

=2nd Place – Caroline Price for “Señora Jaen recalls the fête days on Gorramakil”

Señora Jaen recalls the fête days on Gorramakil

When she remembers how the whole village
followed the stumbling donkeys upwards
dragging the heaped carcasses
of horses, cattle, dogs

and stood back breathless
for the first sighting, a dot in the distance,
then two, then a dozen
and the air hardly moving as the birds circled, closed in

the only wonder she feels
is how out of utter peace and emptiness
violence can suddenly come
and disappear as completely, leaving

this silence, a clear sky
and in the coarse grey mountain grass
no more than a stray bone or two, small
knucklebones, jacks, picked clean by the weather.

What the Judges said:

We liked the tight control of language here (and therefore of story), and the juxtaposition of the vivid, violent episode and its empty aftermath. There is the sense of whole populations moving through this poem – the villagers, the live donkeys, the dead beasts and then the carrion birds - leaving afterwards only the knucklebones – ‘jacks’ – lying remembered on the grass, ‘picked clean by weather’ and memory. Not a word wasted, and its spare quatrains – and even sparer description – give a compelling feel to the stark content.

About Caroline:

Caroline Price was born in Middlesex. She studied Music, and has worked as a violinist and teacher in Glasgow, London and Kent, where she now lives and where she is one of the organisers of the long-established Kent & Sussex Poetry Society. She has published short stories and three collections of poetry, most recently *Wishbone* [Shoestring Press, 2008], and was co-editor of an anthology of women's poetry, *Four Caves of the Heart* [Second Light

Publications, 2004]. She has also studied French, and has undertaken several writing residencies in schools and a European Writers' Centre in northern France.