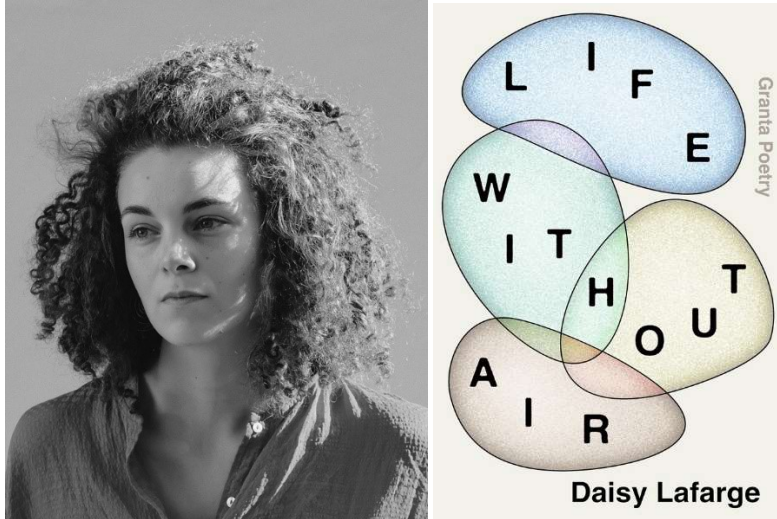


Life Without Air **by Daisy Lafarge**



Daisy Lafarge was born in Hastings and studied at the University of Edinburgh. Her debut novel, *Paul*, is forthcoming from Granta Books. She has published two pamphlets of poetry: *understudies for air* (Sad Press, 2017) and *capriccio* (SPAM Press, 2019), and her visual work has been exhibited in galleries such as Tate St Ives and Talbot Rice Gallery. She has received an Eric Gregory Award and a Betty Trask Award, and was runner-up in the 2018 Edwin Morgan Poetry Award. Daisy is currently working on *Lovebug* – a book about infection and intimacy – for a practice-based PhD at the University of Glasgow. *Life Without Air* is her first collection of poetry.

Reviews

'When Louis Pasteur observed the process of fermentation, he noted that, while most organisms perished from lack of oxygen, some were able to thrive as 'life without air'. In this capricious, dreamlike collection, characters and scenes traverse states of airlessness, from suffocating relationships and institutions, to toxic environments and ecstatic asphyxiations.

Both compassionate and ecologically nuanced, *Life Without Air* bridges poetry and prose to interrogate the conditions necessary for survival.' (description via Poetry Book Society)

'Daisy's Lafarge's *Life Without Air* is a whip-smart, sonically gorgeous exploration of the personal, cultural, and historical ties that bind us in literally and figuratively toxic relationships' (Rae Armantrout)

mineral intimacy

unabashedly love
the minerals of you / I
always was a wind-fuckèd

gull for the White Cliffs pressed
hard and lithic between the lower elements
of yr lips / When u flay me w/ bracken its lust
is pre-floriferous / I used to sit awake in the beetling
dark to watch yr erosion 'til I stared so long tht fickle hair
fell deciduous 'round my shoulders & when I looked away my
lashes wer caught in yr layers & tore clean off like the stripping of bark /
Now prt of me's filed in yr endless strata & the wind combs hotly my nkd eyes

false alarm air

I once passed a high-rise
as an alarm began to sound. for a while,
there was no movement, and then an elderly lady
emerged from the front door, flapping across the lawn
in a single white towel, she was naked otherwise, still
dripping from her shower, a sea-green bottle of detergent
in hand. each of her limbs a sprig of pale lavender, protruding
in a gesture of genteel and outmoded frailty. we stared at
the building, its indifferent gaze, as the siren cut out quick.
the towel billowed round her body, a flag
to safer days. I glimpsed the podzol
belly, the mildew thighs. I was about to walk on
when she held out her hand, turned two eyes of cracked
china, and said: one day I will know how it feels
to haul around a body of rotting flowers, to let memory
chew holes in my mind like maggots. then she laughed, and started
to sing a song whose words were lost to the wall
of a younger alarm, just beginning to teethe

the willows on the common are still on fire

the willows on the common are still on fire.
she lives in a combustible North.
memories, the engines
she doesn't want, keep firing blanks
at significance.
in the obsolete commons of crayons
and tarmac
children who resolve too soon to never
play with matches end
up setting themselves alight
with fervour or
goodwill. she keeps a sequin

in her palm; she knows
the sequin
is a girl seed,
a time capsule that must
be artificial, disc-like enough
to withstand its own heat

Discussion Ideas

- What do you make of the vocabulary of 'Mineral Intimacy', its mixture of text-speak abbreviations and archaic soundings out of '-ed' suffixes such as 'fuckèd', 'lookèd'? How does the shape of the poem build up? How does the poem contrast the eternal and the eroding? Is love more like a stone or a plant?
- What does 'podzol' mean in 'False Alarm Air'? If you don't know, speculate before you look it up. Is this a poem meant to be read by 'elderly' ladies?
- Is the alarm that sounds at the beginning of the poem a false alarm? What is it alerting people to? What about the second, younger alarm?
- 'the willows on the common are still on fire' was commissioned by Sean Edwards for the catalogue accompanying his exhibition *Undo Things Done* at the 2019 Venice Biennale – more details and a film here - <https://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/sean-edwards-undo-things-done-wales-venice-biennale-2019-video-interview>. How does the poem relate to the exhibition?
- What are the words common / commons doing in this poem?

Other books by Daisy Lafarge

understudies for air (Sad Press, 2017)
capriccio (SPAM Press, 2019)

If you liked Daisy Lafarge, try ...

- Rachael Allen
- Amy Acre
- Fran Lock

Daisy Lafarge online

[Daisy on the Eric Gregory from the Poetry School](#)