

## Alice Oswald

### Poet

**Alice Oswald** studied Classics at Oxford and then trained as a gardener. She worked in gardens for seven years before publishing her first book of poems, [THE THING IN THE GAP-STONE STILE](#), which won the Forward Prize in 1996.



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## Publications

### Non-Fiction

Publication Details	Notes
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**GIGANTIC  
CINEMA**

2020

Jonathan  
Cape

'It is in very truth a sunny, misty, cloudy, dazzling, howling, omniform Day...' - Samuel Taylor Coleridge to William Sotheby, 27 September 1802

This anthology of poems and prose ranges from literary weather - Homer's winds, Ovid's flood - to scientific reportage, whether Pliny on the eruption of Vesuvius or Victorian theories of the death of the sun. It includes imaginary as well as actual responses to what is transitory, and reactions both formal and fleeting - weather rhymes, journals and jottings, diaries and letters - to the drama unfolding above our heads.

The entries narrate the weather of a single capricious day, from dawn, through rain, volcanic ash, nuclear dust, snow, light, fog, noon, eclipse, hurricane, flood, dusk, night and back to dawn again. Rather than drawing attention to authors and titles, entries appear bareheaded, exposed to each other's elements, as a medley of voices. Rather than adding to our image of nature as a suffering solid, the anthology attends to patterns, events and forces: seasonal and endless, invisible, ephemeral, sudden, catastrophic. And by assembling a chorus of responses (ancient and modern, East and West) to air's manifold appearances, Gigantic Cinema offers a new perspective on what is the oldest conversation of all.

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## Poetry

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**Publication  
Details**

**Notes**

**NOBODY**

2019

Jonathan Cape

This is a book-length poem - a collage of water-stories, taken mostly from the Odyssey - about a minor character, abandoned on a stony island. It is not a translation, though, but a close inspection of the sea that surrounds him. There are several voices in the poem but no proper names, although its presiding spirit is Proteus, the shape-shifting sea-god. We recognise other mythical characters - Helios, Icarus, Alcyone, Philoctetes, Calypso, Clytemnestra, Orpheus, Poseidon, Hermes - who drift in and out of the poem, surfacing briefly before disappearing.

Reading Nobody is like watching the ocean: a destabilising experience that becomes mesmeric, almost hallucinatory, as we slip our earthly moorings and follow the circling shoal of sea voices into a mesh of sound and light and water - fluid, abstract, and moving with the wash of waves. As with all of Alice Oswald's work, this is poetry that is made for the human voice, but this poem takes on the qualities of another element: dense, muscular and liquid.

one person has the character of dust  
another has an arrow for a soul  
but their stories all end  
somewhere  
in the sea

Publication Details	Notes
<b>FALLING AWAKE</b> 2016 Cape Poetry	<p>Alice Oswald's poems are always vivid and distinct, alert and deeply, physically, engaged in the natural world. Mutability – a sense that all matter is unstable in the face of mortality – is at the heart of this new collection and each poem is involved in that drama: the held tension that is embodied life, and life's losing struggle with the gravity of nature.</p> <p>Working as before with an ear to the oral tradition, these poems attend to the organic shapes and sounds and momentum of the language as it's spoken as well as how it's thought: fresh, fluid and propulsive, but also fragmentary, repetitive. These are poems that are written to be read aloud.</p> <p>Orpheus and Tithonus appear at the beginning and end of this book, alive in an English landscape, stuck in the clockwork of their own speech, and the Hours – goddesses of the seasons and the natural apportioning of Time – are the presiding figures. The persistent conditions are flux and falling, and the lines are in constant motion: approaching, from daring new angles, our experience of being human, and coalescing into poems of simple, stunning beauty.</p>
<b>MEMORIAL</b> 2011 Faber & Faber	<p>Drawing on her experiences as both classicist and poet, Oswald creates an original piece which serves also as a translation of the ILIAD. It is characterised by a unique homage to the moods of Homer's writing.</p>
<b>DART</b> 2010 Faber	<p>Over the past three years Alice Oswald has been recording conversations with people who live and work on the River Dart in Devon. Using these records and voices as a sort of poetic census, she creates a narrative of the river, tracking its life from source to sea.</p> <p>Winner of the T.S. Eliot Prize for Poetry (2010).</p>
<b>WEEDS AND WILD FLOWERS</b> 2009 Faber & Faber	<p>A magical meeting of the poems of Alice Oswald and the etchings of Jessica Greenman.</p>
<b>A SLEEPWALK ON THE SEVERN</b> 2009 Faber & Faber	<p>Commissioned for the festival of the Severn, this original new work aims to record what happens when the moon moves over the sublunary world: its effect on water and its effect on language.</p>
<b>WOODS ETC</b> 2008 Faber & Faber	<p>Woods etc. is Alice Oswald's third collection of poems, and follows the success of her widely acclaimed river-poem, Dart, which was awarded the T. S. Eliot Prize in 2002. Extending the concerns of Dart and written over a period of several years, these poems combine abrupt honesty with an exuberant rhetorical confidence, at times recalling the oral and anonymous tradition with which they share such affinity.</p>
<b>THOMAS WYATT</b> 2008 Faber & Faber	<p>Poems selected by Alice Oswald.</p>

Publication Details	Notes
<b>THE THING IN THE GAP- STONE STILE</b> 2007 Faber & Faber	Shortlisted for the T.S Elliot Prize.
<b>THE THUNDER MUTTERS</b> 2006 Faber & Faber	101 poems, chosen by Alice Oswald, which map the border between the personal and natural worlds.