



CINNAMON PRESS

Ogham Tree Mini-Competition Adjudication Report

Dear Writers,

We were very heartened by the response we to this year's rolling mini-competition. Last year's theme — the Celtic wheel of the year — brought in a very strong selection of material (as can be seen from glancing through the resultant anthology, *From Hallows to Harvest*) and it's always a worry that another year and another theme will not do as well. Happily, choosing to base this year's competition around the Ogham alphabet seems to have caught a lot of your imaginations and we had a large and interesting array of entries to choose from.

So, how do judges go about whittling down so many entries to something that will fit comfortably into a pamphlet length publication? In this case, we looked for strong imagery, distinctive voices and a creative engagement with the trees associated with the characters of the Ogham alphabet. Some entries we've selected took a more 'traditional' approach to the material, drawing inspiration from the meanings that Robert Graves gave the letters/trees in his influential (if not quite infamous) tome, *The White Goddess*; others took a more side-on approach. In each case, there's a spark in the entries we've chosen that made us pause.

Without further ado, here are the writers whose work we've selected for the special edition pamphlet:

Gail Ashton;
Zoe Broom;
Stan Galloway;
Jean Hall;
Nigel Hutchinson;
Tim Kiely;
Donna Kirstein;
Joan McGavin;
Sue Moules;
Jude O Mahony;
Art Ó Súilleabháin;
Janet Olearski;
David Olsen;
Ness Owen;
Vincent Steed;
Vivienne Tregenza;
Lynn Valentine;
Emily Vanderploeg;
Laura Wainwright; and
Patricia Helen Wooldridge.

To give just a few examples of what drew us to these pieces: Emily Vanderploeg's sequence ('Alder: Looking to the future', 'Willow: The moon; its rhythms and tides', and 'Hawthorn: Transformation; enchantment and change') drew parallels between the usual interpretations of the tree alphabet and the tarot deck's Major Arcana — a striking and inventive approach to the material; in contrast, Patricia Helen Wooldridge takes us month by month through the whole calendar year and interweaves the reflective and observational with the character of each tree; meanwhile Stan Galloway brilliantly transplants a quintessentially Anglo-Celtic tradition eastwards, into the Ukraine; Jude O Mahony and Zoe Broome achieve succulent levels of compression in their delicately drawn miniatures, 'Hawthorn' and 'Homecoming'; and Art Ó Súilleabháin's pieces for Oak and Apple offer a sense of embodiment and visceral incarnation that reminds us that we also live in the present moment, not simply among abstractions and symbols.

Easy to have found praise for any of our line up for the new anthology but hard to have honed our entry bag down to just these 20 writers — there was a lot of very strong material submitted to the competition and there were some very difficult choices to be made. So, a big thank you to everyone who entered the competition and many congratulations to the writers who will be appearing in the special edition anthology.

Look out for *In the Voice of Trees: an anthology* in the autumn of 2020.