

Ledbury Poetry Festival  
Poetry Competition 2015

**Adult Winner:**

**Forfeit**

By Jane Satterfield

*—lost the Hawk. Nero which with the geese was given away and is doubtless  
dead for when I came back from Brussels I enquired on all hands and could hear  
nothing of him—* —Emily Brontë, Diary Paper, Thursday, July 30, 1845

I know a hawk from a handsaw & when Nero  
came crashing down from what wound, what wonder—.

I know a hawk—& the wind running armies  
over grasses, hedge and path, the sky unfurled

over a fever of fields, torn petals ferried  
on the stream—a hawk, handsome-feathered, rescue-won.

—I know a bite from a beak & when the wanton  
spirit rises nothing mournful opens—a day's walk,

the weather fine, sunshine floating free. Bog & bracken,  
heather lit from within. I know hilltop, heath & stunted

firs. Thought silt and crow flowers, rue. Thought &  
thought again. A proper letter I have never performed.

There must be magic in my taming—cuffs & collars:  
the falls are fresh in mind. The hawk's wing-beat's rapid,

can't connive a cage. When clipped, is stripped of dive  
& plummet, grip & tear; heart feathered, fettered. Stutter

or hop-to-hand. I thought of rumors, a remembered  
sketch, the talon here, the moment tamed. Sift the embers,

scratch the meal; I am seldom troubled with nothing  
to do. I have no answers for extreme weather, a failing

source of light. We are at home & likely to be. Or  
walking out, I guess, if all goes well, toward the maw

of time. I have no answers but I knew him—hawk quick-witted  
as questions in margins, as window-clatter when the clouds

turn cool as iron, ashed in the afternoon. For a while,  
a page's torn beauty—I could not countenance a flame.

Note: Line 1 excerpt from Shakespeare's Hamlet  
Lines 20 and 22 paraphrase lines from Brontë's Diary Papers.

**Second Prize:**

**Break**

By Rosie Shepperd

Thank you for leaving my books without shelves  
I like the way they lean against each other  
sometimes tumbling over on to my grandmother's kilim  
I may leave them like that – 'strewn' is the  
word and I say it out loud and wonder if pressing words  
instead of flowers might qualify as one of the six activities I  
might use to diversify my mind  
Tomorrow evening I will toy with 'square' for  
the space left by my Wolf Dual Fuel Range  
and the larger place where I shall install my  
new bed and this makes me think of the word  
'cherry' as a wood you conserve and I can now buy  
'Wire' is a clueless question of a word as it  
searches for some explanation behind each  
embarrassed copper thread that protrudes  
from the drawing room wall and at 'protrude'  
I imagine your new lover and my lights and  
I am sad to think she has no fixtures and fittings  
but wonder if this might explain certain  
uncertain aspects of her coordinated separates  
'Chaise' is a fabulous word and it's in the  
diary for Thursday and it reminds me how grateful  
I am to you for removing mine so that  
I am not forced to recall your groaning weight in it  
and your buttocks on it and your stains  
of herbal infusion that you swore would not mark  
the emerald ciselé and always always did  
I'm leaving 'jar' for Friday – your bathroom door  
ajar and the jarring effect of your blinking  
on my concentration and your damn jam jar with  
a spare key inside and little label outside and  
your HB capitals: 'IN CASE OF EMERGENCY'.

**Third Prize:**

**Five throats**

By Nisha Bhakoo

She owned five throats and had something stuck in each of them.  
She is imperfect and it breaks me.  
Sitting there stoned and cold, looking for luck and distraction,  
she cleared her five throats simultaneously,  
harmonising with herself.  
Sound creeping on to my shoulders like a winter scarf.  
The edgeless street, no longer shy at night

no longer artless in heartbreak.  
I am imperfect and it breaks me.  
No overdrawn lips, pure throat, just throat  
with an evening scent of rain on the canal.  
She could slice bread with those high notes.  
I could slice bread with my thoughts.  
She got lost in her music, shutting the mind off at intervals.  
Her song whistling along the wet concrete in yeahness.  
Notes rolling boldly like teenage eyes.  
Heart in each note. Heart in all five throats.

### **Young People Category Age 12 - 17**

#### **First Prize:**

#### **The Disappearance**

By Shaliyah Grant

I don't know when she disappeared,  
Only when I realised that she was no longer here.  
Her frequently glazed eyes were a giveaway,  
But I ignored that too.  
I had thought I heard the door close  
One night in my sleep  
Although she'd already made up her mind. By then,  
She'd been halfway through the door  
A long time before.

She'd painted her smile like a Picasso;  
It hid those bags she'd packed,  
But never taken  
That stay forsaken,  
Underneath her bed.  
Although sometimes I hear her dragging them across the hall.

The neighbours still don't know she's gone,  
They smile and wave every morning into the emptiness.  
I often search for traces of her  
Behind the eyes she used to have,  
There might be something that I missed  
Or haven't tried,  
But I remembered my unheeding of  
The tell-tale signs.  
And it is hard to pry answers  
From a memory.

There's still an indentation on her side of the bed  
That matches the outline of her body,  
But has long since grown cold

And started to fade.

An empty space stays in her seat at the table,  
An empty promise that she will return.

**Second Prize:**

**aubade**

By Daniella Cugini

we bridge the space between  
us – music, radio, two cups  
and string. anything to  
avoid the ruined geometry  
of ourselves: *weather's  
nice out, the leaves* – last  
night the canaries woke up  
dead and we blamed geopolitics,  
twisted our mouths up  
and back, slept too  
clean. now i siphon clamour  
off the kids in the park,  
anything to cut this  
peace. as you leave, i  
resist the urge to grab  
your shoulders; snap your  
healthy, contented  
jaw – how lithe we were  
as children! please god teach me  
to shiver again, grip and tear and  
burst up like a live  
thing – i clear plates.  
cold toast; bright balls  
of yolk. light enough to drown  
in, and we do.

**Third Prize:**

**Paper Cats**

By Elin Gray

Paper cats  
above the bed.  
Copied from the pictures on your grandmothers walls.  
Coffee rings on the window sill  
and chipped paint  
that time picked away. And a vase  
of flowers, dying  
sat on top of a handkerchief  
stained with red  
wiped from the porcelain  
after you coughed blood into the sink.

Kisses on cheeks of people you're supposed to remember  
even though they all look the same  
with that sickly sweet taste still left in your mouth  
through the syringe  
and on to your tongue. Paper cuts from paper cats  
copied from your grandmother's walls  
torn from the wind because you left the window open too long.

### **Children's Category Age 11 and under**

#### **First Prize:**

#### **Deteriorates**

By Inés Rossi

Brisk breezes  
petrify me  
as the scratchy oak  
encased in fungus  
expels little black  
Dots,  
dots that skitter down  
from bark  
to  
Britannia blue stone  
down the sharp blades  
of iridescent grass,  
up the layered translucent sole  
that leads  
to yellow stitches  
and a salmon  
matte surface.

Little black dots  
entwine  
around my bones  
until I relocate  
and blow out  
the forcefield  
of vanilla silk oblongs.  
They disperse,  
the petals  
of yesterday's amber sun  
in a wonder  
built whimsically  
whisp by whisp  
just  
to be blown away  
in a fraction  
of a second.  
A blossom of sunbeams

deteriorates overnight  
into  
a tuft of snow.

**Second Prize:**  
**The Cobweb**  
By Kitty Prince

Handmade home,  
the spider carefully sews  
a cobweb  
bent like the spine of a book  
unique shapes,  
a curtain for all things horrible,  
a wall within a gap.

**Third Prize:**  
**The Magic Box**  
By Victor Nogueira

I will put in the box  
the swish of a waterfall touching the depths of a lake,  
Fire from the fireplace on a winter's night,  
the last Tudor house in England.

I will put in the box  
a man with a risky life,  
a moon at day and a sun at night,  
the last drop of water in the desert.

I will put in the box  
a brown hair from a hopeful mammoth  
a blue flame from the great fire,  
a faithful man standing up for his country in the war.

My box is fashioned from fireworks  
With plastic on the lid and surprises in the corners  
Its hinges are the spine of a book  
I will ski in my box on the white alps.