I really enjoyed reading all the entries this year. I loved seeing people’s different approaches to the theme of Myth. Well done to everyone who entered!

Lots of people looked for new and interesting ways to bring myth into a modern context, into the everyday and into the realm of the relatable.

And there were so many different perspectives: some playful, some sombre, some reverent, some reflective. Every take on myth was unique and that made each of the poems feel very personal.

I was especially drawn to work that sought and identified the mythic in the non-human encounter – with animals, with plants, with landscape and place. These were often the poems that stuck with me.

I also enjoyed poems that set out to retell a well-known myth and offer a new take on an old story or character.

But despite their thematic correspondences, the shortlist represents a real range of different tones, styles, perspectives and poetic personalities.

Some are precise and sparing in their use of language, others are wonderfully verbose and linguistically elaborate. Some are interested in rhythm, meter and rhyme in a traditional sense, while others draw musicality from the natural meter of language.

In any case, these were the poems that I was drawn to, and that stuck out for me.

**Cottonwood Saga & Horse Latitudes – Mara Adamitz Scrupe**

There’s a lovely fluidity to this poem; a fluid movement from sea to river to earth to celestial sky. The journey it takes the reader or listener on traverses several layers of being, unearthing a sense of deep history, and exploring myth as a geographical and geopolitical phenomenon.

**Scribbling Sisyphus – Martin Bennett**

I really enjoyed this playful take on the Sisyphus myth, exploring poetic perseverance in the face of writerly rejection; what writer won’t relate to that? It’s full of good advice for writers, but also a precise attention to rhythm and meter that gives the poem a carefully-crafted feel.

**Storm – Rosa Beuzeval**

There’s a real attention to detail in this poem, focusing on myth at a micro scale: textures, movement, the physiology of trees, offering a mythic approach to the way weather interacts with landscape.

**In the market café – Mike Farren**

I loved the macabre undertones of this poem, which playfully explores how we might find the mythic and the magical in the quotidian. The unique perspective of the rabbit in the poem captures an otherwise banal moment through an unexpected lens. The juxtaposition of these elements – the macabre and the everyday – creates a compelling and curious tension.

**Butterfly blood – Mike Farren**

What stood out in this poem is the way it captures how a sense of violence pervades human interactions – both with other humans and with non-humans – the same way violence often pervades myths. And there’s a sense of melancholy knowledge in the undercurrent of the poem, reminding us that love isn’t always beautiful and perfect.

**Bufo Bufo – Jack Andrew Lenton**

I love the way this poem makes a god of the common toad. What better animal to deify than the one you would perhaps least expect. There’s a delightful combination of vivid, evocative images that bring this toad god to life in a precise and inventive way, while also paying close attention to the natural rhythms of language.

**Melted Ice – Lisa Lopresti**

This poem has a precise sense of clarity that reflects its subject. It provides a sense of myth in landscape; a specific moment in time presented in painstaking detail and communicated with a real attention paid to the sonic qualities of language.

**Porpoise – Max Mulgrew**

There’s a wonderful musicality to this poem, articulating a moment captured in time in which an encounter with the nonhuman provides a mythic sense of great profundity and momentousness that feels utterly otherworldly.

**Pandora – Diana Myers**

I deeply enjoyed – and empathised with – this poem’s incredulity at the mistranslation of ‘jar’ to ‘box’ in the Pandora myth. I was drawn to the way the writer adopts Pandora’s voice reflectively and with empathy, providing a resituating of a well-known mythic character that emphasizes the importance of hope in difficult times.

**The worst job in the heavens – Phil Tuffin**

I loved the playful rhyme scheme of this poem – a comedic take on a Norse myth that asks us for our sympathy, cleverly highlighting that perhaps it’s not always so desirable to be a god.