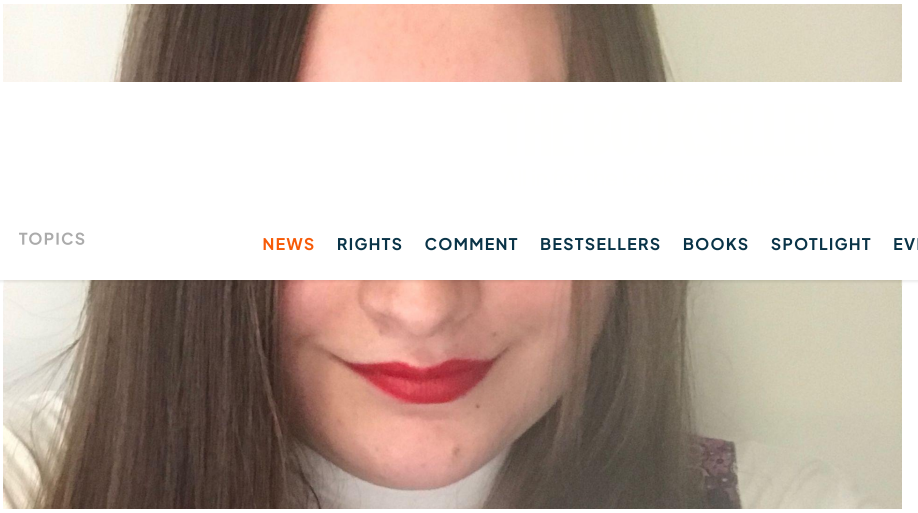
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Gale wins Ledbury Poetry Competition for How (Not) to Say Impossible Things

NEWS JAN 26, 2023 BY ALICE KEMP-HABIB



Naoise Gale

Naoise Gale has won the £1,000 Ledbury Poetry Competition for her "breathless" poem “How (Not) to Say Impossible Things”.

This year’s award was judged by T S Eliot prize-winning poet Joelle Taylor. In addition to prize money, Gale wins a week’s poetry course with the Arvon Foundation, while the second and third-place prizewinners receive £500 and £250 respectively.

Taylor described Gale’s poem as a “breathless piece of writing”. “The way it negotiates language and pushes meaning; it is a big country at war with itself. Its sudden declarations become legends—‘if you love something/ fuck it into myth.’ Or, ‘this house is burning me down’. Using fragments from Kaveh Akbar’s *How To Say The Impossible Thing* (Pilgrim Bell, 2021), the poet addresses the self with an uncertain flamboyance that makes this poem a compelling joyride, an unsolvable mystery, and my first-place choice for the Ledbury Prize 2022.”

Gale, who hails from West Yorkshire, writes about addiction, psychosis, mental illness and neurodivergence. Her work has been longlisted in the Disabled Poets

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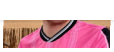




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Prize 2023, the Fish Poetry Prize 2022 and shortlisted in the Creative Futures' Writers Award 2021. She performed at the Vivacity Multi-Arts Festival in April 2022 and her debut pamphlet, *After the Flood Comes the Apologies*, was published by Nine Pens in 2021. Her first full collection, *Implode Explode*, which focused on grief, eating disorders and growing up autistic, was published by Beir Bua Press in October 2022.

In second place came the poet, critic and choreographer Oluwaseun Olayiwola, whose poem "Simulacrum", explores love, desire and masculinity. Taylor said: "The use of language within this poem is arresting. It's brash, confident, surprising, and lived. There is a violence that stalks the poem, a sense of both defiance and threat. I am particularly drawn to muscular poetry, poems with dirty teeth, that leave the reader panting and unsure of what just walked past them, and this is certainly one of them."

Third place went to Toby Campion for his poem "Ghazal for the Screaming", which Taylor said reflects "the increasing authoritarianism of our times, particularly with regard to LGBT rights globally, which it explores through the logic of its semi-surreal world".

Ten poets were highly commended for their submissions: Karina Fiorini (for "Habiba"), Partridge Boswell (for "Ravel"), Robert Hamberger (for "Queens") Jonathan Greenhause (for "The Kiss"), SK Grout (for "We Can Tell Where A Humpback Whale Has Travelled By Themes In Its Song"), Laura Stanley (for "Martha Dobie Shot Herself Offstage"), Sharon Black for "The Border"), Patrick Preston (for "The Fucking Tree"), Julie Kennedy (for "Mouth Searches Are Allowed") and Elijah East (for "Anil").

Mary Morris, artistic director at Arvon, said: "Ledbury Poetry has an impressive track record when it comes to recognising fresh talent and so Arvon is delighted to be working in partnership with this competition to help develop and nurture that talent, whether in one of our writing houses or online through Arvon at Home."

The winning poems are available to read **online**. The Ledbury Poetry Festival takes place from 30th June to 9th July.

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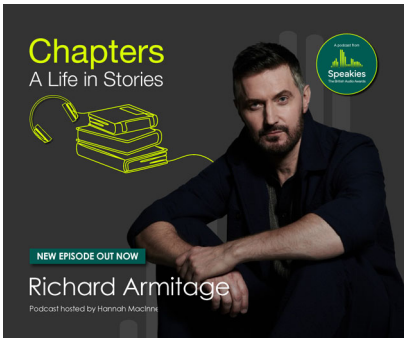


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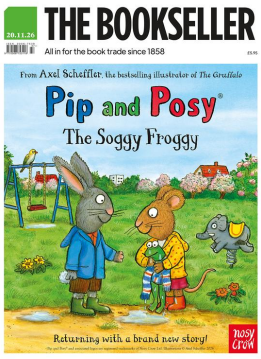


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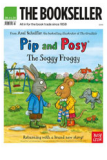


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