

Protecting Life On Earth

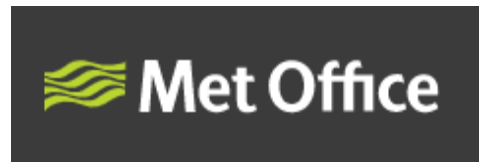
Driven by **HOPE** for creating **GREEN FUTURES** at G7 and COP26 this collaborative project highlights links between the *climate crisis* and *human health*; how to use words to halt and heal a fast-escalating climate emergency.

Powerful poetry connects disciplines, research, communities, and emotions in diverse and challenging ways; poetry provokes questions, motivates positive change, and reveals what is most valuable.

The following slides connect a mix of voices, (some are extracts of poems and some complete). They testify to our team's mission - to forge exciting collaborations using poetry to announce key environmental change and health messages.



COLLEGE OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH



A Portable Paradise

And if I speak of Paradise,
then I'm speaking of my grandmother
who told me to carry it always
on my person, concealed, so
no one else would know but me.
That way they can't steal it, she'd say.
And if life puts you under pressure,
trace its ridges in your pocket,
smell its piney scent on your handkerchief,
hum its anthem under your breath.

And if your stresses are sustained and daily,
get yourself to an empty room – be it hotel,
hostel or hovel – find a lamp
and empty your paradise onto a desk:
your white sands, green hills and fresh fish.
Shine the lamp on it like the fresh hope
of morning, and keep staring at it till you sleep.

© Roger Robinson with kind permission of the author – TS Eliot
Poetry Prize winner 2019



There aren't many days left
like this. Seagulls glide
silently across porcelain sky.

A perfect sun. Rocks appear
as if they've dressed especially
in layers of luminous moss

for the boy and girl on the cliff
diving into a green ocean, while
gorse on the precipice buds yellow.

From *No Planet B* by Dr Sally Flint University of Exeter



'(Let it come.) Let it start
now as we sit here waiting
and talking through days
of colour and rain.

May it infect the heart
and save it. May it lead us
into light. *(We are open.)*
Let the healing start.'

Extract from 'Prayer' Dr Anthony Wilson, University of
Exeter



Neuropteris

Snug in my hand
a dark print
of its former self.
Once it was bright,
a leafy shoot swaying
and speckled with rain
in the glow of a setting sun.

* Neuropteris – an extinct fern that lived 300 million years ago.

By Dr Sarah Baker, Geologist, University of Exeter

Published in *Climate Stories*



'Her thigh-bones, longer than a giraffe's,
Are lying steeped in a swamp, or smashed
in a midden, with her unstrung vertebrae.
Our predecessors hunted and ate her,
gobbled her up: as we'd have done
in their place; as we're gobbling the world.'

Extract from 'The Last Moa', Fleur Adcock



'Everybody talking bout de Green revolution
Protecting de children an fighting pollution.
But check
Humans hav been taking an not giving
An now de boat is sinking yu stop an start
tinking,
Now we see dere is a change of tone
De problem's cumming home
De world's a danger zone'

Extract from 'Me Green Poem' by Benjamin Zephaniah

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2zJojl-qdc>



‘And that will be England gone,
The shadows, the meadows, the lanes,
The guildhalls, the carved choirs.
There’ll be books; it will linger on
In galleries; but all that remains
For us will be concrete and tyres.’

Extract from ‘Going, Going’ by Philip Larkin

'Whoever thought I'd miss the polar bear?
Or bluebells? Or icy frosty mornings
where I saw my breath before me
as crystal clouds across the frozen air?

They say this year the harvest will be good,
the wheatfields up in Greenland doing well.
I pray they're right.
Perhaps we've turned a corner.
Time will tell.'

Extract from 'The straw of hope' by Steve Pottinger - *Climate Matters*



THE FLYING TOILETS OF KIBERA

Because the politicians can't discuss
toilets for fear of breaking taboo,
Afiyah (Swahili: 'well-being, health')
launches hers beyond Kibera's walls.

Because the bureaucrat believes
the settlement must be 'illegal',
Kanja (Sanskrit: 'water born')
slings his to the reservoir's edge.

As plastic bags rain from the sky
Nafula (African: 'born in the rain')
washes his face in the tainted tank.

You choose, Samira... either use the bag,
or squat outside in the perilous night
(Arabic, meaning 'pleasurable place').

Prof Andy Brown, University of Exeter



'She is awed by Mother Ganga's family tree:
the crouching boys who brush their teeth, spitting into
her bosom,
the oleaginous women of unwavering faith who fill
their
plastic bottles
with her coffee-coloured and clotted liquid,

the dogs and goats scavenging at the Burning Ghats,
before the smouldering bones are swept into the
bowels of Ganga Mata.'

Extract from 'River' by Prof Corinna Wagner, University of Exeter



‘It’s hard to know which to prefer, the leaves
yellow or green, unfurling or at height,
or the stark beauty of the twigs and branches;
or would be, if I didn’t know I don’t
have to choose but can move, as the tree moves,
through all the seasons, between earth and sky.’

Extract from ‘The Lime Tree Year’ by John Freeman (*The Tree Line* - Worple Press),



'the sound of water rushing through the pines
towards us and a scent
unfolding from the earth, to draw us in
- a history of light
and gravity - no more -
for this is how the world
occurs: not piecemeal
but entire
and instantaneous
the way we happen:
woman blackbird man'

Extract from 'A Theory of Everything' John Burnside



'We sat, watched waited
We realised the hedgerow and us
were more or less the same thing.
We ordered some chairs online.
It was a good year for outdoor
furniture.

That went out with a bang.'

From 'Waiting', Joanna Guthrie (University of Exeter alumni) 2019
Gingko Prize runner up

Published in *Out of Time: Poetry from the Climate Emergency*, (Valley
Press July 2021 - A Poetry Book Society Commendation).



‘What have you done
with what was given you,
what have you done with
the blue, beautiful world?’

From ‘The Question’, Theo Dorgan



'In today's sharp sparkle, this winter air,
any thing can be made, any sentence begun.

On the brink, on the brim, on the cusp,
praise song for walking forward in that light.'

Extract from *Praise Song for the Day* by Elizabeth Alexander



OVERSHOOT

**Mother is in the garden
She doesn't see the dragon
Between us**

**We released it long ago
We didn't know
It could destroy our world**

**We have got
just
one
shot**

**Together we raise the bow
And hold our breath**

By Dr Natalie Garrett (Private Secretary to The Met
Office Chief Scientist)





Dr Sally Flint



Prof Ian Fussell



Cecilia Mañosa Nyblon



Prof Reza Zamani



Sarah Campbell



Dom Jinks



Prof Rosa Barciela



Prof Peter Stott



With thanks to:

Riptide Journal

<http://www.riptidejournal.co.uk/>

Climate Matters

<http://www.riptidejournal.co.uk/shop/climate-matters/>

Climate Stories

<https://www.climatestories.org.uk/>

Videos/Links of Interest:

Benjamin Zephaniah – ‘Future Vision of Our Planet’: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDWu9Xuj9oQ>

(4.19 min long)

Dear Future Generations: ‘Sorry’

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRLjScAlkIM>

(6.02 min long)

Ginkgo Prize

<https://ginkgoprize.com/>

*Where extracts are shown a google search will find the whole poem - or for more information:

Contacts: Dr Sally Flint s.flint@exeter.ac.uk and UEMS_CPD@exeter.ac.uk



Partner with us to Shape a Greener Future.



GreenFutures.exeter.ac.uk



5 of the world's top 21 most influential climate scientists are innovating at Exeter.
(Reuters Hot List 2021)