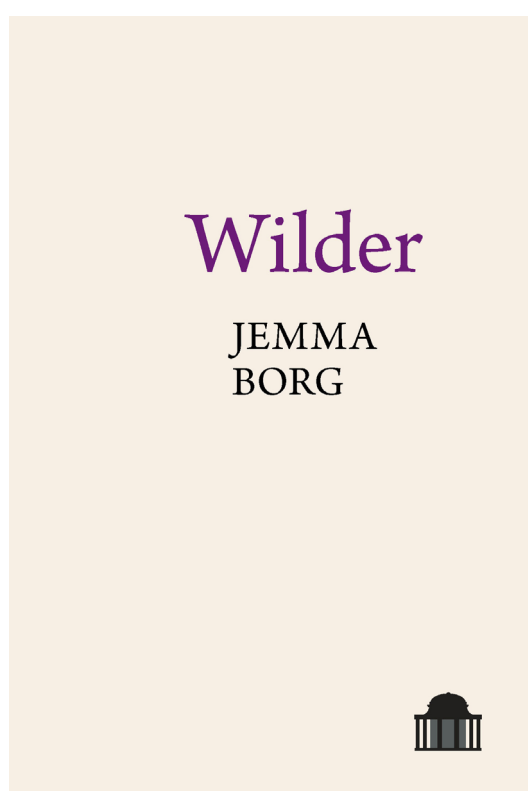


READERS' NOTES

Welcome to the **T. S. Eliot Prize 2022 Readers' Notes**, in which we present the ten exciting collections shortlisted for this year's prize. The Readers' Notes offer introductions to some key poems, with reviews and biographies of the poets, and suggest creative writing prompts. Take the notes to your book group or poetry workshop, or respond individually to them in your own time. English teachers – if you're preparing your students for any Unseen Poem papers, hone their skills on this year's list.



Wilder by Jemma Borg What reviewers say



Wilder (Pavilion / Liverpool University Press, 2022) by Jemma Borg.
liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk
(search Pavilion Poetry)

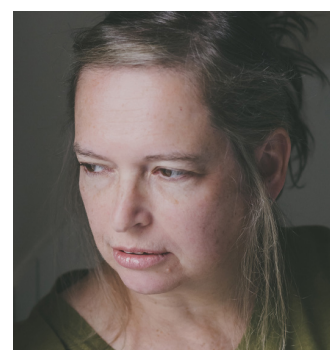
'A book about seeing through the dark, Jemma Borg's *Wilder* enacts a subtle illumination between the crepuscular and haptic and the dazzling and epigrammatic. Light is life itself, photosynthesising, meteorological, caught in poems similarly, beguilingly, changeable, imbued with a timeless and deep ecological knowing, the fruitful surrender of the human heart. – **Linda France**

'In 'Three storms', a prose poem in parts, Borg describes the experience of witnessing a storm, using it as a metaphor to contemplate the nature of threat [...]. As the storm subsides, the poem shifts to the speaker's own inner turmoil: "What would you give up in order to live? The wound. What is the instrument of benevolence? The wound." The reader is left with a sense of a threat eclipsed. Borg's imaginative use of language beckons the reader into new worlds. [...] Borg makes us realise the vital connection between the human and the non-human, the physical and the psychological, the visible and the eclipsed.' – **Jennifer Wong, *The Poetry Review***

'Ecopoetry is a relatively new label designed to represent a distinction between modern approaches and what's been historically called nature poetry. I think perhaps what has really changed is that we know that what we love is being lost, that we are looking at a world – and the Arctic is a good example – that's unlikely to exist in its current form in the near future. And to know this challenges us to examine how we live and seeps into the products of our educated imaginations, poems and art.' – **Jemma Borg, Liverpool University Press blog interview**

About the poet

Jemma Borg won the inaugural Ginkgo Prize in 2018 and *The Rialto*/RSPB Nature and Place Competition in 2017. Her poems have appeared in the *TLS*, *The Poetry Review* and *Oxford Poetry*, and in the anthologies *Out of Time* (Valley Press, 2021) and *Places of Poetry* (Oneworld, 2020). Her first collection, *The Illuminated World* (Eyewear, 2014), won *The Stare's Nest* Fledgling Award and the New Writing Ventures Award for Poetry. Her second, *Wilder* (Pavilion / Liverpool University Press, 2022), was among the winners of the 2022 Laurel Prize, awarded by the Poet Laureate Simon Armitage and the Poetry School. She was a zoologist and evolutionary geneticist before working in scientific research management in the voluntary sector and in science publishing. Jemma lives in Kent with her family.



Jemma Borg. Photo: Charlotte Knee

READERS' NOTES



Discussion ideas

- Who is ringing the gong at the beginning of 'Marsh thistle'? What purpose – ritual or otherwise – might the sounding gong have?
- What sort of play is 'Canis minor' – comedy, tragedy or something altogether different?
- One of the sources of 'Thaw' can be found in an article from *The Guardian* on global warming and its effect on life in the Arctic (bit.ly/arcticthaw). What are the sounds and noises of this poem? Who makes them? Who listens to them?
- '[Z]inc, uranium, gold' and 'moss, lichen, reindeer, caribou, // humans, cod, seal, walrus' – how do these lists function in the poem? Are they lists of landscape features, of commodities? Is there a hierarchy in them?

Writing prompt

- Wilder won the inaugural Ginkgo Prize in 2018 and *The Rialto*/RSPB Nature and Place Competition in 201 – awards that focus on nature and/or environmental poetry and highlight the climate crisis. What does ecopoetry mean to you? Write a poem which addresses the genre in some way, using the phrase 'and then the upwardness begins again' from 'Marsh thistle' as a starting point.

Find out more

Other books by Jemma Borg

The Illuminated World (Eyewear, 2014)

See also: lyrikline.org/en/authors/jemma-borg

If you liked Jemma Borg's work, try...

- Mimi Khalvati
- Pascale Petit
- Nancy Campbell

About the T. S. Eliot Prize

The T. S. Eliot Prize for Poetry, awarded annually to the author of the best new collection of poetry published in the UK and Ireland, was inaugurated in 1993 to celebrate the Poetry Book Society's 40th birthday and honour its founding poet. Since 2016, the Prize has been supported and run by the T. S. Eliot Foundation. It is the most prestigious poetry prize in the world, and the only major poetry prize judged purely by established poets. It is also the most valuable in British poetry. The judges for the 2022 Prize are Jean Sprackland (Chair), Hannah Lowe and Roger Robinson. For more information, visit tseliot.com/prize

T. S. Eliot Prize 2022: join in

- Look out for the **video recordings of interviews and poems** recorded by all ten of the shortlisted poets, as well as past winning and shortlisted poets, on our YouTube channel: bit.ly/tseliotprizeyoutube
- Join us and the poets live at the celebrated **T. S. Eliot Prize Readings** at the Southbank Centre, London, on Sunday 15 January 2023. Hosted by Ian McMillan and British Sign Language interpreted, readings are simultaneously live streamed to a worldwide audience. Book at bit.ly/eliotprize22sbcreadings
- Read **John Field's authoritative reviews** of every shortlisted title in full at bit.ly/eliot22reviews
- **Sign up to our weekly e-newsletters**, packed with information and insights about all ten shortlisted poets, and specially commissioned features and giveaways. To stay up to date with Prize news, subscribe at bit.ly/eliotprizesubscribenews
- Follow the T. S. Eliot Prize on **Twitter, Instagram and Facebook**: @tseliotprize
- Who is your pick for this year's T. S. Eliot Prize? Share ideas at **T. S. Eliot Prize shortlist shared reading events** such as the one run by the Poetry School at Southbank Centre, London, held on the day of the Eliot Prize Readings (see poetryschool.com) – or you could set up your own!

Marsh thistle

A gong sounds in the dark temple of the earth
and now, upwards, the thistle comes.
Nothing sweet about this consonance
of purple clusters, this spray of green swords.
Nothing sweet but every part of it a soul:
rising high above the soft earth between sea
and stream, in the farm's hinterland.

And what soul is it that embellishes the sky
with battlements and bristling lances?
What part of a human soul is this thistle?
The brave and fearful, lonely, frost-hardy,
short-lived, adamant, stubborn, broken heart
and bold heart and contradiction of spine:
all the wounded, and wounding, glory of enduring,

all the solitude of marrying a place.
Our native Holocene thistle, our unpalatable,
fen-meadow, head-above-the-crowd thistle,
nectar-rich candelabra rampant with bees,
our crackle and frost of threats, our September
wind-bloomed plume of thistledown,
connoisseur of spiny resurrection: it sews

its sons and daughters back into tap-root
in the sinking ground. Alone and fiercely, it breaks
the unmown meadow with its deep rooting
and thistle-intent. This is
the thing done and logged among the reeds,
this is the foot-in-water birth of the place-present.
And then the upwardness begins again.

2022

T. S. Eliot

T. S. ELIOT
PRIZE
SHORTLIST

Wilder

JEMMA
BORG



from *Wilder* by Jemma Borg
(Pavilion / Liverpool University
Press, 2022). © The author.
liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk
(search Pavilion Poetry)



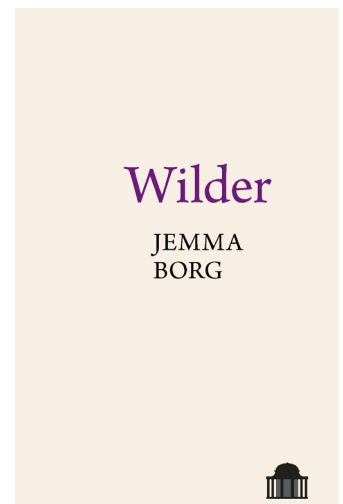
Canis minor: directions for a very short play

Enter: Fina, moon-dog,
in a flash of upturned tail.
Woof on the terrace.

Smaller woof follows: Lula,
kissing hind legs of Fina
who offers paw.

Fina, missile-nosed, exits right.
Lula mooches after
with her collar of diamanté stars.

Tiny paws heard among fallen berries.



from *Wilder* by Jemma Borg
(Pavilion / Liverpool University
Press, 2022). © The author.
liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk
(search Pavilion Poetry)

Thaw

The northern bear is losing its clear white mind.
A creaking at springtime. An almost violet light.
Then the paw of a salivating glacier
between two mountains in the Svalbard heat,

thunderous blooms of red snow, mosquitoes
feeding on the moisture of eyeballs. The discovery
of *zinc, uranium, gold*, and their publicising.
An unravelling of *moss, lichen, reindeer, caribou*,

humans, cod, seal, walrus, and the land births
a giant's thumbprint in thermokarst,
delivering up mammoth and bison bones, methane
that burns with a purple and yellow flame.

The waves of a swollen sea find their way
through three houses and they take down
the middle house, they breathe its pots and pans,
its red and blue buckets and broken lengths of wood

in and out of the cavity
as though it were a lost tooth: slosh of debris
through the gap, corrugations of roof in the gum.
'That noise you hear out there – fizzing and cracking,'

the ship's captain says, as he cups his ear to the wind,
'that noise is the end of the world.'
Sonic boom, *ak-ak-ak* as the calved ice turns on its axis,
then it surrenders to the ocean in silence.

Wilder

JEMMA
BORG



from *Wilder* by Jemma Borg
(Pavilion / Liverpool University
Press, 2022). © The author.
liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk
(search Pavilion Poetry)