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

— Kristen Adams ’20
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
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 hummin

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
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
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 overfill 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.
I love being from Massachusetts and listening to the poetry of the seasons as they melt into one another. I love being hardened to the wind and the cold, persistent air. I love the whispers of the seasonal romantics and the stone-faced academicians. 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—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
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.