

**Wigtown Poetry Competition 2018**  
**Main | Winner: Jane Lovell, *Starlings***  
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**Starlings**

We use folders of bamboo and deerbone  
to construct you: slinted claw  
and oilbead plumage, its gloss-speckle and lustre

crisp-folded on the cusp of winter.  
Tweezers pin your reedy legs  
and thorny beaks, wings blown

from mountain folds and pleats,  
their feather-strata paper-cut-sharp  
and glorious as angels'.

Evenings, we line you up in trees to roost,  
wind you up to hear your clockwork grobbling  
and deep space radio whirrs.

Each dawn, exhilarated by the light,  
you sing in clicks and shrills, wolfwhistles  
and bright cellophane twists,

then fly your squadron down to land  
and dandle determinedly across the grass  
to yesterday's pecked apples.

Fieldfares descend in reverse folds.  
Unfazed you dance defence,  
flyweight boxers on your thinstalk legs.

In dreams, we gather you in, gently open out  
and press flat your mulberry squares,  
their iridescent foil,

store you in a drawer, loose-wrapped  
in leaves of tissue, for emergencies:  
secret trapdoors to another life,

fast and dark and beautiful.