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An Earth Day-inspired  
collection of poems by the students,  
faculty and staff of Wellesley College



## Director's Note

The Raining Poetry project started early this spring, with a call to the community for poems about the earth and plans for painting the poems on concrete all over campus. We were thrilled with the response to our call: more than 30 beautifully crafted poems from students, faculty, and staff arrived in the Newhouse inbox. In collaboration with Mass Poetry, a non-profit organization devoted to the practice of poetry, Professor Dan Chiasson (English Department), and Suzanne Langridge (Paulson Ecology of Place Initiative), we were poised to begin.

Now the Wellesley campus is as empty as I've ever seen it. Big signs at every entrance announce "Warning COVID-19" to ward off would-be walkers and picnickers. But, look around and you see that the campus is humming with life. In a cold spring, buds line every branch, waiting for a burst of warmth, the rain creates ever-expanding vernal pools, grasses thread their way through earth. Although many of you cannot be on campus, you can envision it through the poems that you are about to read. They are your gift to the community.

— Eve Zimmerman,  
Director of the Newhouse Center for the Humanities

The Newhouse Center gratefully acknowledges Mass Poetry and Wellesley's Department of Communications & Public Affairs for their untiring support of the Raining Poetry project.



## **Earth is Liberty, Earth is Freedom**

Searching to see, to see to learn  
We twirl like the many butterflies of the trees floating; so graceful is  
the journey  
Of returning to the Earth.

Together, Earth beings signal the passing of time.  
Recreate me into a butterfly  
Pollinate the world with unity and respect for all life

My soul is for this land to keep.  
Please lay me down amongst the leaves, that fluttered from the  
mapou tree.  
Honor the land that has birthed thee.  
Ayiti pap peri

— Frannie Adams '21



## Love[r] in the Moment (Alternative Title: WE-AR-TH)

I nibble your arm because  
you hug me like I'm your favorite hot  
sauce and unleash my hunger for your smooth gingerroot skin  
I kiss your arms, for being the comfort  
That holds me tight like warm soil clinging to my skin to forget its  
concrete erasure,  
The way it rises to meet our soles, souls of the earth.  
My lips thank your hands  
for being the bringer of  
thin breeze warm sunlight seen peering up  
through green leaves...abundance.

Tracing your fingers,  
vessels of pleasure.  
Lips massage on your neck,  
holder of kind voice of encouragement.  
Kisses on the hills of your cheeks  
that greet the sun of our energy rising  
through my lips.  
And when my gaze caresses your body,  
moon of my tide,  
we smile together as love's vine ties our eyes.

Living in the moment  
Cold has no place here  
Greed is the seed that finds no soil from which to capitalize  
So breath deep, sigh with me, relief: we still believe  
that ginger and hot sauce  
Sunny breeze, green trees and  
Luminous galaxies twinkling good night  
are still of the earth as much as we,  
Huggers of trees, we,  
Souls of earth, we, here-hear-are-earth.

## March 1st

I was watching a clarity of light  
clothe the naked arm of a branch,  
& I was not unhappy. Spring was coming—  
with the rain, with then  
the wet, enveloping summer—  
each year a little early, a little more,  
but—for now—not *now*.  
For now, I am watching the light fall  
outside, bright & late  
on a winter afternoon.

— Matilda Berke '21

## Untitled

I burnt guilt and shame in the desert.  
I threw them into a secret fire I had built with dried wood and  
    decaying cactus.  
The sparks flew up  
and disappeared into the deep blue night.  
The last bits of white hot wood I stomped out  
and buried in the sand.  
The same sand my tears had fallen on, the same sand I had bled  
    my pain into, the same earth that held me  
And woke me,  
when the stars melted with the morning sun.  
The same sun that named me, touched me  
with it's golden light.  
I have emptied myself into the rocks and sand,  
into the wind, into the heavens.  
To them I have whispered, spoken, screamed, and let go my  
    secrets. Through them,  
I have found myself.  
Again.

— Meg Brandt '22



## **Red Willow**

Red willow bends along Rio Grande, low to riverbed, stark light at  
January noon—  
we wait our time along this earth, cottonwoods bend and sway,  
their lasting buds  
yellow silhouetted against a bare blue sky—

Nothing but trees, branch, heaven, canyon bed expanding—the  
crack in this earth  
made not by water, simply by earth shifting, plates crackling--water  
finds the spirit  
level—all beings seek equilibrium—

It takes a millennium of searching to see the glory in one  
cottonwood tree.

— Heather Corbally Bryant  
Writing Program

## **Scientific Reasoning**

The astronomy student stares up and counts  
until they can't anymore. It's an age old dilemma:  
how can you calculate the expiration of beauty?

~

In another sky, the time thief sleeps with eyes open.  
No one knows when a star dies until it's too late,  
space dust dancing, unseen.

~

I don't know how to write about the Earth  
without praying for it.

— Claire Cheek '21

## **Notes from BISC-108: Environmental Horticulture**

- a tree still grows after its heartwood has burned
  - awe is a sap-sucking aphid
- only scarred seeds can sprout morning glories
  - god is a Hormone
- I have eaten / the ovaries / that were in / the ice box
  - the answer is eight-legged and better off alive
- bananas sweeten slower in solitude
  - there is no difference between persistence and preservation
- sometimes, we have to go dormant to survive winter
  - a rose has no thorn

— Mila Cuda '22

## Untitled

In this transience, is it the same scenery?  
If the leaves are still burning,  
And grass becomes  
Rumpelstiltskin's gold  
If the sun is still shying,  
And bare branches are laced with crystals  
If the birds are still trilling,  
And deers' antlers are distinct from the trees  
If the lake is still shining,  
And the songs on the steps start with new keys  
Will our sights be the same in this brevity?

— Grace Deng '23

## Untitled

I love the way  
winter reveals  
that beneath their  
sunfed blankets  
trees are constantly  
reaching out  
towards me  
towards sunlight  
towards the center  
connecting us all

— Kelsey Dunn '21

## **Drowning Stars**

water is perhaps the most human thing in its longing  
even the heaviest parts of the ocean remember the swell of the  
moon  
they fashion living, floating satellites in her image

— Ada Eke '23

## **EARTH AND NATURE**

1. the earth + the womb  
the earth and the womb are the  
same — cherish them and always  
seek permission

2. the Earth is our  
Church

### **3. the sound of you**

...alarms are unsettling, i respond better  
to the tender allure of nature, the  
brilliance of the morning star, the  
exuberance of chirping birds, the pitter  
patter of raindrops, the aroma of wet  
earth, the sway of leaves and the  
freshness of mist, i respond better to  
the sound of you.

— Liseli Fitzpatrick  
Africana Studies Department



## Untitled

can't you hear them whispering, the leaves?  
stay a moment, book-beaten scholar, and you will  
their words fall around you like rain - petrichor  
chemical syllables caught in the breath of fresh-cut grass  
they slip through the soil beneath your feet - earthworms  
or song - a humming

loaf in my anemonied meadows, it sings  
amble my wooded streams  
come home before the inundation ends  
and makes me a harmony of misremembered dreams

— Kate Habich '22

## Untitled

I'm almost there

Does it matter where?

Through the mist and the fog—

Through the frost and the thaw—

Look,

I'm almost there

— Maya Igarashi '20

## Untitled

Now is when I start to feel,  
Like something waking up, stirring  
When thick clouds crack open, revealing blue sky  
And I have to stop walking, stand in place  
As the sun presses into my cheeks, taking a minute while they thaw.

And on my trek home I feel everything around me  
This profound largeness and smallness  
Seeing for days, miles, years around me  
Measured in fading winters and barely-cresting springs.

— Lily Jackson '20

## **Beauty on Earth**

rain makes a mirror  
of the world; shoes shatter trees  
hat brims hold the sky

— Hazel Kevlihan '22

## **Untitled**

We are three-day butterflies  
In the expanse of geologic time.  
How strange it is to  
Live so little, and  
Feel so much

— Doris Li '20

## **The Last Hummingbird**

A single hummingbird  
Plumper than all the rest  
Dancing around a late bloom.  
I knew it would be the last  
So I took in the feeder  
And the sculpture welcoming them each spring  
And I prepared  
To be alone.

— Barbara Lynn-Davis  
Department of Art

## **straw-flower**

the smell of green things, long dead -  
but the promise of unknown expansion into being remains potent  
and petrified, here  
in the architecture of days and divisions, slices of time and tissue.  
here is held an untouchable dead dream, made all the more in  
being unreachable,  
even from the stars (glimmering memories that are not our own,  
but illuminating these familiar gone-ness-es and those still  
to come for us)  
the promise of the dead is thus that there are still things left to die.  
in that, there is a still and sparkling emptiness that these leaves once  
filled,  
and there is an untraceable certainty that this earth will be filled  
again  
and in this time, it will overflow the cup -

— Ava Mackay-Smith '20



## Untitled

I've lain down in the tall golden grass a thousand miles from where  
my ancestors lie  
But here, cheek pressed to the heartbeat of the earth, a stomp  
dance in my ear,  
I feel the warm hand of the sun stroking my hair,  
And know they are here with me all the same.

— Emily Magness '21

### **Ode to oxygen.**

So necessary you are,  
Often taken for granted  
With negative two charge but  
So positive as kinetic energy to cause motion,  
so inevitable to live.  
You are Oxygen but should be named Unique.  
I won't know if you are replaced by something else in a different  
Earth,  
But you sure deserve worshiping and praise.

— Mary E. Martínez Núñez '22

## **Waiting in Hurricane María**

I waited each night for your text; I waited  
through class, through meals, through every “Is your family OK?”  
I waited for you to say: “Gracias a Dios estamos bien.”  
When I got your call, I sighed in relief,  
but you did not do the same. You waited...  
for the singing of the coquis to return;  
for the hum of the generators to end  
For the lights to return. For the water to run.  
And, after four months of lines, barren pipes, and darkness,  
you had to learn to stop waiting.

— Zulia Martinez '20

## Energy

I am the dark night sky,  
That holds the shining stars in front of it.  
I am the crashing waves,  
That push a journey forward.  
I am the cold hard ground,  
That shoots the flowers upward.  
I am the rusted key,  
That unlocks the secrets of the world.  
I am the energy,  
That turns the world around.  
I am the start of all beauty,  
That people tend to overlook.  
I put you in front of myself,  
Because you are something special.  
So don't glance over me, or put me down,  
Because without my energy, your beauty wouldn't be found.

— Dominique Mickiewicz '22

I love being hardened to the wind and the cold, persistent air. I love the whispers of the poetry of the seasons as they melt into one another. I love being store-faced academics. I live with ghosts.

— Eve Montie '20

## First Lesson of the Earth

My ancestors tell me to *go slowly* and  
I don't know what they mean, until  
I look up and see that the leaves are browning.

*They were green just a moment ago?*

I blink and again, the branches are dusted in frost.  
The seasons change without my awareness, without intentionality.  
My friend says there are 12 weeks until the end of the semester,  
and I hear nine;  
I'm always speeding ahead of the moment.

My ancestors want me to listen to the trees more. to learn  
my lessons from the earth.

It takes seasons for trees to grow, and still they do.  
When the earth was born, it took billions of years to  
position the continents, billions more to  
fill the oceans and still  
the earth is not done- swallowing a continent here, blooming  
foliage there,  
and still, the earth is not slow;  
She's just doing things in their proper time.

We ask the earth of our needs with immediacy, and she asks us  
*What is the rush?*

— Sarah Nnenna Loveth Nwafor '20

## **LIKE ROOTS**

You seek, but do not want to be found.  
You dig your toes into the Earth  
And cast your eyes down,  
Willing the cool soil to pull you down like roots.

There is no fear of being lost among the dark.  
There is only hope,  
Hope that maybe something beautiful  
Will be born out of your destruction.

— Julianna Poupard '21



## **Lullaby for A Stone at Slievemore**

Did it hurt when you fell from the wall of a ruined house in the  
abandoned village?

When the raven rasped overhead, coarser than imagining, battling  
the wind?

How long have you lain here among the potato rows of history,  
A boat of stone sailing a living bog?

Thank you for sheltering me from the raven's wind.

For letting me hear birdsong.

Here I can stand on you, gently rocking,

Among your fallen neighbors, closer than brothers, I can lean  
gently,

Gently rocking an ancient boat on windy waves.

— Alyssa Robins '22

## **Climate Change**

World on fire - smashed by wind - ravaged by water -  
land lacerated

Cloying coconut turns to  
Salt on my tongue,  
And my blood, desiccated,  
Turns to ash

Off we go  
Intruders, now

Brand new family

Sounds like strangers to me

— Melanie Rumbel '20

## **Queer Coasts**

Queer and enigmatic sea  
The way we are always called to you  
Your voice and passion relayed as you beat into the sandy earth  
You can take us into your riptide  
Not even scared because you made us with pride  
We look at you and see our queerness reflected back  
You are our origin  
Queer, fluid and loved.

— Fost Silver '20

## **Fever**

I see the half-changed tree—colors on one side,  
but not the other, spreading from top to bottom.

Don't the still-green leaves know what's coming?  
Do they want to burn crimson then faint and fall away?

Will the last leaves tremble, waiting for the fever  
to come over them like the Holy Spirit?

Is what overtakes them something akin to love  
that releases joy like a fire shut up in their bones?

What if I press my hands into the bark of this tree?  
Will the fever spread to me?

— Pamela L. Taylor  
Assistant Provost, Institutional Planning & Assessment

## **Garden Snail**

Under vibrant pink hibiscus  
blooms the length of my index  
finger the size of a table  
tennis ball one lonely garden snail  
pulls itself across grey ground to meet  
another the slime it leaves behind  
glittering in afternoon sun.

—Sanjana Thakur '20

## **new day**

the skies open up with a thunder clap to shake the earth  
drops fall as if heaven weeps with despair  
from trees to leaves to other greens  
to the smallest members of nature  
the earth that was tainted  
is washed clean  
crimson stains  
became white  
like as snow  
a new day  
begins

— Lizzie Um '23

## **Spring, Awakening**

When the last of snow dissolves into stale rivulets down drains  
And small droplets of the morning dew slide down smudged  
    window panes  
And gusty April showers dance across the frothing lake  
Upon the heads of daff'dils who from frigid slumber wake —

When the radiator is turned down and steel hearts come to rest  
And the sky is vivid blue and blooming wheat fields sway in zest  
And sailboats unfurl hidden wings, and hoops roll where they May  
Chasing after futures bright and beautiful and gay —

I brush off loose goose down feathers and rush to lift my pen:  
For the cold has gone, sunlight returned, and spring has come  
    again.

— Cheryl Wang '23

## **On a Sunday Morning, We Find**

Cigarette butts, a crumpled Saturday  
detention notice, pistachio shells.

In their indigo black shells,  
mussels cluster along the shore's end.

When we turn our backs to the waves,  
we see graffiti scrawled across the cliff's bare belly.

— Kaitlyn Wang '23



## Untitled

Nature casts herself in darkness  
Just as I prepare to seek  
Some color amongst buds and branches  
Or smallest fluff around a seed  
Never is the truth revealed  
In one glimpse, of what life is  
Swaying, sudden, new or ancient  
Coming from the earth beneath

—Jenn Yang  
Botany Fellow, Botanic Garden/Greenhouse



# Mass Poetry

EVENTS | OUTREACH | MASSPOETRY.ORG

Raining Poetry— a unique public awareness campaign launched by Mass Poetry in 2016 in collaboration with the City of Boston— results in poems appearing on sidewalks when it rains. The Raining Poetry project accomplishes this by stenciling poems onto sidewalks using clear, waterproof paint, causing the text to appear when it rains. Wellesley College’s Newhouse Center for the Humanities solicited these poems for a Raining Poetry installation in recognition of Earth Day 2020. This booklet of poetry honors Mass Poetry’s partnership with the poets of Wellesley College and the Newhouse Center for the Humanities. Learn more about Mass Poetry by visiting [www.masspoetry.org](http://www.masspoetry.org).

