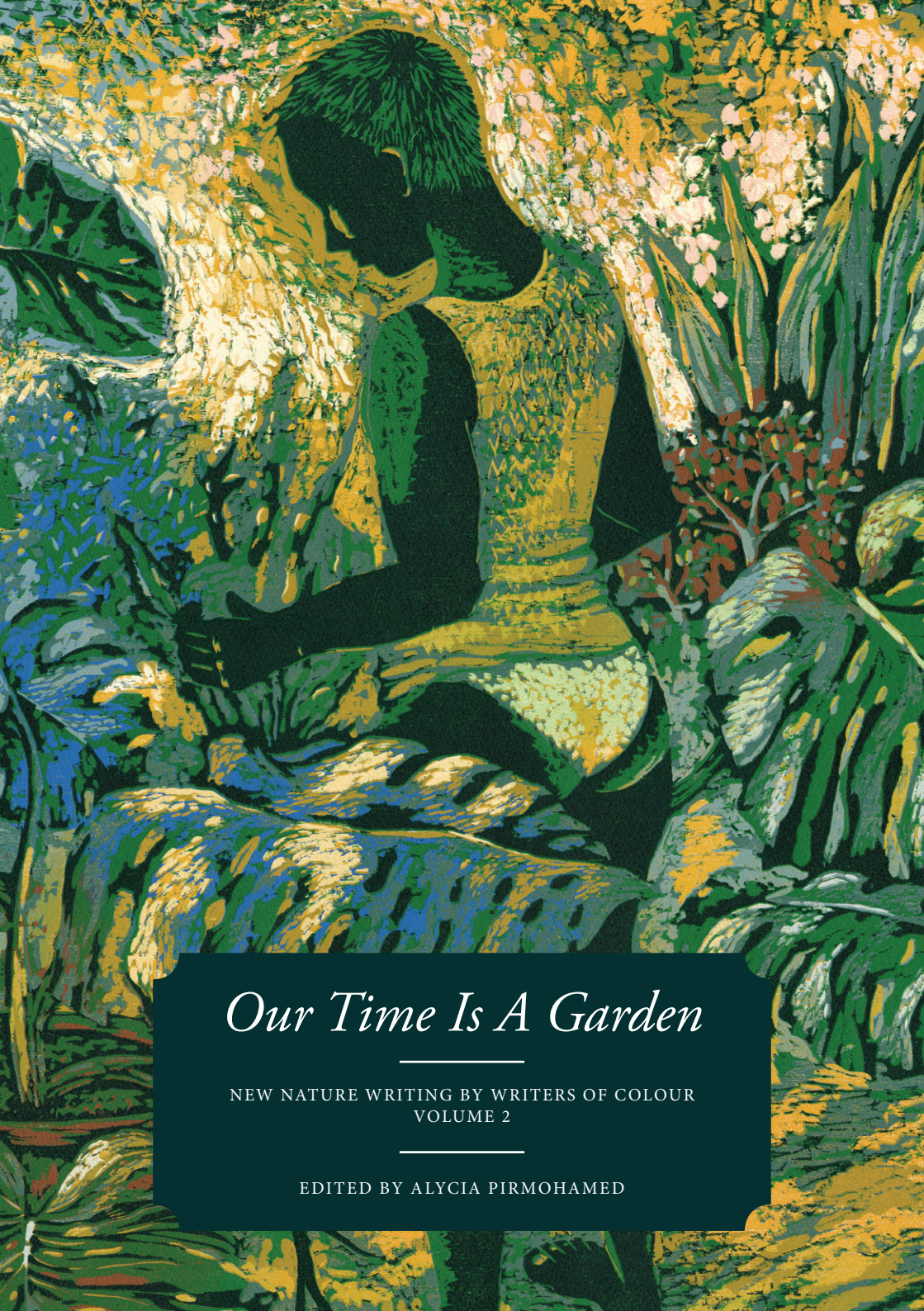


Our Time Is A Garden

NEW NATURE WRITING BY WRITERS OF COLOUR
VOLUME 2

EDITED BY ALYCIA PIRMOHAMED

Alycia Pirmohamed (ed.)
Our Time Is A Garden: new nature writing by writers of colour, volume 2

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THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH



OUR TIME IS A GARDEN is part of a larger project that began as Dr Alycia Pirmohamed's research on radical landscape poetry as the Junior Anniversary Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (IASH), University of Edinburgh.

The first iteration of the project took place in 2022 and invited participants in Scotland to join five workshops over six months that were co-facilitated by artists and academics working in various areas of ecological writing. In 2025, Dr Pirmohamed collaborated with the Scottish BPOC Writers Network and the field notes collective (Jessica J Lee, Pratyusha, Alycia Pirmohamed, and Nina Mingya Powles) to run the programme a second time, this time taking place as a two-day short course over a single weekend.

All the writers included in this pamphlet attended this workshop series as either attendees or guest speakers. The programme was open to poets at all stages in their careers and from any educational background. It aimed to develop writing skills and promote knowledge exchange by sharing interdisciplinary art and research. As a research project, OUR TIME IS A GARDEN aims to explore how online workshops and community programming for writers of colour promote accessible learning, activism, and a sense of belonging or identity formation for participants.

This programme also aimed to decolonise the literary arts in Scotland, primarily by supporting the development of, and creating space for, new nature writing by writers of colour, and by examining how writers from the Global Majority map multiplicity in terms of language, culture, nation, and other intersecting aspects of identity.

This collection was only made possible thanks to the warmth and generosity of an entire community.

We are grateful to our invited speakers: Jessica J Lee, Pratyusha, and Nina Mingya Powles from the field notes collective. Your openness and willingness to share knowledge with our group in the collaborative workshop was a source of inspiration.

To the Scottish BPOC Writers Network, thank you for hosting such an inviting and safe online space for this series, and providing the necessary funding to pay our artists for their time and labour.

We thank Sun Yung Shin for permission to draw our title from the wonderful book *Unbearable Splendor* and to Anupa Gardner for licensing her beautiful picture 'Keeper of plants' as our cover image.

Finally, thank you to Ben Fletcher-Watson and the rest of the team at IASH for helping to bring this publication together.

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Our time is a garden in which all realities are simultaneously possible.

Sun Yung Shin

PREFACE

Our Time Is A Garden is named after a programme of online nature writing workshops for writers of colour based in Scotland. This publication marks its second iteration, which took the shape of a two-day online writing course in February 2025 in close collaboration with the Scottish BPOC Writers Network. The programme included an interactive welcome session, presentations on new environmental writing and research projects, generative writing sessions, a space to share works in progress, and finally, a collaborative writing workshop run by field notes collective, which consists of the members Nina Mingya Powles, Jessica J Lee, Pratyusha, and myself.

Following on from the first iteration of this programme in 2022, the aims of this short course were twofold: to nourish and develop participant writing skills, and to promote knowledge exchange by sharing interdisciplinary art and research. This pamphlet contains exciting and innovative nature writing from twenty-two writers from the Global Majority, and the project overall intends to contribute to the decolonisation of nature writing in the UK. It prioritises the development of new writing and facilitates knowledge exchange between academics, researchers, and writers at all stages of their careers.

The subjects and themes of these workshops were vast, and they considered deeply the contemporary landscape of ecopoetics and its relationship with the political contours of our everyday lives. In them, we highlighted as a group the inextricable relationship between environmental and humanitarian justice, and participants were invited to think about the variety of ways writing and activism work in tandem. A few key texts of the course included:

'Mainly in Sinuosities' by Amanda Thomson, a multidisciplinary leaflet – or map – created in consultation with botanist Greg Kenicer that allows visitors to navigate the Union Canal through its flowers. It provides historical commentary, explores the languages of the natural world, and brings together different materials and practices, like newspaper articles, cartography, plant knowledge, and personal essay.

'Hide Your Water,' a hybrid lyric essay which includes extracts from an ongoing journal kept by Jumana Emil Abboud with the help of photographer Issa Freij. This work reflects on spirited water spots in Palestine, and these retellings are based on her childhood memories and the 1922 study *Haunted Springs and Water Demons in Palestine*.

Lola Olufemi's *this is a temporal landscape*, which is an ongoing and collaborative project, or 'experimental lecture', initiated by Lola Olufemi and Agnes Cameron. This project uses digital forms to 'aestheticize the political imaginary' and argues 'in favour of radical and expansive conceptualisations of temporality and material resistance'.

The poem 'Decomposition into Ghazal' by Asim Khan, a longer experimental poem in dialogue with the ghazal form, which was first published in *The Willowherb Review*, a publication that features non-fiction and poetry by emerging and established nature writers of colour.

Community, collective care, collaboration and social justice were important themes at the centre of this two-day writing course. In prioritising these themes, the course culminated in an extensive collaborative workshop that asked participants to trust one another enough to write together. The field notes collective ran this collaborative workshop together, incorporating writing exercises that aimed to stretch and contract the writing process. These prompts involved freewriting, generating lists, working somatically and sensorially, experimenting with different registers and voices, and various types of erasure to ultimately sculpt a single piece of writing.

Participants also worked together in groups to write a collective piece with one another, responding to each other's work, and finally co-authoring a sequence poem. This process asked our writers to explore writing towards and with each other, pushing against typical production patterns of publishing today. It examined the notion of stepping away from individual authorship, as well as traditional stylistic and aesthetic boundaries, and asked us, overall, to think about a communal poetics and a new kind of togetherness in writing.

Alycia Pirmohamed

Anti-threshold

I'm anti-threshold / I'm anti-ghost, anti-spirit, anti- being held to my word / I look at the image of earth as sacred consumption / to hold my mouth open and feel the night flood in / my ash-stained footprints have charted the only way out / following the red eyes / the sun / the moon / their pitiful human faces / the only story is my story / the only girlhood is the secret I've lived / the only innocence is this endless hunger for ash / any word you extract from me is a green-pointed bitter lie / glimmering, bejeweled / I stand at the edge of a delta, silent and overflowing / This is the state of the body produced by desire, not to become an ancestor, but to *live, live, live* /

The Journey to the Shore

The journey to the shore was deceptive [disappointment]
Realisation that this was not a place of regular joy [sanctuary]
I boxed it up [like so many memories]
Too much a hoarder to erase [too jumbled to recall]
The perspective is so different down there:
A neat part of a larger landscape becomes
One arresting feature [what is behind is hidden]
You were the one who could always conquer that landscape
Conquer? No, inhabit, navigate, guide, yes:
You could clear the path and lead the way [gone]

A Stream and a Hill of Outcomes

This rock, a tense shoulder, withstanding
the current. I watch leaf after leaf reach it
or dodge. Another, resting its stem
on the rough. The next, twisting, insistent
on cutting past. I root, alternately, for both, loyal
to neither outcome. Some days aren't days
for decisions. Tearing the bright blue fence
of a cereal bar wrapper, I repeat this.

Later, on the hill, an endless press of wind
slows my fingers. Managing a claw, I hold
my phone up, take the same photo
of the city as I always have. Where am I
in relation to our flat? To pothos leaves,
once hesitant, now pouring down
the side of my wardrobe, beginning to swallow
a postcard from Varun.

Darts of rain behind my glasses. I take
their rhythm on my eyelids as a prompt.

Walking the long way down, I shuffle
through the week just gone — pages
of information, no longer unbelievable.
Between them, ma's call from an airport,
Shauna's from an office canteen.
Words from neither language stick. Only
their residue within me, a feeling, vivid
as this slope, its slight angle, its surface
sprayed yellow with gorse.

Embryonic

after Bhanu Kapil

how will you live now in the midst
of this change you hold yourself

against the wall wait until the last
sound has left the path empty and

in the sleep of a river making its own
maps you venture to touch out beyond

yourself there are spaces in the earth
compressed that want to learn your

name wish you to belong to the roots
and shoots and tentacle possibilities of

stretching press away from the walls
grow out beyond the boundaries of what

they told you of flat land vertical structure
move into multiple filament fluid

move with want. you are alive you are alive

UNDER THE BRIDGE ON WALTHAMSTOW MARSHES

In 1909 Sir Verdon-Roe made the first all-British engine-powered flight at Walthamstow Marshes. He went on to found the pioneering British Aircraft manufacturer Avro which went on to be absorbed, becoming part of British Aerospace in 1977 and later BAE Systems in 1999.

In 2026, 15% of aviation components for the F-35 fighter jets used in the ongoing genocide were manufactured in the UK by BAE Systems.

Listen to the voice of the woman who forgot she was
multiple her echo a chorus a shelter
for birds for lovers to love privately to rest
brick upon brick considered bones
make a nest make a passage of your silence
whisper a prayer to the shadows
of strangers outside the walls are
canvas gallery viewing for cormorants
notice the plaque
that honours the first experiment of flight
imagine wings on a man
imagine him hopping from humble height
gliding into a field full of laughter
in the future perhaps we will also seem
impossible perhaps this will all be
ruin perhaps someone will wonder
what crossed over who made it through

oxalis

yellow mould
a whole palette

lichenous pink
on freshling leaves

look away
and out furl
the largest flags
[sun]

now delicate
tent flaps double
gently back
[shadow]

age darkens to maroon
musty plum

then drop
colour-dust

folded
'I'm Closed'

Our Strange Kin

Autumn air enters me
After weaving through
The air you breathed out
A squirrel breathes in
What a beautiful day

Mushrooms flare into being
Without asking or announcing
Billowy clouds ripple away
Weaving, dancing, departing
Aimlessly happening

Stars burst, elements form
Building cities and trees

Our eyes form out of dead stars
Gazing back at the world
Our strange kin

The Wild

after The Peace of Wild Things *by Wendell Berry*

I come into the peace of wild things, and
the trees wrap their branches around me, arms
reach for comfort, their roots reach up and lay
me down, I come into the peace of wild

things, and the moon whispers softly, You're home
sweet child and I am bathed in pleasures of
waning gibbous silvers, I come into
the peace of wild things, and the honey sweet

dew dances with awakening sparrow
guiding me to breathe deeply, breathe Slowly
healing me in nature's caress, I come
where vines entwine in tender loving curves

I come into the peace of wild things and
I become Peace I am Wild I am free

Black holes are where light goes to die

At the event horizon
I watch you check your boxes
And pat each other on the back
At a job well done
Ignorance cloaked in good intentions

Yet only resistance is violent
Gravitational redshift
Diaspora like low energy photons
No longer resembling the original light
Black holes are where light goes to die

Transformed and encrypted
Beyond recognition
Scattered splinters of radiation
Written on the edge of spacetime
Code waiting to be read

Reclamation

I am trying not to think about
man's hubris
as I walk
through the angular landscapes of my city,
shaped and reshaped
over centuries of changing fortunes—
derelict streets of red brick
and sandstone
boarded-up windows
graffitied shutters,
and think instead of rebirth
and regeneration—
Buddleia seeding in gutters
and mortared walls
purple panicles drooping carelessly
above passing traffic
or wrestling with the fissured asphalt
of industrial wastelands.
And how this native
of shingly Chinese river valleys,
this densely thicketed 'harbourage for tigers'
came to flourish
in the devastation of British bomb sites.
Butterfly Bush
revelling in the challenge of concrete
and crumbling masonry
of overbridges and underpasses
chalky embankments
and gravel of railway cuttings
of pernicious fumes
choking the city's relentless roadways.

An immigrant's travel guide to heartbreak

even the fattest fuchsia shivered
willow warbler dropping its precious coin
into the thirsty throat of summer
In Leith, hearts can break in two languages and
leave narration to a third
We don't need privacy from
these superb spectators of our sorrow
Do you know how long I have travelled, to
stand in this green gist of an almost love?

desire blooms more easily in Edinburgh than Allahabad
but best in Florence, facilitated by David; all
marble muscle and pubic peony
or in Nainital, where the Himalayas have enough
laps to hold the hubris of every civilization
or in the Black Forest, where the spruces are
just a little more sure of themselves
we don't have to settle this now—
immigrants fail so gloriously at love because we misunderstand
as attainment what demands an attunement:
I know the present deserves my full attention
but have you ever wondered how every body part is
so conveniently its own verb?

I lament the loss of a left-handed lover
how he nestles the *good*
hand between my thighs,
as we slant our bodies and risk much
for a little love, a little light
wobbling with want, we
become harvesters of hope
our fumbling isn't a failure,
isn't intimacy always a little inconvenient?

Were we happy then?
We knew this debrief wasn't going to be easy
rejection melts your mettle, lacerates your languages
how to say that I'm interested in
the inconsistencies between our childhoods,
that sex on a visa is never casual
turning vulnerability into violence is
imperialism's initial industry
hearts turn to ceramic complaints in
the hands of clumsy colonizers.

Even the most diligent lovers can be exhausted
by the constant cataloguing of love
Why must I slip every touch within a mylar sheet?
A truth not believed can seem like a lie
no one kissed my grandmother's lips,
her birch bones, slender
with silver stories, fingers
branching suddenly, becoming
wayward with arthritic want
resentment can coexist with reverence,
translation is no mere flipping over of tiles.

In Venice, someone has painted all the lantern panels
pink so they blush with the setting sun.
Empires have given excess a bad reputation. But
I can confirm—sometimes
beauty alone is the argument.
I know I am asking too many questions, but
really, my worries are just the cadence to my wonder
in Dilli's dusty dopeher, when I was
so distracted by desire, daydreaming of an elsewhere,
did I appreciate the bougainvillea's
benevolence enough?

What breaks despair

we hear fledglings before we see them
how tender still, that we call them a clutch.
I'm mostly hoping for small kindnesses—
for the tacky plastic on the beach to be
moon jelly (the Anthropocene is an era of heartache)
for the moon to materialise; a lunar lozenge, if
only to be swallowed by the sultry sky
for being alert to the purple politics of
heather when it erupts
for my lost earring, a gold bird in
flight with a diamond stomach,
to be claimed by a magpie,
frisking the frost for its next fetish
bird by bird, mineral by flesh
treasure is equal parts loss and luck.

We needn't laminate all losses,
Forgiveness is a forest—if
we stay long enough
the heron will return
to preside over river rituals
the white oak split by the storm, will
become a tomb to its own diligence
turning the cardamom pages of its
heart to light, beckoning wild
witnesses to its afterlife.
The bark is also a skin.
I have seen how much light accumulates in
the prune's copper clavicle—
tell me, what colour is your patience?

Dusk meets water, meets the history of my eye

Not in this lifetime

I said

Not now

the robot replied

Not in this lifetime…

Avocado leaning frail at my side
leaves curled in thinning air.

It was already too late –
monstera, potted succulent siblings naturally crawling the Portuguese sea
none of us could do anything about it.

The robot was right –
we missed the window for the overdue rebellion
the last dusk of human civilisation

last night.

All I had done was eat cereal and laugh with uncle Trevor Noah at the Daily Show, over how we ought to take the alien invasion seriously, how they can't distinguish us from eatable, how this will be our last dusk, and dawn, and mid-day, how humanity brought it onto itself, how the men in charge had completely eclipsed its meaning.

Who would have thought that my stroll back from school on Wednesday was my last?
A final chance to feel, to touch leaf, to observe or notice something

anything that was not *of* me.

Not now

the robot replied, metallic steps close to my ear

Not now

he touched my eyes shut.

Thursday night pub quiz: nature round

1) What tree is this?

Look how it's collapsing into itself. How the green umbrella still works to shelter the insects congregating below. How light dapples between the curtains of sadness and sets the grass ablaze. Its trunk is stronger than you'd think. Wailing. Weeping. Whimpering. Branches sighing in grief. Willow or birch. Birch or willow.

2) What fish is this?

The fish baba took us to catch. At the ponds that we drove past on the way to primary. Where balding men lounged in forest-green waders. Wee faces pressed against the window. The sliproad whirlpooling to the A1 one lane over. Horse tails swatting at the cars. Fishing rods whipping into the water. Mam warned us that the fish would think the glint of the hook meant dinner. Sunken star. Survival. That when it was lured, yanked from its muddy habitat, arcing like a rainbow, thrown onto gravel with metal through its mouth, when it saw the sea in the sky, gasping through blood at the size of it, its dryness, I'd have to choose. Between watching as it thrashed and gulped and drowned in nothing or using a priest to bludgeon it. Its empty sockets found me at the table. It witnessed the very worst of me and I can't even give it its name.

3) What bird is this?

Name the birds we know: pigeon, blackbird, bluebird, crow, owl, magpie, flamingo, ostrich, pelican, penguin, parrot, canary, blue tit, egret. The moorhens stuttering along the canal on stilts. The seagulls braying on our windowsill, hammering the glass with their beaks. The starlings we see murmuring from the window of the train. I recognise this brown-feathered bird and how it migrates. How it moves its body from land to land, making a refuge for itself each season. Tanned wings wide in warning. The spines of its teeth worn down from the journey. My other tongue: *joojoo. parandeh.* Simurgh, who has already seen the world destroyed three times.
Again. Again. Again.

4) Bonus question: what mollusc is this?

This is no creature we know. We don't recognise its flexibility, the formlessness of something that lives untouched and carries home on its back. Something that creates its own shelter. I envy anything that knows how to grow in the dark.

Answers:
1. Elm; 2. Trout; 3. Canada goose; 4. Pass

Forest Bathing

for Austin

Gripped by some ecstatic joy akin only to Shakespearian madness, I fill a bath with nature's trinkets – thistle, yarrow, ragwort, chickweed, bittercress, toad-flax and cleavers – and I cleave to the touch of the prickly greenblue. To this new water, I am topfoam. Topsoil ready to renew. Everything blooms when you least expect it. The daffs come earlier and earlier, doubling along the green with the ghosts

of old covens, fanatic flowerings, the proof that good things must grow wild first. I'm thinking about the trees, love. I'm thinking about their stumps. I'm thinking about the sky and its variants. How I found your reflection in the wet paint on a small house. Its old bones. How they creak. How the sound becomes our voices. How all that grows is with us, treading water. All that grows is now ourselves.

A Tale of Trees

Sharp winter's morning.
a young man, new to the city
bracing from the shock to his system
stumbled upon a living fossil
a tree frozen in time but decked in baubles
towering above him with spiny spiralling branches and
thick green scales all over – bark, leaves, cones.

'who are you?' he asked, in wonder.

shaken awake from obscurity, the tree whispered,
'i am known by many names,
people here call me something grotesque – a monkey puzzle –
named by the ignorance of a white man.

born in the wilds of the andes
i am sacred to the nomadic pehuenche –
our names are one and the same
we lived in symbiosis with the land
feeding each other through generations.

surviving shipwreck, piracy, disease and
months of travel on cramped boats without a choice
i was stolen and brought to this country
and twisted into an ornament
now lost of value, my seed left to rot.'

the tree sensed the young man sought more from it.
scooping him up onto its branches, it said,
'come, let me show you'

it conjured a vision:
an artificially cultivated land, a garden, 1795.
the young tree arrived in its new strange home;
at first, the lonely bitterness stung hard.
soon, it saw others not unlike itself arrive on boats too.

the strong roots of the monkey puzzle
reached out to soothe the palm tree
offering solace, knowing they had both been stripped
of their purpose; of their connection to land and people.

together they learned
how the mycelium of this land is a bridge.
the groundwater and springs, a vessel.
they also learned about the people
who came on ships like them
planted for the amusement of whiteness.

centuries passed with the weight of history.
people in the garden morphed.
plants that were once called "exotic" were now called invasive
as were the people who had come on ships.
it had also become dangerous at home;
loggers and wildfires raged there.

so, the trees rooted deeper where they stood
offering the gift of comfort to lonely wanderers
knowing there could be a home here for them
with the scampering jays and squirrels, in this land
where the gardener's touch cast a veil of protection.

in this tierra, we grew,
or
we're overdue for reparations in our stolen inheritance

esta tierra en la que se reproduce los sueños de las ancestras; en la que tu memoria resuenan en cada esquina; en la que el maíz y la luna nos alimentan; en la que mis pasos redescubren la historia perdida

this soil in which colonialism was born and reborn; in which the gloom and fog clouds our minds; in which the state represses our laughter, in every decade we have been alive

esta tierra que me vio nacer, crecer y volar; en la que mi abuela fue regurgitada en la capital; en la que desaparecen forzadamente 40 personas en un día; en la que el 911 recibe 495 mil llamadas por violencia de género en diez meses

this soil in which I found myself and you, my love; in which Black women are 3.7 times more likely to die during childbirth; in which 8 young people are on a hunger strike while incarcerated, for believing in Palestinian freedom and its people's right to live

this soil, esta tierra, this soil, esta tierra

full of worms and parasites; llena de color y cultura; full of strength and determination; llena de corrupción y violencia

Skein

the sky's cries
ache to their kin,
sounds unfamiliar
so pink feet scatter
remembering land through
loss stitches fractured
skin

archive of pain

images slip through
my mind's tired filter

a stem collapses
onto the grasslands of ongoing grief

gazan fields are scattered
with impressions of rain

water marked with sediment
and debris

and by what is
missing——gone——stolen

a truth carried so many
kilometres and long decades

across the land and sea
the way my blood

tracks its lengthy journey
through a vein

that runs straight through my
heartbreak

what will we preserve?
I want to cherish

every face
the name of every village

there is so much
memory to hold in our

cupped hands
in the endless perimeter

of our prayers
attempting to fork through

colonial violence like the spear
of a tired rose

Outside

Inside, for five days straight

Too exhausted to open the blinds shutting out the dappled light

dancing through the branches of the mountain ash

A quickbeam of another life filtering through

The winter sun finally guilting feet into shoes to step outside

The noise of vehicle exhaust cancelled by the voice of Tilda Swinton reading Nan Shepherd's

The Living Mountain

In the prologue, multiple deaths are reported

I wait for the living to begin

Distracted by counting cygnets, I was not prepared to encounter a sextet of black clad juveniles

My nan's voice drowned out Nan's and I resolved to stay on my path, bracing for the deluge of taunts that might rain on me

> *Do not run or speed up*
>
> *Be steady, your quickening breath is masked by a rainbow scarf*
>
> *They cannot hear the acceleration of your heartbeat*

A closed gate at Leamington Lift Bridge abruptly halted my escape

I realised I had not listened to the end of the chapter

Then Tilda spoke the words 'stand and stare' and I thought of Davies' poem *Leisure*

So, I paused the audio, and stood and stared

at the

crossing transforming

into a bridge

at the operators instructing the boat crew

at the boat crew ducking down to pass under the temporary bridge

oblivious to the duck gliding behind in their wake

At the apple tree

for Marjorie Lotfi

We watch through the kitchen window. Long black hair falling over her shoulders, each strand glistening in splinters of light. Hair like the women in my

family, in her family. A blush of red flashes fairytale beneath her jacket as she reaches high to pluck perfectly imperfect apples kissed by the morning rain. I tell her saab سیب is

apple in Urdu and she tells me: in Farsi we say sib. My tongue wraps around seeb—stretching and holding its sound. The unfamiliar feeling familiar in ways only language can bring people

together. Softened by a fall to the ground, mottled by an insect bite; unpolished red green apples fill a brown wicker basket she places upon a table. New found friends gather over

poems, awaiting the promise of apple crumble. I've crossed the courtyard many times over several days, oblivious to the espalier trees trained into patience. Fruit playing

hide and seek under the serrated edges of oval leaves. Isn't this the way of nature though? A quietening amongst the noise. Unbordered in its shelter

[when a country spits you out like pips]. Outstretched arms—
finding home in the searching.

I saw the result of the 2025 Supreme Court ruling on the 2010 Equality act and ...

It is spring,
a time of blossom in peach, apple and cherry,
fragile flowers laying the path to proud ripe fruit
and I saw that some of the little buds were still hesitant to grow into leaves.
It's ok, I whispered,
We know what a woman is now
and for some reason,
they didn't reply.

*

I woke to the news
that after the Supreme Court ruling,
violent crime against women and girls was down precisely 0%
and I thought,
Thank god we know what a woman is now.
250k well spent.
It's a shame women's shelters are closing due to lack of funding,
but at least if they were funded,
only women could use them.

*

I have never felt more beautiful
than the day I wore my green wedding dress,
my beard trimmed and hair layered
on the house by my barber of fifteen years.
The dress matched the leaves of the trees
and we felt like elves in the woods.
I felt so beautiful in the dress which my mum loved,
and that was made with love by my friends.
In it, I married my deepest love,
who I promised my heart to
by a ruin, by a loch all overgrown with ivy
and flowers, and moss and love.
In that dress
on that day,
the greenest day of my life,
I have never felt more beautiful,
and welcomed in the world.

Fin the light

sustaining
apology
for I have not always been kind
you forever
curve towards the light
orbs burst waxy luck
sorry I have not turned
you green
satellite
now it is too late
I should
manoeuvre towards life
peltate evergreen
clumsy nurture sporadic
I mean
you are all rhizome
oh
many names
harden your branches
nettle I keep meaning to
drop leaves
like
coin pass-along
twist soft tops aerial
phenomenon I see stomata
breath of light I am
grateful to your self
sustenance

Seaside City for My Roots

For the inner me, hoping to keep my own version of Kiki and Joe Hisaishi's "A Town with an Ocean View"

My dancing roots lead me to the shoreline to breathe.
I tip-toe my root tips into the Sea freely.

Blooming.

Floating through the Seawaters that care for me.
Ocean air nourishing my lungs.
My roots never rotting.
It is not always freshwaters that help me grow.

Blooming.

Growing in calmness.
Growing with stillness.
Growing toward a truer me.
Growing beyond my Dreams…

Rooted.

My roots possess a home that belongs to me.
Hoping my roots never detach from comfort and safety.

Sonnet for the Immediate Beauty of Colour ("Untitled, 2020" by Etel Adnan)

after Astra Papachristodoulou

the year is 2024 my heart is a small pink river dolphin
no one has seen in years it is both beautiful and terrible
to understand the colours of a pacific coastal wildfire
wet lupine creamy aster drenched rhododendron crinkled
into pearly flame your palette knife sculpts heat into light
in the greenish rockpools I touch the floating sun
in the place where you were born I touch the border
of your california sea garden which since first entering my dreams
has been filled with a hot abundance of *papaver umbonatum*
palestinian poppies blooming steadily from march into june
dear etel, I live in a city where warm wind flows through tunnels
under the river dear etel, I am running out of ways to describe
burning aquatic light as dusk enfolds the newly risen island
in the harbour that holds my mother nacreous tectonic

NOTES

1. 'The Journey to the Shore' by Anita Mackenzie was inspired by a prompt related to the poem 'mirage' by Pratyusha.

2. 'Embryonic' by Sunnah Khan responds to the question 'How will you live now?' from Bhanu Kapil's *The Vertical Interrogation of Strangers*.

3. 'Anti-Threshold' by Pratyusha references *States of the Body Produced by Love* by Nisha Ramayya.

4. The title of Titilayo Farukuoye's 'Dusk meets water, meets the history of my eye' comes from a line in the poem 'The Fish that Halved Water' by Alycia Pirmohamed.

5. 'Sonnet for the Immediate Beauty of Colour' by Nina Mingya Powles was originally published in *In the Hollow of the Wave* (Nine Arches Press, 2025).

PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

Nina Mingya Powles is a writer from Aotearoa New Zealand, based in London. She is the author of *In the Hollow of the Wave* (2025), *Magnolia* 木蘭 (2020) and two books of creative nonfiction, *Tiny Moons* (2020) and *Small Bodies of Water* (2021). She is part of the field notes collective, an experimental nature writing project, along with Alycia Pirmohamed, Jessica J. Lee and Pratyusha.

Pratyusha is an Indo-Swiss writer based in London. Her pamphlet *this too is a glistening* was published by Bitter Melon Press, and co-authored with the field notes Collective. Her other pamphlets include *Second Memory, Bulbul Calling* and *Night Waters*.

Anjali Ramayya writes poems and short fiction inspired by life in India and Scotland, the two countries she calls home. Her work has been listed and placed in competitions and published in journals including *Poetry Scotland, Propel, Dreich, Soor Ploom* and *Writers' Umbrella*, as well as several anthologies.

Zain Rishi is a writer from Birmingham. His debut poetry pamphlet, *Noon*, was published by the Emma Press in February 2026 and was a Shakespeare & Company Year of Reading selection. He has been published in magazines such as *Gutter, Magma, Oxford Poetry* and *Propel*. He is currently based in Edinburgh.

Karishma Sangtani is a poet and PhD student based in Edinburgh. Her work appears in magazines such as *The North, And Other Poems* and *Modron*. She is a member of The Writing Squad and an alumnus of the Roundhouse Poetry Collective.

Nichelle Santagata is a Cultural Knowledge Bearer; Designer of Spaces and the Future; Prose-Poetry/Nonfiction/Fiction Writer; Hip Hop and Contemporary Dancer/Movement Artist; Spoken Word/Sound Artist; Radio Show Host/DJ; Filmmaker; Photographer; Archivist; Curator; Scrapbooker/Collage Artist; Textile Artist; and Creative Director from so-called Arizona, United States/Turtle Island. Nichelle will obtain her PhD in Sociology focusing on her thesis, *Black Women's Mental Health and Healing Through Arts-based Methods and Autoethnography*, while living in Scotland/Alba.

Shambhawi Tripathi is a *writer-in-wonder* based in Edinburgh and Allahabad. She is interested in the seasonality of love and loss, of peonies and puffins, the gifts and griefs of immigrant longing. Her writing traces magical genres of intimacy and surprising solidarities which emerge in the wake of colonial and capitalist ruin.

Beth Tianxin Xia is a Chinese-New Zealander designer, artist, writer, and zine-maker based in Scotland. She is currently studying MSc Narrative Futures at the University of Edinburgh. Beth's work focuses on making the familiar strange and challenging the taken-for-granted.
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Lakshmi Ajay is a visual artist, writer and social worker living in Edinburgh. Working across painting, writing, film and sculpture; she explores her dynamic experiences of migration and queerness, and finding pockets of community along the way. She creates art in the hope that they lead to enduring spaces of connection, and spends her days dreaming of other worlds in the making. You can see more of her work at *Echo: Take One Action, Fierce Salvage* and *The Skinny*.

Shasta Hanif Ali is a poet navigating the legacy of race and heritage; where meditations of memory and language interlace and disrupt. Shasta's writing has been published in *Myslexia, Silver Press* and *Poetry London* amongst others. Shasta is the Scottish Book Trust New Writers Awardee 2026. She is a winner of the Edinburgh 900 Poetry Competition 2025 and the Candlestick Press Light Poems 2024 competition.

Nasim Rebecca Asl is an award-winning poet. Her work has been widely published in magazines and anthologies. She is an event chair, workshop facilitator and mentor. Her debut pamphlet *Nemidoonam* was published by Verve Poetry Press. Nasim was shortlisted for the 2024 Forward Prize for Best Single Poem - Performed.

Titilayo Farukuoye is a writer, educator and organiser based in Glasgow. Their work addresses social justice and community care and is informed by rights and cultural leaders like Assata Shakur and Oyèrónkẹ Oyěwùmí. Titilayo invites us to dream and use our radical imagination to seek more just realities. Titilayo co-directs the Scottish BPOC Writers Network and is a winner of the Edwin Morgan Poetry Award. Their poetry pamphlet *In Wolf's Skin* is available with Stewed Rhubarb Press.

Etzali Hernández is a nonbinary latinx writer and coder. Their work appears in *Disability Arts Online*, *Poetry and Settled Status for All*, and *Fierce Savage*. They co-curated projects like Queer Disabled Loss and Grief Offerings, and authored the pamphlet *from murky waters, we rise*.
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Sunnah Khan is a Scottish-born Pakistani poet, editor, creative facilitator and activist. Her poems have featured in *Poetry London, The Rialto* and *Aesthetica* and she has performed her work nationally and internationally.

Reyahn King is a Cape Malay poet and culture consultant from Edinburgh. Her work has been published in *Magma, Poetry Salzburg Review,* stringsmag.com and *Poetry London*. She was longlisted for the Outspoken Emerging Poets Development Scheme 2024-25.

Aileen Angsutorn Lees is a Thai-British writer, photographer and artist based in Perthshire. Her poetry has appeared in *Causeway/Cabhsair, Covert, Queerlings, Spittle-tongue, The Madrigal* and elsewhere. Her artist book *Tectonics* (Edinburgh Art Festival) was released in 2026. aileenlees.com

Anita Mackenzie is a music lecturer, and has an interdisciplinary arts practice spanning music, the written word and visual arts. She has created work for the 'Push the Boat Out' festival, co-wrote a play previewed at the Edinburgh Lyceum, and is developing work for a forthcoming collaborative exhibition at Shetland Museum.

Nadia Maloney is a Glasgow-based writer and social entrepreneur whose work is rooted in lived experience, exploring motherhood, illness, belonging, and transformation. Drawing on her Scottish and Arab heritage, her poetry reflects a deep interest in identity, activism, intersectionality, and the stories that shape us.

Niall Moorjani is an award-winning and critically acclaimed Scottish-Indian, non-binary and neurodiverse writer, storyteller and theatre maker based between Edinburgh and London. They have performed all over the world, from Delhi to New York to old York. They create for both children and adults, dealing with themes of queerness, anti-colonialism, myth and legend. At the core of all their work is hope, joy and kindness. Their work has been published in multiple places, but most notably with Bloomsbury/Methuen Drama, *Kanpur: 1857* (2025), and *Lantana, Rajiv's Starry Feelings* (2023). In 2025, they also won a Scotsman Fringe First Award.

Lesa Ng is an Edinburgh-based Glaswegian, librarian, poet, and writer. She is the Chilli Tree Network's Development Lead for Zya Community. She appeared at the Edinburgh International Book Festival in 2022 and 2023 and at Book Fringe: the ALT Edition in 2024.

Jeda Pearl is a Scottish Jamaican writer based in Edinburgh, Scotland. Her poems and stories have been shortlisted in awards and appear in art installations and several anthologies. Her debut poetry collection, *Time Cleaves Itself*, is published by Peepal Tree Press. @JedaPearl jedapearl.com

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