



McLellan Poetry Prize 2026 - English Competition

First Prize: Rosie Jackson for 'Easter Day'

Highly Commended: Petra Regent for 'Fungus'

Congratulations to all of our very worthy winning and highly commended poets.

We would also like to extend our grateful thanks to Gerda Stevenson for her hard work in selecting the winning entries in this year's competitions, and to all the writers who took the time to enter the competitions and to trust us with their words and work.

Our Judge: Gerda Stevenson



Gerda Stevenson is an award-winning Scottish writer (in English and Scots), as well as actor, film and theatre director, and singer/songwriter. She has presented her poetry and prose at literary festivals throughout the UK and across Europe. Her stage play, *FEDERER VERSUS MURRAY* toured to New York, sponsored by the Scottish Government. Her poetry collections include: *IF THIS WERE REAL*, and *QUINES: Poems in Tribute to Women of Scotland* (both also published in Rome by Edizioni Ensemble in Italian translations), *TOMORROW'S FEAST*, and two collections of short stories, *LETTING GO*, and *CAT WUMMAN*. Nominations include: for the Gilder/Coigney International Theatre Award (New York), the Trad Awards as Scots Singer

of the Year for an album of her own songs, *Night Touches Day*, and three times for the Critics' Awards for Theatre in Scotland. The founder of Scotland's leading women's theatre company, Stellar Quines, she has directed and appeared in many theatre productions and films, including *Braveheart*, winning BAFTA for her performance in Margaret Tait's feature film *Blue Black Permanent*. www.gerdastevenson.co.uk



First Prize: Rosie Jackson for 'Easter Day'



ROSIE JACKSON lives by the sea in Teignmouth, Devon, where she writes, mentors and paints. She has a background teaching literature – she has degrees from Warwick and York, and has taught at the Universities of East Anglia, Nottingham Trent, West of England – and she's enjoyed taking creative work into hospitals and many community settings. But she only started writing poetry in later life, after a series of personal traumas and illness. Her poetry was first published in a pamphlet by Poetry Salzburg 2014, then a collection called *The Light Box* from Cultured Llama. She enjoys collaborating with artists, musicians and other writers. She

collaborated with the late Graham Burchell on a 2020 collection of poems about the artist Stanley Spencer and his wife Hilda Carline, this is called *Two Girls and a Beehive*. Two other pamphlets *Aloneness is a Many-headed Bird* and *Light Makes it Easy* were followed by her most recent collection *Love Leans over the Table* (Two Rivers Press, 2023), which focuses on the lives of many mystics, from anchorites, such as Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe, to John Donne, Simone Weil, and Rosie's own spiritual life, which has taken her to India many times. Rosie's won quite a few poetry competitions, including Indigo Dreams 2026, Watchet 2026, Red Shed 2025, Teignmouth 2021, Wells 2018, Stanley Spencer 2017. She's also published several prose works, amongst them a memoir, *The Glass Mother* (2016). Jane Hirshfield calls her work 'gorgeously original,' while Kim Moore describes her poetry as 'a heady rush of restless searching and utter stillness'. You can discover more on her website www.rosiejackson.org.uk

Easter Day, 1968

I never knew her name, and she'll be long underground now.
But if it's true that in the afterlife we revisit every detail
in intense, yet leisurely fashion, she'll have cycled home once more

that Easter morning, the mismatched spires of Chartres
shrinking as she pedals. She's still glowing from holy communion – that tender breaking
of the body, its impossible *largesse* –

everything lifted, the canal serene, cornfields full of promise. Then she hears our cries,
two girls shouting from a barn, hurries towards our panic, dust clouding the car that revs
away.

She walks us to her farmhouse, runs lavender baths, tends our cuts,
stuffs ham into crusty baguettes. We're still at school, doing A-level French, have not yet
learned the word for what has not quite happened.

What does she say when she sees them now in this other light,
those two men with their ageing belts and buckles? Does she look them in the eye,
berate them for the shame they brought on the male race?

Or does she point out how blessed they were, what grace it was –
it being that day, that same third day – that she passed by when she did, stopped them
finishing what they shouldn't have begun.

And those quiet hours after we left, our thumbs raised for the road, when she cycles
along those narrow blossomed paths,
thinking of us – our gendered lives, flouting catastrophe.

Highly Commended: Petra Regent for 'Fungus'



Petra started writing poetry in her twenties, though there were fallow years following her inclusion in *The Gregory Awards* anthology, and *"Anvil New Poets"*.

She returned to her Fife childhood home in 2020 to care for her parents during the final years of their lives, and began writing poetry again. She has been highly commended in the *Rialto Nature Poetry Prize*, 2018 and longlisted in the *MsLexia Poetry Competition 2023*, and has been recently published in *Poetry Scotland*.

She divides her time between her home in Bristol and Fife.

Fungus was written on a residential poetry course at Moniack Mhor, Scotland's National Writing Centre, in the Scottish Highlands,

Fungus

I exist between green things
and the earth.

If you find me
non-communicative
in my white shroud,
that's because the cupped
lid, the dark parasol,
is all that you see.

My temperament
is patient.
I hear only the tick
of the clock
at the centre of the earth,
its slow decay.

Perhaps you have come across me
following a narrow path
through dwarf birch and juniper,
sky dimming beyond the rim of the wood.

My cold green light
the bipolar chemistry
of my divided heart,
my luminous sorrow
the flight path
of pale moths
and fungus gnats.