

The Manchester Writing School at Manchester Metropolitan University presents:

**The Manchester Writing Competition**  
**2020 Manchester Poetry Prize**  
**Short List**

# 2020 Poetry Prize Finalists

## Caroline Bracken

Caroline Bracken's poems have been published in *The North*, the *Irish Times*, *Abridged*, the *Fish Anthology*, *Sonder Magazine*, *The Bangor Literary Journal*, the *Ogham Stone*, *Poetry Jukebox*, *Skylight 47* and forthcoming in *Best New British and Irish Poets 2021* and *Sentinel Literary Quarterly*. She was selected for the Poetry Ireland Introductions Series 2018 by Sinead Morrissey and is the Parkinson's Art Poet of the Year 2020. Her poems have won the iYeats International Poetry Competition, the Poetry Day Ireland Competition 2020 and have been shortlisted elsewhere including the Bridport Poetry Prize. She is working towards a first collection.

## Hannah Cooper-Smithson

Hannah Cooper-Smithson is a poet from Nottingham, currently pursuing a PhD in Creative Writing from Nottingham Trent University. In 2020 she was the first Poet in Residence at Creswell Crags Museum and Heritage Centre. Her poetry has appeared in various journals and online publications, including *Finished Creatures*, *The Interpreter's House*, *Reliquiae* and *Mslexia*. She was longlisted for the Rebecca Swift Women Poets' Prize 2020 and is currently working on her first collection.

## Teresa Dzieglewicz

Teresa Dzieglewicz is an educator, Pushcart Prize-winning poet, and organizer of Further Notice Reading Series. She works with Mní Wičhóni Nakíčižij Wounspe at Standing Rock Reservation. She earned her MFA from Southern Illinois University, where she received the Academy of American Poets Prize. She is the winner of the 2018 Auburn Witness Poetry Prize, the 2020 Palette Poetry Prize and has received fellowships from New Harmony Writer's Workshop, Kimmel Harding Nelson Center, NY Mills Arts Retreat, and Brooklyn Poets. Her poems appear in *Pushcart Prize XLII*, *Best New Poets*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Ninth Letter*, *Sixth Finch*, and elsewhere.

## Joan Michelson

Joan Michelson's collections are: *The Family Kitchen*, 2018, The Finishing Line Press, USA, *Landing Stage*, 2017, SPM Publishers, UK, *Bloomvale Home*, 2016, Original Plus Books, UK and *Toward the Heliopause*, 2011, Poetic Matrix Press, USA. She's received fellowships from the MacDowell Colony, the Virginia Centre for the Arts, Valparaiso, Spain, Sangam House, India and other foundations. Her poems have won the Bristol Poetry Competition, the Torriano International Poetry Competition, the Hamish Canham Prize, and others. Originally from the States, she lives in London and teaches creative writing to medical students at Kings College, University of London.

## James Pollock

James Pollock's first book, *Sailing to Babylon* (Able Muse Press, 2012), was a finalist for the Griffin Poetry Prize and the Governor General's Literary Award in Poetry, and winner of

an Outstanding Achievement Award in Poetry from the Wisconsin Library Association. His poems have appeared in *The Paris Review*, *AGNI*, *Plume*, *The Walrus*, and many other journals, and in anthologies in the U.S., the U.K., and Canada. His other books include *You Are Here: Essays on the Art of Poetry in Canada*, and *The Essential Daryl Hine*. His second book of poems, *Durable Goods*, is forthcoming from Véhicule Press in Montreal.

## **Laura Potts**

Laura Potts is a writer from West Yorkshire. A recipient of the Foyle Young Poets Award, her work has been published by *Aesthetica*, *The Moth* and *The Poetry Business*. Laura became one of the BBC's New Voices in 2017. She received a commendation from The Poetry Society in 2018 and was shortlisted for The Edward Thomas Fellowship, The Rebecca Swift Women's Poetry Prize and The Bridport Prize in 2020.

# Caroline Bracken

## Admissions

i

The waiting room outside the admissions office is like any other  
bloated blue chairs with foam poking through torn corners  
the handiwork of some previous impatient patient  
greasy *Hello* magazines show Princess Diana alive  
accepting a pink posy from an overdressed child  
a half-full water cooler      no cups.

ii

You tick boxes      hope he won't notice the locked door  
too late      he yanks the handle    bangs on the high window  
screams and spits words which bounce off you like sponge-balls  
three of them take him through another locked door  
you are released      you sit in your car    smoke a cigarette  
phone your sister    hang up      you do not cry

iii

Press the buzzer      the door opens      press the next buzzer  
longer this time      you are interrupting their form-filling  
they search your bag like airport security    you wish you were  
boarding a plane to somewhere      anywhere      his right hand is bloody  
and bruised from punching walls    you ask questions    no answers  
he is an adult    they only answer to him      he cannot form a sentence

iv

You tell a few people    they suggest acupuncture    aromatherapy      yoga  
you stop telling people      he gains ten pounds    you lose ten    you can afford them  
other relatives tell their stories in the smoking shelter      everybody smokes  
the stories are all the same    some are on their tenth admission    they say there is no  
cure  
no hope      only endurance      only acceptance      only helplessness  
you stop talking to them    you refuse to stop asking questions    you take him home

v

He refuses all meds    you are poisoning him            there is an incident  
you call the police    they take him away    he goes quietly talking about football  
another admission    and another    and another            until you lose count  
he is an adult    he can make his own choices            he wanders the streets  
you make calls            lobby politicians            argue with doctors    you will not give up  
they give in    find him a safe place    he is stable    you can rest            for now

## Ward Warrior

This war  
d is a war  
ship the cr  
ew we  
ar un  
iforms ma  
n the ma  
st pa  
trol the ca  
bins we  
are pi  
rates pi  
nned i  
n the hol  
d wo  
rds a  
re we  
apons us  
ed to tr  
ap us  
so we st  
ay st  
ill sa  
y no  
thing wa  
it for wa  
ves wa  
ter t  
o ca  
rry u  
s t  
o  
sh  
ore.

## Word Salad

*When making lengthy explanations or reading continuously, they (the patients) drop into a meaningless extravagant jabber which Forel most happily designates as "wordsalad" (wortsalat)*

*The Medical Standard 1895*

His words are shredded purple cabbage  
    punctuated with phrases of radicchio  
subordinate to roasted butternut squash  
    and Kalamata olives  
His sentences are salty feta cheese  
    confabulated by croutons  
structured like grated carrot and cucumber  
    undermined by garden rocket  
His paragraphs are chopped bell peppers  
    sprinkled with almonds  
manifested as pumpkin seeds in disguise  
    styled by red onions  
His questions are one part balsamic vinegar  
    two parts olive oil  
answered by wilted iceberg  
    and ripe heirloom tomatoes  
His tears are sunflower seeds  
    roasted in tamari soy sauce  
mixed with a twist of pink Himalayan rock salt  
    they fall like Manuka honey

**Review of Involuntary Detention in Accordance with the Provisions of Section 18 of the Mental Health Act 2002 (as amended)**

They  
decide  
it is his  
right to believe  
he is the chosen one and walk the streets  
barefoot and starving is not a crime yet  
the gates open  
he is free  
to save  
souls



## Coffee Sonnet

We sat in Butler's Café        removed from  
the silence of home    escaped from the ward  
noise   nurses orders   mandated meal-times.  
The barista made you a latte heart  
raised a shy smile        my Americano  
hot on my lips   my words took baby steps  
across two metres of space    I wonder though  
are we even half-way there yet        six years  
in no end in sight. We shared salt caramels  
truffles        hazelnut brownies   every dark  
mouthful drew you out        drew me in    our tongues  
ungoverned. Over the hiss of the milk  
frother we talked and listened like strangers  
your leg shaking        my hands shredding napkins.

# Hannah Cooper-Smithson

## And Still the Cypress Remains a Tree of Mourning

The trunk presses against your back, steady  
as a second spine. You hear what the tree hears –  
the sound of your mother calling, her voice  
frantic and fluttering, like garden birds.  
The hundred arms of the cypress are flush  
around you, and their bitter, green smell  
is a second skin that will never fully shed.

When they come for the tree, you bind yourself  
to it with a pink skipping rope, write a crooked  
plaque of protest – SAVE THE TREES – but  
you are small and easily uprooted,  
and chalk can be washed away with a hose.  
The chainsaw makes quick work of that steady trunk  
and you feel the injustice of it in your bones,

the sheer injustice of it, like a spear to the heart  
of a sleeping deer, and you think you might die  
from the weight of knowing that it cannot be undone,  
that grief has all the power of smoke against stone.

## Lithification

Under the hill, the earth is riddled with holes,  
little twisting passages and caverns, like bubbles  
of air in a loaf of well-leavened bread.

Time down here runs slow and heavy, and if you stop  
paying attention, you might find that when you surface  
into the starstruck Autumn night,

you've left your body behind, lodged in a fissure  
surrounded by the remains of the old seas –  
hard skeletons of coral, molluscs, brachiopods,

the bodies of urchins and brittle stars,  
tiny, watery algae that are still in the process  
of becoming undiscovered opals.

This is what time will do to you – petrify  
your warm body into a fossil of calcium and plastic,  
your face becoming a frightened moon,

your eyes compressing into two blue pearls,  
your heart and lungs disappearing, leaving no trace,  
leaving only your bones and the soles of your shoes

and the shreds of your waterproof coat  
to be excavated and strung up on wires,  
like a great whale, in the middle of a well-lit hall.

## **Gabriel's Trumpet**

*Brugmansia suaveolens*

From the trellis, a flourish of trumpets stretch  
their wide, yellow throats; your head becomes  
a bucket mute, and a bright brass chorus burbles  
playfully in your ear, reminding you that the trumpet is,  
most bizarrely, the reason you are alive.

Your father played it, and your mother played it  
from the row behind, and it's funny to think  
of the industries of plant and metal and sound,  
the compositions of time, place, Vivaldi, Saint-Saens,  
to which we owe our existential debts,

and I wonder, often, if they could hear  
the glad tidings heralded in that playing –  
if they knew that the heart-thudding spaces  
of the cathedral and the future were ringing,  
resounding, with three golden notes.

## Chimera

It's the knot in the flesh of the tree, the dark eye uncovered by swift planing –  
and did you know that those dark eyes are the stubs of new branches  
that tried to grow and failed, and died, and were encased, lidded,  
by the slow, inevitable, growth of the bark?

It's the body of a mother, with its two sets of ribs, eight limbs, two hearts –  
and did you know that when the baby is gone, the body of the mother is still multiple  
with little cells, little foreign genes spinning in the dark, persisting in the blood  
for as long as the mother will live?

It's the body of a pig, butchered and diced and minced and smoked –  
and did you know the average American eats twenty-seven whole pigs in their lifetime,  
building their body from the fried muscles of those pigs, and that sixteen pigs  
can eat a whole human body, uncooked, in under eight minutes?

It's the Earth, the rich soil and the crisp air, innocuous and fresh smelling –  
and did you know that if you left your body to decompose out in the open,  
the bacteria and the blowflies and the mites and the worms and the earth itself  
would absorb your cells, and thrive?

It's the mosquito that pricks you with its needle-face, sucking  
your blood up into its smaller body before it whines away into the night  
so that a part of you will live forever beside the still water,  
drinking the blood of the squirrels, the chickadees, the white footed mice.

## **Birch, Meaning Birth, Meaning Weeping**

In the early hours of a winter morning  
when the moon is a silver ladder

night turns to dawn on the dark verge  
of the atmosphere.

On a white table in a quiet hall  
a silent phone sits waiting.

On the desk, a parturition of careful words  
on white paper – the only birth the house will see this winter.

In the white hall a quiet clock is ticking;  
dust stirs into a curl of starred light.

A layer of silence hovers over every surface,  
and every hour is heavier, like wading through dark water.

A mother who is not a mother  
pulls the grey cover up over herself.

Outside, a light rain falls, a soft *smirr* of water  
over the folding hills.

A mother who is not a mother  
drifts and cries and tries to remember –

in the other world beyond the mirror there is a mother  
who is a mother, and a baby who is

a baby is sleeping in a bower of white flowers  
roses, juniper, purple heather

and when the sky shivers with the dancing lights of the aurora,  
that baby who is a baby

will stir and cry with all the fervour of a white-winged seabird  
turning over the water.

# Teresa Dzieglewicz

## The story starts like this: with scraps of shell

and the river, just beginning to chisel her bed across the not-yet prairie, to score through prehistoric fangs of cats, sea-glass

smooth ribs of swept-away mammals. No nation dams her yet, floods the homes along her banks, corners her in puny

lakes. No, now, she sows and sows. The once-hinged hull of a mussel. A limpet emptied of its triangular heart. And new

mineral starts to cling, spends centuries swelling globe-like and resistant around this swallowed archive. Now, weathering:

polishing away shale banks, revealing the shapes, up to ten feet in diameter. In Lakhóta, this place is called the Íŋyaŋwakaġapi Wakpá,

or Sacred Stone River. But when the soldiers came, saw the sun-lit stones, warm and breathy as eggs, they re-christened her

the *Cannonball*: because when destiny means only more and more, when all your tools are weapons, even a river starts to look like a war.

## Learning the Plum Pit Game

Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Camp, Standing Rock 2016

1) You don't know the rules yet. Sit with the kids in this circle of grass. Listen.

(You see the smooth brome and want to say *untouched*. Or *soft as a child's head in your lap*. Don't. Even grasses have a history you don't understand.)

2) You have a partner and an opposing team. Take five plum pits, painted on one side, some with the tiniest buffalo, others with the winging of birds.

(These stalks planted here as forage for cattle who were planted in place of buffalo when they were turned to bleached planets of skull.)

3) Your turn: hold these plum pits in the palm of your hand. Shake them like dice. Feel the hoof trying to escape. The beak.

(Roots of native grass hold carbon in crenellated shapes fourteen feet underground. We are held here by castles.)

4) Flick your wrist, open your palm. The kids chant *tatanka, tatanka, tatanka* or *zintkala, zintkala*

(and in the hills beyond here, a bulldozer turns the land like the tossed dreams of fever, and the gasses rise like ghosts of the bluestem, the false boneset while)

5) You count your matches and mark your points and

(you are suspended in the palm of the prairie)

6) the amber wings of the Dakota Skipper disappear.



## Rally at the Capitol

*Bismark, ND*

Camp bursts from busses, vans, opens like an agate  
on the state-sponsored lawn. Uniform  
and over-mowed blades obscured now by the flash

of jingle dresses, jewel-toned *I Stand with Standing Rock*  
tees. *Water is Life* signs float like sails,  
let us believe our collective bodies could be

a boat. Ricardo shares a sketch, a small girl  
placing a flower in the gaping throat  
of a gun; the ends of Red Fawn's ribbon skirt

flutter like the cobalt butterflies back at camp;  
and everyone chants *Protect the Sacred, Protect*  
*the Sacred*. We round dance, rise and fall like one

set of lungs. Our skyward fists are a release  
of balloons. And none of this requires  
the rows of National Guard men swaddled

in riot gear, matched and ill-fitting pants.  
I lay on the grass beside a huddle  
of quiet kids. RJ asks why there are so many

cops, so many guns, when nobody has done  
anything violent? Halle says, *they want us*  
*to start getting afraid*. The monolith

of men shadow us like the brutalist  
building they line up before.  
The obligatory blankness in their faces

blurring and disappearing the bowed  
lips, birthmarks, moles, the small  
asymmetries their lovers must think of at night.



German Shepard tongues.

Dogs

Frankie says,

*they don't even say the dogs were biting people,  
It's like we attacked them first.*

In the chaos of rising fists, horses painted with hands,  
ticking helicopter blades, canine noses  
wet with blood:

it was the women,  
grasping one another, who lay down  
where the mouth of the dozer was meant to swallow  
next, planted

their bodies until the machine retreated.

I watched like a scarecrow, strung outside  
the fence by my own indecision  
as their ribbon skirts re-colored the land.

Tashubi kicks a box,

sloppy with summer tank tops, half-used  
grammar books donated  
from white people's basements,

at Construction Site

*It's not just a place to dig up—it's our land!  
Our ancestors are buried here. The treaties say it's ours!*

I hear the little kids ask Jose about tear gas  
again, their arms waving and purple with glitter,  
if the cops will spray kids too.

And I know some things

I didn't know last week. How I should have  
poured milk on the welted face  
of the blue-haired woman  
on the side of the road.

How I can waver  
like a building

glimpsed through heat when it's my turn  
to put my body on the line  
and how that is a violence too.

Through the speaker, we hear a fragment  
of an elder's speech: a reminder  
that every choice we make is a ceremony.

Our faces are green in the tent's military-issue glow,  
and a few miles away, in St. Anthony,  
red and blue lights of police  
barb a fence around each school bus,  
escort white children back  
to white homes,  
and when the state says *protect*,  
we all know who they mean.

# Joan Michelson

## Time and Again

### The Last Week

On the last Sunday in the last photo,  
which our daughter caught with the camera  
we'd given her for her birthday the week before,  
we're on the sofa reading in a mess of mismatched  
pillows. You're wearing your bent specs.  
I notice this and how we both sit resting back  
slumped, but leaning so our shoulders touch.  
My right leg, in plaster from a break, is stretched  
to the pulled out piano bench. Your feet in sheepskin  
slippers rest high against the chimney breast.  
'To help your heart,' I think, 'keep its secret until  
Friday when the 2:13 pm pulls out without you.'

## **The Last Day**

When he exits from the school circus  
with its traffic, his heart is still beating,  
the pain dismissed as acid from a bagel.  
His daughter, excited that it's Friday,  
takes her mother's front seat place.  
She recites her weekend chauffeur needs:  
flute lesson, Jemma's pool party, gymnastics  
practice, and back to school Sunday  
three o'clock for five-a side-football  
He gets her home in time for 'Neighbours',  
sees she's settled with a TV snack,  
goes up, breath short, gets on with paperwork.  
It turns out he has an hour yet.

## **The First Summer**

Spring came late  
and was overeager,  
a blue that caught  
like a broken bone  
inside my throat.  
I couldn't look up.  
Green was earth  
where you lay,  
a thought that made  
your sister shiver.  
She wanted fire.  
I couldn't let you  
go so quickly.  
Now it's summer  
I keep playing  
your CD of Mahler's  
Song of Earth.  
His grief explodes  
then quiets, lingering.  
The mezzo fades out,  
then one by one  
the instruments,  
but oh! so slowly.  
He too holds back  
the final note.

## The Tenth Year

You've looped a braided rope around your head  
with a lead attached to your canoe and it floats  
easily behind you down the Rio Verte.

The air smells of summer, smells of south.  
You could be hearing the song I'm hearing now  
in our bedroom where I'm seeing you

in the empty mirror. You're a long-limbed stripling  
years younger than the man I married, (and decades later,  
buried). You're being carried down river

in the slow time of wander. The sun is hot,  
the water cool, the current slow and steady  
while in this room the drums beat California

rock-and-roll—guitar and banjo, jangling  
tambourine, brass with John Fogerty singing  
(you remember) 'Green River'. It brings you home

to London winter, to strangely balmy weather  
and calls me out of self. With you as if  
you're present, I leave the house to wander roads

pocked with curtained light from homes with many  
floors and rooms. On either side from end to end  
cars are parked; and in a car, a woman by herself

playing a CD of 'Green River'. She's swaying, singing  
'Take me back down where the cool water flows.'  
I'm singing too, and you, your long legs bent are turning

side to side with the rhythm. We're melded, she and  
I and you inside the song while out of sync  
the hour is rung in bells from different churches.



## The Twentieth Year

i.

Grateful for the light, for the sun-squint  
of the winter morning, I see him  
hurrying along the pavement the week he died.  
And in the years of hours clocked with plans.  
And before we married. Before I carried.  
Before I learned that dying has no ending.  
He's paid the barber, rolled a cigarette for later  
and set off, already late for work.  
Had he turned his head, he would have run  
across the road to kiss me quickly. But he kept  
walking against time. Today the sun is leaping  
from the backed up cars and blinding.

ii.

The sun is blinding but the house is cold.  
Here again the cold, which came with death,  
and the countdown to the ending. He left  
the house. He left too late, walked too slowly  
to the station, missed his train and fell  
and died, face-down on the platform. The fall  
left him bruised, especially his face,  
which I saw when taken to the morgue to sign  
he was he and I was left behind to be alive.  
I set my oven timer for the final hour,  
and sitting in a kitchen chair and listen through  
the sixty ticks to the closing two bell ring.

iii.

When the ringing ends, the dying's done.  
As required I pull myself together and go out.  
The light is fading. The wind, which brought in cloud,  
has dropped. A woman, sounding bitter, shouts  
into her phone, 'What have I got to lose?'  
I take her words, take his route and walk.  
The hour enters limbo. He's with me walking,  
but his step's so slowed we're going nowhere.  
We stand together until he is nowhere.  
Now I quicken towards the lit up Broadway.  
It's dressed for Christmas in tinsel and white lights.  
The traffic's building. I hear carols. Now I'm singing.

# James Pollock

## Lighter

The hand-held Titan doffs his cap thus: *schling!*  
A little sloshing in the belly. Wick,  
spark wheel, eyelet, flint spring, chimney. Plaything,  
the ancient miracle become a trick,

or many: Drop Spark, Bar Slide, Spinning Wheel,  
The Married Man, The Twilight Zone, The Gun.  
No one remembers what it took to steal  
this little tongue of fire from the sun.

## Scale

To bear what it has to—that is the craft.  
Also, to measure the force by which the world  
brings one down. Imagine if it laughed  
every time its inward dial got whirled,

bearing the unbearable; which describes  
how it does justice. It's a bit uncouth.  
It lends you gravitas precisely when your scribe's  
heart is weighed against the plume of truth.

## **Screw**

Spiral staircase, or ramp, rather, as in  
a tiny parking garage, or the shoots  
of the runner bean—such things as spin  
a helix, one of nature's absolutes,

into the matrix of the universe.  
Turn the self-locking vortex by the head  
with your torquing driver; such tight verse  
holds all things together by a thread.

## Sewing Needle

All eye and backbone and piercing toe.  
Stiff paleolithic archetype of skill,  
*sine qua non* of duds—why does it go  
up-and-down, over-and-under, until,

like a sine wave, the way grows eternal?  
It is the original notion: to fasten,  
whereby the fastener makes the self external.  
It is the longing of the eye: to fashion.

## Microphone

A good listener, with a heart-shaped zone  
of sensitivity to vibrations  
in the very air, your fine microphone  
amplifies the small imagination's

vibrato-in-the-diaphragm to flower  
in the speaker with pure vocal grace.  
Only technicians know what phantom power  
helps it fill the ear with such deep space.

# Laura Potts

## Night Song

Birds came in on the tail of the day  
to the evening bells of Harpurhey.  
Dusk had smudged the land, the lanes  
long as sorrow

in the graceless rain.

He'll remember the hour –  
the saddening glamour of lamps  
in the dark. The way the city lit its quiet lights  
below the stars.

And this is home. Old as coal,  
as cotton. Old as the throat  
that a boy broke open there,  
at evensong.

Yes, Manchester.  
The little lights lived on.  
He knew the prayers, the silver songs

that lit the sky by night.

How time would remember this city.  
The thousand lost tomorrows

and the avenues of light,

and oh  
the human music –

the everbells, the pipes

that lifted through the smoke  
their held, their holy notes.

And those bright gods.  
Over the domes of the dark, he watched  
the sparrows charm and sparkle

into absence, into loss.

## The Never-Mother

Outside my skin: cold, and stone skies. I weep  
and think of hands – stressed, clenched – his skull  
moulded in the crack of my elbow, and rock him,

crying, caressing the soft pearls of his eyelids.  
Thunder snarls in the dead of night.  
Say *light* and I swallow my stomach.

He sleeps in some other arms now, my son,  
wakes to the halls of dawn in another land  
far from here, where a woman will not hold him

quite like I did. The moon will be old and  
the stars wheeled away before I see him, my boy,  
striding with limbs long to his mother's open arms;

when the skies will flame with copper, copper, crimson  
and tan. When he will stop, cold, and ask me who I am.



## Fieldsong

Old as coal and onward, beyond the song  
of foxes on the hallways of the dawn,  
a clod of ox unfolds the fields of morning  
with his horn. Upon the moor and glory,

robin raising morning to the valley-carried  
call, shallow stomachs of the hills begin  
to rise and fall. All along the wharf  
among the operas of the fawns, Yorkshire

hebbles on towards tomorrow and the north.  
Beyond the ringing city, the singing chimneys  
or the broken-throated locomotive on the moor,  
all the roar of autumn pauses for the water's

call. Oh, the ballroom and the soaring chorus  
of it all: the wanderers from warmer shores,  
swinging from a string, bring a hymn to dignify  
this kingdom in their wings; or the sun that splits

a ginger grin across the dims; or the wince  
of water on the winter-bitten winds. All  
and evermore of this: the cinders that have been  
the legacies to centuries that bore them in; and

on the ferry-terrace with the wren upon the wing,  
a merrie bell of berries starts to ring the winter in.  
Far the little city; far the limb of river with the stars  
upon its skin; far the path that brings the children

and the darkness in. This, perhaps, is everything:  
the fox that hunts the dusk, the ever-glow  
of home that once was just the stuff of dust.  
The river, quick as history, living as it must.

**The Manchester Writing Competition was established in 2008 and celebrates Manchester as an international city of writers, finding diverse new voices and creating opportunities for writer development. The Competition offers the UK's biggest literary awards for unpublished work, has attracted more than 20,000 submissions from over 80 countries and has awarded more than £195,000 to writers. Designed to encourage and celebrate new writing across the globe, the competition is open internationally to new and established writers.**

The Manchester Writing Competition was devised by Carol Ann Duffy (UK Poet Laureate 2009-2019) and is run the Manchester Writing School at Manchester Metropolitan University: [www.mmu.ac.uk/writingschool](http://www.mmu.ac.uk/writingschool).

This year's Manchester Poetry Prize was judged by Malika Booker, Mona Arshi and Mimi Khalvati. The Manchester Fiction Prize was judged by Nicholas Royle, Tim Etchells and Irenosen Okojie. The winners of this year's £10,000 Poetry and Fiction Prizes will be announced in February.

The copyright in each piece of writing submitted remains with its author. Views represented are those of the individual writers and not Manchester Metropolitan University.

If you have any queries, or would like any further information, about the Manchester Writing Competition, please contact: [writingschool@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:writingschool@mmu.ac.uk).

Press enquiries: Dominic Smith: [dominic.smith@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:dominic.smith@mmu.ac.uk); +44 (0) 161 247 5277. The judges and finalists are all available for interview.

**The Manchester Writing Competition will return in 2021.**