



2024-25 SHORTLIST

Award was established in 2019 by Poetry Wales magazine as a national competition seeking to discover the very best international poetry.

Since its inception, the **Poetry Wales Award** has had over 4000 entries, given out a dozen First, Second and Third Award prizes, and published over 50 winning and Highly Commended poems both on our website and in our magazine.

All entries are judged anonymously.

JEREMY DIXON

POETRY WALES AWARD 2024/2025 JUDGE



Jeremy Dixon (he/him) is a prize-winning poet, editor and workshop leader. He is the author of the pamphlet In Retail (Arachne Press, 2019). His first full collection A Voice Coming From Then (Arachne Press, 2021) won the Wales Book of the Year Poetry Award 2022. He is co-editor of the anthology JOY//US: Poems of Queer Joy (Arachne Press, 2024). His new pamphlet of Polari-inspired poems Bold in the Life has just been published by Broken Sleep Books.

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SOPHIA ARGYRIS Winter-Flowering

My mother taught me to follow a recipe. I think of her each time I break a rule. I think of my father when I'm bad

with money, too lazy to fix even one small corner of my life. We go grey so slowly have you noticed? From the tips of our fingers

it spreads stealthily inwards. Only happiness and salt water could make us whole. Forty-five minutes after birth, fawns stand

flick their ears at flies. We take years to walk and be dissatisfied. In December the sky gives in to relentless murk

but the buds on a winter-flowering plant still open. I will boil an orange, blend it all into the cake. Dimple of rind, fascia of pith, flush of juice,

trace of bitterness. My mother strong-armed eggs into stiff peaks. She and my father liked to sing often, but in different situations.



She when driving, he when walking or sitting in a restaurant. He sang me an entire blues number once, by the river Spey.

Considering this orange, I think I feel young enough to understand new truths and how to wear bright colours on dark days.



SOPHIA ARGYRIS

Sophia Argyris (she/her) is of British-Greek origin, grew up in Belgium and Scotland. Her work has appeared in *MsLexia*, Poetry London, Under the Radar, Live Canon Prize anthology. Her pamphlet Heronless, (Palewell Press) published in 2025, and her forthcoming pamphlet *Blood Tundra* will be published by Broken Sleep in 2026.



@Sophia_Argyris



LIAM BATES Magic

A man at the front was yelling he knew how I did that after every trick. At what stage does a thought become an act? An attitude like that won't appear out of nowhere, how is a feeling like a fruit, when does a shoot become a plant, how does a baby grow ta-da from cosmic to a boy and how does that boy become a man who buys a ticket to my show just to heckle, I wondered, fumbling a bullet catch, losing another tooth.



LIAM BATES

Liam Bates (he/him) is a poet based in Lancashire. He won a Northern Writers' Award and has been published in Magma, Under the Radar, Berlin Lit and elsewhere. His two pamphlets and his debut collection, Human Townsperson, are available from Broken Sleep Books.



NATASHA BORTON Bucket Hat Bois¹

At full time bois bach² brave the trek to'r Dafarn.³

Turn it up la, Yma o⁴
He breathes into last season's crest.
Pawb⁵ pulls at the table
mwy⁶ bums than chairs, mwy legs than lads.

Drops his bucket hat to the sand that swimming sun reclaimed with two's stained fingers his other hand rubs the Queen's nose on a fiver collapsed into his pocket.

Around his neck the chain his Taid⁷ wore 'til death Mam⁸ cursive to collarbone like the pulsing tide.

Shouts behind Where we headed? West la, Straight into the sea Where buoys mark their depth.



1 Welsh: Bois - Guys

² Welsh: Bois Bach - Little Guys

³ Welsh: To'r Dafarn – to 'the pub'

⁴ Welsh: Yma o – 'here from'

⁵ Welsh: Pawb - Everyone

⁶ Welsh: Mwy - More

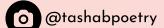
⁷ Welsh: Taid - Grandad

8 Welsh: Mam - Mum



NATASHA BORTON

Natasha Borton (she/her) is a poet, musician and theatremaker from Wrexham. She uses performance and music as tools for connection and discussion. Her poetry is rooted in identity and community and everyday folklore. She hosts Voicebox Wxm, supporting emerging and diverse voices and she is part of Representing Wales 24/25.







ANNA BOWLES February the Thirty-Seventh

For Yulia

My Masters degree and I knew Russia would never really invade. Not like this.

*

In March, it's still February as the map crackles and shrinks, blackens towards Kyiv.

The reeling city bleeds people. Your friends' kitchens yield mouldy onions, champagne, washing-up and a refugee hamster.

Telegram pleads: Driver needed... ... elderly... medicine ... Empty playground. Train window.

On the hallway plastic mattress, sleepers jostle out of rhythm with artillery up in Irpin. You scream into a towel.

My gift from London: Summary of official guidance on how to survive a gas attack.



Your flatmate won't sleep near glass. From the devil-glow of Irpin, a shockwave rides south.

*

Each February dawn I levitate, and feed myself sick on news. Kyiv rocked overnight by new explosions.

Tanks crawl dogged round my brain. It's, what, February the thirty-fifth? Evacuation train doors slice off your family.

Fears that the capital will be encircled. Kyiv is a thicket of hedgehogs, jilted kiosks and posters for luxury flats in Bucha.

England's a pale concern of drifting phantoms. I'm cracked on the London pavement, marvelling at puddles of iridescent filth.

Andriy texts from a basement: They are wiping Mariupol from the face of the earth.



In Kyiv, the sirens give you three minutes notice: just enough time to boil coffee. Your cat eyes the hamster.

*

Video call. Occupied airstrike curfew missile checkpoint...
I hold a thimble to your haemorrhage,

then we voyage separately to dawn. Time stamps in Telegram show that you finally slept.

You say the night you first dreamed of the war was when it became real.

ANNA BOWLES

Anna Bowles (she/her) is a freelance editor and pro-Ukrainian activist. Since Russia's invasion she has divided her time between London and Ukraine. Her poetry is a response to her experiences and has been published in a number of magazines and placed in competitions over the past year.



@annabowles.bsky.social

annabowles.substack.com

HEATHER CHAPMAN Kiss Me Like I'm Edward II

Like divine judgement is hanging above our heads, a fashionable kicking blade. Kiss me like compassion, the kingdom devastated by fire. Like an enemy army storming ashore, the water choking on every anchored foot. What does it matter? Touch my neck like the golden ram, tripping through whispering cloud. Tell me you'd die for duty, die for dying's sake. Kiss my palm. It doesn't count. I am not my own. God cinches each of my breaths to the next, my voice the hollow toll of a ruby stumped in a crown. Whatever. Don't cry! Look at me like I've found out about your politics, your piracy. Like I don't mind too much. Put on my spurs. Let's pretend I am flush from battle, frost wincing on my boots. You're flighty, fancying a challenge. Pluck a thousand knights from their beds with mythic talons.



You are leaving – you are leaving because I ordered you to. Funny story.

I am turning my hand to other matters – my palm angling the certainty of a country.



HEATHER CHAPMAN

Heather (she/her) is a Durham University student. She was a 2023 Foyle Young Poet, and was shortlisted for the 2024 Tower Poetry competition. Her work is published or forthcoming in *The Garlic Press, Bloodletter, Disco Kitchen* and Carmen et Error. She likes vampires, sestinas, and Edward II.

@heatherchapman4523



GINNY DARKE Sea Witch

I am four drinks in, poolside and the sun is hurting my eyes. Tomorrow, I'll let you peel my skin off my back like you filet a salmon. I go looking for the oracle in the deep end of the chlorinated public pool. I glimpse her in the corner near the ladder. She is pearl on black velvet, her arms limper than I first expected. I've heard she is something to fear and that her skin is translucent, or at least in this light it is. She told me never to trust a boy with a biblical name. She gestures to the blue floor tiles where I think about sleeping, only to awaken with a layer of sand on top of me. There is an anemone on my left big toe and I let it rest

GINNY DARKE

Ginny Darke (she/her) is a Welsh writer based in Bristol, U.K. Her poetry has been shortlisted for the Foyle Young Poets award (2018) and the Creative Futures award (2019, 2020). Her work has been published with Poetry Northern Ireland, Anthropocene, The Remnant Archive, Al Literary Review and Ink, Sweat and Tears.





DOMINIC FISHER Black rubber on the hard shoulder

Then call this road reality its white chevrons, overhead signs

its mallow flowers streaking down the central reservation

a magpie, cruciform, landing on the nearside crash barrier

and one Hell's Angel vanishing out to a point on the windscreen.

Call this road karma, the way home or the history of the nation

where a dark car is overtaking with lights like half-hooded eyes

trucks like freezers alongside us. Contact info, slogans, logos



POETRY **AWARD**

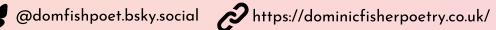
and midday dazzling a river also blinding our mirrors.

Black rubber, flat fox, hard shoulder. Bald truths on an island of lies.



DOMINIC FISHER

Dominic Fisher (he/him) lives near the allotment in Bristol he shares with sparrows and foxes. An English language teacher for many years, he was a co-editor of Raceme magazine, is widely published, and sometimes broadcast. His second collection, A Customised Selection of Fireworks, was published by Shoestring Press in 2022.





GARNETT 'RATTE' FROST MANSCAPE

A facial flourish not fit for everyone Separating the Cubs from the Bears The moustache's butch brother grows

Free to express, impress, or just trim A must for any Santa or wizard Testosterones six o'clock shadow Remnants of a head full of hair A sign of age, if not wisdom Nature's crumb catcher Embraces faces whilst Always snagging in zips Not just for men Harnaam Kaur at her Most feminine Hiding where The chin Actually **FND** S





GARNETT 'RATTE' FROST

Garnett 'Ratte' Frost (he/him): Wirral based dyslexic Transman with an English BA. He is also an ink and wire artist. Cofacilitator of Merseyside LGBTQI+ Creative Writing group, Queer the Page. Published in Writing on the Wall's TranScripts, Moving Foreword, Write Minds, Surface/Below anthologies and Joy//Us by Arachne press.





NATASHA GAUTHIER Via Crucis on the Piccadilly Line

The auntie on the Cockfosters train wears a t-shirt proclaiming Jesus is the WAY, the TRUTH, the LIGHT.

I know, without needing to ask, that a cheap rosary from Fatima or Lourdes tangles around her handbag mints like a string

of Christmas lights. A fancier set hangs from the mirror of her husband's Mercedes, Our Lady on her blue bungee,

warding off accidents and death. Auntie drones daily novenas for her daughter, sitting shameless next to her. The girl

has a Kali tattoo, talks back and has stopped going to Mass, they snipe at each other in-between stations, on either side

of the scrimmage-line pole, in accents my people would have had If they had come here instead of Canada. Later at dinner, my family

will watch me eat from their silver frames on the walls of a jazz bar in Kensington, slight women in saris and beehives, small grinning men

Llenyddiaeth Cymru Literature Wales

draping arms over each other in front of the cricket club in wide ties and high-waisters, or playing baritone sax and upright bass for dancers

in post-Raj rooms. Maybe our photos in their striped satin albums fell overboard, floated ashore, found their way to a Notting Hill charity shop

to be plundered for atmosphere. In truth, they are not my relatives at all, even though I know their faces, the smell of their Shalimar

and cigars, their correct, topiaried voices, English roses on jacarandas, just like the sound of this woman and her daughter, fighting Christ

and the Devil on a train to my childhood, where my mother waits on the platform, worrying, clutching a prayer-book and a slap.



NATASHA GAUTHIER

Natasha Gauthier (she/her) is a Canadian poet living in Cardiff. A 2024-25 Representing Wales alumna, she has appeared in Poetry Wales, Scintilla, Ink, Sweat and Tears, and Black Iris, among others. Her work will be featured in the upcoming Afonydd anthology (Arachne). She is nominated for the 2025 Forward Prize.





@NatashaGauthier | @TigerBayPoetry



RICHARD LEWIS The Circus

My performance was flawless. I now bask, breathless, in a red and white waiting room, stroking my wrists wrapped by a first-year resident. I recognise him from my first job juggling burgers at sixteen. He doesn't recognise me. In his smart checkered shirt and clean-shaven jaw, nurses look up to his ringmaster authority with gasps and awes. I'm ignored by two strongmen in hi vis leotards guarding the entrance, crushing their phones like apples. In school it was a punchline. 'you're mad', they would joke, 'you'll end up in Cefn Coed.' Can you hear the applause? That's midnight, its fireworks exploding over the sea, the start of a New Year. Breathe. Take a deep bow. It's tomorrow. You're still here. On with the show.



RICHARD LEWIS

Richard (he/him) is a writer from Swansea. In 2015 he was second prize winner of the Terry Hetherington award, and in 2018 he won the Foley Poetry prize. He has had poems appear in publications including Bare Fiction Magazine, Ink Sweat & Tears, London Grip New Poetry and Shot Glass journal.



TEDDY MILLS when i came out to my family in that Airbnb in Rome

A ghost lodged itself in that hollow place behind my collarbone. I turned counselor in my sister's grief, soaked up her wine-slick tears as I assured her that I was sane, that I'd be the same, that I wouldn't change, not really. (I was a small thing then and didn't know how I would grow around the ghost). Just bowed my head and held them all. My sisters and our mother asked their questions and we laughed around the new sounds unconvincing: son, brother. My stepdad sat still in the corner. After, I smuggled my shade on the plane back home then tried to find a place to put her. I looked in all the drawers for space but they overflowed with cups and plates, the Christmas tree, prom dresses, make believe. I combed through my journals for an empty page but they all blurred before me. I went into the garden to see if I could find a pot to put this seed in, but everything was frozen shut. I was frozen shut. There was a cold ahost inside me and a burning. I had never carried a ghost before and I didn't know what I should do. I was prepared for



pain but not for this. I didn't know I would get a ghost. I went to bed and we curled around each other like parentheses: the new me and the old me / the same me and the changed me / the beginning and the end



TEDDY MILLS

Teddy Mills (he/him) earned his PhD in Applied Linguistics from Swansea University in 2024. He lives in Swansea and spends most of his spare time on the beach with his dog.



@poetry.is.ted



ZAIN RISHI Potter's Field

for Abdullah

I knew that to win a fight with my brother, the trick was to go for his wrists.

Elbows locked, toes gripping the mossmargined tiles, I'd thrash

him every time, red with satisfaction, hungry for more as we split

like yolk, the clouds kneeling to ask what even was the point of it?

That was the summer we buried a bird, the ground black and dandruffed

below the chamomile sun. We were always digging up old ghosts, making



room for new ones in the hollows we circled like Kaabas in the dirt.

I would watch him work like a god, before Maghrib filled the dark with djinn

and other flora. The year he outgrew me, I began to keep pot plants

as friends, not decorations. I learnt the hardest thing is staying clean, finding

dirt in places it doesn't belong. So much heaven left to scrub off your wrists.



CREDIT: CHRISTA HOLKA PHOTOGRAPHY

ZAIN RISHI

Zain Rishi (he/him) is a writer and bookseller based in Edinburgh. He won Third Prize in the 2024 Oxford Poetry Prize and is a Young Poets Network prizewinner. His work has appeared in Fourteen Poems, Horizon, Gutter and Propel. He is currently working on his debut poetry pamphlet.



@zain.rishi



ELIZABETH WILSON Mulholland Drive Weather Report

Everyone, have a great day' David Lynch (1946-2025)

You want me to make this easy for you? No fucking way! It's not gonna be. We merge, we double, reality blurs and breaks, twists and bends, the city burns with passions, our days ooze dark and vast. We act, react, we dream, we wake

deliriously we interpret, reinterpret, try to illuminate, make sense, yet Hollywood's narrative lies rebellious, wild along that road and all along the way stars flare, with energy and brilliance, blaze then fade and die. Dead end. Their story's closed.

Tonight the owls are crying. The Sunset wildfires swirl in Santa Monica, the city burns untamed a starless smouldering breathless tale of loss starts to unfurl, and this is how it ends. Once he claimed 'love is a bird of flame,

coming into a dark world'. Today, no music, no Llorando. Fade black. No weather to suggest. Silencio.





ELIZABETH WILSON DAVIES

Elizabeth Wilson Davies (she/her) is a poet from Pembrokeshire in west Wales. She has an MA in Creative Writing and a PhD in Post-colonial Literatures and has received a New Writer's Bursary and mentoring support through the Literature Wales scheme.

