

2024 DISABLED POETS PRIZE SHORTLISTS: bios + quotes

Best Single Poem – SHORTLIST

Gayathiri Kamalakanthan

TITLE: Eating An Orange

BIO from sub

Gayathiri (they/them) is a disabled Tamil poet and support worker. They're a winner of the Faber & Andlyn Publisher's Prize and the MONO poetry prize. Gayathiri is published in bath magg, fourteen poems, Propel and Magma; they've performed with DAYTIMERS, Apples and Snakes and Roundhouse. Gayathiri runs the poetry workshop WORD-BENDERS at The Common Press bookshop. gayathiri.co.uk, @unembarrassable

SHORTLIST QUOTE:

"It's meaningful that this Prize exists. It makes me feel like I am a writer, even when writing is painful and slow. I can't type for very long and when I'm not physically typing I'm often lying down/stretching/walking and repeating words to myself. So all of this lends itself to shorter poems. I'm so excited for a small, Tamil trans centering poem to be out here in the world like this!"

Rachel Burns

TITLE: Blue Monday

BIO from sub

The over-arching themes that inform my work are post-modernist feminism, chronic illness and trauma, mental health, ecopoetry and lived experience of homelessness & teenage motherhood. I'm widely published in magazines including Ambit; Butcher's Dog; The Rialto; The Moth; Magma; The Fenland Reed; HeadStuff; South Bank Poetry; Southlight; The Herald Newspaper; Marble Poetry; South; Crannog; Poetry Salzburg Review; Ink, Sweat & Tears; Algebra of Owls; and Atrium. Anthologized in Poems for Grenfell Tower; Poems for the NHS; Our Beating Heart NHS hits 70; #MeToo; Play; For the Silent and Pale Fire, New Writing on the Moon and in North Country, An anthology of landscape and nature (Saraband) 2022. Poem in Spectrum, Poetry Celebrating Identity (Renard Press) 2022. Placed in poetry competitions Head Stuff, Primers Four; Leeds Peace and BBC Proms Poetry Competition 2019. I was shortlisted in the Keats-Shelley Prize and Mslexia Poetry Competition, came second in The Julian Lennon Poetry Prize 2021 and longlisted in the National Poetry Competition 2021. I was awarded a DYCP grant 2023 to work towards a poetry collection. I work as a support worker for Changing Live.

QUOTE:

“It means a lot to me to be shortlisted, as the subject of the poem is close to my heart. I have Axial-SpA (a type of inflammatory arthritis) and work as an employability coach, supporting people with disabilities and chronic health conditions, who have multiple barriers to accessing work. On the day I wrote the poem I was struggling with pain and fatigue and feeling outraged by the government's welfare reforms, and societal attitudes in general towards people dependent on benefits. It felt good to vent, and I think often poetry comes from a place of despair, but with that comes resilience and then hope and resistance.”

Alex Mepham

TITLE: Dark Matter

BIO from sub:

Alex Mepham is a writer and translator based in York. Alex was awarded the 2023 Northern Debut Award for Poetry by New Writing North, and has had various poems, translations and creative non-fiction published in print and online journals including Magma, fourteen poems, berlin lit, Ink Sweat & Tears and Modern Poetry in Translation among others. Alex is also the Poetry Editor at Queerlings and is currently undertaking the National Centre for Writing's Emerging Translator Mentorship Programme. More of Alex's work can be found at amepham.carrd.co or on Twitter @am3pham.

QUOTE:

“It is a privilege for my work to be recognised by the Disabled Poets Prize. After a challenging year, placing in this Prize has been a real encouragement to keep going and to keep writing even amid difficult circumstances.”

Elizabeth Gibson

TITLE: Could this be how to love

BIO from sub

Elizabeth Gibson is a queer, neurodivergent poet and performer from Wigan, living in Manchester. Her poetry has appeared in Abridged, Atrium, Berlin Lit, Butcher's Dog, Configo, Lighthouse, Magma, The North, Popshot, Spelt, Strix, and Under the Radar, and anthologies from The Poetry Business and The Poetry School. She has been the recipient of a New North Poets Prize at the Northern Writers' Awards, and a Developing Your Creative Practice grant from Arts Council England. Elizabeth has been commissioned by cultural organisations around the North. For Manchester Poetry Library, she completed a Neurodivergent Zine-making Residency in 2023, with her zines subsequently exhibited. In

2022, for the Workers' Rights project for Islington Mill in Salford, she wrote a series of monologues inspired by the stories of mill workers, which were performed by local actors. She was sponsored by Superbia (Manchester Pride) in 2022 to bring her solo show 'The Reason for Geese' to Turn on Fest at Hope Mill Theatre. She was one of the writers selected for the Writing Dance project at Yorkshire Dance in 2020-21, working closely with dancers to find new ways to combine words and movement. Elizabeth has completed numerous projects for Oldham Coliseum Theatre, including writing two of their Advent Plays and performing one of them, 'Truffles', and writing a new play, 'Happy Place', for secondary pupils, which has been performed by local schools, including an SEN school. She has led workshops for The Writing Squad, Rebecca Swift Foundation, and The Portico Library.

QUOTE:

"I am really honoured to be shortlisted, especially with this poem. I have been trying to be braver and more open in my writing, and "Could this be how to love" looks at periods - often a taboo subject in and of itself - through my neurodivergent and also queer lens, and as someone living with PCOS. It feels quite vulnerable, and I'm really proud to have put it out there."

Website: <https://elizabeth-gibson.com>. Twitter/Instagram: @Grizonne.

Vera K Yuen

TITLE: Ward 9

BIO from sub

Vera K Yuen is an emerging poet residing in London, where she is an undergraduate at Royal Holloway. Due to her diverse upbringing in Hong Kong and the West, she is interested in writing about culture and transformation in both internal and external worlds. She is a keen mental health advocate and a current Barbican Young Poet. Previously, she has won The Charles Causley International Poetry Competition 2022.

QUOTE:

"I'm truly honoured by this announcement. Through my poem, I hope to shed light on the impact of mental illness and highlight the courage and resilience of those who decide to persevere despite setbacks and trauma. I hope they can find comfort in my words."

Dee Dickens

TITLE: A Horse Walks into a Bar – After Tyrone Lewis

BIO from sub

Dee is a genderqueer (she/they) poet who lives on a mountain collecting words and trying to transform them into emotions. They are a disability positive sex blogger and an activist for intersectional equality. A PhD student, she resides with two shedding familiars, Frida and Sylvia and one wonderful husband, Phil. She is currently writing a collection exploring grief through the metaphor of mythological women. They are very, very fond of ribs.

QUOTE:

“This is even better than when I placed Highly Commended in the Stranger Danger poster competition when I was 9.”

Best Unpublished Pamphlet 2024

Amber Horne

TITLE: So She Spoke

BIO:

Amber Louise Horne is a poet and academic based in Worcestershire. Amber has performed at Run Your Mouth, Dear Listener, Hit the Ode, and was runner-up in the 2023 UniSlam Coach's Slam having mentored her team to a successful semi-final placing. She also performed at last year's roundhouse regional heats. Her poetry has been published in Jaden magazine, the #SoftLads anthology, Dear Reader, Under Your Pillow, and the Sunday Mornings At The River Autumn Anthology of 2022, and is soon to be published in other projects.

QUOTE:

“Being shortlisted for this Prize has been a joyful and affirming experience. As a recently diagnosed Autistic woman, I found myself grieving for the years I questioned myself and thought I wasn't 'disabled enough'. This Prize has shown me that I am a valued member of the disabled community and that I deserve to be heard.”

Anna Starkey

TITLE: All These Frequencies

BIO (from submission):

I am a multi-disciplinary writer with a freshly awakened love of poetry and hybrid forms. I find myself drawing on influences from an intersection of artistic and scientific ideas, and I'm interested in the generative possibilities of 'not knowing' as a creative practice. I like questions that emerge from the edges of things, and I want to surface experiences that are often pushed between the gaps or made invisible by dominant forces in society. I previously

worked as a screenwriter for children’s animation series and since returning to writing in the last couple of years, I am exploring different strands to my writing. I am a non-binary person living with a disabling chronic illness and I have most recently written a hybrid autofiction piece that celebrates an epic yet tiny journey in a small corner of a city through the lens of physics and disability. Poetry is the newest thread in my work - as a reader I love the way some poems feel like spells that unlock a feeling that I never thought it was possible to find words for, and as a writer I will always be aspiring to do that somehow for other people.

QUOTE:

“I am totally delighted and honestly, a tiny bit overwhelmed to be shortlisted for this Prize! It’s amazing to know that what I enjoy writing might also be something that some other people enjoy reading. It feels huge that two accomplished poets have read my work and given it this boost. I now feel more confident about the value of weaving my experience of chronic illness into my writing too - it really means so much that this Prize is here to lift up the work of disabled poets. Thank you.”

Danne Jobin

TITLE: Scar Tissue

BIO:

Danne is a poet, collagist, creative coach and a tutor at The Poetry School. They are interested in trans & nonbinary poetics, poetic journals, collage, and the practice of poetry as a form of magic. Danne’s poems have been published in Magma, harana poetry, Datableed and Tenebrae. They have performed at the Poetry in Aldeburgh festival as well as for the 87 Press and Datableeder. Danne has also reviewed books for The Poetry School, Wasafiri, Transmotion, and the Journal of Postcolonial Writing. They post regularly on their YouTube channel Poetology.

QUOTE:

“I am so pleased to learn that *Scar Tissue* has been highly commended by the Prize. My life has changed a lot over the last few years and poetry is one of a few things that has stayed with me throughout that time and given me purpose. I hope that the Prize helps promote the development of a variety of original voices in contemporary poetry.”

Norman Miller

TITLE: Learning in Nine Keys

BIO:

As a poet, I have had several poems published in both print and online, and this year received a Highly Commended in an international competition. Three of my plays have had professional cast readings since 2020 involving various theatre companies, with one shortlisted in a national competition. A production featuring my short plays was also staged at the Brighton Festival Fringe, and was then shortlisted for a Fringe award for Outstanding Local Talent. Early chapters from my still-in-progress novel were shortlisted in Penguin/Random House's WriteNow competition to find new novelists from under-represented groups. I'm a continuing member of the WriteNow cohort. I was shortlisted for The Fiction Desk Short Story Award in 2016, with the story then published in 2017 in the anthology England's Future History. Young playwright for two years with the Scottish Youth Theatre, when one of my plays was performed in Edinburgh with a professional cast. During this time I also won the Edinburgh University Short Story competition.

QUOTE:

“Poems are hard enough to write individually, so trying to put together a pamphlet can feel even more daunting. It was hugely encouraging and uplifting to have a selection of work picked out for this wonderful prize.”

Ozge Gozturk

TITLE: Exit Amours

BIO (from submission)

Ozge Gozturk is a British-Turkish, hearing-impaired, exophonic writer based in London. She is a graduate engineer with an MA in Creative Writing from Roehampton University, London. She is the founder of the London Independent Story Prize. Her debut novel is 'Lupu'. Her numerous stories have been published in US, Netherlands, Malawi, UK, and Turkey magazines, including KaosGL, Feminine Collective Raw, Bending Genres Journal, Ink Sweat & Tears and Magma Poetry. Her fiction works are shortlisted for Penguin WriteNow 2020 and longlisted for the London Library Emerging Writers Programme 2022. Her short-play was selected by Rapid Writer Response, Theatre 503 and staged. Her poems Shortlisted for the Peepal Tree Press, David Oluwale Prize 2023 and Bridport Poetry Prize 2023.

QUOTE:

“I'm incredibly humbled by being shortlisted for this fantastic prize. Many thanks for supporting my words, my voice.”

Susie Wilson

TITLE: Nowhere Near As A Snake In Bed

BIO:

Susie is an autistic Scottish poet, with ADHD, living in Sheffield. She holds an MA in Poetry from The Writing School, MMU and has been published widely in anthologies such as those for the Winchester, Gloucester and Shepton Mallet Competitions, with poems also commended by Fresher and Poets & Players and longlisted in The Rialto Nature Competition. You can also read her work in journals such as Envoi, Monofiction and Black Bough. Frosted Fire Firsts and Indigo Dreams longlisted her first pamphlet 'Skin The Rabbit' in 2020, which has yet to find a home. You can find Susie on Twitter @concordmoose . She lives with Stage 4 Melanoma.

QUOTE:

"I'm really delighted to be shortlisted for this Prize. I very much enjoyed the work shared last year, Jamie's own performances and look forward to hearing my fellow disabled poets! To be on the list is a boost for both me and my poems which I feel are waiting for their day in the sun. Also, the existence of this prize has helped me to face some of my difficulties and get on with it – learning not to wait until the fantasy time when I feel 'better' or 'ok' to write. Thank you."