

THE GINKGO PRIZE

—
**AREAS OF
OUTSTANDING
NATURAL BEAUTY**
BEST POEM OF
LANDSCAPE

COMPETITION
ANTHOLOGY
2021



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*The National Association for Areas
of Outstanding Natural Beauty:
Best Poem of Landscape Prize
Anthology 2021*

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THE GINKGO PRIZE AND THE AONB BEST POEM OF LANDSCAPE

The Ginkgo Prize is a major international award for ecopoetry, funded by the Edward Goldsmith Foundation and organised by the Poetry School. The award, initially called the Resurgence Prize, was first presented in 2015. It has been run by the Poetry School since 2017 and was relaunched as the Ginkgo Prize in 2018. The Poetry School is a national arts organisation providing inspiring tuition and opportunities for poets and poetry audiences. It was founded in 1997 by poets Mimi Khalvati, Jane Duran and Pascale Petit. Since its earliest days, its courses and activities have encouraged poets and poetry to flourish.

An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is an area of landscape designated for its distinctive character and natural beauty in the national interest. Through the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the UK's 46 AONBs partner with the Poetry School to award the 'AONB Best Poem of Landscape' as part of the Ginkgo Prize.

PREFACE

This is the second year of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty partnership with Poetry School on the Ginkgo Prize. Again, the variety, scope and quality of the poems entered in the Best Poem of Landscape category has delighted us.

The past year has brought new governmental environmental schemes, commitments, programmes and targets which promise to tackle climate change and redress the declines in nature we have seen over the past decades. The environment has been at the forefront of the thoughts of more people than ever and there is real hope of a sea change.

Our partnership with Poetry School places a different lens on our view of landscape. A welcome change of perspective, reminding us that it is only through the perceptions and gaze of people that landform is transformed into landscape.

The shortlisted poems that follow give space to stand back, breathe, and remember. Landscape is the essence of the relationship between people and place, and poetry is a means through which this relationship is given a voice. These poems are not an observation of landscape – they *create* landscape, layered with our experiences and the meanings we find in the places around us. We celebrate all that people find special in this anthology and long may different voices give a different voice to all which surrounds us.

– **John Watkins, Chief Executive**
National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

AREAS OF
OUTSTANDING
NATURAL BEAUTY
BEST POEM OF
LANDSCAPE

WINNING
POEM

Avon in Summer Rain

Swimming like falling
backwards
with arms thrown
into plush cushions
over and over.
Floating
through an asteroid belt
of bubbles twinkling among blossom
in the crisp-packet static
fizz & slow velcro
unsticking of the rain -
each white needle turns once
and throws up a plume.

And the green river
between the green banks
flecked with a foam of hogweed
holds me against the sky
slides over my throat like silk
and bears me as if unconscious
into shaded pools
under trees full of birds.

AREAS OF
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BEST POEM OF
LANDSCAPE

HIGHLY
COMMENDED
POEM

The Ternery Pool

The path here is overgrown
winding through industrial estates
past shipping-crate monoliths
and the rusting hulls
of sheet-iron warehouses
gravel pits
and the hedgerow tangle
of the junkyard

into the sheep-fields
where they graze
in the shadow
of castle ruins
where weeds grow
through cracks
in Tudor stone

and from the dark earth
of the ploughed fields
a skein of lapwings
rise like smoke

out to the salt-marsh
where the rain-speckled breeze
stirs the reed-beds
and under the sun's watery light
the plovers pick insects
from the sands

and there to the sea
over the mudflats
and tidal pools

seaweed rotting on the shoreline
tangled with fishing nets
and the rubbish
from a thousand other lands

I shelter in a birdwatching hide
amongst the scent
of damp wood and saltwater
and listen to tiny sounds
the calls of the birds
the distant crunch
of rocks underfoot
and the twin breaths
of waves and wind

framed by these windows
all is pearlescence
these glimmering skies
the sea-damp shingle
the wet bark
of the wind-stunted hawthorns
the crystalline shimmer
of the marshlands
and the rain-slicked feathers
of a curlew's wing

and I do not understand
how this path
constellated with sheep-dung and pot-holes
cigarette ends chucked over
the fence from the builders' yard
leads to a peace
unlike any other

and I do not understand
how a landscape shaped by human hands
could feel so wild
how these blank white skies
and shifting reeds
contain so many lives
how the ugliness
makes it so glorious

but in this moment
everything is perfect
the wind in the sea-grass
the salt-dank air
and the arc of a tern
hanging starlike
in the cold grey sky

AREAS OF
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LANDSCAPE

SHORTLISTED
POEMS

Eryri

Lilting mists and moss of centuries
where the mountains tail off into the sea,
tang the salted air of west-facing valleys,
their refuge sequestered deep in Cwm Pennant.

In the call of a cuckoo and bluebell mist
it is here where Eryri gives up its secrets—
tracks under bracken, bee-swarmed heather,
the restlessness of a flood-driven river.

Slant of sun gilding the glade,
above the ruins of farms, the tumbled-down walls,
ravens caught up in their crosswind tangles
not knowing we were here at all.

Present in the margins, in the shadows of mountains,
the black path of a prince masked in lichen,
and in the pale lucent jade of this fading light,
clouds sour, intermilk, and spoil—the sky silver-grey silk.

The Old Way

A buzzard swoops as close as breath,
wingtips whisper a roost nearby,
two lime-green butterflies flit
between ramson and herb robert
marbled in the sun;

yellow from the cowslip field
the dog rolls in the dandelions,
piss-a-bed, we children said,
like that would stop us picking them
and blowing time away.

We found this drove way years ago
in winter, when the branches arched
a tunnel overhead, and snow
had carpeted a path invisible
until then.

White windflower stars, proud
proclamation of a purple orchid,
moss a prehistoric sea of green
pierced by witches' thimbles, trembling
violet blue.

Two years ago you said
the canopy of the wood was lifting,
opening, letting in the light.
I couldn't see it then and I doubted you;
I see it now.

the green

the green. is an hour. an awning.
of rustling. leaves. in the breeze.

a falling. of tiny. green spiders.
a hiding. of still-green strawberries.

the green. extends upwards.
above the mass. of sycamore branches.

above the swifts. and whatever they eat.
above the moon. rising. above Attermire.

the green. as seen. from above.
is a shrug. of green shoulder.

a swathe. of green pasture.
a wall. of grey weather.

and down. on the level.
gunnera. obscuring the seam.

between. field and stream.
now. and all the green after.

Lane

Width of one car,
our car,
swallowing grass

that thrives in a strip
at its centre
and from verges

a lean of wild heads
leading us,
rare callers

around each blind
bend, this twisting aisle
with its utter lack

of sign, or streetlight
or markings
yet is valid track,

ditch-edged, meandering,
tunnels of high
branches bending,

then out into
fields, kite diving
bright golden

pages, hare
skittish, our eye
back to route,

meadow-spill
winding
could be lost,

but these are
verdant ghosts
guiding,

look up, daughter,
a mistake
to love this later.

Harbour, at Aberdyfi

It's October, and water helps the trees change their sugars.
The rain paints the road and each beech leaf shines
inside its transparent envelope.
The route smuggles past coves and outposts
before dropping into what was once
shipbuilding.
Each time, my heart flies into my throat
seeing emeralds mixed with milk;
the Atlantic come back from Persia.
The river opens.

Saline washes out of the lobster pots, stacked.
High tide frisks under the jetty, the bell rings
for submerged kingdoms.

The freshwater and seawater, totting,
reduced incidences, visible whirlpools,
estuary blisters.

So, in an act of faith on the slippery pier:
cast out, cast out—

a line held with your first finger
free the reel
lever your waist,
hear (happiness racing impermanence—zizzing)

tick-tick-tick of the spinning rod
against tide-race
and once the lure is pulled,
it dives.

The river and the sea, dense against one another.
Moving, overlapping plaques, like the bark of a blue oak.

My grandmother wore a signature ring. Emerald.
Cathedral-cut.

The last fish on this tide raises its head
to gulp the trees' breath.

Evening at Bruntingthorpe Air Base

Breaching the barricade of rusty pipe
standing to attention in concrete blocks
just beyond the field gate is easily done.

The day's work is unleashed with the dog
his tail's white tip high and swinging
lights up the crumbling runway booby-

trapped by Charolais cowpats. Starlings
take flight at our intrusion split again
and again like atoms their cloud

spreading to trees at far ends of the field
rabbits to warrens under the hawthorn.
Bullocks bellow alarm the herd hard-

running like families to a bunker stockpiled
with tin goods pistols cold war instructions
and hidden beneath brick and barbed wire barrows.

The entrance is either in the houses inherited
from the Americans or out here
under the base hospital ruins

a mountain of slabs graffitied in unsteady red
of dick sizes mothers to be fucked
this hideout of village boys who outgrew

the den in the hedge their campfire circle
of fag packs and cider cans on a sheet
of corrugated iron blackened car door

and motorcycle parts buried in the long grass.
Unable to catch any prey the dog inspects
droppings surrounding a foxhole.

A Walk Across The Island

From the pier, the track lifts past the kirk
towards the valley, where an old post road
is dusty and hard as the Ridgeway in June.

There is bog cotton, primrose and heather;
there is silence but for the humming of bees,
and stillness sits deep in the day's saddle.

A cuckoo calls from a wood beyond the Lodge
as the sun sets down its blanket on Ward Hill
and the ness is already a memory of chilled air.

This valley is a chalice of midsummer light
into which the island pours its mood,
chuckling with the beck's hidden water.

There's none to greet you here but sheep,
no double inks his profile onto the skyline
and raptors prey in vain for the lark's brood.

Plant your feet and feel the hard earth
– this view accruing force by its isolation –
as the path's now dirty-pig white drops

leisurely to the bay at Rackwick. Here
lie awhile on the sickle strand, resting
your head on the red-brown egg of a boulder.

In this one-sided love affair, declare nothing
but seen things, a burn's low gargle and that breeze
from the sound cooling your path to its crossing.

Sor Brook

Turning the corner, the stream is the shock of bird song,
late January slipping between stark ash statues
in a waltz of gurgling shadows. I am frozen
with the flash of a small boy skimming
pieces of ice across an afternoon
when the sky was stripped of aeroplanes
and I had swallowed the silence of ancient oaks,
their broken fingers scratching my lungs.

I was breathless with fear of the hospital doors,
the red screech of sparrowhawks,
whether I would ever come back to the softness
of sheep, scattered clouds across these snowdrop fields.
The stones a circle of betrayal, monolithic knights
whispering of Shakespeare's plague, the curse of coughs
cracking through the mud and our castle in the distance.
Battered bronze from the prison of my bed,
but here now in these Cotswolds woods,
I am running once more into the light.

To the River Stour

some call you *S'toor*, like *poor*
and I thought this your proper
posher name because mum
pronounced you that way

others called you *St-our*, like *our*
and maybe that's your name
too as you wiggle like an idyll
on a National Trust postcard

through Essex-Suffolk flatland
a horizon punctuated with spires
dotted with telephone masts
ears pricked for a glottal stop

coppiced willows flank your banks
boaters meander as they squint
to find tributaries into Constable
gorgeous and flat and calm but

I longed for the wide mouth
of estuaries the way they aren't
one thing or another their brackish
manner part play part threat

Stour, St-oor, St-hour, you're a Site
of Special Scientific Pinterest
a keepnet for Nordic walkers
a cowpat for the flies of tourists

and streams of gleaming Land
Rovers yearning for a blemish
a picture perfect cream tea
on an English patina, cracking

when you are lost

remember the muddy route
up the mountain
is marked by yellow posts
lift and place your weight
one foot steady to risk the next
feel your muscles stretch and flex
the deep lake before you
clouds all around so you cannot see the end
step into moss
tiny leaves sink under your boot
rise when you lift your foot
find yourself with only the birds
beside a lake rippling in the breeze
grasses moving lightly with the wind
the smell of rain
the ghosts of ptarmigans fly over the ripples
revealing how the weave of water and earth
hold together
when you are lost remember
you are not the centre
in your heavy boned body
here by the lake
you glimpse through the mist
the birds the water the fish
it is not important whether or not
you find your way down

In conversation with Wistman's Wood

where venerable oaks are the size of saplings –
after four hundred years the tallest branches
only just brush my crown. The landscape leads me

deep into communion with its rich tapestry of greens.
Moss, liverworts and lichens by magic or osmosis slow
my steps, remind my contused heart I am part of the dark soil.

The peaty scent of earth is a doorway like the spiral
of the Druid's stone. The gush of the brook surging
heavy with last night's rainfall

urges hidden herstory to surface. Shame floods in
with memories of parting my legs, trading pearls
(tender skin for self worth), something the softly-unfolding

fronds of new fern never need to question.
The resolve of this untamed place re-seeds
the ground of my atoms. I thread a path through

the tangle of bilberry and bracken back to
firm ground – friendship with myself –
sit cradled by the bark of a Mother tree,

gnosis rising, miraculous as spring sap:
*the land calls us home to ourselves,
aches for love between all species.*

Note: Wistman's Wood is one of the highest ancient oak forests in Britain.
It is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest and thought to be a place
of pre-Christian worship.

Walking Whirlaw

Above the tree-line here, gritstone outcrop, bilberry, gorse, to the south white
wind turbines

spin slowly

as clouds shape-shift, sunlight glints off yellow gorse and under my feet,
heather's upthrust, tightly curled hair sprung back from the comb,

propels me

towards the solitary hawthorn, wind-warped with darkening berries, knuckles
tougher than iron,

that whispers,

expect nothing from this moor, policed by crows, reclaimed by reeds, where dark
bog-water swallows pack horse tracks

and respect

the Orchan Rocks, Bridestones, Eagle Crag, Blackheath Barrow, the fault line
conifers by Hawk's Stones. Feel their force-field and

let wind

loosen your hair as dry grasses shake free seeds. Leave all untouched, except you
may take with you

one keepsake.

I choose not the spent fern, nor the whitened root poking through clay but a single red

rose hip

POET BIOGRAPHIES

WINNER: Ross Styants is a programmer and a poet living by the river in Bristol, UK. He has lived all over the world. For work he crafts alternative realities in VR and AR. It's the wildernesses of our shared physical reality he's most fond of though and he has always sought out these places for inspiration and repose; perhaps his favourite being the dunes between the forest and the sea on the Gower. He can also often be found at Conham river park in Bristol where the raw material for this poem was mined. He has always liked to write down his thoughts but only recently began gathering some of them into poems. He also enjoys painting, surfing, fatherhood and long baths.

HIGHLY COMMENDED: Lizzie Lee grew up in a series of villages around Rye, East Sussex. She studied English Literature and Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia and now lives at the foot of the mountains in North Vancouver, Canada, where she is opening a bookshop and working on her first novel.

SHORLISTED POETS:

Paul atten Ash is the pen name of Bristol-based poet Paul Nash. His poetry has been published by Deep Adaptation Forum, Envoi, International Library of Poetry (ILP), Oscillations, Raw Edge, Tandem, Tiny Seed, Understanding, and Visual Verse. He won the ILP International Open Amateur Poetry Contest for 'Tsunami' (Grand Prize Winner) and his work has been published in the ILP anthologies *Songs of Senses* and *Memories of the Millennium*. He has read his work at Edinburgh Fringe Festival and at various poetry events in London and Bristol. As a recording artist and composer he has released music and toured as North Sea Navigator (Blurred, Kill Crow), written and produced scores for theatre (Raucous, Sleepdogs) and screen (BMG, Felt), and he is one half of choral ambient electronica duo holmes + atten ash (Blackford Hill). As a lens-based artist (Saatchi Art) his work has been published by Deep Adaptation Forum and Oscillations. Website: campsite.bio/northseanavigator

Diana Cant is a poet and child psychotherapist living in rural Kent. She has an MA in Poetry from Newcastle University / The Poetry School. Her poems have been published in various anthologies and magazines including *Agenda*, *Finished*

Creatures and The Alchemy Spoon. In 2021 she was voted Canterbury People's Poet, was commended in the Hippocrates Prize and was a winner in the Spelt competition. Her pamphlet, *Student Bodies 1968*, was published in 2020 by Clayhanger Press, and her second pamphlet, *At Risk – the lives some children live*, was published by Dempsey and Windle in 2021.

J. R. Carpenter is an artist, writer, and researcher working across performance, print, and digital media. *The Gathering Cloud* won the New Media Writing Prize 2016. *An Ocean of Static* was highly commended by the Forward Prizes 2018. *This is a Picture of Wind* was listed in The Guardian's best poetry books of 2020 and longlisted for the Laurel Prize 2021. Website: luckysoap.com

Genevieve Carver is a writer and performer whose poetry has been published in journals including *Msllexia*, *The White Review*, *The North*, *The London Magazine*, *Magma* and *Poetry News*. Her first collection, *A Beautiful Way to be Crazy* (Verve Poetry Press), was based on a gig theatre production in collaboration with multi-instrumentalist live band *The Unsung* celebrating female experiences in the music industry. Her pamphlet, *Landsick*, is forthcoming from Broken Sleep Books and explores themes of connectivity and discord between humans and the natural world. She co-directs the Sheaf Poetry Festival in Sheffield alongside Suzannah Evans. Twitter & Instagram @gevicarver.

Rebecca Goss is a poet, tutor and mentor living in Suffolk. She is the author of three collections and two pamphlets. Her second collection, *Her Birth*, (Carcanet, 2013) was shortlisted for the 2013 Forward Prize for Best Collection, the 2015 Warwick Prize for Writing and the 2015 Portico Prize for Literature. She is winner of the Sylvia Plath Prize 2022. In 2016 Rebecca was given the Roger Deakin Award from the Society of Authors, a grant for authors of creative works concerned with natural history, landscape or the environment. The award helped to fund the writing of her next collection *Latch*, set in Suffolk, from which her poem 'Lane' is taken. Twitter: @gosspoems

Suzanne Iuppa is a poet and conservationist living and working in the Dyfi Valley, mid Wales. Raised in America, she came to the UK as a young person to study

modern British poetry and Countryside Management. She worked many years as a ranger in the Clwydian Mountains AONB, and now designs sustainable policy for the voluntary and public sector in Wales in conversation with local communities. Her poetry is inspired by ecology and day-to-day relationships. Recent poetry and essays appear or are forthcoming in *Ambit*, *Spelt*, *Good Dadhood*, *Words for the Wild*, *Poetry Wales*, *Bad Lilies* and *Natur Cymru*. She is a featured Welsh writer in Robert Minhinnick's 2021 climate futures anthology *Gorwelion/Shared Horizons*. She is Writer-in-Residence for the national policy and campaign platform, Climate Cymru. Suzanne has raised three sons and is grandmother to two boys and two girls: Eli, Arlo, Sunny and Juno.

Charles G Lauder, Jr. was born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, and has lived in rural South Leicestershire with his wife and children since 2000. For nearly thirty years, he has copy-edited academic books on history, literature, medicine, and physical science; from 2014 to 2018 he was the Assistant Editor for the poetry journal *The Interpreter's House*. He has published two pamphlets, *Bleeds* (Crystal Clear Creators, 2012) and *Camouflaged Beasts* (BLER, 2017). His debut collection, *The Aesthetics of Breath*, was published by V.Press in 2019, and he's currently working on a second collection. His poetry often explores family, history (both public and personal), masculinity, nature, and racism.

Martin Malone lives in north-east Scotland. He has published three poetry collections: *The Waiting Hillside* (Templar, 2011), *Cur* (Shoestring, 2015) and *The Unreturning* (Shoestring 2019). *Larksong Static: Selected Poems 2005-2020* was published by Hedgehog Poetry in December 2020. In addition, he has published four pamphlets: *17 Landscapes* (Bluegate Books), *Prodigals* (The Black Light Engine Room), *Mr. Willett's Summertime* (Poetry Salzburg), *Shetland Lyrics* (Hedgehog). He reviews for Poetry Ireland Review, Poetry Wales and Poetry Salzburg Review. An editor at Poetry Salzburg, Poetry Ambassador for the Scottish Poetry Library and Honorary Research Fellow in English & Creative Writing at Aberdeen University, he has a PhD in poetry from Sheffield University. Before all this, he was a guitarist, singer, songwriter and sound engineer/ producer in a variety of rock bands from the age of 16. Website: www.martinmalonepoetry.com/

Aoife Mannix was born in Sweden of Irish parents. She grew up in Dublin, Ottawa and New York before moving to the UK. She read English and Sociology at Trinity College Dublin and has a PhD in creative writing from Goldsmiths, University of London. She has previously worked as a script editor for the BBC. She has published four collections of poetry, four libretti and a novel. She has been poet in residence for the Royal Shakespeare Company and BBC Radio 4's Saturday Live. She has toured internationally as a writer with the British Council. Her pamphlet 'Alice Under The Knife' won the James Tate Poetry Prize in 2020. Her poetry has previously appeared in *Abridged*, *Under The Radar*, *Magma*, *Gargoyle*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Crannog*, *Poesis Internationale*, *Aesthetica*, and *Cadenza* amongst others.

Caleb Parkin, Bristol City Poet 2020–22, won second prize in the National Poetry Competition 2016, the Winchester Poetry Prize 2017 and other shortlists. His poems feature in *The Guardian*, *The Rialto*, *The Poetry Review*, *Under the Radar*, *Poetry Wales*, *Magma*, *Butcher's Dog* and elsewhere. Commissions include Poetry Society, Lyra Festival, Green Party, National Literacy Trust, Royal British Legion, and The Hepworth Wakefield. He tutors for Poetry Society, Poetry School, Cheltenham Festivals, First Story, Arvon and holds an MSc in Creative Writing for Therapeutic Purposes (CWTP) with a research dissertation focused on museum and gallery settings. He previously worked in BBC TV and radio production, as a teacher and Senior Inclusion Worker. Debut pamphlet, *Wasted Rainbow* (tall-lighthouse, Feb 2021). Debut collection *This Fruiting Body* is published with Nine Arches Press, October 2021. In 2022, he'll publish a new pamphlet with Broken Sleep and his collected City Poet work.

Judith Shaw has lived in St Leonards on Sea since 2004 when she returned from Iceland where she lived and worked for a year. She visits Iceland regularly and the landscape and people have had a profound influence on her life and writing. Her poems have been published in magazines including *The Frogmore Papers*, *Fib Review* and *Obsessed with Pipework*; she was the Featured Poet in an edition of *Orbis*. She has twice been longlisted for Primers published by Nine Arches Press, and for the Rialto Nature Prize, and has work in *Ten Poems about Getting Older* published by Candlestick Press. She is a printmaker and painter as well as a poet. She works as a psychotherapist and doing one-to-one study support with people with dyslexia,

autism and ADHD. Currently she is studying on the Masters in Writing Poetry run by the Poetry School and Newcastle University, completing in 2023.

Nia Solomon is a psychology graduate and poet. Her writing centres around the issues and intersection of feminism, culture and the environment. Her poetry recently appeared in *Magma's* Anthropocene edition and the anthology *Elements* published by Fawn Press.

Theresa Sowerby has had poetry and prose published in magazines and anthologies and placed in several competitions, most recently the 2020 Cannon Poets' *Sonnet or Not* in which her elegy for Seamus Heaney was placed first. She also writes plays and monologues which have been performed in festivals and competitions; her short piece, *Nora's Flood*, won the 2020 Soundwork monologue award and was performed by Donna Preston. Theresa lectures on poetry, hosts Open Mic nights and regularly reviews new poetry for *Orbis*.

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The UK's 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are proud to partner with Poetry School on the Ginkgo Prize 'Best Poem of Landscape'.

Landscape is so much more than a view: it is the product of landform, climate, geology and waves and generations of people. Together these elements give rise to the species that thrive, the industries that grow, and the unique local heritage, traditions, culture and dialect.

More than this, these places become precious because of our gaze, layered with meaning through our deep relationship with them.

We hope these poems inspire new visitors to build their own relationship with their nearby landscape on their own terms, finding joy, rest, adventure and solace whenever they need it.