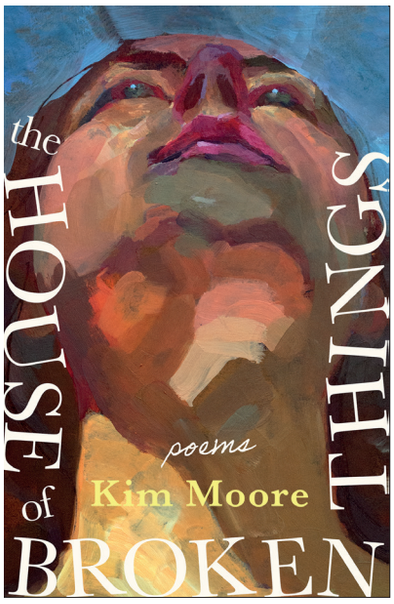
T. S. ELIOT PRIZE 2026 READERS' NOTES

The T. S. Eliot Prize 2026 Readers' Notes offer a selection of poems from each of the ten exciting collections on our Shortlist, plus reviews, reading suggestions, and a writing prompt or two for those inspired to respond creatively. We hope the Readers' Notes will aid your deeper reading as an individual, with friends, or within a book group or writing workshop. English teachers: if you're preparing your students for any Unseen Poem papers, why not hone their skills on this year's Shortlist? And don't forget to check out the T. S. Eliot Prize Young Critics Scheme.

2026
T. S. Eliot
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The House of Broken Things (Corsair Poetry, 2026) by Kim Moore.
www.littlebrown.co.uk

On *The House of Broken Things*

'[Kim Moore] excels at hooking in her readers, balancing effortlessness with emotional weight. She then commands attention by fusing seriousness, surprise and subtle humour. These qualities coexist brilliantly in the three-part poem 'The Trimesters'. "[D]on't be angry at the ways your body betrays you, the sneeze / and what comes after", she warns in the first part; and in the third: "The midwife starts to pull at the placenta / as if it's a stubborn weed." As Moore knows, a sense of humour is a precious commodity in the testing realm of parenthood, which can seem a place of visceral fear [...] The speaker has also had to learn to multitask, sustaining attachments in a surprisingly wide array of directions. In 'On Reading Chris Kraus's *I Love Dick* with my Dead Ex-Boyfriend' [...] a mother's love comprises ghosts, grey areas and the memory of people we used to be: "You hug me before you go, then lie down / on the road, arms splayed as if you're cheering, / looking over your shoulder like an owl." Looking back on her pregnancy, the poet recalls the teeth-grindingly annoying strangers she came up against, "when people say *get your sleep now* and *you think it's hard now*" or "someone else mentions fucking ginger". She must "learn to smile / when a man says, *well, my wife hardly showed!*"

Yet, despite these frustrations, her love for her child is not diminished: "My life as refuge, my life as harbour, / my life for yours each time", she writes in the collection's final lines.' – **Jade Cuttle, *The Observer***

"The Black Notices' lists, without comment, some of Europe's unidentified murdered women and girls: "No sign of any clothes. / Hungry when she died. May have been thirteen." No wonder being the mother of a daughter is so fraught with guilt and fear: "this was the bargain, / the promise I made to keep you safe from harm, / my life as refuge, my life as harbour, / my life for yours each time."

Countering the darkness are the writers who bring Moore endless solace, whether it's Anne Sexton imagined as a doula, a cheeky address to Wordsworth ("Dear William, if I can / call you that"), or 'Reading Keats', which fuses the Romantic with the much-missed Irish-American poet Michael Donaghy.' – **Suzi Feay, *The Financial Times***

About the poet

Kim Moore's collection *All the Men I Never Married* (Seren Books, 2021) won the 2022 Forward Prize for Best Collection. Her first collection *The Art of Falling* (Seren Books, 2015) won the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize. She is the author of the non-fiction titles *What the Trumpet Taught Me* (Smith|Doorstop, 2022) and *Are You Judging Me Yet? Poetry and Everyday Sexism* (Seren Books, 2023). She is a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at Manchester Metropolitan University and Deputy Programme Leader of the MA and MFA in Creative Writing.

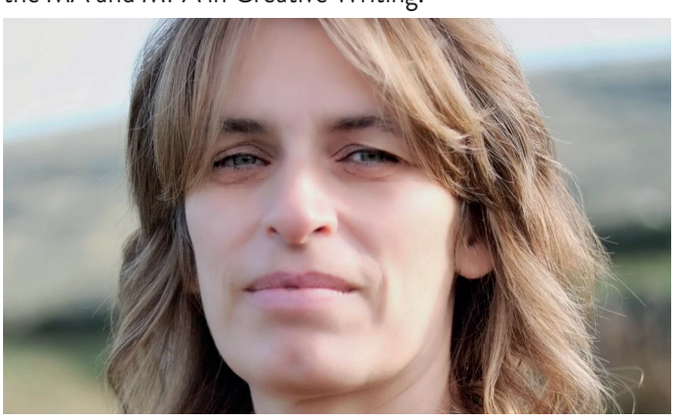


Photo © Rebecca Higson

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What do you think?

- What do you make of the phrase 'I want to float in water / like a murdered girl' in 'Giving Birth With Anne Sexton'? **Here's the Sexton poem** mentioned in Moore's poem.
- **In her T. S. Eliot Prize video, Moore talks about confessionalism** as a genre, and the mixed cultural response it receives. Is 'Giving Birth With Anne Sexton' a confessional poem? What is it confessing?
- Is there a point (or points) in 'Advice From My Family' when the poem turns, or its mood changes? Why might that be?
- There are five poems called 'The House of Broken Things' in this collection of the same name. The one included here is the last one. How might a house tell you 'what to do'? Does 'house' mean the same as 'home' in this poem, as 'family'?

Reply in writing

Is there a literary or historical figure that you conjure back to life to accompany you in your day-to-day activities – whether these are as life-changing as giving birth or as run-of-the-mill as going to the supermarket? What challenges do they offer you? Write the poem to find out.

Find out more

Other work by Kim Moore

The Art of Falling (Seren Books, 2015)
All The Men I Never Married (Seren Books, 2021)
Are You Judging Me Yet? Poetry and Everyday Sexism (Seren Books, 2023)

On screen

View the **Manchester Poetry Library launch of *The House of Broken Things* on YouTube** with Kim Moore reading from the collection and in conversation with Malika Booker.

If you like Kim Moore's work, try...

- Helen Mort
- Hannah Lowe
- Liz Berry

About the T. S. Eliot Prize

The T. S. Eliot Prize, which celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2023, is awarded annually to the best new poetry collection published in the UK and Ireland. The Prize was founded by the Poetry Book Society in 1993 to celebrate the PBS's 40th birthday and to honour its founding poet. The T. S. Eliot estate has provided the prize money since the Prize's inception, and the T. S. Eliot Foundation took over the running of the Prize in 2016, following Inpress Books' acquisition of the PBS. It is the most prestigious poetry prize in the world, and the only major poetry prize judged purely by established poets. The judges for the 2026 Prize are Leontia Flynn (Chair), Ishion Hutchinson and Daisy Lafarge. For more information, visit **tseliot.com/prize**

T. S. Eliot Prize 2026: join in

- Join our shortlisted poets live at the celebrated **T. S. Eliot Prize Readings** at the Southbank Centre, London, on Sunday 17 January 2027. Hosted by Ian McMillan and British Sign Language interpreted, readings are simultaneously live streamed to a worldwide audience. Book for in-person tickets at **bit.ly/eliot26readings** or for the live stream at **bit.ly/eliot26livestream**
- Look out for the latest additions to our amazing **video archive of interviews and poems** with Eliot Prize poets on our YouTube channel: **bit.ly/tseliotprizeyoutube**
- **John Field's authoritative reviews** of all the shortlisted titles will be published on the T. S. Eliot Prize website over the coming months. Read them online at **bit.ly/eliot26shortlist**
- Browse the brilliant **Writers' Notes series**, devised by our partner the Poetry School, in which Eliot Prize shortlisted poets reflect on the writing of their nominated collections. Visit **poetryschool.com** and search 'writers' notes' –and look out for new additions by poets shortlisted for the T. S. Eliot Prize 2026
- **Sign up to our weekly newsletters**, packed with information and insights about all ten shortlisted poets, and specially commissioned features and giveaways. Subscribe at **tseliot.com/prize**
- Follow the T. S. Eliot Prize on **Instagram**, **Bluesky**, **X** and **Facebook**: @tseliotprize

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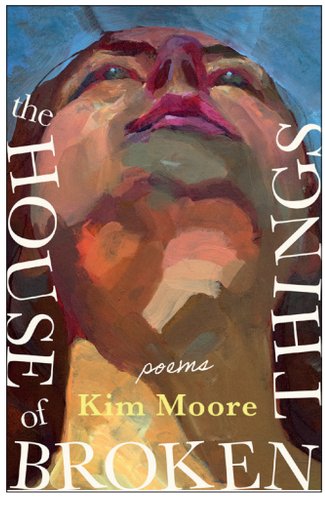
Giving Birth with Anne Sexton

The corridor is long and I can barely walk,
but I've been told to follow so I do, bent over,
one careful step and then another, to enter
the room of bright lights. There's a woman
with Anne Sexton's face sitting in the corner smoking.
She's unimpressed by pain but turns the lights out
without me asking. She reads her poem
'Letter Written on a Ferry While Crossing Long Island Sound'
and when she gets to the bit about the nuns
rising up into the air she flings her arms wide
and shouts *see how my dark girls sally forth*
and even though I'm not a nun,
and she's not really talking to me, I feel loved
and the baby shifts inside me.

I tell Anne all I want is to float in water
like a murdered girl. She says this is a good idea
and turns the taps on to fill the birthing pool.
Steam fills the air. My husband is a different kind
of species. I know he can't see Anne, ghost of a ghost
that she is, figment of a figment that I've made her.

I take off all my clothes. Now Anne and I
aren't strangers any more. Above the water
there are tiny lights made out to look like stars.
Anne climbs in beside me, starts to talk about confession
as performance. I think I understand. I think that I might die.
I tell her about my dream of being split in half,
each side of my body sewn up neatly
to form a seal, and the great weight of absence,
which teaches me there are worse things
than being broken.

Anne smooths back my hair
and starts to whisper in my ear about haunting,
about misunderstanding, about the blackest air.
My body shudders in a spell of its own making.
Afterwards I hold a baby girl against my breast.
The woman with Anne Sexton's face stitches me
back together. Just one of those things
we women do for one another.



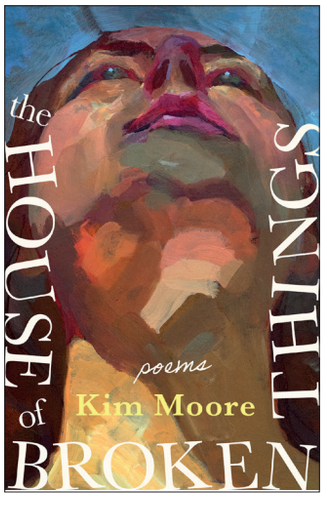
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Advice from My Family

My mum says don't walk home in the dark, don't run on your own, don't do anything on your own. My dad says if you listened to your mum, you wouldn't step outside without an armed escort. My sister says do you remember that panic alarm we had to carry round when we were seventeen? My mum says wasn't that after the armed robbery at the pub you worked at? My sister says no, the panic alarm was before that, it was because we had to get the bus to college. My sister says dad always used to say you two don't need anybody because you've got each other which I point out is opinion not advice. She says what about when he said if you can read, you'll never be bored. Dad says I've always told you never be a bully, but if someone hits you, hit them harder, and to be a good liar you need a good memory. My mum chips in with make sure your name is on the mortgage and never leave your dirty washing in a cupboard under the stairs. My dad says I've always said never drink so much you can't get yourself home. Mum says don't split the bill on a date, the man should pay. In fact, women shouldn't pay for anything. This leads on to her advice about how to leave relationships. She says if I ever split up with your dad, I'd leave him with one knife, one fork, one spoon, one plate, one cup. If he wants to entertain any body, he can get his own stuff.



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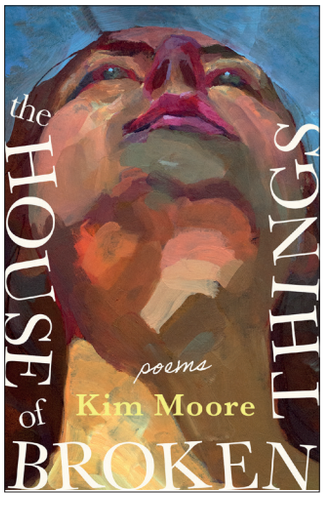
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The House of Broken Things

The House of Broken Things is twenty years away
and moving further still. Was it ever in that field,
the motorway a distant hum? Was it always
halfway up a hill? The records show that love
was never named, love was not allowed to speak
or show its face, but it did live inside the house,
crept into those that stayed there, despite themselves.

Jumps in conversations, fists through doors.
A table halfway through a window that could almost
be art. Flies gathered in the corners and beat
themselves to death against the walls.
Each one a pet of ours. We gave them names
like Shame and Secret, like Be-Careful.
A mirror image of that house lives inside me too.
See how the house tells me what to do,
shapes my marriage, splits my life in two.



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