

PAMPHLET AWARD 2022

Thank you to everyone who submitted work to the Poetry Pamphlet Award. It isn't always easy to press 'submit' and entrust your work to others and then have to wait. We really appreciate your faith in us and we take it seriously.

Reading the poetry submitted to the pamphlet award has become one of the highlights of the Cinnamon year. But this year was exceptional. We've never had so many entrants and never had so much high quality writing in one competition. If your work is on the longlist it's a real achievement. There was a great deal of well written poetry that in any other year would certainly have made it this far but this year the standard and range was so high we found ourselves making really hard decisions right from the outset.

With a longest of 58 pamphlets to read and re-read, we ended up with a short list that was longer than usual. By this stage we were looking for poetry that engaged us immediately, that had something to say but was able to say it without didacticism, that was rich in imagery without overwriting and that held our attention to the last poem. That's a lot to ask but the 23 pamphlets on the short list had all these ingredients.

By this point we needed to step away from the poetry to return to it fresh, knowing that whittling down this list was going to be incredibly difficult. When we returned, some of the decisions turned on a hair and to anyone who made it to the shortlist we can only say we wished we were able to publish many more pamphlets than our capacity allows and we hope you will keep beating on poetry doors—your work deserves to be read.

We narrowed the shortlist down to 10 pamphlets. We wanted to be surprised (even if in quiet ways) and feel immersed. We were looking for distinctive voices and a combination of precision and linguistic dexterity. And we looked for a balance between accessibility and layers of resonance

that would bear several re-readings, yielding different perspectives on the world. These 10 pamphlets did all this and more so then we were really in trouble.

We sat reading poems aloud, chewing over the impossible-seeming task of judging inventive prose poetry against tight lyrical pieces or innovative concrete pieces against rich imagery or narrative. Inevitably a subjective element enters in to any adjudication and perhaps particularly when the decisions are so finely tuned. And there was also a wider sense of choosing voices we know will fit within Cinnamon Press: we love work that allows the images and story to speak for itself, that layers language and will take risks with form or content or emotion.

But the more we read, the more it seemed impossible to choose only two of these pamphlets for publication. We finally came to the conclusion that next year we will simply have to publish a bumper crop of pamphlets. So after a lot of discussion we settled on four winners.

Huge congratulations to the four poets whose pamphlets will be published next spring:

| | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| Yvonne Baker | Tree Light |
| E A Griffiths | Concrete Sea |
| Alex Josephy | Again behold the stars |
| Helen May Williams | Coed Cae Claer |

LONG LIST

Yvonne Baker
Anne Bateman
Valerie Bence
Steve Boorman
Sheena Bradley

Lesley Burt
Sylvia Cohen
Bob Cooper
Irene Cunningham
Rachel Davies
Mair De Gare Pitt
Hélène Demetriades
Julian Dobson
Marilyn Donovan
Susan G Duncan
Anne Dunford
Catherine Faulds
Sally Festing
Stan Galloway
E A Griffiths
Anna Gurney
Jacqueline Haskell
Rebecca Hawkes
Kate Hendry
Daniel Hinds
Christopher M James
Mannon James
Dana Littlepage
Phil Madden
Jessica Mayhew
Christine Marshall
Merryn MacCarthy
Joan McGavin
Jane McLaughlin
Sighle Meehan
Janet Olearski
Alasdair Paterson
Helen Pizzey

Belinda Rimmer
Don Rodgers
Mark Russell
Mark Rutter
Sarah Steele
Sarah Steele & Helen Pizzey
Sarah Salway
Helen Scadding
Maria Straw-Cinar
Norman Sutherland
Mary Tate
Laura Theis
Tony Vowles
June Webster
Jane Wheeler
Helen May Williams
Mick Wood
Marjory Woodfield
Teffy Wrightson

SHORT LIST

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Yvonne Baker | Tree Light |
| Anne Bateman | Weight for the Winds |
| Elaine Briggs | Permission to Stray |
| Julian Dobson | What happens at the watershed |
| Catherine Faulds | Remember to Breathe |
| Stan Galloway | Book ends |
| E A Griffiths | Concrete Sea |
| Anna Gurney | Somebody's Daughter |
| Daniel Hinds | The Young Mariner |
| Christopher M James | Coming into Land |
| Manon James | Notes from a Eucharistic Life |

Alex Josephy
Dana Littlepage
Phil Madden
Janet Olearski
Maria Straw-Cinar
Sarah Terkaoui
Laura Theis
Christine Webb
Helen May Williams
Sr. Sally Witt
Marjory Woodfield

Again behold the stars
Motherlode
The Electric Butterfly
After the Fire
Throatlines
Splinters
miðnæturlár
Birthright
Coed Cae Claer
Claiming light and darkness
Gentle the Sky
& The Earth is All Stones

FINAL 10

Yvonne Baker
Anne Bateman
Elaine Briggs
E A Griffiths
Christopher M James
Alex Josephy
Phil Madden
Sarah Terkaoui
Helen May Williams
Christine Webb

Tree Light
Weight for the Winds
Permission to Stray
Concrete Sea
Coming into Land
Again behold the stars
The Electric Butterfly
Splinters
Coed Cae Claer
Birthright

WINNERS

Yvonne Baker
E A Griffiths
Alex Josephy
Helen May Williams

Tree Light
Concrete Sea
Again behold the stars
Coed Cae Claer

What we loved about these pamphlets

Yvonne Baker's *Tree Light*

From its tentative first word ('perhaps') to the final phrase, realising 'here is no journey / only attending to stones— / like a story told yet again / by an old friend', the reader is completely taken in to a woodland, alive with quiet yet profound epiphanies about the way we live and die and the way we might weave narratives that change this story. In this liminal place, which is both a real woodland and an internal space, we learn that 'What matters is the silence that encircles you,...' And we find in that silence a liturgy of the natural world we too often forget we are part of. Lyrical and beautiful, Yvonne Baker's poetry relies on the deceptive simplicity of acute observation to transport us to a space that loops through time and memory, allowing us to ask questions without the need to fill in the answers. The tone is thoughtful and enquiring, and every word adds impact to this tightly woven collection.

E A Griffiths' *Concrete Sea*

One of the things we delight in seeing when we read work for the literary awards is the willingness to take risks with form and to push the reader's expectations of what a poem might be. E A Griffiths does this in two distinct ways within one cohesive, tightly written collection with *Concrete Sea*. The lyrical pieces in this pamphlet are tiny, elliptical, often heart-breaking and utterly located in a sense of place that is at once home and yet the terrain of struggle. Drawing on Welsh tradition and the complexity that spins from needing to learn your native language so that even when it becomes fluent it never becomes the language of dream, the collection opens a dialogue with concrete poetry. It's a move that allows words to fragment, names to partially mirror themselves, breath to expand the possibilities of the poem on the page. The concrete poetry in this collection is as serious as a funeral, or electric shock therapy, yet it is also playful, generous and expansive.

Bringing the forms of lyric and concrete poetry together adds a whole other dimension, one that invites us to feel into the experiences of these poems and to emerge with the sense of another's heart-print.

Alex Josephy's *Again behold the stars*

Set in winter 1553 in a small Italian hill town under siege, the people are hugely outnumbered, but their town, with its fortress walls, has never been taken in war and these people have uncommon endurance. It's a story that could have been laboured, that in other hands might have been over-told, laden with too much commentary. But Alex Josephy inhabits the place and people with exquisitely-phrased precision. Told in the voices of women, including a chorus, a nearby mountain and the fortress herself, the uniting voice of the pamphlet is a girl, through whose eyes we see the minute details of life under immense stress and feel the nuances of loss, hunger and uncertainty. This is an intense immersion into a lockdown that challenges all the senses, one utterly different from the modern experience of lockdown in the pandemic, yet also hauntingly resonant with it. Most vitally, the empathy evoked reaches us across almost five centuries, making us care in the present.

Helen May Williams' *Coed Cae Claer*

Prose poetry has the ability to interrogate a single thought or subject with razor sharp precision. Haiku is able to condense an observation that pivots into epiphany. The haibun form combines these two with parallel pieces that resonate without one explaining the other or one being merely a continuation of something begun in another form. The juxtaposition sets up layers of internal dialogue that shimmer with possible meanings and depth without anything ever being spelled out. It's a form that demands formidable control and observation and when it works it is evocative and gives the reader an extraordinary sense of how we hold paradox together and live in its domain. In *Coed Cae Claer* (Clear Field Trees) it most certainly works.

Lucid, linguistically dextrous, and woven through with Welsh phrases, and words and passages in French, the collection, subtitled 'Covid Haibun' only refers to Covid once in the entire text. There is nothing obvious here—instead there are connections—with nature, with relationships, with what is lost and what is saved.