



GINKGO
PRIZE

ECOPOETRY
ANTHOLOGY
2020

g I N k g o
P R I Z E

ECOPOETRY
ANTHOLOGY
2020

The Ginkgo Prize 2020
Ecopoetry Anthology

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PREFACE

The work in this anthology is the result of sifting over two thousand anonymous entries from around the globe for The Ginkgo Prize for Ecopoetry 2020 — facilitated by the Poetry School, it currently stands as the biggest ecopoetry prize in the world. Each poem is sculpted in the shadow of environmental crisis, their themes addressing everything from the intrusive destruction of marine wildlife and the mass extinction of species, to the jumble sale of space junk and the ghost-like bleaching of sea coral. Some of them catch us off-guard with heart-shaking imagery or a startling tone, while others are more stripped-back in cultivating their ecological reckoning. Together, however, they assemble a poignant timeline of man-made damage and disarray that charts our greatest non-achievements — each page holds up its poem like a cracked mirror, both urging and inspiring us to piece together the shards.

I would describe the judging process for these poems with my thoughtful co-judge Simon Armitage as a delicious experiment in poetic foraging. After setting off each morning to meander through untouched imaginative territories, and orient myself in their unique landscapes, I was thrilled to stumble across these texts; excavating meaning from its layers with eager admiration. The journey was unpredictable, surprising, deeply nourishing and vital, for curiosity is scored by these writers in such a way that we, as readers, re-emerge with renewed awareness and faith in the restorative potential of language. They foreground that necessary mode of co-being between the environment and its invited guests, while also rethinking the fabric of poetry as ecological terreau. I look forward to re-reading this anthology as inspiration for my own dialogues with nature, duets with singing orchids and otherwise, as well as continuing to share it widely.

— Jade Cuttle

Ming

We ease you open.

Hinged to each valve,
a pale tongue rooted in silence
tears from its mantle.

You slacken and still.
A clear liquid oozes lustre
gleaned from ocean salt.

Muscle and foot, we scrape you
out, put you to one side,
globby and unfortunate.

Such is fate.

Carved into your shell
we find trade routes, the wake
of explorers, contours of underwater
mountains, the migratory patterns
of whales.

We measure the scrawled ridges,
scribbled centuries of silt and swell,
share tales – the ancients
of the deep:

ghost barnacles
on a fairground tail-slap swirl;
turritopsis dohrnii, aspic thimbles,
their eternal cycle of drifting light;

horseshoe crabs caught by the tide
in halls of porous rock,
tails and spines shattered
by the blast.

We call you Ming.
You are older than this world
we created.

We wrap your gummy form
in polythene, keep it on ice.

Ming, the bivalve mollusc was 'born' in 1499, meaning it was swimming in the oceans before Henry VIII took the English throne. It was unfortunately killed by researchers when they opened its shell to find out how old it was.

Field Notes

Spring

I write 'clouds' more than I write 'sun'.

Sparrows invent themselves
each time I forget the proper name for a bird.

Did you see?

It was snowing when I was born. An iron square.
The ash and the oak were cladded with light.

3.21 p.m. On the day they told me I was depressed I was sitting
in a doctor's office in a Portakabin in Tottenham.

It was Wednesday.

Poetry prompt: our last disenchantment = the vanishing of snow.
Poetry prompt: autobiography.

[March 16th] These are the damp days
clasped in the shattering clack of underground trains,

where unbroken lines cross between stations,
faces turned down, bodies grit in the teeth

of scrolling news.

Adverts dream their way onto our thumbs;

the mind's dissolution an empty aperture.
Did that work? Not exactly. The text reads:
too much information.

[Undated] There are fires in California.

Blackthorn and stitchwort. Bees scuttle in blue corollas, omens
of a future they already knew would come.

Hedgerows. Winged calyx. Smoulder of alder. Hornbeam.

Sour tongues
of rain

clip on tar, a curtain drawn to greet
the earth's secret language.

I remember when observation was something
other than fumbling, field notes scratched against oblivion.

Summer

"Remember when" is the lowest form of conversation — Tony Soprano

The boxwood mazes hum:
terse, a hint of piss.

Electric heat churns in servers. Skinned rays
walk shadowless in the alley behind the houses

rooms sweating in a febrile, cubic warmth,
a leak of brick.

Tuesday. I remember sparrows, darting like mistakes
across the eye.

[16th June] Sirens. Blue light's thuggish endangering of air, a fragile grip
of state wavelengths.

The longest note since records began.

Reminder: Lava is called magma
while it stays hunkered underground

(pressure transforms the word)
so does its release.

8.31 p.m. The couple next door are screaming again.

Last week I met a woman with a name like a god and
a carrier of peacocks

(beings made of eyes)

she taught me how flesh can be more
naked in a dress. Desire, two syllables aching toward three.

Maybe the word becomes human by trying
to be more than what it is?

[19th August] *Your local council has opted not
to be a member of the London Air Quality Network.*

11.33 a.m. A girl is crying in the park. Her doll is missing,
and the name in her mouth shows us the way

every distance is infinite to love
and the salt on her cheek is a seed
planted in the ground of every goodbye still to come.

Autumn

My fingers lay open the book: September.

The house is a nest of pipes. Tanks and tubs
rusting, scaled with grey flakes.

The waterfalls and streams
imagined by the wind onto the leaves

face the drying light;

slim branches freckled like skin cells
a scrape of brown curling slowly

into fire.

Poetry prompt: a poem made only of last lines.

[12th September] I blink. Sparrows. I forget.
Maybe the word is also an illness?

How original.

Fruit falls with a blunt thud. Crab apples torn
across rail-side fences, squashed, gulping into mulch.

This just in: The sea does not remember you.
It rises and falls.
October. Debt and guilt in German are one word.
To clarify, the accounts will not be settled.

English Dusk. Vortical shadows.
Loose smoke moves in the gloom.

Hands try to mark drills, bed in crops, fingers frosted numb.
Soil bulges, thick and crisp. The netted frame

for sifting hardly holds.

There will come a time when the leaves are full
of no one, and the birds

go unidentified
as sparrows

as mistakes across the eye.

Until then we will keep this record, a tea light
drowsing in the sway of mortal dark,

picking up the crumbs that speak of oceans,
reminding one another of the years

before the murmuring of cinders, when
like wasps we built a shelter from our mouths.

What Survives of Us

The wedding was my idea, but you show me
a young thing who doesn't dream lace-lacquered
with a fistful of fuchsias, feigning fear of fake gods
for the church shot. You conceded. Said if it mattered,

I should simply ask, but no white cliffs of Dover.
No pomp, priest or plastic. I wore gold sequins,
clutched peonies grown only to be plucked.
Guests puckered straws, dresses bleeding

glitter into carpet, and lips slathered in petroleum
toasted to our love. You insisted we made rings,
had me melt the earth, had me pour it and bend it,
had me hammer platinum into a fine string.

Together we made the mouth of a river
or the sun eclipsed, and after one wedded orbit
the sea swallowed mine, clean like a splinter
from troubled flesh. We tried to report it,

but you can't handcuff the ocean, and you can't
lasso the moon, and you can't collar a beast
and call it yours. So leave me rotting
in the garden, let the worms and flowers feast

until I am worms and flowers. Tell our children
not to marry, and that if they're really good
their teeth will turn to diamonds, their smiles
will make mountains, their bones will be the woods.

At the End of West Sands, St Andrews

A stranded seal, trapped
in the swaddling
of her own skin.

Hauled out of her element,
her sleek fat missile
can no longer move

with force and elegance.
She is all eyes: mournful black pools
of paralysed watchfulness.

All pupil: two tears of onyx
set in their orbits
implore me for – something.

To keep a distance, perhaps
(one hundred and fifty feet),
not loom, stare and *click. Click.*

And walk away with eyes
in the back of my head.
I wanted her to feel accompanied,

or for her to accompany me;
momentarily, we were
the only proof of each other.

Extraction on the Rocks

First, an injection to numb the loss of umpteen species.
There are other teeth, so what's the odd extinction? Hold on

to your polar bears, adrift in unfeeling oceans.
There's a menagerie beneath the shallows of gum.

Impressive says the dentist: an Xray of tyrannosaurs.
Intertwined. Clinging together as the ship goes down.

Can you feel that? Does it hurt,
to know a living part of you will soon be gone?

He tunes his instruments. There's drilling, the waft
of singed ivory. Am I the last of the walruses in the room?

One final wrench, *all done*. He suggests sucking ice
to staunch the flow. A prescription for Paracetamol.

The narwhal is back in its unquestioning cage.
Sensation worms its way home, the fridge hums

as it sponges up resources. Change the gauze
and go for the amnesia-cube. Its chill shock

shoots pain into my palette: spit out the hail stone
and my tongue resigns itself to this ransacked coastline,

a cargo of spilt tusks whale bone silence.

Anglezarke Moor

This moor is mine.
Or, at least, I pretend
I own the peat that gives
gently under my feet.

That dark brown
pool of water, acid
and reed-edged.
A monster might lie

just under the surface,
eyes half-closed, gills
palpating, my monster,
my pool.

These furred fells
rise, one behind the other.
Their curved flanks
breathe for me.

Spitler's Edge,
Will Narr Hill,
Noon Hill,
Rivington Pike.

My skylarks
flirt with the sun,
throats open, sing
a lemon-sherbet song.

Bog cotton rags
flutter. My bouquet.
Pinpricks of light
on the dark.

My ancient limestone
ribs rise up
through thin skin,
rain mapped.

At last, Great Hill.
My long, slow climb
to sky-reaching
cairn of stones.

A A I A
NT RCT C

Two worlds | sdlrow owT

Summer of vowels. Winter of consonants.

Six months with no punctuation

;Six / months: {with – nothing?}, but ... [punctuation]!

II

Winterize your words against the extremes.

No sibilants to freeze and jam the letters;

sprinkle iron dust on the serifs

for rust to release its microheat;

take them out for seconds at a time, then back

into the fur-lined Scrabble bag of mind;

flick a sable brush around the contours

of sense, swab away ambiguity;

feast on calorific concepts, wade

into the blubber of fatty metaphor;

write out the word ‘chocolate’ eight times a day;

star-jump with an X, high kick with a K,

take yoga with a Y, pilates with a P,

curl up with a cat-like G and sleep with ZZZs;

listen out for mumbling and murmuring,

for changes strange of syntax normal;

never open the door to a raging verb

like *desolate*, *yearn*, *remember*, *regret*;

seek the chapel when lost nouns begin to howl

around the station: *lover*, *mother*, *pet*;

claw a snow cave into an old conversation –

ones that hurt are deepest, the heat profile

of past frictions and *l'esprit de l'escalier*

will keep sound and breath and logic alive.

There are no wrong words, only polysemous weather.

III

Some poems take a bad steer, stray miles from shore,

their inner ears furred over from ceaseless cacophony of stars.

“It’s heartbreaking to see a poem struggling like this.”

Lurching into town on scraped and scarred flippers,

yelping for breath, suffocating from the weight

of unsupported flesh. “But we’re not allowed to interfere.”

In a few days we’ll say some kind words and remove it from here

IV

The sun bounces across the horizon

like the white ball on a karaoke screen.

Which words is it tracing?

‘We’ll meet again?’ ‘Ain’t no sunshine when she’s gone?’

Too obvious for this subtle star.

‘And then I see a darkness.’

V

A man with a double-barrelled name crosses Drake Passage in a rowboat.

A man with a triple-barrelled name crosses Drake Passage in a bathtub.

A man with a quadruple-barreled name crosses Drake Passage on a flip-flop.

A man with a quintuple-barelled name crosses Drake Passage in a sardine tin.

A man with a sextuple-barelled name crosses Drake Passage on a fig leaf.

A man with a septuple-barrelled name crosses Drake Passage on a prayer.

A woman with no name dreams on endless, untouched, pristine, laundered linen.

VI

Jason, wearing one rescued flip-flop, hunts the golden fleece in Antarctica.
One foot, one flipper, one foot, one flipper, across the continent.
No green in this desert, no ruminants, no wool, no gold.
If Cadmus sowed teeth here they wouldn't grow,
they would chatter at the Milky Way, never suckling.
In frustration Jason remembers the heel of Talos,
how unscrewing the plug brought forth a flood of ichor.
He grasps the combination lock of Antarctica
with its ergonomic curves and slots for finger and thumb,
and twists the bottom of the Earth right off
releasing gold into the atmosphere, fleecing the world of its riches.

VII

these words have never been. these words will never go. unless you take these
words with you.
never go unless you take these words with you.
never take these words with.
never with you.
never with.
never go.
take these words with.
you.

For Christina and Antoine on the occasion of AntarctiCA55 Expedition to the 7th Continent, 2020.

Birds Britannica: Exhibition Catalogue

The vivid display

of high-keyed colour suggests an acidic immediacy that contrasts playfully with the Lesser-Spotted Woodpecker's deep connection to more elemental scapes such as ancient glades and old cider orchards, whose subtle and diverse varieties of dead wood recreated here offer the ideal context.

Muted tones and lost histories

are interwoven in the vision of the Grey Partridge, who likes to ask how a future ruralism might present itself, attracted as she is to pastoral tropes such as the swing of a rusty gate or open ploughed ground, which she seeks to express by colours dull and delicate, sudden deft twists.

What begins as a dialogue between

folk tale and woodcut becomes the haunting starting point for the Barn Owl but one from which he may deviate, for in some cultures the owl is considered a fool, an idea perceived here as something to both honour and subvert.

Typically grounded in the process

of collating variations of local visual phenomena – the more surprising the combination the better – the Magpie gathers objects that, while accruing unstable symbolisms, act as physical footnotes to an entire era.

A quiet spirit at work

the Wood Warbler aims to frustrate the process of recognition by treading a path almost lost among wet leaves and dead bracken, between the borders of figuration and abstraction.

We see in his body

of work materials as diverse as charcoal, plastic and greaseproof paper, which the Herring Gull uses to employ a sense of provisionality as he explores how the built environment is both source and trap alongside which the liminal offers a deep ambiguous charge that could be described as a sort of despairing triumphalism.

Tracing her beginnings in classical still life

the Mute Swan emerges from myths of decadence and mortality set against a background overpainted with lakes and rivers, where she presents a facade at once closed but pervious to a kind of fixed interiority.

What is being proposed

by the Song Thrush is a way of imagining how the concrete might be released into a more fluid understanding of time and space.

Appearing here as

a form of semi-erased expression, the Skylark represents himself as lone symbol that manages to exalt the idea of how a national identity might exist more fully in art than in a vanishing reality.

Insisting that violence too

must be accommodated the Cuckoo operates between acts of damage and reparation and while keen to explore notions of parasitic exploitation she nonetheless celebrates opportunity and daring together with a certain brash self-preservation, where any nagging doubts about the means of creating are always overcome by the promise of something new.

As part of her ongoing interest in participatory art

the Nightingale asks that we take ourselves to the edge of a wood and listen and in the unlikely event that we will hear anything may we nonetheless make ourselves open to the possibility that something might be heard thereby allowing ourselves to become the artwork in the way we stand there in the dark listening for what is no longer there.

Bluejoint

there is little wildness left
in me

beneath it all
I feel
 rhizome
 full
of roots
only
sprouting stalks
into the soil
for stability

what happened was
 there was a spillage
a dark pouring
into the soil
and then
 nothing
but silence and thought

and I thought
there is little wildness left
in me

what happens is
my child
 my child picks
a stem of bluejoint

he holds it to the sun
its shadow
falls onto my wrist
 and I pray
for it
to burn onto my wrist
 and I pray
for its inflorescence
beneath my skin

what happens is
 the bluejoint

the first growth
after oil spills

after the dark pouring

what happened was
my child picked a stem
of bluejoint for me

and beneath it all
a little wildness

The Shot-Up Holes in a Road Sign at Kms. 1,871, Patagonia Highway

There's a purple birthmark on the throat
of a Spanish engineer draining an aquifer
to make the copper for our mobile phones,
letting us talk via Google Translate:

so why such dismay, O Mother?

The mischievous wind is a Mapuche sprite
ripping the cagoule-hoods from our heads,
till we find refuge in a log-cabin and drift-off
to the sound of a glacier's waters breaking.

*So why such dismay, O Mother,
and why is your sky like a shot-up road sign?*

Mendoza friars tame the soil, seed poplars,
less for their gorgeous gold in evening light,
more for roots to soak-up our winter floods,
packed more to an acre than native spruce.

*So why such dismay, O Mother,
and why is your sky like a shot-up road sign,
the bullet-holes like stars, winking lost light through their dead trajectories?*

A Chilean frog (cf. 'The World's Weirdest' on YouTube),
the male carries the young in his vocal sac, the father
literally announcing the children onto an Endangered List.
Lacking in all irony, we name them 'Darwin's Frog.'

*So why is there such dismay, O Mother,
and why is the sky a shot-up road sign,
the bullet-holes like stars, winking lost light through their dead trajectories,
to the fallen forests of a southern hemisphere?*

Cat Cracker Carnival

Come children, climb in them seat. They leather line and warm, but miss out
one-two, stay arms length apart before we go start. We go slide past them aisle
stack up with tin fish, dry peas and rotten fruit. Let we fly through them wide-
open freezer doors, and hold on firm, just for this! Gardez! How we hook and
hang up wild meat, swing carcass in we own slipstream breeze. While everything
around moving to millennia musak, watch how we dodge and shoot past all that
melt and stink. We go slide past monoculture – easy now – we moving on well
beyond, breezing through all them colony, one after the other, while they fall
bap! bap! and collapse down like domino, into their own kinda disorder. Don't
forget to breathe. In. Out. And light plenty torch on the way. We plan good eh?
Here, pick up some of this wood: it nice and dry and easy to burn. Now clap and
sing out with raise-hand praise:

[full brass band with
drums, crescendo]

When you breed a dog to kill, it could only kill!

When them gear get perpetual oil, they go never stand still!

[decrecendo, with
pandeiro roll]

So keep going little ones. Speed up quick quick. Put on your mask, make sure to
breathe from them tank. Filter your water well. You could see? You could
count? Bounce babies, bounce. Fly even higher! Watch what we doing and make
sure to follow. Mark up we game, because we write them odds. After all, hell
done flip over, so who laughing now?

Denial

I lied to the boy
who I met in the woods
by the church hall
who thought I was a boy
and took me home
to his mum down the lane
who thought I was a boy.
That wasn't the lie.
I never said Joe.
I said *Jo*.
The lie was the tree
I was in when I met the boy
by the church hall.
The broad beech elephant
branch I was balancing on
when he said *Is that your den?*
I was the lie,
not the tree,
when I said *No*
and shook my head.
I said *No*
and shrank my neck,
tightening the corners
of my face to say
No three times in the way
the boy knew meant *Course not.*
This tree wouldn't be my den,
not by a church hall,
by a wall,
not right by a carpark.
Even though I knew

the woods that the tree
guarded went all the way
down to a secret stream.
A stream that was worth
five pockets full of beech nuts.
A stream with a shoal
of chub that was worth ten dens.
I betrayed my tree
to keep my name,
to keep boys away
from my den,
to keep the fish
in the stream.

Extinction

How beautiful some things are
when slowed
 right down —
starlings,
 bulbs exploding,
a storm erupting from thin air,

or how the world keeps on then turning
 in its sleep below

a hurricane's brute eye cycling.
 And still we see only

mechanisms here
 or patterns in the sky
that amount
 to cold logic —

how heat plus wind gives birth to rain

how everything is simply
 ordered chaos ripe

for harvesting. But not everything

that shifts through us
 is scripted physics,

not all that's set in motion
 can be stalled. Take how
a sea-hawk tries to halt

 mid-dive then keeps
on falling
 right through the sky towards

oblivion
 or how
 extinction works
the way light disintegrates

 from a television screen.

But then I think there could
be beauty
 in this too,
 some grace
in our unravelling. No smoke signals,

no hullabaloo. Just another animal
 pressed to mute

as a planet learns to pick off
 from its skin old scabs.

For Other Bees Do Not Visit This Flower

I have very little doubt that if the whole genus of humble-bees became extinct in England, the heartsease and red clover would wholly disappear
– Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 1866

Some hearts fracture slowly, a small crack
in the muscle wall deepening over the years,

and the sound of breathing more like sobbing,
as though floodwaters were swamping the airways –

the storms are getting oftener and stronger,
their muster of names those of long-lost cousins

blowing home from overseas, bringing gifts
of biblical proportions and rattling with stories;

we hunch inside our skins, trying not to listen.
But old houses are porous, on a winter's evening

you can smell the smoke of other people's fires
through the depleted walls, like bad news drifting in,

a waft of paranoia. Then something we should not
have said flies out of our mouths, a dead word

like bumblebee or heart's-ease. In the small hours
in flowerless chambers the planet trembles.

Gannet...

offers quarter point, banks left
and is the compass rose of self,
drawn by the sea's dark magnet
to narrow on its dive. That beak
could nail you to a bloody rood,
eviscerate the dull mind's scrod,
fall ravenous on an idling flex
from nowheres of insipid sky
and still come back for more.
Here, against the ocean scrim:
white cross on Payne's grey,
corn-tinged torc of neck,
post-punk graphic head,
those brown bastard wings
angle steel-tipped greed
to cleave the surface water
and feed a boundless want.
Firebolt cruciform retracting in-
to knife, you've glid the season
by me, swept aside my morning
for the zero sum of your hunt.
In turn, I sift the cortex
of near-forgotten dread,
to lose you in the thinking
as this sharp beak hits white.

LENSKAYA HORSE

Liquid blood found inside a prehistoric 42,000-year-old foal.
Siberian Times, April 16th, 2019

Bog Dobbin, *Equus lenensis*, leggy newborn
foal – dirt-stiffened, like a toy abandoned

and exposed by melting snow, its bay
plush caked with clay. The mud

he drank when he drowned and a guzzle
of mare's milk turning sour slosh inside

a gut fermenting undigested dream.
His body is a shriveled wineskin

stowing dregs of a vinegary elixir –
the infant heart a veiny sponge

a-sop with the world's oldest blood.
In a Siberian lab scientists draw fluid

from the golem on the slab,
seeking in vials of urine and cruor

claret conjurations to reconstitute its soul
in a petri dish. The chosen host in sterile stable

stands placid in her stall, vessel readied
to bear and birth a shadow of the resurrected foal.

Little Horse of the Apocalypse, whose blunt
mahogany head is an antique instrument

carved with sound-holes, whose unshod hooves
are crude omegas curved with luck, whose equine gaze

is a dirt-glazed pane through which the past
stares into the now-known Now: shudder

creature! Stamp your feet free of muck,
snort puffs of dust as sound screeches drily

cross the taut untuned chords strung
in your neck – a wakening shriek: *the scream*

you must scream to summon your rider.
Rise stallion, whinny, flick your black tail!

Nature Based Solutions

At the webinar propped on my kitchen table
the minister asks us to consider (third in a list
of six) *nature based solutions* to the crisis
we find ourselves in for the very reason
phrases like this are scattered like straws and clutched
at, smoke rising from a house on fire. In this *window*
to act, he calls it, *a positive inflection point*, I try to think
of a single thing that isn't based within nature –
if that means part of us all and where we live, us
humans and our fellow creatures, flowers and trees,
moss and mushrooms, not forgetting lichen, the dirt
under my fingernails, invisible flora blooming
in my gut. Above my head there's a tap-tap-tapping
like the woodpecker who sometimes mistakes our house
for a tree. The roofer's fixing leaks round the chimney
and in the valley between me and my neighbour.
He took over his father's business but wouldn't want
his son to: his body's shot to hell he says from all
the clambering and crouching and clinging he has to do
on roofs all over the county. He's making a consummate job
of it, anti-clockwise, handling every slate with such care
they could be the armour of Marianne Moore's *near artichoke*,
the pangolin, *scale lapping scale with spruce-cone regularity*.
Up here the wind and the rain puff out their cheeks
but we'll be okay now the roofer's doing what he does.
He reminds me I have some nature based solutions
of my own. I open my mouth and start speaking
passionflower, all the words coming out like nails,
pollen-dusted verbs and vowels mending what is broken
by spreading seeds and changing with the weather.

Northern Latitude

Damp, arrhythmic, upon an anorak hood,
soft blown rain gifts a latitude
blurring hell's acre, where dumped kale self-seeds
and formally, from well-farmed scenes, secedes.

Galvanic wire, a tautologic fence
—tight, long-drawn, intense—
is stretched for wintered cows
to stop them roaming.

In one green field a brace of duck
and an alarming redshank fly right up;
in another, a knackered Volvo, bronze,
shoots the breeze with rooks, and reflects in ponds.

Along the shore small gulls en masse
shall undulate yet never pass
up sandeels from a breaking wave
nor smörgåsbord from skerry,

till hollowed whelk with battered beer-can lies,
elevated as detritus
caught awhile in some wrecked seiner's
polypropylene mesh.

Yet from this high-flung muck we are all gainers,
we'd moralise amiss
upon life's bruck on a stripped-down beach
with less and less of this,

but only that squat lump
of blown, unloved aeolianite,
on which may rain, wind, verve & patience suit
to let vetch drill, and clumpy sea pink root.

Seeding the Cosmos

Find some attractive planets
and tie yarn around their moons
to mark them for later.

If one snaps easily in half,
the planets are ready to pick. Remove
all the dried ones, place them

in a paper bag. Remove the seeds
from their orbits by cracking
with a fingernail. Pour the seeds

into a box, place them in a warm spot.
Shake once a millennium.
Pour the dried cosmos seeds

inside an envelope, fold over the flap,
place in a clean screw-top jar
until ready for planting. Start seeds indoors,

before the last frost. Planets sown
in outer space will quickly catch up. Water
copiously. Better luck this time.

Skrik

(At Bamsebu, Svalbard)

We blot out
the detritus

of our dreams
to surface

in the mudroom
booted up to belt

on amber lifejackets
and into Zodiacs

(we clamber ant
like), hammy

rib-craft belching
as they land.

The shacked bones
of the slain belugas

lie dissembled,
rimy, unmade

jigsaw time
and tide will marl.

A querulousness
fills the space,

the shorn flesh
of their dying.

White horde
of antiquity

they gape at us
from cavities

where eyes are
memories, *enormous*,

infinite. Some click
and mew of ghosts

in horizontal, only
there's no dawning,

just this papery set.
We're all made up

as a stream of purple
sandpipers affects

a dance of life
and we are finished.

Solastalgia

Action is the best antidote to despair

– “UNEARTHED”, James Bradley, Meanjin.com

When I opened my mouth to describe to her
the glacial mire of my mind,
an iceberg fell out,
sat there
stubbornly melting
in the middle of my counsellor's box room.

Her pursed lips loosened;
eyebrows rose like a tide.
Hold it like an inner child, she suggested
pointing with the tip of her pen.
I leaned in from the fold-out sofa-bed
with the kind of tentative hug
you'd give at an office party
you weren't invited to
while clocks ticked deadlines on both walls
and the patterns of lost continents
surfaced in drips on my shirt
until, having claimed surface area,
the water crawled up the shorelines of the room,
passed marks of a child's growth on the doorframe
reading Venice, Amsterdam, London, New York.
We laughed about 90's disaster movies
like we weren't in one.

Her smile fell to rest like dust and I wondered,
do counsellors get support for stuff like this?
How safe can she make this space, really?

Is it triggering to know it's not just the world inside my head that's on
fire anymore?

Can she hear the whipping permafrost crack,
gun-sliding across the room as well?

Does she smell the same billowing popping candy of forest fires snap
from downstairs?

Is she woken to the harmonium drone of bulldozers marching in the street,
echoing
like tinnitus.

Seems somethings are meant to thaw,
others not
while all that's frozen,
seems it'll never melt

until it does.

Space Junk

I was listening to Hawkwind's *Quark Strangeness and Charm*
in the machinery shed on the farm -

an inheritance of bones in a belt of wheat
the day space junk fell to earth.

I thought the stylus had hit scar tissue on the record
I'd dusted off and pressed into service.

I could see a blur of windmill blades
like the recommissioned fan

of an everglades boat. We were ten years into a drought.
I was no stranger to the wonders

of cosmic travel, or being the beneficiary
of what land and sky can offer.

My geologist uncle once held, at arm's length, a rock
like a warped planet

in some cottage industry orrery.

Meteorite, he said, tracing the raised
heat-scars with his thumb. Another time he placed
a mottled grey stone in my palm:

You are now being X-rayed by uranium.

I left the shed and walked out into shape-
shifting waves of heat like footage of a crematorium
in full production.

I found twisted metal frames
and cables like a melted cross-
section of the cardio-vascular system. Wildflowers
were in bloom.

What had fallen was scattered
like abandoned sculpture
among everlasting and Queen of Sheba orchids.

One of Skylab's solar
wing panels was caught in a fence,

its busted mirrors
throwing bits of light like code for an emergency.
It seemed the atmosphere that day
had been arranged
by astral choreography. A lenticular cloud
was stalled overhead like a bell, and the wind
contained sounds
of industry, despite the farm
being fifty miles from town.
I called the authorities, then waited on the verandah,
watching the road for dust.

The Endangered Naturalist

I know all about the miracles
bred into their peanut hearts,
the hollow bones and half-sleep
while circumnavigating continents.
They sense the earth's magnetic fields,
the hunger of ice or flicker of beetle antennae,
can execute a thousand beats per minute slice
through air in a whir of wing and synapse
to escape the abyss of my cat's eye.
They see invisible colours, keep me up
with streetlamp songs; I count their charms-
green for tidings, skeins and murder,
red for chatterings and lamentations.
Each morning I wake to blunder,
rubber booted and watch them lift
in a shockwave of flock and caw -
they know when a storm is coming;
they know a scarecrow when they see it.

There are as Many Songs in the World as Branches of Coral

I walk a long way
sinking in soft sand.

My feet, two creatures
of burden.

Low lying clouds
mirror stormy ocean waves

and wild eddies.
The wrack line

littered with elkhorn
with coral sponges—

each one a finger
from a different hand.

Disappeared
are the reefs

they arose from.
As a child

I combed black rocks of a jetty
prying starfish from pools

sucked salt
off their legs,

curious podia searching
my tongue.

I craved also
the taste of ash

ate cigarette butts
from the beach—

put anything in my mouth
to know it.

.

I was nine
when I first saw the photographs—

bodies overflowing
from wheelbarrows.

Corpses pitched
in heaps like firewood

at the sides of barracks.
Didn't recognize what they were.

Then I noticed the bird,
a raven,

eating
the inside of a human nose.

.

There are as many songs in the world
as branches of coral.

The sponges
the sea pens,

the whips,
have a bloody

earthy smell.
I lay the few I've collected

on a wicker table to dry
under the adonidia palms

and squeeze out the remaining brine.
Soon they begin to sigh.

.

These hours
when the sky is white

my heart reels
like a cay in a squall

and I arrive again
at the scowl

of the red brick gate.
There were no clouds

that day, above the camp.
The grassy fields

bright green.
Tall birches

in full leaf.
I walked weightlessly

on the train tracks,
one foot

in front of the other
balancing on rails.

I pulled a rusty hair pin
from the soil

put it in my mouth—
75-year-old tarnish

a perfumed
female essence.

The remaining brick
chimneys crumbling,

splintered garrisons—
burial pits moaned—

here was an endless landscape
of hatred this primeval—

it was as if I saw
each soul

who had arrived and
departed,

shimmering,
impossibly,

in the emerald fields.
And everything

broke open
and sang.

.

There were no clouds
that day

I visited Birkenau,
but the sky,

it was white.
The meadows,

they glistened,
the tall birches,

beckoned.
Before I left

I ate a few blades of grass—
peeled off a strip of bark

pressed two sharp stones
into my well-made shoe.

BIOGRAPHIES

FIRST PRIZE: Jane Lovell is an award-winning poet whose work focuses on our relationship with the planet and its wildlife. She has been widely published in journals and anthologies in the UK and US. She has won the Flambard Prize (2015), the Wigtown Prize (2018) and the Geoff Stevens Memorial Prize (2020) and has been shortlisted for several other literary awards including the Basil Bunting Prize, the Robert Graves Prize and Periplum Book Award. Her latest collection is the prize-winning *The God of Lost Ways* published by Indigo Dreams Press. Jane lives in Kent and is Writer-in-Residence at Rye Harbour Nature Reserve.

SECOND PRIZE: Daniel Fraser is a writer from Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire. His poetry and prose have won prizes and been published widely in print and online, including: *London Magazine*, *LA Review of Books*, *Aeon*, *Acumen*, *X-R-A-Y*, *Poetry Birmingham*, *Radical Philosophy* and *Review 31*. His debut poetry pamphlet '*Lung Iron*' is published by the Oxford Brookes Poetry Centre's ignitionpress. A current humanities excellence scholar at University College Cork, his research examines crisis and traumatic temporality in post-1945 European literature. Twitter: @Oubliette_Mag

THIRD PRIZE: Emily Kate Groves is a poet and facilitator living in Brighton. She previously won *the Sunday Telegraph* and Rose Theatre's 'Poetry for Performance' competition, and made the final 15 for Young Poet Laureate, London. She took part in Apples and Snakes 'The Writing Room' and gained a place on their 2018 Arvon retreat. Most recently she has delivered intergenerational writing classes, and works for a charity connecting older people with their younger neighbours for mutual friendship and creativity.

RUNNER-UP: Nicola Healey's poems have been published in *The Poetry Review*, *PN Review*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *The London Magazine*, *The Spectator* and *Wild Court*, among other places. She won the Seren Christmas Poetry Competition

2018 and was commended in the Hippocrates Prize for Poetry and Medicine 2019 and 2017, and the Resurgence Poetry Prize 2015. She is the author of *Dorothy Wordsworth and Hartley Coleridge: The Poetics of Relationship* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), a revision of her PhD, which she received from the University of St Andrews.

RUNNER-UP: Sue Kindon was born when Croydon was still in Surrey, and studied at Hull, where Larkin ruled the library. She rediscovered poetry while living in Cumbria, and was privileged to be part of Brewery Poets, Kendal. She now lives and writes in The French Pyrenees. An enthusiastic member of the local slam team, she has recently won an award for French poetry. Kindon is the author of two pamphlets, *She who pays the piper* (Three Drops Press, 2017); and *Outside, the Box* (4Word Press, 2019), sparked by the box moth plague that devastated the shade-lined shepherds' paths of her adopted landscape.

AONB BEST POEM OF LANDSCAPE: Liz Byrne was born and grew up in Dublin. She now lives on the edge of the West Pennine Moors. She worked as a clinical psychologist in the NHS until her retirement. She was shortlisted for the Bridport Poetry Prize, 2019 and was highly commended in the Artlyst: Art to Poetry Competition, 2020. Her poetry appears in *The Curlew*, *Obsessed with Pipework*, *Orbis*, *Agenda* and *Butcher's Dog*.

HIGHLY COMMENDED:

Simon Barraclough has published and edited several poetry collections and anthologies, most recently *Sunspots* in 2015 (Penned in the Margins). He also devises and performs in multimedia projects involving filmmakers and musicians (Psycho Poetica in 2010, Sunspots in 2015, Vertiginous in 2018). He is currently working on short stories and finalising his fifth collection and a new pamphlet.

Greta Stoddart's 3 poetry books have won or been shortlisted for prizes such as the Geoffrey Faber, Forward, Roehampton and Costa Book Awards. Her latest work, a radio poem *Who's there?*, was BBC Pick of the Week and shortlisted for the Ted Hughes Award in 2017. Her new book will be published by Bloodaxe in 2022.

Malene Englund is a writer and translator. Her pamphlet *The Wild Gods* was published by Valley Press and she is currently writing her next book *Wolf Zone*. Her translation of Christel Wiinblad's collection *My Little Brother – a morning in heaven, at least in green* was published by Valley Press in 2020 and it was the PBS recommended translation for Spring 2020. She lives in Copenhagen with her husband and their two sons.

Ken Evans won the Kent & Sussex competition in 2018. His poems have featured in *Magma*, 14, *Under the Radar*, *Envoi*, *The Frogmore Papers*, the *Lighthouse Literary Journal*, *The High Window*, *Obsessed with Pipework*, and *The Interpreter's House*. Ken longlisted in the National Poetry Competition in 2015 and 2020. In 2016, Ken won Battered Moons Competition and was runner-up in *Poets & Players*. A first pamphlet, 'The Opposite of Defeat' appeared in 2016. Ken's first collection, *True Forensics* in 2018.

Fawzia Muradali Kane is an architect and poet. Born in Trinidad & Tobago, she came to the UK on a scholarship to study architecture, and is now a director of KMK Architects in London. Her poetry has been extensively published in anthologies and journals. Her poem *Kaieteur Falls* was shortlisted for the 2017 Montreal International Poetry Prize. Her debut poetry collection *Tantie Diabliesse* (2011) was longlisted in the 2012 Bocas Lit Fest prize. Thamesis Publications produced her long sequence *Houses of the Dead* (2014) as an illustrated pamphlet. She is now preparing her second collection.

Joanna Lilley is the author of three poetry collections: *Endlings*, which is all about extinct animals, *If There Were Roads* and *The Fleece Era*, which was nominated for the Fred Cogswell Award for Excellence in Poetry. She's also the author of a novel, *Worry Stones*, which was longlisted for the Caledonia Novel Award, and a short story collection, *The Birthday Books*. Joanna moved from Britain to Canada in 2006, 15 years after cycling alone nearly 6,000 miles from Nova Scotia to the Northwest Territories. She lives in Whitehorse, Yukon, with gratitude on the Traditional Territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

Dom Bury is a devotee to this miraculous earth in this time of planetary transfiguration. He has been published in magazines and anthologies including: *Poetry Review*, *Poetry London*, *Poetry Ireland*, *Poetry Wales*, *Magma*, *Best British Poetry*, *Staying Human: new poems for Staying Alive* (Bloodaxe Books, 2020), and *100 Poems to Save The World* (Seren 2021). He has received an Eric Gregory Award, a Jerwood/Arvon Mentorship, has won The National Poetry Competition, The Magma Poetry Prize, 2nd Prize in The Resurgence Eco-poetry Competition. His first collection of poems *Rite of Passage* was published by Bloodaxe in April 2021.

Lesley Saunders is the author of several books of poetry, most recently *Nominy-Dominy* (Two Rivers Press 2018). Her English translations – including the poem that won the 2016 Stephen Spender award – of renowned Portuguese poet Maria Teresa Horta was published in 2019 as *Point of Honour* (also Two Rivers Press). Lesley was joint winner of the inaugural Manchester Poetry Prize, and one of the winners of the Poetry Business Pamphlet Competition 2016/17. Lesley has performed her work at festivals and on the radio, and worked on collaborative projects and productions with visual artists, musicians, composers and dancers, as well as other poets.

Martin Malone, born in County Durham, now lives in Gardenstown on the north-east coast of Scotland. He has published three poetry collections: *The Waiting Hillside* (Templar, 2011), *Cur* (Shoestring, 2015), *The Unreturning* (Shoestring 2019) and a *Selected Poems 2005–2020: Larksong Static* (Hedgehog 2020). He is currently working on two new collections and writing a third album for his regathered band from the 1980s, *Innocents Abroad*. He's won and not won some prizes in the past. His website is to be found at: www.martinmalonepoetry.com

Catherine Greenwood has lived in British Columbia, New Brunswick, China and southeast England. She recently moved to South Yorkshire where, as a PhD candidate at the University of Sheffield, she is pursuing an interest in Gothic poetry. Her poetry has appeared in many literary journals and anthologies,

including Poetics for the *More-Than-Human World: An Anthology of Poetry and Commentary* (Dispatches Editions: New York, 2021); her ecoGothic poem *The Grolar Bear's Ballad* was a finalist in the 2019 CBC Literary Prizes.

Linda France has published eight poetry collections, including *The Gentleness of the Very Tall* (Bloodaxe 1994 – a Poetry Book Society Recommendation; longlisted for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize) and *Reading the Flowers* (Arc 2016 – longlisted for the Laurel Prize; ‘Bernard and Cerinthe’ won the 2013 National Poetry Competition). Her work has been awarded a Society of Authors Cholmondley Award. In 2020 Linda curated the collective poem *Murmuration*, made into a film with artist Kate Sweeney, as part of her ongoing Climate Writer’s Residency with New Writing North and Newcastle University.

John Aberdein. Ring-net herring fisher, sea kayak coach, green socialist campaigner, English teacher and Arvon tutor, John hangs in Hoy, under a cracking mountain, raising carrots and planting aspen.

Sari C. Cunningham is a dual national (USA/Belgium), ecologist and writer, living near Oslo, Norway. Her poetry and nature writing have been published by *The Island Review*, *Kyoto Journal*, *The Curlew*, and others. This poem was written in 2020, after returning from the bird island of Runde, where gannets breed in nests of nylon rope. She is interested in conservation biology, and how narrative shapes our relationship with the natural world. Twitter: [@Sari_Cunningham](#)

Jessica Traynor was born in Dublin in 1984 and is a poet, essayist and librettist. Her debut collection, *Liffey Swim* (Dedalus Press, 2014), was shortlisted for the Strong/Shine Award and in 2016 was named one of the best poetry debuts of the past five years on Bustle.com. Her second collection, *The Quick*, was a 2019 Irish Times poetry choice. *A Place of Pointed Stones*, a pamphlet commissioned by Offaly County Council, was published by The Salvage Press in 2021.

Jonathan Greenhouse won the Telluride Institute’s 2020 Fischer Poetry Prize and was shortlisted for The Black Spring Press Group’s 2020 Sexton Prize for Poetry,

and his poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Dark Horse*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, The Poetry Society website, and *The Rialto*. He's currently – joyously – wearing a mask with his wife and 2 children.

Sharon Black is from Glasgow and lives in a remote valley of the Cévennes mountains of France. Her poetry is published widely in the UK and she has won many prizes for her work, including the Guernsey International Poetry Competition 2019 and *The London Magazine* Poetry Prizes 2019 and 2018. She is editor of Pindrop Press. Her two collections are *To Know Bedrock* (Pindrop, 2011) and *The Art of Egg* (Two Ravens, 2015; Pindrop, 2019). A pamphlet, *Rib*, will appear with Wayleave Press in 2021 and her third full collection with Drunk Muse Press in 2022. www.sharonblack.co.uk

John White is a native of Northern Ireland living in Oxfordshire. His poems have appeared in magazines including *Ambit*, *The Moth*, *The North*, *Poetry Wales*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Poetry News*, *The Reader*, and *Stand*. He has been published in the anthologies *Oxford Poets 2007* (Carcenet) and *Initiate* (Kellogg College), and he passed the Oxford Masters in Creative Writing with distinction. A wildlife lover with an active interest in protecting Oxfordshire’s badgers, he works in a local special school.

Ciarán Hodgers, a Pushcart nominee, is a multi-award-winning Irish poet based in Liverpool. His debut collection *Cosmcartography* (Burning Eye Books) toured the UK & Ireland, featuring on major broadcast outlets on both sides of the pond. Named “one of the region’s most exciting spoken word performers” by *The Independent* and “a powerhouse poet at the top of his game” by Lingo Festival Dublin, he has been published internationally. He is interested in the relationship between ecology, language, culture, and spirituality. You can find out more here: www.ciaranhodgers.com

Anthony Lawrence is a contemporary Australian poet and novelist. Lawrence has received a number of Australia Council for the Arts Literature Board Grants, including a Fellowship, and has won many awards for his poetry, including the

inaugural Judith Wright Calanthe Award, the Gwen Harwood Memorial Prize, and the Newcastle Poetry Prize (three times). His most recent collection is *Headwaters* (Pitt Street Poetry) which was awarded the Prime Minister's Literary Award for Poetry in 2017.

Morag Smith's short fiction and poetry have been published in ezines, magazines and anthologies, including *Ink, Sweat and Tears, Pushing Out the Boat* (Apr 2021), *Poetry Ireland Review, Crannog* and *Gutter*. She is the winner of the 2021 Paisley Book Festival /Janet Coates memorial poetry prize. She's currently trying to pull together her first collection and well as working on a pamphlet about the ecology, wildlife and human history of the partly abandoned site of Dykebar Psychiatric Hospital in Renfrewshire.

Elizabeth Jacobson is the Poet Laureate of Santa Fe, New Mexico and an Academy of American Poets 2020 Poets Laureate Fellow. Her most recent book, *Not into the Blossoms and Not into the Air*, won the New Measure Poetry Prize, selected by Marianne Boruch (Free Verse Editions/Parlor Press, 2019), and the 2019 New Mexico-Arizona Book Award for both New Mexico Poetry and Best New Mexico Book. She is the Reviews Editor for the on-line literary journal Terrain.org and she teaches poetry workshops regularly in the Santa Fe community.

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**POETRY
SCHOOL**

'2020 has proved an exceptional year for the Prize and for humanity as a whole. Eco-poetry has enabled poets to transcend the boundaries of lockdown and travel beyond the confines of our own walls. Whilst the planet enjoyed a brief period of healing and the skies were filled with birdsong rather than aeroplanes, the roads silent and the air cleared, the Prize was delighted to receive more entries than ever before from across a quiet globe.

This resulting anthology forms a record of a unique period reflection where our planet was placed on pause and it must be hoped that if good is to come of it then it lies in this volume and others like it, generated through COVID and testament to activism and hope.'

SALLY CARRUTHERS,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
POETRY SCHOOL