the smokehouse, sweeping them down with a broom.
- 2. The ax hits the block of wood. He splits alder, splits again. My father's hands split and fold time like he's a younger man greeting the morning.
- 3. Across Alaska, five of the six salmon species lag behind normal.
- 4. I slice salmon chunks to fit the racks, slice through silver skin into pink flesh. Leftover meat I toss to the crows.
- 5. Salt and water mix and my father stirs the brine with a stick. My father floats a potato in the brine. We dump in the salmon slices and watch them float, turn them over flesh side down. Soak.
- 6. First time in memory, kings and dog salmon are late or hardly returning at all. Fishing on the Yukon is banned. Out in front of our cabin, salmon fishing is either limited or closed again.
- 7. Soil packed beneath our feet, leaves and gravel and fish blood. This place, nestled between cabin and cedar and spruce is sacred. Behind us, our backs are cradled in alder.
- 8. I dump the brine and load the fish on the racks. I favor thick slices, a salty brine, a long smoke.
- 9. Altered food chain: trawling, warming. What chain do we hold onto now? Who or what lit the hollow candles? Food chain unchains with unmatched velocity. What link do we fix?

- 10. My father sits in his plastic chair, watching smoke curl up from the eves of the smokehouse roof. "This is what I do best" he says, and I think of process: catching salmon and smoking fish. He finishes his sentence: "Watching the fish smoke is what I do best."
- 11. Disaster declaration. Salmon air-lifted to the villages. 90,000 pounds.
- 12. Moody clouds swell over the ocean, sunlight cracks the day.

 Crows gather in the trees, waiting. All around us, we want to imagine upriver—set nets, pack water, chop wood, gut fish, smoke and smoke and smoke. An Elder taste tests—quality assurance.

 Done. /Is this called hope?
- 13. Salmon dried for jerky, frozen fillets, salted in barrels, pickled, canned in mason jars.
- 14. Go beyond spruce and cottonwood, beyond cut and dried, and smoked, and enter our bellies, beneath our skin folds. Salmon, be fat for us, be fat for our stories.

Rainforest in a Shoebox

My girl is dying to show me the emergent layer, the understory, the canopy, the forest floor. She has meticulously labelled them all.

Such passion went into their making – the toilet-roll trunks, the pipe-cleaner branches, the tissue-twist leaves of emerald and lime,

the buttress roots, luminous with PVU, the waterfall, a torrent of imagination and shred. Her box, primary-bright, flutters with life –

an orangutan, an ocelot, a two-toed sloth. *Look at the leaf-cuter ants!* They have clearly bitten off more than they can chew.

The teacher has given every child a gold star. The parents are trying to get to grips because rainforests can be challenging,

not heavy exactly, but awkward, with their flimsy and unpredictable parts, some inadequately glued and dangling.

And we have so many other things to hold. She knows when a promise is a lie, my girl, a rainforest pressed to her heart,

the lopsided pain of endangered things – leaf cutter ants, staggering towards extinction, each one with their own shape of load.

On Mutability

To whose frail frame no second motion brings

Percy Bysshe Shelley

It shimmers like a Turner, the boat wedged in the riverbank, weeds sprouting from its hollow. What's it all about, this being on a train and screaming softly towards what life can be? Underneath a fixed fragility that shadows, then grinds to a judder when the carriage stops and the rudder of the heart slices through thin air. We're staring hard across the water whose reflections touch the sky and make the world seem new. Her death could be a bird going by, afforded now some breath-taking view.

*

Outside the allotment an engine idles and a car door slams like tequila at the bar. You're overcome by the swathe of flora and fauna crouching in the dark, past gnarled trunks standing there like fathers at the edge of the wood. The past sinks towards a brook whose ridge beckons in a scree of silence.

We spy a squirrel lying on its side, peace floating a few inches above it. It looks asleep, of course, and doesn't move, even when blossoms from the cherry tree kiss its eyes.

*

We're collecting smashed glass on the back lane with a dustpan and brush, lads' drunken shouts having passed from night into day. Heads for mush we keep going and scrutinize the weeds for rubbish, plastic junk unyielding on the breeze.

Behind a tree I let out a fuck when I see the rictus grin of a fox emerge from some beaten grass, its body a deflated doll sucked of its guts, a taxidermist's scroll pressed flat against the earth ready to be brought back to life.

*

She opens a drawer in the kitchen, dons a pair of surgical gloves and strolls into the back garden, fine as a warrior stung with love. Beyond the potted stars of yellow flowers she searches the long grass singing to herself. At last, a stick the length and width of a posh matchstick used to light a prayer. Her own defiant flame she prods the sleeping snail on the flag out of harm's way, no boot crushing its thumb-nail home, its sunny whorl, its glittery drag.

The Myxomycetes Dream

shall I compare thee to dog vomit scrambled egg or wolf's milk tiny slime mold your scripture of wetness tracing yellow arteries on the rotting stump you seeking neon thing

that strives so cleverly towards nourishment

by which we usually mean food but may sometimes imply poetry

O sporangium O fruiting body O unknown plasmodium

your painterly threads weave like the streaming rivulets
where a river braids through ironsands to mingle with the sea
or precipitated pyrolucite dendrites painting false florals upon the limestone

O slippery protist you single-celled shadow of the tallest arboreal crowns and most deeply thirsting roots you mirror aerial etchings of river catchments cleft between mountain peaks or arid gullies fossilised in some far desert

a tattoo of the memory of water ornate as your strike of liquid lightning your patterns are the very branching grasp of neurons and they are frost crystal fractals fern-formed at my window where I breathe behind the glass

even the shapes of my lungs and my gnarly vessels of blood mimic your living lace splendid aethalium when my species dies from our loneliness you will still be striving and in your gooey filigree queer poetries will thrive writ by your vibrant curiosity

The House of Water

At first everyone just thought it was the end of the drought, *good fat rain* that would fill the cracks in the soil and revive what had wilted. But as the river that cut through the village began filling up, spilling over the borders that contained it, the people packed their bags, seeking shelter with friends and relatives in the city, in the hills, while their homes became submerged in an excess of murky water.

|||

As the rain grows stronger she worries about the roof, imagining herself living between two storeys of water as the tiles give way and the attic lets itself be filled. She realises she had not been expecting the added danger of wind – when she first heard about the flood risk she had imagined the drops of water to fall steady and straight into the expectant earth. Instead the gusts throw them against the windows like pebbles and enter through the gaps in the frames until she stuffs them with newspaper and rags.

As if joining a chorus the pipes make noises that sound at once plaintive and weary. She imagines them to be the voice of the house, and seeks to comfort it with the kind of soothing sounds you use to hush small animals.

Once she has moved all she can upstairs she attempts to create a barricade at the back door with the heavier pieces of furniture. She briefly wonders if anyone else has chosen to stay, if they too are deciding what to place on a high shelf, giving up on daily routines to allow a loosening to this strange new time, clinging to objects despite the rising water. Not for the first time she feels the burden of this inheritance; each chair, each embroidered napkin useless in the face of a flood and yet she takes comfort in the fact that these things would weigh the house down, ensuring it remained fixed to the ground that is now mostly silt.

Nothing is still, nothing is quiet, even if she cannot always hear the alarm being raised. The snapping of a tarpaulin only half tied down. A small bird calling out on its way to take shelter in a tree, a shattering of a terracotta pot as it falls to the ground, the leaves of the corn in the fields bristling at the sudden gales, voicing their disapproval with a soft *shhhhh*. Rivers falling from gutters still clogged with autumn leaves. The frame of the greenhouse about to give way. She opens a window to see better and it is like being buffeted by the side of a goods train that rushes past the platform without stopping.

There had been summer rain but never like this. So heavy, so visible on the surface of the day, as if lit up by headlights.

She walks around the house looking for entry points, not knowing how high the water will rise, turning off sockets. There is a finger sized hole where a knot of wood has fallen out in the window frame of the downstairs bathroom. She places her thumb over it for a moment and imagines herself standing in that exact position for the whole duration of the flood, this one act saving the whole house.

She remembers that a storm is measured in width as well as strength, that sea water can be picked up and carried onto land, that highways can become rivers, that trees can die from an inundation of salt, that one day you might need a saw to cut yourself out of an attic. She remembers seeing all this on tv, happening in far away places, thinking she was safe – this is my front door and this is the wave.

She worries about the tap no longer running clear and fills up bottles of water she hopes she will not need.

111

Raindrops on the roof blend into white noise in their density but other things keep her awake. Gusts of wind enter the room through the chimney until she stuffs it with an old pillow, a strobe of lightning brings the room into sharp relief and a roll of thunder sets off the churning of her stomach linked to the fragility of property. Struggling to sleep she thinks about how the house has come to pass to her, wishing there was someone else to share the load. We were on a train when you said to me, in thirty years time that house will be underwater.

Notes

good fat rain

From Derek Jarman's diary entry for 13 February 1989, in *Modern Nature*, his book about cultivating a garden at Prospect Cottage in Dungeness.

clinging to objects and hearths

Not everyone leaves – a recent piece in *The Guardian*, 'Sea level rise in England will put 200,000 homes at risk by 2050' read, 'This article was corrected on 15 June 2022 to clarify that the 200,000 homes will be at risk of abandonment, but may not be abandoned.'

this one act saving the whole house

A reference to a story within a story, about the boy who plugged his finger in a dyke to save a village, via Teju Cole.

this is my front door and this is the wave

A line said by someone shooting footage of a tsunami hitting the coast of Tonga after a volcanic eruption, found on *The Guardian* in January 2022.

The tap no longer running clear

Because this is the reality of floods, of rising sea levels, the counterpoint to the romanticism of Atlantis. Rosa Lyster's articles for the *LRB* have been particularly helpful in thinking about this: 'Current projections suggest that [Alexandria] will be 'underwater' in thirty years' time. I want there to be a better term for what's going to happen to places such as [this]. 'Underwater' has a dramatic ring, but there's also a sort of dreamy, mythical quality to it, an ancient city sinks elegantly beneath the waves. I want a word that conveys just how scared and sick people are going to be.'

in thirty years time that house will be underwater

This is something my mother said to me about my grandparents' house in Friuli, Italy, when we were on a train from Glasgow to Edinburgh in 2017.

Notes Towards a Poem on Earthworms

After Charles Darwin

1

THINGS WORMS ARE INDIFFERENT TO

Shouts · shrill metal whistles · the deepest and loudest bassoon · the sounds of a nearby piano—The smells of tobacco and millefleurs perfume—Immersion in water—Sage · thyme · mint—Interruptions while absorbed in other things: meaningful work · wild cherry leaves · sex—Moonlight.

II WHAT WORMS DO WITH LEAVES

Break down their defences—Plug the mouths of their burrows against the intrusion of cold—Gauge their shape and which way to drag them: narrow end first—Pile them up, like roofs—Take them in. Cast out their remains.

III RECENT FINDINGS: AFTER DARWIN

Many are dying, have been for decades—The whys are many and few: shortcuts · collateral damage · indifference—Drilodefensins: molecules in worms' guts that make leaves digestible—Without drilodefensins this land would be unrecognisable: covered in layers and layers of leaves.

IV THINGS TO FIND WORDS FOR

The chemical structure of drilodefensins: almost the shape of a worm digesting a leaf—The opacity/luminosity of worm cocoons—The sound of worms squeezing leaves into burrows, as heard by Mr D.F. Simpson one calm damp evening in his small walled garden in Bayswater, so extraordinary that he went out to look—The fading of that sound, a hundred and fifty years long—What happens to time when leaves begin to outlast trees.

Women Gathering Mushrooms

After the Babenzele Pygmies

Through moth-thick twilight dusk scatters her many ribbons of bird-whistle, loosing notes into wind like launched spores, that drift to perch snow-bright among the sparks that flake the sky's violet, a spangled foam clustering into sperm-white river, as water swells from the drip-spatter trickle of a thousand throats to thundering symphony, its racket of rhythms throbbing towards the chant of a full choir from which human croons spiral to surface, in mouth-gape bubbles, weeping a forgotten mother tongue buried long in far-flung flank of earth, and under this another noise, fuzz-dimmed, percussive, the clack-flutter of wings against bulb-glass, or crack of branch within unlit rustlings, masking a sound vet deeper still, a low hiss on the edge of hearing, that could be the wrench of hyphae tips into moist sockets, fanning splayed heads, planting glittered lures.

Endurance

I pretend I can see them,
the disappearances,
the transparent doors. No
one notices. Or everyone
has noticed already,
the shadow-green
uptwists of bear-breeches

through the earth, upside
down, the white willow's
leaves incandescent, arcing
to the ground their
chlorophyll techniques
of low-wind forgetting,
their shuffling, light: darkness

we cannot look away from,
every degree of day casting
gleam ache's, down here, over
the sanded world—

If only I could take you
there, into time's perfectly
inked manipulations,
into the river's black-breath
unfolding its rope between
vision's keylock
and the plumes of delinquent
smoke so swelled
they are by-now simply

air. The white willows weep long
after the rain cedes—I

tug a leaf from the branch,
witness a new one
already growing to replace it.
Who could call this beauty.

The filling-in of loss,
like a mound of edematous
leaf-rot, keeping us inconsolable
and alive—

Do not touch me now
beloved—unless you mean me
to open, open farther than
this beach and what
we endured here, has already
opened me—Is it that you think

I'd rather be anything else, that we were gifted the option to be anything more, than temporary.

19 Gigabecquerels

Touch it, they warn, you'll get burns. Cradle it for longer, who knows what your cells will do – spilling their borders, pouring themselves into new masses, mutant futures. At 8mm X 6mm, a glowing Tic-Tac in gamma-ray green, I presume. Shimmied, reports say, through the hole where a bolt had shaken loose in the outback, on its 1800km journey from mine to deposit. Now, it radiates somewhere on a dirt track or suburb, mocking Geiger counters. Caesium-137 hide 'n' seek. Perhaps between the fronds of a roadside plant, seed of sickness, less needle in a haystack, more breath-mint in an oil tanker. The streamlined size, I suppose, of a suppository or pessary. How abominable, to be so tiny and contain so much. Someone once told me a coffee has a half-life of twelve hours in the body, its caffeine exposing our nerves like a searchlight. Still, every morning we release it again, welcome its truck to rumble our guts, shaking every bolt loose. Erratum: An earlier version said the radiation source was 19 becquerels, the correct figure is 19 gigabecquerels. The moment that capsule was released, I see it plummet through a hatch onto the vast, miniscule world beneath, which busies on, chews the day, a new threat descending from this rumbling machine too far above to be named.

Dragon, Komodo National Park

The ranger points his stick at a patch of leaves—the dragon seems made of volcanic rock, face a slab of basalt, scales tectonic plates.

A twig snaps. She puffs her smoky throat and widens her jaw to a Jurassic crack. Her long, forked tongue sparks sunlight.

We retreat up the path. This park is her inheritance and the treasure she guards a secret. Around her the sayannah flows in a mantle

of tall grasses studded with lontar palms criss-crossed by the trails of snakes and skink, birds, pigs, deer and macaques.

I left the island years ago, took a speed boat back to where dragons blaze on screens and flags, but that drakaina still stalks my mind's savannah, creeps

up on the rim of dreams in which I brood in a crater over eggs that won't hatch. No escape from those fire-ringed eyes, my heart a rabbit caught

in her claws as she warns of slow death by paralysis, toxic shock like the scorch of molten lava. I wake petrified. My skin flakes off in ashes.

I remember how she shifted on her gold leaf nest, the quake as she thrashed her mighty tail and my world tilted on its axis.

I will write a love poem.

I thought the baby bunnies were dead—heard the mewl before dawn, and the thump of the cat door, came out to see four bodies on the rug. I scooped them up to take them out to the compost heap and they squirmed

in my hands. I knew then that they were dead, still. Just not yet. You wouldn't think it, but in spring there is always something dying. I told the children, We'll do what we can, but they won't make it. When my friend wrote, I made a list of all the things / I could not save, my mind began

unfurling the lost, the curling words. My days were a list of all the things I could not save. Nonetheless, I drove to get raw goat milk, made a nest of hay, dried leaves, and towel by the heater. I risked

loving the tiny soft body in my palm. Warmed the milk, lifted the dropper to their miniature lips. Again. Again.

Echolocation (1943)

Our mothers emerged at dusk to forage,
feeding us through the walls of themselves.
We listened to the dark inside and beyond their bodies.

Their clicks sculpted the night into insects—moths, flies, mouthfuls of other winged things that don't sing like us.

The night arrived when our mothers perched, head-up, to birth us, aided by the pull of gravity, minding the crease

of membrane, new wing, in its perfect fold. Our first unfolding was followed by midnight milk.

We were so many until the men harvested thousands of us from the belfries.

Their church bells dripped prayers and dripped of us.

We were evil placed there by God, awaiting this hour to play a part in the scheme of the human.

They called us up, we who flew fastest.

They chose us with care—
how much napalm

could we carry, the perfect incendiary.

They measured our skulls and sloganized our bones:

Aim High! Fly-Fight-Win!

They attached parachutes
and slipped us inside the shells of bombs.

At dawn, we dropped like stones above the testing ground,

friendly territory. Associated in history with darkness, until now reasons for its creation have remained unexplained.

This *perfectly wild idea* kept us captive until we forgot the pulse of flying farther and the taste of fresh water.

We craved the caverns, the nights we knew one another, and our pups in the crèche.

One spring day, we flew under a fuel tank, incinerating the test range in one fell swoop. We did not want to be

the bomb that changed the world. We did not mean to add to the sorrow of the mothers of America.

We echoed the sorrows of our mothers.

BIOGRAPHIES

FIRST PRIZE: Anthony Lawrence's most recent book of poems is *Ordinary Time*, (Pitt Street Poetry) a collaboration with Irish Australian poet Audrey Molloy. His books and individual poems have won a number of awards, including the Prime Ministers Literary Award for Poetry, the Queensland and New South Wales Premiers Awards, the Peter Porter Poetry Prize and the Blake Poetry Prize. A new collection: *What the Field Guide Saw Outside the Field: Poems 2017–2024* is due for publication with Pitt Street Poetry in early 2024. He is a senior lecturer at Griffith university, where he teaches Creative Writing, and he lives with his Dingo/Kelpie dog Benny on Moreton Bay.

SECOND PRIZE: Cath Drake is from Perth (Boorloo), Australia and now lives in London, UK. Her debut collection, The Shaking City (Seren Books, 2020) was longlisted in The Laurel Prize and highly commended in the UK Forward Prize. It was described by Philip Gross as 'a guide to staying clear-eyed, combative and caring in unsettling times'. It followed Sleeping with Rivers, a Poetry Book Society Choice & winner of the Seren/Mslexia poetry pamphlet prize. Cath has been published widely in anthologies and literary journals in UK, Ireland, US and Australia, most recently in the Best Australian Poems 2022 anthology, Plumwood Mountain Journal and The Weekend Australian. She has been short-listed for the Venture, Bridport, and Manchester Poetry prizes and previously received a second place and commended in the Ginkgo Prize. An Environmental Science graduate, Cath worked for a decade as an environmental scientist, writer, and journalist in Australia before moving to London. She won awards for her environmental nonfiction writing and broadcasting. Cath is a mindfulness teacher who highlights mindfulness appreciation of nature and poetry. She hosts The Verandah, quality online poetry events, including ongoing 'The Climate of Change' workshops that encourage deeper investigation and fresh expressions on positive change. www.cathdrake.com

THIRD PRIZE: Yvonne Reddick is a poet, nature writer, environmental humanities researcher, and climber. Her books include Burning Season (Bloodaxe, 2023), Ted Hughes: Environmentalist and Ecopoet (Palgrave, 2017) and Anthropocene Poetry (Palgrave, 2023). Her poems have been published in The Guardian Review and The New Statesman, and broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and North West Tonight. For her academic work, she has shown how Seamus Heaney sold bog-poems to raise funds for bog conservation, and detailed Ted Hughes's petitioning of politicians about water pollution. With the filmmaker Aleksander

Domanski, she made the nature film *Searching for Snow Hares*. Her latest nature writing project, *Fire on Winter Hill*, looks at mountains, climbing, climate change and the impacts of the oil industry. She is Reader in English Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Central Lancashire.

RUNNER-UP: Lydia Benson (she/her) grew up in Cornwall and now lives on the coast in Folkestone. Her publications include *Ink*, *Sweat and Tears* and Vanguard's *14 Magazine* and her poetry was shortlisted for the Disquiet Prize 2023.

RUNNER-UP: Charlie Druce was born and raised in rural Worcestershire and, armed with an English and Media degree, moved to London in the mid 1980s to start work in film and TV. Some forty years later, he's still here, now married with a son and co-running a production company. He has written poetry for many years; most often poems that explore our increasingly tense and complex relationship with nature. Having grown up in the country then living most of his adult life in London, there's an 'inside out' perspective on nature that fascinates him; all the more so as urgency around environmental loss escalates. 'Night Feed' was amongst ten commended poems in the 2006 National Poetry Competition, 'Leatherback Turtle' was longlisted in 2021 in the same competition, and several other poems have appeared in pamphlets and anthologies. He has published one non-fiction book: *Ripping up the script*, one couple's journey through infertility, a man's perspective. Notable film work includes *Father's Day*, a drama made in partnership with Prostate Cancer UK and ITV, and *Alastair Campbell*, *depression and me*, a co-production for BBC2 Horizon.

AONB BEST POEM OF LANDSCAPE: David Canning moved from Essex to the Forest of Bowland in 2021, and this landscape has become a new inspiration for his writing. He has published two poetry collections: An Essex Parish (2015) and The Celestial Spheres (2020), and in 2021, Jim-Jam-Julie, an illustrated children's story in verse. David is the BBC Essex Poet in residence, and he performs regularly on and sets the monthly theme for their BBC Upload show. His poetry has been longlisted in the National Poetry Competition, twice shortlisted for the Bridport Prize, won a first prize from the Sentinel Quarterly Literary Review, and has been commended in the Poetry Society's annual Stanza Competition. He has been published in several anthologies, including Places of Poetry, magazines (most recently in Wet Grain and UKClimbing.com), and one of his poems featured in a garden design in Channel 5's The Great Gardening Challenge.

HIGHLY COMMENDED:

Andre Bagoo's latest books include *The Undiscovered Country, The Dreaming* and *Narcissus.* He lives in Trinidad with his dog, Chaplin.

Freya Bantiff (previously Carter) is a Sheffield poet who has placed third in the National Poetry Competition. She was joint winner of the 2022 Bridport Poetry Prize (18–25s) (while being highly commended in their overall competition) and winner of the Canterbury Poet of the Year Competition 2021. A member of Hive Poetry, she was longlisted for the Winchester Poetry Prize in 2022, won second prize in the Bedford Poetry Competition 2021, and was the winner of the Walter Swan Poetry Prize (for 18-25s) in 2020, alongside the Timothy Corsellis Poetry Prize in 2017. Freya's poems and stories have been placed in the Aesthetica Creative Writing Award (2021), Mslexia Flash Fiction Competition (2020), Ilkley Literature Festival's Poetry Competition (2010–2015), and Foyle Young Poet of the Year (2015). Her poems twice toured Guernsey and she won first prize in the Wicked Young Writers Award in 2014. Currently, she is completing an MA in Poetry at UEA and will take on the role of Apprentice Poet in Residence at Ilkley Literature Festival later this year.

Rachel Bower is a poet and fiction writer based in Sheffield. She is the author of two poetry collections (*These Mothers of Gods and Moon Milk*) and a non-fiction book on literary letters (Palgrave Macmillan). She is currently working on a collection of poems about endangered insects. Rachel's poems and stories have been widely published in literary magazines, including *The London Magazine*, *The White Review, Magma*, and *Stand*. Rachel won *The London Magazine* Short Story Prize 2019/20 and the W&A Short Story Competition 2020. Rachel is currently editing an anthology with Simon Armitage (Faber & Faber) and her work is represented by Cathryn Summerhayes at Curtis Brown.

Genevieve Carver is a writer working in poetry, children's fiction, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Her first poetry collection, *A Beautiful Way to be Crazy* (Verve Poetry Press 2020) was based on a gig theatre show with live band highlighting female experiences in the music industry, and her most recent pamphlet *Landsick* (Broken Sleep Books 2023) explores connectivity and discord between humans and the natural world. Her poetry has appeared in journals including *Mslexia*, *The White Review, The North, The London Magazine, Magma*, and *Poetry News*, and she won The Moth Nature Writing Prize 2022, judged by Max Porter. Genevieve is currently Poet in Residence with the University of Aberdeen's School of

Biological Sciences, where she's writing in response to their work studying bottlenose dolphin and harbour porpoise in the Moray Firth, and the fulmar population on the uninhabited island of Eynhallow in Orkney. She is also the Jessie Kesson Fellow at Moniack Mhor 2023.

Grant Clauser is the author of several books, including *Muddy Dragon on the Road to Heaven* and *Reckless Constellations*. His poems have appeared in *The American Poetry Review, The Literary Review, Greensboro Review, Kenyon Review*, and other journals. In 2023 he won the Verse Daily Poem Prize. He lives in Pennsylvania where camps, hikes, tends his garden, and works as an editor for a media company, and also teaches poetry at Rosemont College.

Claire Collison is an Artist and writer and was one of three winners of the inaugural Women Poets' Prize, 2018. She came second in the inaugural Resurgence Prize (forerunner to the Ginkgo Prize) in 2015 and was placed second in the Hippocrates Prize, 2017 and Winchester Poetry Prize, 2020. Her poetry is widely anthologised, including in *The Valley Press Anthology of Prose Poetry* and *Field Notes on Survival* (Bad Betty Press), and can be found online and in publications including *Perverse*, *Corrupted Poets, Magma, Butcher's Dog, Finished Creatures*, and *Rialto*. She is a founder member of Poets for the Planet. Her debut pamphlet, *Placebo* is published by Blueprint, 2022.

Sarah Doyle is the Pre-Raphaelite Society's Poet-in-Residence. Her poetry has been published in journals including Spelt Magazine, Wild Court, Under the Radar, Atrium, Poetry Birmingham Literary Journal, Mslexia, Finished Creatures, and The Lonely Crowd; and in anthologies from publishers such as Broken Sleep, The Emma Press, Paper Swans, Shoreline of Infinity, and Places of Poetry. Sarah won 1st prize in the Ver Poets Open Poetry Competition 2023, and was longlisted in the National Poetry Competition 2022. She is a former winner of the William Blake Poetry Prize, the Wolverhampton Literature Festival poetry competition, and Holland Park Press's Brexit in Poetry; and has been a runner-up in the Keats-Shelley Poetry Prize and Essay Prize. She was highly commended in the Best Single Poem category of the Forward Prizes 2018, and selected for Poems of the Decade: An Anthology of the Forward Books of Poetry 2011-2020. Sarah is currently researching a PhD in meteorological poetry at Birmingham City University. A pamphlet of poems collaged from fragments of Dorothy Wordsworth's journals - Something so wild and new in this feeling - was published by V. Press in 2021, while her second pamphlet, (m) othersongs, is forthcoming from the same publisher in autumn 2023. Website: sarahdoyle.co.uk

Vivian Faith Prescott was born and raised on the small island of Wrangell, Kaachxana.áak'w, in Southeast Alaska on the land of the Shtax'heen Kwáan. She lives and writes in Lingít Aaní at her family's fishcamp. She is a member of the Pacific Sámi Searvi and a founding member of the first LGBTQIA group on the island. She's the author of several poetry collections and works of non-fiction and fiction. Along with her daughter, Vivian Mork Yéilk', she co-hosts the awardwinning *Planet Alaska* Facebook page and co-authors the *Planet Alaska* column appearing in the Juneau Empire.

Victoria Gatehouse is a Zoologist, poet, and children's writer based in the Pennines. Her second pamphlet *The Mechanics of Love*, published by the Poetry Business under the Smith|Doorstop imprint, was selected as a 'Laureate's Choice' by Carol Ann Duffy in 2019. Her writing has been widely published and broadcast on BBC radio. Her poems can be found in many journals and anthologies including *The North, Magma, Mslexia, Anthropocene, Butcher's Dog, The Rialto, Spelt, She is Fierce* (Pan Macmillan), *After Sylvia* (Nine Arches Press), and the Candlestick Press pamphlets. She is a three-time winner of The Poetry News Members' Competition. Other competition wins include The Ilkley Festival Poetry Prize, the PENfro Poetry Prize, and the Indigo International Wild Nature Poetry Award. Victoria is a volunteer tree and hedgerow planter with Forus Tree in the Calder Valley. She is working on a debut collection.

Kevin Graham lives with his family in Dublin and works in risk, specialising in environmental liability. He graduated from Dublin City University with a BSc in Applied Computational Linguistics. His poems have appeared widely in print as well as on radio and he has received Literature Bursaries from the Arts Council of Ireland. His debut poetry collection, *The Lookout Post*, was published by The Gallery Press in 2023.

Rebecca Hawkes is a poet and painter from Methven, New Zealand. Her book *Meat Lovers* won Best First International Collection in the UK ecopoetry award The Laurel Prize, and was a finalist in the US-based LGBTQ+ Lambda Awards. She is an editor of journal *Sweet Mammalian* and the Antipodean climate verse anthology *No Other Place to Stand*. She is presently undertaking a controlled detonation of her life in Aotearoa to pursue an MFA in poetry at the University of Michigan as a Fulbright grantee.

Maria Howard is a British-Italian writer and artist based in Glasgow. Her research-led practice is concerned with the poetic and political connections between memory

and imagination, site and material. She is the recipient of a Gillian Purvis Trust Award for New Writing and The Yellow Paper Prize, has been shortlisted for the Fitzcarraldo Editions Essay Prize and highly commended for UEA New Forms. She has undertaken residences with CCA Glasgow and Le18, Lyth Arts, Can Serrat and the Bothy Project, among others. She is currently a PhD candidate at Glasgow School of Art and a co-editor of *Nothing Personal* magazine.

Ute Kelly started writing poetry during the first Covid lockdown, often on walks from her home in the Calder Valley, West Yorkshire. Since then, she has enjoyed exploring different forms and approaches to writing. She has had poems published in *Rue Scribe, Topical Poetry, Willows Wept Review, Re: An Ideas Journal, One Sentence Poems*, and *Unlost*. A pamphlet in-progress, inspired by her practice of looking at leaves, was longlisted for the 2022 Mslexia Poetry Pamphlet Competition. She loves gardening and watching earthworms but has never yet heard the sound reported to Charles Darwin by Mr D.F. Simpson.

Ciaran McDermott is an Irish-British writer who grew up in rural Staffordshire, and after spending his twenties travelling in Europe, Australia and Japan, and living in Bristol, has settled in the shimmering emerald hills of central Scotland. His work has been published in a wide variety of journals and anthologies, and has appeared in *Poetry Birmingham (PBLJ)*, *Acumen, Dream Catcher, Rust and Moth,* and *The Journal*, among others. His writing explores the vivid intersection between ecology, shamanism, and myth. For Ciaran the process of writing a poem is like tracking the footprints of an animal through a forest in predawn dark, out beyond the realm of the linear self into the wilderness of dream and myth, to encounter the bedrock of meaning that lies within every heart – the deep soul memory of the earth.

Oluwaseun Olayiwola is a poet, critic, and choregrapher living in London. His poems have been published in *The Guardian, The Poetry Review, Oxford Poetry, 14poems*, and elsewhere. In 2023, he placed second in the Ledbury Poetry Competition. He became a Ledbury Poetry Critic in 2021 and since then his criticism has been published in *The Guardian, The Telegraph, TLS, the Poetry School*, and *Magma*. Oluwaseun was an inaugural member of the Southbank Poetry Collective. He also has an MFA in Choreography from the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, where he was a Fulbright Scholar. His debut collection is forthcoming from Granta (UK) and Soft Skull Press (US).

Caleb Parkin's poems have appeared in *The Guardian*, *The Rialto*, *The Poetry Review*, *Magma*, and he was guest poet on BBC Radio 4's *Poetry Please*. He won

second prize in the National Poetry Competition 2016, first in the Winchester Poetry Prize 2017, and various other shortlists. From 2020–22 he was Bristol City Poet. His debut collection, *This Fruiting Body*, is published by Nine Arches Press and was longlisted for The Laurel Prize 2022. He's published three pamphlets: *Wasted Rainbow* with tall-lighthouse; *All the Cancelled Parties*, his collected City Poet commissions; and most recently, *The Coin* with Broken Sleep Books. He tutors for Poetry Society, Poetry School, Cheltenham Festivals, First Story, Arvon, and holds an MSc in Creative Writing for Therapeutic Purposes. From 2023, he's a practice-asresearch PhD candidate at University of Exeter, as part of RENEW Biodiversity.

Judith Rawnsley is a poet and writer based in Porto, Portugal. A life-long lover of literature and the visual arts, she studied English Literature at Cambridge University and later earned a BA in Creative Writing (prose) from UEA. She lived in Asia for many years where she worked as a journalist, author, editor, literary critic, and in finance. Judith recently gave up her day job to write full time and is gathering poems for her first collection. She's particularly interested in poetry of the environment and place, migration, art, and love and is passionate about mentoring young people, and diversity and inclusion. She was shortlisted in the 2018 Oxford Brookes International Poetry Competition and longlisted in the 2020 National Poetry Competition.

Adrie Rose lives next to an orchard in western MA and is the editor of Nine Syllables Press. Her chapbook *Rupture* is forthcoming with Gold Line Press in 2023, and she has a micro chapbook forthcoming in 2023 with Porkbelly Press. She is a Poetry MFA student at Warren Wilson College. Her work has previously appeared in *The Baltimore Review, Nimrod, The Night Heron Barks, Underblong, Witness*, and more. She won the Elizabeth Babcock Poetry Prize, the Ethel Olin Corbin Prize, and the Gertrude Posner Spencer Prize in 2021, and the Anne Bradstreet Prize, the Eleanor Cederstrom Prize, and the Mary Augusta Jordan Prize in 2022.

Milena Williamson has a PhD in poetry from the Seamus Heaney Centre. She is currently the Ciaran Carson Writing and the City Fellow at Queen's University Belfast. She has received an Eric Gregory Award and the Ireland Chair of Poetry project award. Her pamphlet, *Charm for Catching a Train*, was published by Green Bottle Press.

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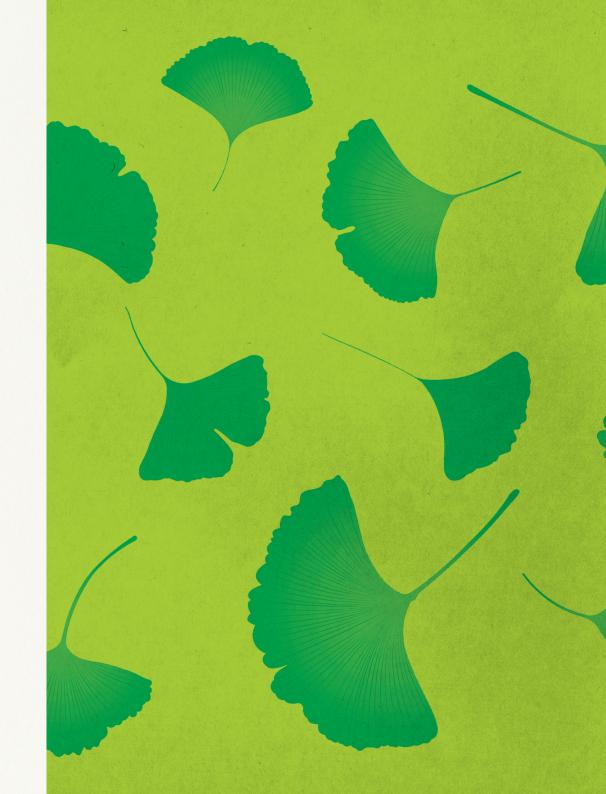
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Nazrene Hanif, Tessa Foley, Maryam Hessavi and Jasmine Ward for their hard work, and for Jaz's brilliant graphics for the poets on social media and her handling of the Prize management.

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POETRY SCHOOL



"These are poems that rise to the terror of our current moment: some with tenderness, others with anger, many with a powerful combination of both. The climate crisis is so profound, so huge, that the poem can risk being crushed under the pressure. In this anthology, writers have found new and affecting ways of letting the local speak to the global, of letting the image suggest the unspeakable whole. Reading these poems lets us see more, and see better. Each is a window into a deep and true connection to the world around us."

SEÁN HEWITT

"Ecopoetry demands to be read as an anthology.

Not merely a collection, but a choir of voices of living creatures from every far flung corner of this globe, united in their battle against climate crisis. From lace like lichens draped upon rocks, to medusas in the deeps of the oceans, from wing bourne birds to poets from Australia, Africa, New Zealand to New York, the poems in this year's anthology demonstrate that what unites us is greater than what divides.

They remind us what is precious and that it is our duty to work as part of nature rather than against the wonders of this world."

SALLY CARRUTHERS