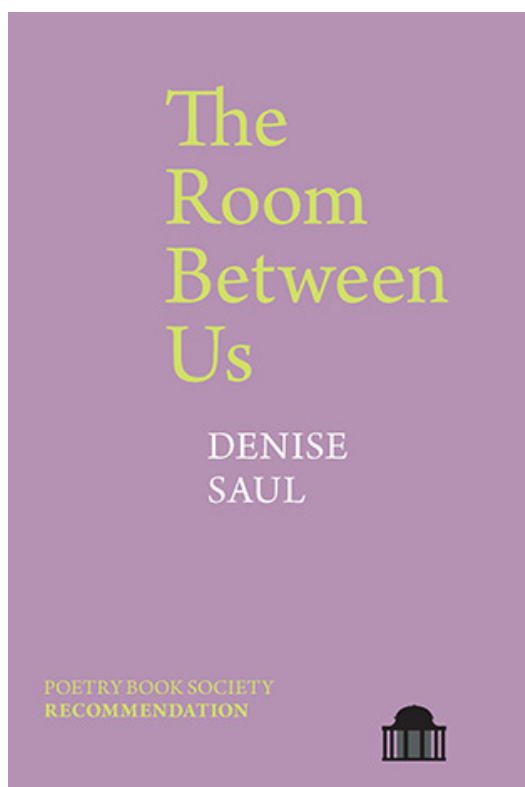


READERS' NOTES

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.



The Room Between Us by Denise Saul What reviewers say



The Room Between Us (Pavilion / Liverpool University Press, 2022) by Denise Saul.
liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk
(search Pavilion Poetry)

'In the title poem of *The Room Between Us*, Denise Saul strikes her minimalist, eerie, unforgettable note. A true stylist, Saul is somehow both delicate and bold, her prose poems studied, her lines impeccable. [...] As in a fairytale, language is power and sometimes withholding is the only power left to the patient, "The women hid their tongues when men did not listen to them." Like Lilith in Eden, Saul doesn't name like a coloniser, she listens, her silences are powerful.' – **Martina Evans**, *The Irish Times*

'The book explores the ways families go on interacting with each other when language fails, collapses or is rendered insufficient. [...] As the collection develops, we become aware of how bodily agency, a looming sense of frustration and hope, all work together to complicate individualism [...] Silence is part of the caregiving experience. The gaps or spaces between lines, horizontally and vertically, are used to build boundaries between body and language. Some poems in the collection follow other experiences of loss: the death of a parent and sibling. In *The Room Between Us*, what is said and unsaid also invokes a close connection with nature and sound.'

– **Poetry Book Society Summer Bulletin**

Experimental in its use of voice, ellipsis and elegiac prose poetry, *The Room Between Us* offers a poignant narrative of love and grief, of speech recovery and of silence, capturing the unspeakable and inconsolable across physical, temporal and emotional spaces.'

– **Jennifer Wong**, *The Poetry Review*

Denise Saul

Denise Saul lives in Surrey. She is the author of two pamphlets: *White Narcissi* (flipped eye, 2007), a Poetry Book Society Pamphlet Choice; and *House of Blue* (Rack Press, 2012), a PBS Pamphlet Recommendation. She is a past winner of The Poetry Society's Geoffrey Dearmer Prize and a Fellow of The Complete Works. Denise holds a PhD in Creative Writing (poetry) from the University of Roehampton. She received an ACE Grant for the Arts Award for the delivery of her video poem collaborative project, *Silent Room: A Journey of Language* (see silent-room.net). *The Room Between Us* is Denise's debut collection. *Denise Saul photo: Karolina Heller*



READERS' NOTES



Discussion ideas

- In *The Room Between Us*, Denise Saul tells the story of a mother's illness and subsequent aphasia*, and a daughter's ongoing role as carer. What are the limitations or possibilities of language for a patient or for a poet in 'Clopidogrel'?
*Aphasia is when a person has difficulty with their language or speech. It's usually caused by damage to the left side of the brain (for example, after a stroke). Clopidogrel is an antiplatelet medicine. It prevents platelets (a type of blood cell) from sticking together and forming a dangerous blood clot. Definitions from nhs.com
- Are you a person – or do you know a person – who collects stones or crystals, as in 'Stone Altar'? What drives you or them to do that, do you think? What are the qualities of chalk? What are those of kyanite? What might they represent in a poem that gestures towards mourning?
- 'No-one receives what they truly want'. Do you agree?
- Is 'Golden Grove' a public or a private utterance? Would it work as a poem read at a memorial service?

Writing prompt

- Choose a stone or a crystal and research its meaning (however much or little you believe those meanings). Write a poem about the stone, connecting it to someone for whom you have strong feelings.

Find out more

Other books by Denise Saul

House of Blue (Rack Press, 2012)

White Narcissi (flipped eye publishing, 2007)

See also: denisesaul.co.uk

If you liked Denise Saul's work, try...

- Pascale Petit
- Jay Bernard
- Rachel Long

About the T. S. Eliot Prize

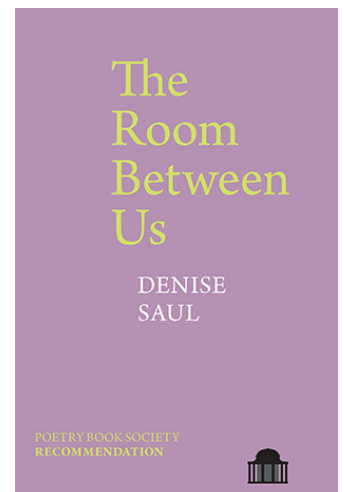
The T. S. Eliot Prize for Poetry, awarded annually to the author of the best new collection of poetry published in the UK and Ireland, was inaugurated in 1993 to celebrate the Poetry Book Society's 40th birthday and honour its founding poet. Since 2016, the Prize has been supported and run by the T. 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** 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!

Clopidogrel

I was talking about the doctor or you were. I can't recall who spoke first even though I said *clopidogrel* and you said *cabbage*. In the afternoon, you mentioned *cardigan* and did not budge from this word.

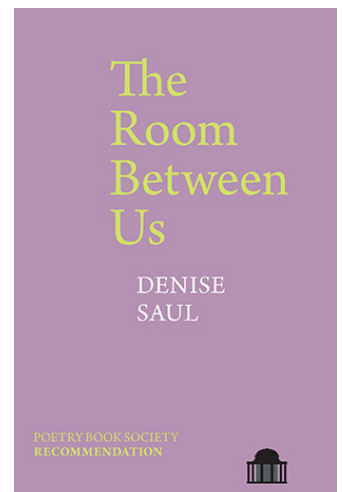


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Stone Altar

I am not sure how the stone travelled
from British Guiana but the story goes
my mother brought it to England to remind her
of a passing like the way one remembers
the flight of a bird by keeping its feather.
What I thought was limestone was chalk
passed down from grandmother Frances
found among other stones in a black handbag
pushed to the back of a cabinet.
That autumn I asked my sister to tell me about
the stone when I sifted through the possessions.
When chalk gave away some dust, she held it
up to the light and told me about
other things in a world of decay.
It seemed easy enough for her to
wipe away the dust from her fingers.
No-one receives what they truly want.
It took me a while to understand all of this
when I placed the chalk on an altar
next to blue kyanite stones I collected.



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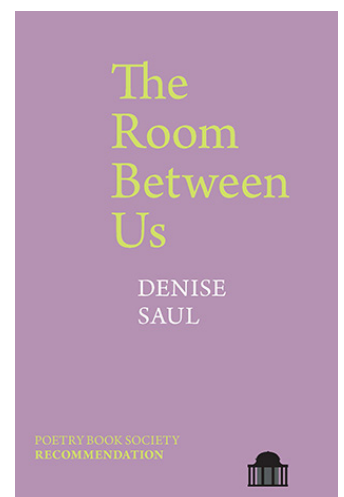


Golden Grove

i.m. Aubrey

Unbearable as night from which sleep comes,
you are everywhere at once: in the wind
on sunken earth in stilling water.
I carry your heavy urn to Golden Grove
where tamarind trees emerge as woods.

The dream holds back day from night.
And you, a wanderer, could not wait
to leave rain behind in our city.
You will now become a thousand things:
scent of jasmine salted air troubling light.



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