

Ledbury Poetry Festival
Poetry Competition

Commended Adults

The girl who was never even conceived

By Jillian Fenn

Invisible as air, she wears silk taffeta
(cut too old for her, cut too low).

The colour of the milk, and she shouts
obscenities (mostly about swans

and the beaks of ravens). Her month
is December, her weather is hailstones.

She sleeps in my bed (Goldilocks
hair on fresh cotton pillows).

When I lift her nightgown
her rib-bones show.

Gloria

By Polly Atkin

The hounds pawing, pawing the ground. Gloria Anzaldua, 'Cervicide'

Gloria, today my poem came true.
I thought of you, of the slaying of the tame
self to save the group. This morning
I opened the door to a young deer quivering
by the car just like I wrote. The self
out? a god? neither? I tried
of course to follow when it sprang, scanning
the sodden moss for the print of its hooves,
but it vanished by the swollen river, left
no mark as proof. All week the wind
playing the house like an ocarina
and the floods rising, drawing the wild things
down from the woods. Each day misted,
barely light.

Gloria.

Deer!

I yelled to the man inside who saw it,
not as I did on the drive, it was gone
already, but in his mind: the deer
he dreamt the previous night. Live.
Leaping. This evening, the whole silvered herd
running at the long night moon.

A Year In

By Maeve Henry

We do not ask the butcher what he's skinning
in the shop rubble, a year into the siege.
The bread ration is just a hundred grams -
my mother has to mix her flour with brick dust.

In the shop rubble, a year into the siege
my brother drops down dead without a word.
My mother has to mix her flour with brick dust,
cook flatbreads on the ashes of our house.

My brother drops down dead. Without a word
my mother buries him, she gets our rations,
cooks flatbreads on the ashes of our house,
sends me to the broken pipe for water.

My mother buries him. She gets our rations,
carrying my sister safe under her coat,
sends me to the broken pipe for water.
The rockets start up again at nightfall.

Carrying my sister safe under her coat,
light as bird bone, she has no lullabies.
The rockets start up again at nightfall.
My sister cries in the darkness of the cellar

Light as bird bone - she has no lullabies –
I carry my mother to the new dug pit.

My sister cries in the darkness of the cellar.
We do not ask the butcher what he's skinning.

Obsidians in Moon

By Jackie Juno

I keep owls in my head.
And at night when they wake
I borrow their eyes, just for a few seconds
before they wrestle, agitated,
in my skull.
Then I have to let them out or it gets really messy.
Silently they fly out, ghosts in the dark,
to prey on tiny quivering thoughts
I've let loose during daylight.

It's been raining stars again.
The owls like that.
They love new stuff; it's all an adventure to them.
Sickled claws grasp at branches, make runic
the trees I created
from hopes and dreams.
They skuwee to each other.
This spooks the woman who works in the opticians.
Scurrying down the lane,
she's been moonlighting again.
Hisses escape from those sharp beaks,
beaks desperate to tear flesh.

I don't want to go to bed. I follow them out
into the monochrome meadow
where nothing makes sense,
where blood is the common language
and mud is my ally.
Scraggy feathers are waterlogged,
we walk on a crescent blade.
He mustn't know I'm out, he'd worry.

But I can't go back now. I'm on a mission.
When owls call, you listen.
I just want you all to know,
if I don't make it -
I chose this.

Commended Poems
Children's Category

Our House

Faye Colhoun

Our house has the usual noise
Of granny's needles clicking
Of grandpa's deep snoring
Of mum's failing cooking
Of dad's foot tapping
Of auntie's phone
- keyboard clicking
Of uncle's story
- nobody listening
Of Molly play-acting her Barbie dolls
Of Tom shouting at football on telly.
And I make no noise
but observe my surroundings.

The Giant

By Jacob Littlewood

The giant was in his lair,
And then he sat in his massive chair.
He was putting his people on toast,
And then he started to boast.

He sounds like an earthquake.
He drinks fast-flowing rivers.
He looks like a crumbly mountain
From far away.

Snap!

By George Martin

He was like a flytrap,
waiting for an innocent insect to fly by,
and then,
Suddenly,
Snap!
Or a spider, decked out in his web,
Waiting for a slight vibration,
And then
he pounces.

He's your friend,
for a while.
He gets to know your every secret
and then:
Snap!
Just like the fly.

Wait.

Turn the situation around.
He's the fly,
his parents are the spiders.
He's the fox,
his parents are the trappers,
He's the mouse,
his parents are the poison

April Morning

By Roo Prince

Bitter blows the wind
in an early April morning,
freezing gusts swing the branches,
sweet-scented blossoms sway in the sunlight,
soon, sun starts to glaze the fields,
bitter breezes fade.
I stroll in the dew,
I spot three roe deer,
tilting my head,
the deer startle.
They sprint,
leaving me rooted,
leaving me breathless.

Foxgloves

By Roo Prince

Shimmering in the shadows
the foxglove hides,
pink
like a flamingo.
Its head droops
Its bells jingle.
Blood-red freckles
lurk inside the bells.
Admiral butterflies
drift by elegantly

Storm

By Roo Prince

A shade of grey
with light bulb yellow
like a swirling, stormy cloud.
Then,

rainbows, rainbows,
pastel pink,
the golden bow
above the sugary clouds,
some say storms are lurking
above the trees.

Ante-Meridiem Mourning

By Ava Whitney

I wake to the misted world.
Beige birds sing in black darkness.

Silver, spindly arachnid legs
spin a web of dewdrops. A shot

light beam shines above a tall peak.
I pull off a thick woolen quilt

of melodious dreams. My mind
fills with the powerful night songs

as I welcome dawn's light
and know that time is passing.

My Artist's Name

By Ava Whitney

Youth is fantasy,
a clean-swept psyche
of hope and dream.
I knew since preschool
I was a famous artist.
And I mean FAMOUS.
The one whose paintbrush
stroked a canvas of gold.
My name would be Ava M. Whitney—
my dream, my hope, my wish,
my almost legend.
As youth passes
those wishes fade away
like the bugs
from their glass-paned prison,
and I am Ava,
just Ava.

Senses

By Rosie Shepherd

Seeing the pouring rain through

My front window.
Seeing the ants marching though my
Front Garden, carrying leaves.
Seeing my schoolbooks lying out before me,
Ready to be written in.
Seeing the hill covered in white snow,
With sledgers all over it

Hearing the shouts of children
Playing in the school playground.
Hearing the scream of my sister
When she burned her hands in the oven.
Hearing the whistling of the wind outside,
Whilst I was doing my homework by the window.
Hearing my crunching footsteps as I trudges along
A stony beach in North Norfolk

Feeling the warmth of my bed as I
Jumped in after a long, cold day.
Feeling the cold hard metal of the handle on
My front door as I stepped out into the sunshine.
Feeling the cold refreshing sea on my toes,
Cooling me down.
Feeling the sharp pain as the
Wasp stung me.