

A POETRY COLLECTION



ANTHOLOGY:  
THE STORY OF US

BY NTU WRAP

# Foreword

---

In 2020, Nottingham Trent University made plans for an extra-curricular programme celebrating reading and writing in the heart of Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature. WRAP, (Writing, Reading and Pleasure), was launched in the middle of the health emergency, bringing students together to explore their creativity at a time of isolation.

In our inaugural term, our WRAP workshops and book clubs looked at some big issues; race, mental health, gender, class, amongst others, inspired by Derek Owusu, our WRAP featured writer. The poems in 'The Story of Us' are open at a time of global constraint, speaking about subjects such as relationships, faith, loss and finding pleasure in the everyday. They are poems which try to make sense of the past, reflect on the present, and ask questions about the future.

These are poems by debut writers, who have done something new. I hope the poems inspire you to pick up a pen yourself, and in the words of Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature, 'build a better world with words'. It is my pleasure to share 'The Story of Us' with you.

Dr Becky Cullen

WRAP Programme Manager

NTU Curated and Created

Instagram: @ntucreated @insta.wrap.notts



# Maps of The Future

---

What does it tell you about human nature when you consider atlases of the past?

Hand drawn,  
meticulously measured,  
fantastically depicted,  
carefully put together.

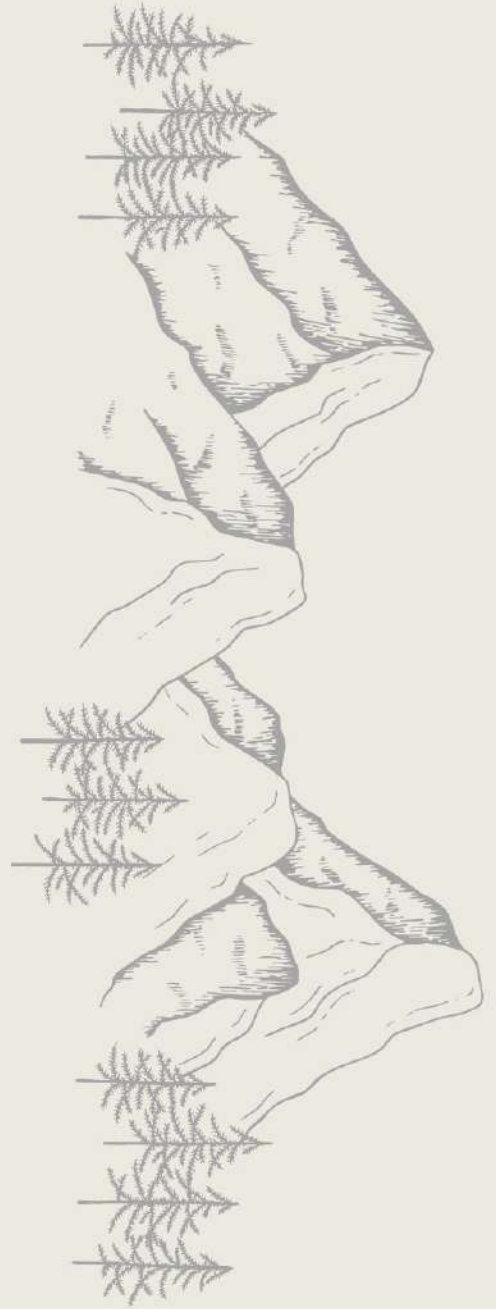
What does it tell you about human spirit, broken in the shadows of technology?

Maps don't look like that anymore - they don't look like art.

When possibilities of the digital are so much simpler, what does it tell you?

Ancient art now forgotten,  
put to bed and euthanised.

We discard those pages upon which many spirits have been broken, roads painted red with blood and sweat are meaningless.

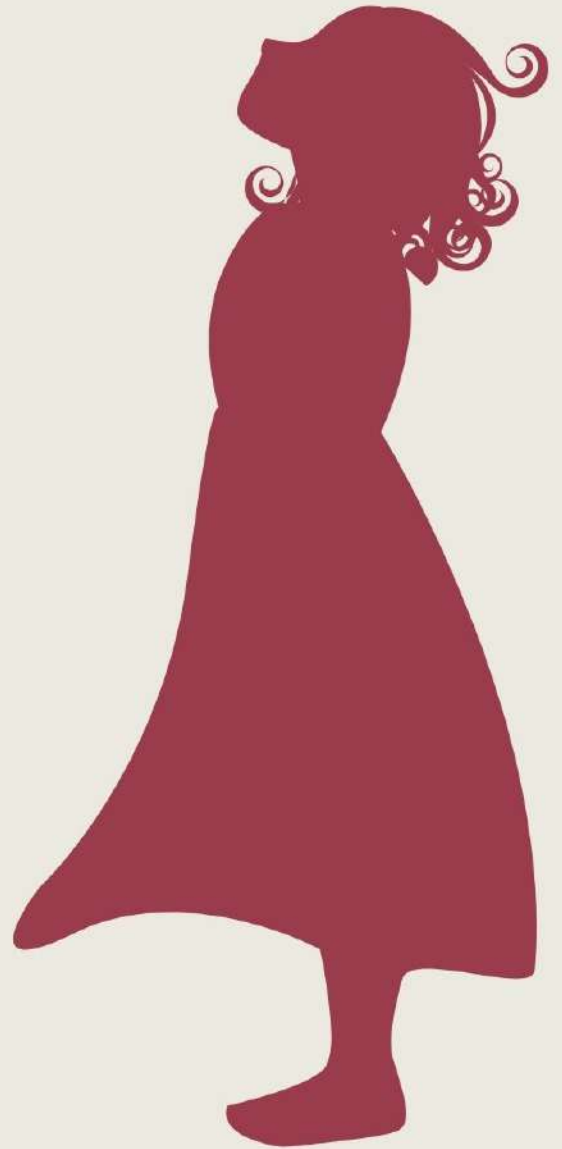


Justyna Cuglewska

# Past



This where it ended,  
and where it also began.  
This is for you, maybe for me.  
So I'll start.  
Once upon a time,  
I was just a little girl.  
I lived, I loved, I laughed,  
and I also cried.  
Maybe that sounded cliché,  
but just like Beyoncé,  
I was there too.  
Weren't we all?  
Travelling through thoughts and emotions,  
I could feel the wind  
and it smelled like hopes and dreams.  
Waking up every day, I asked Him,  
but He never answered.  
Or wait, maybe I didn't listen.  
So once upon a time,  
I wandered  
but was never lost.  
This is where I ended.  
This is where you can also start,  
just like I began.



Munashe Dziva

# KISMET



KISMET... that's what it is!

Had I diverged into a different path,

had I made a different choice

that night, would I have met you?

Would I have noticed you if you walked by?

Is not knowing better, sometimes?

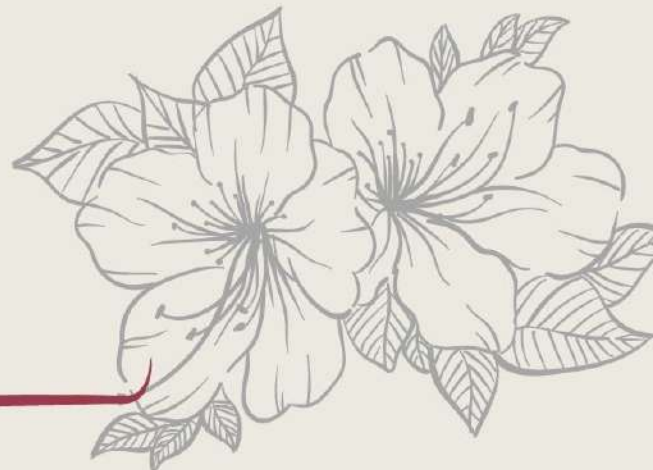
Or have I filled a void I so needed to fill,

with your laughter and smiles?

I still wonder, sometimes, had I made a different choice

would you still find me somehow?

Do we name choices, or does fate take our hand?



Alessandra Leone

# Captured In A Photograph

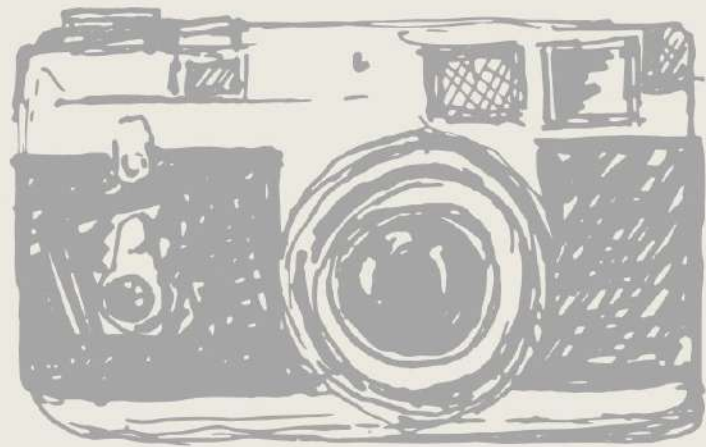
Happiness is captured in a photograph,  
a smile of pearly whites or dull yellow teeth.

A smile of all teeth, some teeth, or no teeth  
is captured in a photograph.

Pain is captured in a photograph,  
the clenching of jaws, forced smiles,  
the deep ache in their beings.  
A soul is lost, crying out to be heard.  
Our eyes are captured in a photograph.

Age is captured in a photograph.  
The lines that hold our story  
arch and curve,  
the sag of our eyes in hard times.  
Our skin is captured in a photograph –

we are captured in a photograph.  
I am stuck in this state,  
in this brass cage,  
a window to freedom taunts me  
as I am frozen in place.  
I am captured in a photograph.



Rebekah Hemmens

# Moving on

I am inflicting pain,  
crying in the nights rain.  
When I look in their eyes  
I still feel their lies,  
penetrating, bruising, distorting.  
How brutalised can one person be?

It's in my bones, on my skin.  
I am no Saint, I cannot be.  
They are still critical of me,  
of what they cannot see.  
But I accept it, accept myself  
I think this is a brave new me.



Andra Tanasescu

# Present

---

Hey Present,  
did you say that little girl was here?  
You must be mistaken!  
Look in the mirror –  
a big girl is standing.  
She, who you told to wander,  
is moving with purpose.  
We can send you photographs,  
so even if we are pretending,  
joke's on you.  
Let me introduce you to Filter,  
you wouldn't like her though.  
But Social Media still approves.  
Anyway, back to the story.  
Did you see how distracted I was?  
That's how it is here.  
But that little girl? Do not worry about her.  
She does not conform,  
she stays true.  
Let me tell you a secret.  
She doesn't know how to tell you, but,  
she met this heartbreaker called Corona,  
and apparently Corona meets these other people too.  
He is the same as Fluenza, you know?  
But she smiles every day,  
and talks about grace.



Munashe Dziva



# Autumn Loss

With the crisp leaves crunching underfoot,  
the autumn breeze surrounds me.

The rose thorns prick at my finger,  
and the early evening looms.

As the darkness begins to rise,  
the name on the cold stone brings peace.

The soft pinks of the rose against the harsh  
grey of stone brings comfort in the cold.



Lucy Bint

# and waits for snow

---

pull away the sheets, strip bare,  
clinging onto pieces, shadows never there,  
imaginary, distant friend -  
never a believable end.

months gone by, lucid dreams,  
swept up in life, suppressing internal screams,  
creeping, anxiety starts -  
vessels broken away from the heart.

closed doors, sail away  
not a soul, remembers that forgotten summer's day,  
finger tips, let go -  
foot falls down and waits for snow.



Hannah Siam Gascoyne

# When I Remember

When I remember it now it sickens me to the core.

When I remember it now I look withdrawn,  
the pain you caused me seemed so trivial at the time.

I wonder why I was so weak, so gullible,  
so blinded with love.

When I remember it now it wasn't love at all.

A cry for help,  
sadness of solitude.

When I go back, the pain I should've felt hits me  
like your palm wide open.

I need to shake off this feeling  
remind myself that I'm a different person now.  
A better person, stronger -  
disinterested in our childish games of the past.

When I remember it now  
I can't remember it exactly.



Justyna Cuglewska

# Fleeting Time

I hear you say good morning,  
and I say it back.

I hear your breathing get heavy  
as you fall back asleep.

Time is fleeting, make the time stop.

I know in a few hours you have to leave,  
but I wish you could stay one more hour with me.

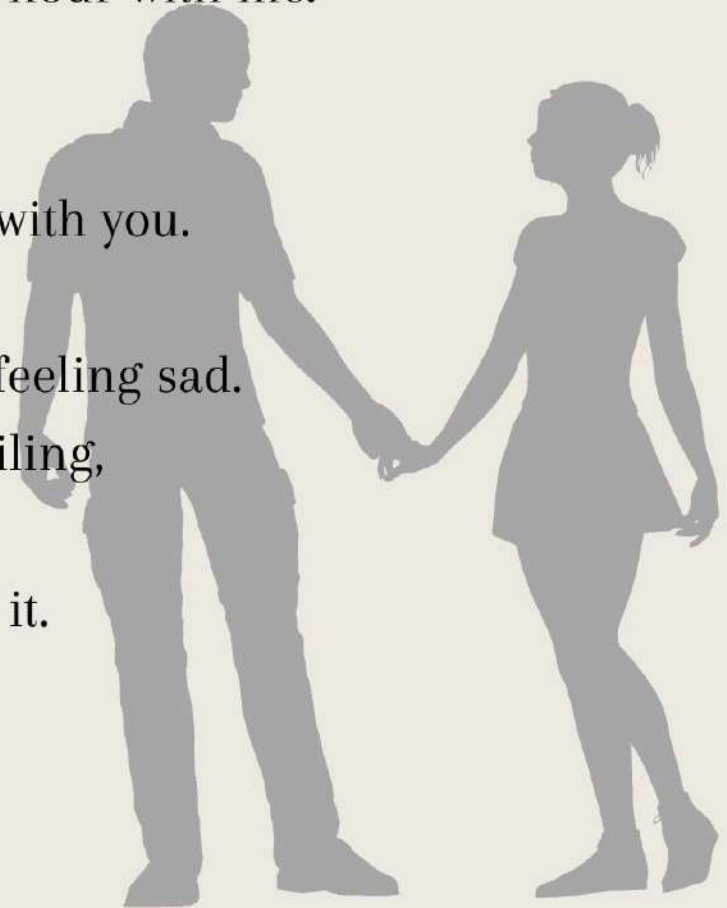
We take a shower, have breakfast,  
and maybe watch the telly too.

I wish I could share one more hug with you.

You start getting ready, and I start feeling sad.  
You don't know it because I am smiling,  
and I hold you very hard.

I leave you at my door, slowly close it.

I don't watch you drive away.



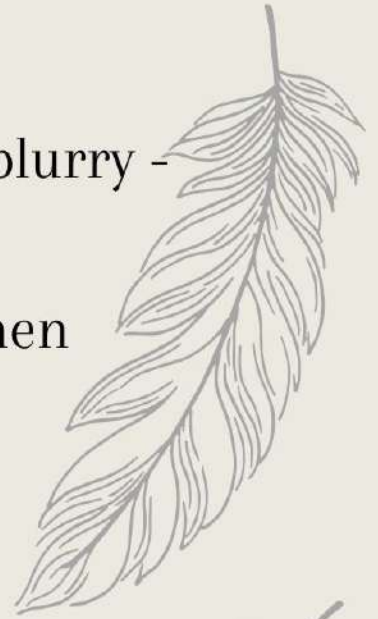
Alessandra Leone

# Memory

When I remember you now the images are all blurry -  
time is not consistent in my mind,  
and the things that were life and death to me then  
do not matter at all.

When I think back,  
I wish it could all be crystal clear to me.  
It would be just as it was.  
It would be as though you are still here.  
It should be as though a film reel is being shown  
in the personal cinema of my mind.  
It is not.

When I remember you now,  
all of my current priorities are on display;  
what you looked like, and not what was said.  
You are almost as clear as day,  
and all the insignificant fights have faded away.



Lucy Bint

# Goodbye 2020, Hello 2021

Seconds go by,  
I sit here –  
my page bare like the street outside my window,  
an abandoned road.

Minutes go by, I still sit here – the shelves still bare,  
grabbing hands and impatient foot tapping,  
I need this and this  
but I don't need you.

Hours go by,  
I still sit here –  
the news in the background  
is the same as this morning  
and yesterday  
and the day before.

Days go by,  
I still sit here –  
a constant shadow covers my face  
from the lights glued to our faces as we talk to one another,  
no longer face to face.  
A constant beam burns my mind.

Months go by,  
I still sit here –  
silence fills the air,  
in the streets, the road, my room.  
But there is a creak in the floorboard,  
a movement,  
the people are restless.

When will this end?  
A hope for an end brought through pain and more loss.  
I will see my loved ones next year.  
Goodbye 2020, hello 2021.



Rebekah Hemmens

# Future

Dear Future,  
this is a letter to you.  
Before we find each other,  
I want to gift you this present.  
Sometimes, I see you  
and try to shape you like a sculptor.  
You make me anxious.  
He tells me to be still  
and lean back, in exchange of freedom.  
I wonder how He found me?  
All I knew were chains,  
chains that couldn't break.  
But He made them dissolve.  
Was that a magic trick?  
If it was,  
I will tell Him now,  
before I get to you.  
Please don't stop!  
More tricks need dissolving.  
So, dear Future,  
I know you are secured.  
You are not in my hands,  
because I don't trust myself,  
but in the one I just told you about.  
Be rest assured and lean back.  
I will see you soon.  
Keep looking back on Past.  
We could have never made it without her.  
But for now, I will prepare this Present.



Munashe Dziva

# The People Will

---

The people will and it will be the norm.

To spend our lives in front of a screen because technology is the future and your job will be taken by a robot.

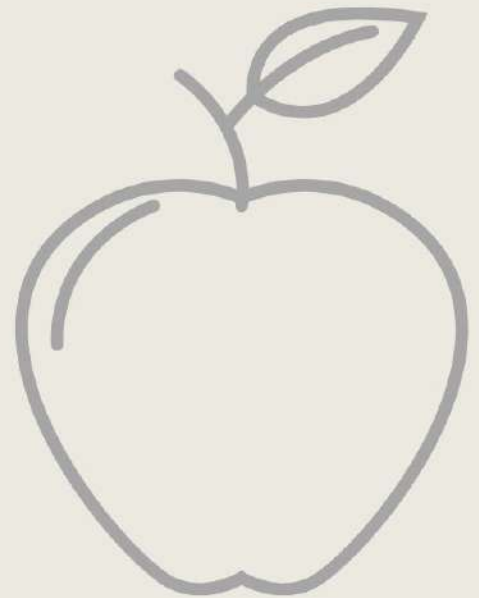
Losing touch with good values, with your grandfathers and your God and your purpose on this Earth will be difficult to find amongst the rubble.

The people will not stand for life, for freedom.  
Even though an apple a day always carried poison and brought Snow White's death closer.

The people will bite  
and crunch, pretending it's tasty,  
but it's rotten at the core.

The people will close borders  
between sanity and madness, the lines are thin  
and lies are thick.

To keep lovers apart,  
Juliet might be better off without Romeo -  
but heartbreak is such an ordeal.



Justyna Cuglewska



# Talking to The Moon - I

As I walk and breathe in the cold night air,  
I feel my lungs fill with a refreshing bite.  
This is where I feel closest to you,  
when the stifling sun has gone,  
replaced with the vastness full of possibility.  
Facing skyward, my mind sinks into the inky blackness,  
it explores and probes,  
each star holding a memory of you.  
Some stars holding memories I wish were with you.

I allow my mind to to return in part,  
as I focus on the brightest light of all -  
the moon: beautiful and elegant.  
Her kindness knows no limits,  
she bathes my soul in her white light.  
In this moment, the world disappears.  
It's just me and her -  
the beggar and the healer.  
She listens to my heart whilst repairing my soul.  
I tell her of my longing for you,  
my wish for just one moment.



  
Shannon Fletcher

# Talking to The Moon II

As I stand in the blue shade of this park,  
she urges me to look around.

A lonely bench, an empty trashcan,  
a single pathway leading over the crest of the hill -  
a path of loneliness leading to tomorrow.

*No*, she tells me,  
moonbeams reaching like arms embracing the world.  
And then I see it.

In her light, hope is found:  
a lonely bird on an empty bench  
alone but still singing its hopeful song.  
Is it looking for its partner? Is it singing for you?  
And as I follow the lonely path over the hill -  
One step, one step, one more step -  
the blue shade of the moon leaves,  
replaced with the redness of the dawn,  
a dawn full of opportunity and possibility.



Shannon Fletcher

# Oh, December! 1

Oh, January, why are you here already,  
with birthdays, and a new year for everyone,  
and lots to do but not nearly enough time?

Oh, February, why do you go so slowly,  
with not a lot on, except the start of Lent,  
and not much else to do apart from schoolwork?

Oh, March, why are you so good at building hope,  
with Lent all month to building hope for Easter,  
and to wrap up the month we have Palm Sunday?

Oh, April, why are we not grateful enough,  
with all the hope and joy you bring at Easter,  
and the start of spring to enjoy as well?

Oh, May, why do you seem to last forever,  
with all the spring flowers beginning to grow,  
and with the little lambs playing in the fields?

Oh, June, why do you arrive so suddenly,  
with many things to do, keeping me busy,  
and yet I'm more motivated than ever?



Abigail King



# Oh, December! 2

Oh, July, why do you take me by surprise,  
with a sudden drop in all the things I do,  
and a lot more time to work on all my goals?

Oh, August, why are you so hot and sunny,  
with holidays and beaches and lots of sun,  
and we get to spend more time with our friends?

Oh, September, why'd you feel like a new year,  
with the start of a new academic year,  
and the start of another year of learning?

Oh, October, why is it all Halloween,  
with skeletons, bats, witches, wizards and ghosts,  
and everything is there just to be spooky?

Oh, November, why are we never prepared,  
with your wind and rain and leaves falling from trees,  
and everyone so excited for Christmas?

Oh, December, why do you come so quickly,  
with birthdays, Christmas, and lots of gifts to buy,  
and lots of decisions we need to make?



Abigail King



# Blue And Yellow

There could be blue,  
there could be yellow,  
in the sky's heart,  
in the autumn's soul.

I could see it,  
that blue in you.  
Your ocean eyes told the lies,  
her sapphire shirt broke all trust.  
That blue  
is no longer  
in my mind.

I can see it,  
that yellow in you.  
Your sweet heart made of gold,  
my inner soul burns as fire.  
That yellow  
is shining  
in my mind.

There could be blue,  
there could be yellow,  
there could be us  
in another love story.



Lahien

# Wishes

I wonder, what will my future be like?

Will I finally get my university degree?

Will I be able to work in a job in which I help others?

Then, there is you.

What will our future be like, I sometimes wonder?

Will I be kissing your lips, holding you tight?

Will you still be my guiding light?

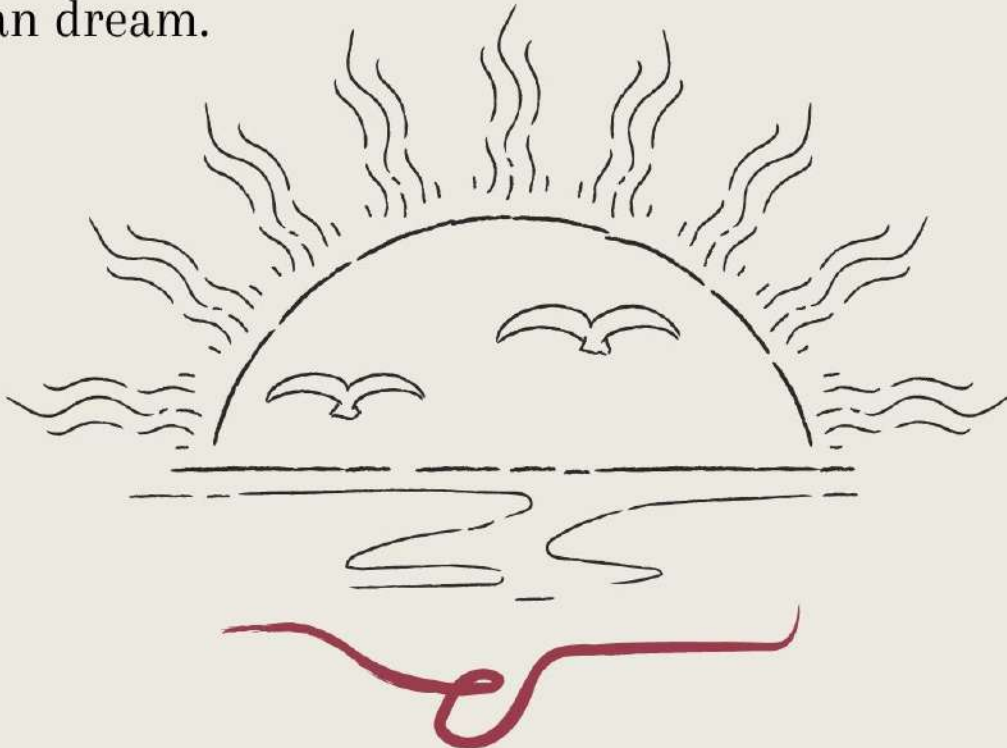
Will you even want me?

Then, there are my dreams -

living together, being your wife, starting a family.

I know some of those things you do not want,

but a girl can dream.



Alessandra Leone

# Letter to the Sun

Dear Sun, you have become cold.

I shun you and your ever-changing ways -  
your dishonesty, your deception, your betrayal.

As the winds of autumn blow out  
the fire of autumn leaves,

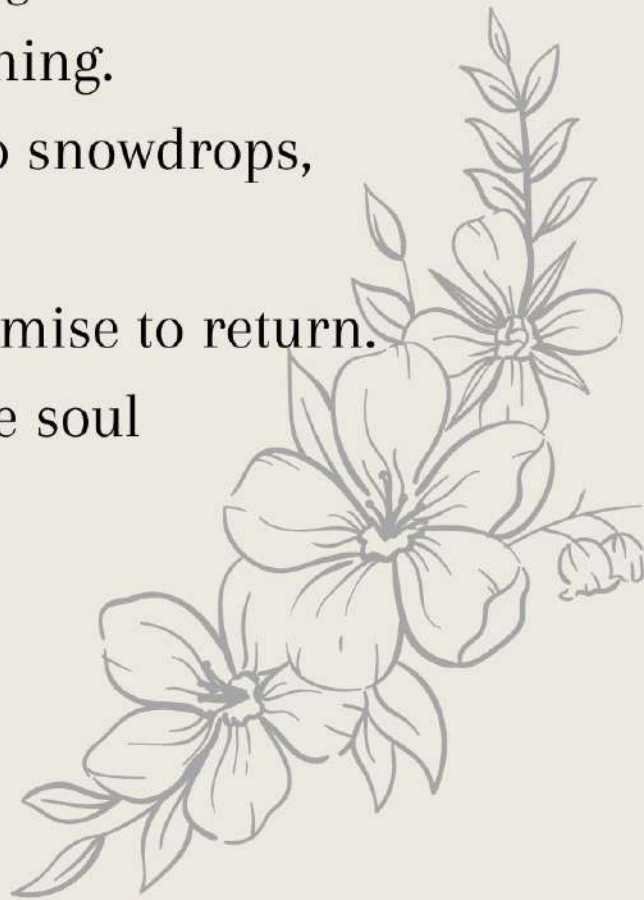
I will turn to walk amongst the blues.

But I won't feel blue.

For winter is honest in its harshly gentle way -  
destroying the flowers but protecting the buds,  
heralding in the end and the beginning.

Snow gives way to snow gives way to snowdrops,  
as if leaving a parting gift -  
a gift of sympathy, of hope, of a promise to return.

A promise to return and cleanse the soul  
ready for its rebirth, in this endless  
cycle of betrayal and forgiveness



Shannon Fletcher

# Meet The Writers



## Rebekah Hemmens

Rebekah Hemmens is 21 years old and comes from Wales. She is an English Literature and Media Studies student at NTU. She enjoys writing novels, short stories, and blogs. She has enjoyed experimenting with poetic composition as a part of WRAP



## Lucy Bint

Lucy Bint is a final year BSc Psychology student at NTU. Whilst studying for her degree to (hopefully) become a clinical psychologist, Lucy greatly missed writing prose. She therefore joined the WRAP community to get back into writing and branch out with confidence into the world of poetry. She is currently working on her debut novel.



## Justyna Cuglewska

Justyna Cuglewska is a final year BA Marketing student and WRAP Ambassador. Her inspiration for writing comes from meditating on the external environment, but also from the WRAP community. Her goal in life is to travel, starting in South-East Asia, and find her own corner of the world that feels like home.



## Shannon Fletcher

Shannon Fletcher is a business student at NTU. She has always been a bookworm with a preference for sci-fi and fantasy. The first book she remembers reading was Eragon by Christopher Paolini when she was 8. Her recent journey into the realm of poetry is both new and daunting for her as she is drawing inspiration from personal experiences of love and loss without hiding behind a character!



## Andra Tanasescu

Andra Tanasescu is a final year BSc Psychology with Sociology student from Romania. She spends a lot of time working with trauma victims – especially females – and likes to use these experiences to write poetry as a form of expression for the ongoing issues in society.





# Meet The Writers



## Munashe Dziva

Munashe Dziva is a BSc Psychology with Sociology student at NTU. She regards herself as spectacle of emotion, because spectacles are made to improve one's vision, so when life is blurry, a vivid image comes by observing emotion. Her poetry is inspired by faith, soul searching, and life observations.

## Hannah Siam Gascoyne

Hannah Siam Gascoyne is presently an English MRes student at NTU, studying Angela Carter and Feminism. She is normally a prose and screen writer, but through WRAP there has been a sudden and delighting shift to writing poems, with many more to spill out of her pen.



## Alessandra Leone

Alessandra Leone is a first year BA English student at NTU with an interest in gothic, young adult, and chic literature. She has found a new love of poetry through WRAP.

## Lahien

Lahien is an MA Broadcast Journalism student at NTU. She considers herself a thinker and adventurer, seeking for nothing but creating her own happiness through writing.



## Abigail King

Abigail King is a Forensic Science student at NTU. She spends most of her time reading, and enjoys a diverse range of genres, including fantasy. Abigail enjoys writing in her spare time.