



THE ROYAL VICTORIA  
**EYE AND EAR**  
HOSPITAL DUBLIN  
LOOKING AFTER THE NATION'S EYES AND EARS SINCE 1897



RESEARCH FOUNDATION  
ROYAL VICTORIA  
EYE & EAR HOSPITAL

The Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital  
and  
The Research Foundation

are proud to present the  
Winning and Commended Poems for the

'Making Time for Poetry'  
Poetry Competition

In celebration of Poetry Day Ireland 2020

Adult Category

Theme 'Time' or 'The Body'

Judge: Nuala Watt



Supported by Poetry Ireland for Poetry Day Ireland 2020

There Will  
Be Time



Thank you for inviting me to judge this competition. All the winning and commended poems had strong features and any of the top three could have won. I loved the tight structure of 'It is Time: Dublin City Speaks During the Lockdown'. It is a really successful list poem that uses repetition and variation to good effect. I also enjoyed the Dublin-specific language and references. I think it's a strong poetic and political response to a really strange situation.

'Marrow' has a really striking central premise of talking bones and I love the idea of bones as 'vulgar footnotes to death', Some of the poem's imagery was enjoyably gruesome and I loved the epiphanic ending, The third placed poem, shaped like a cocoon, makes excellent use of concrete techniques and natural imagery. As the mother of a toddler I really appreciated its references to *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.

In the commended poems I admired the technical finesse of 'History's Sestina', and the cosmic reach of 'Meteorite Slice'. Finally, as someone who had regular appointments related to visual impairment as a child, I enjoyed the imagery and perspective of 'Stargazing in the Waiting Room'. It was a vivid portrait of patient experience.

I enjoyed reading all the poems. Several had potential but would have benefited from further redrafting so I would encourage all entrants to consider putting their poems away for a short period and then redrafting if they feel it's necessary. Thank you very much to everyone who submitted.

**Nuala Watt**

**April 2020**

## **It is Time: Dublin City Speaks During the Lockdown**

Give me back my cranes, those skyline surfers,  
orange and red crosses reminding me I am alive.  
Give me back my flower sellers, their purple freesia  
scenting my streets, their voices rousing me from sleep.  
Give me back my white-faced bankers, dockers, builders,  
long-distance lorry drivers, protesters, overseas visitors.

Come out you buskers, Luas fare dodgers, canal walkers,  
chicken fillet roll eaters, gallery goers, bargain hunters,  
pie in the skyers, Temple Bar terrors, Liffey lovers,  
taxi talkers, whatever your having yourselves, banterers,  
I'm all right Jackers, God botherers, Spire mitherers.

Send me your sinners, your half-useless horse backers,  
head bangers, dealers, gurriers, chancers, I'll take all-comers,  
your tappers, gougers, smokers, shoplifters, pick-pocketers.

Sort out my tent dwellers and sleeping baggers  
they are still here with me  
waking to silence.

*Caroline Bracken*

*1<sup>st</sup> Place, Adult Category*

## **Marrow**

A bone spoke to me this morning,  
one of my ribs.  
“Some day, you’ll be dead,” it said,  
“nothing left of your flesh,  
just rags of skull and brittle sticks.”

I rubbed my finger slowly over  
its subterranean mountain range,  
sure I couldn’t have heard it,  
but it spoke again –  
at parks and junctions, the rusted railings of an old warehouse.

Leaning on a gate before a field,  
I pictured my flesh dropping to a pool,  
trickling down a country road.  
Tell me, body, what would you do  
if your bones deserted you?

I’ve always imagined my ribs  
wrapped round my organs like the wings of a wounded bird,  
as if our bodies began with imperfection.  
In bed, I hear my collarbone whisper,  
its two halves fused with a knot of mutant bone.

“You’re fragile,” it says. But I always knew  
that bones are vulgar footnotes to death.

I tell that mangled twig:  
“I broke you once on a football pitch.  
I never felt more alive.”

*Trevor Conway*

*2nd Place, Adult Category*

**on monday, i ate  
three  
strawberries,  
a pear,  
a palmful  
of sunflower  
seeds &  
one  
nicely  
ripe  
banana**

the next day,  
i ate nothing at all:  
i just curled up in a sunny  
corner of the veranda & waited  
—when my saliva had thickened  
to a pearly gloop, i probed it out  
from under my tongue: slowly, slow  
-ly allowing it to dry as it met the air:  
to form a thread that drifted almost  
invisible against the early afternoon  
sun & starting at the very backs of my  
heels i slowly wove those soft billowy  
folds around and around from sole  
to crown, a semi-translucent worm  
-like pouch: i am in here now, warm  
& cushioned from outside sounds  
my skin softening within its silken  
sheath, cells melding: all of the  
holding in me seeping away  
until one day when the  
world has settled  
back on its axis  
and the time  
is right to re  
-emerge

*Anne Casey*

*3<sup>rd</sup> Place, Adult Category*

## History's Sestina

Sediment builds on the river bank.  
Wind batters a forgotten fort.  
Cold deflected by a stone wall  
is directed above the traveller's tent  
to be harvested by his machine  
aged by salty water.

Below the water  
lies the forgotten bank.  
Prince of the abandoned machine  
it is the ransacked fort,  
the pitching ground for its tent.  
Globalist tendencies fell to cries of 'Build the Wall'.

Privilege built the wall  
as it threw scraps into the water.  
The rest scurried from their tents  
built along the banks  
to the foot of Privilege's fort.  
Each worry fed the machine.

Built for all, the machine  
was slowly moved inside the wall  
kept for 'the good of the people' in a fort  
high above the water  
far away from the banks  
where the rest lived in tents.

Ideology birthed in the tents,  
grew wary of the machine.  
They withdrew from the banks  
and laid siege upon the wall.  
Privilege discovered that whims like water  
can not be ordained from within a fort.

Time lays claim to the fort  
where a traveller packs his tent.  
He pauses to pray to the water  
that wipes away the machine,  
kneeling behind a wall  
as sediment builds on the river banks.

Water doesn't fear fabled fort  
as banks 'too big to fail' are outlasted by a cotton tent  
- machines can not avoid the fate that befalls every wall.

*Tony O'Halloran*

*Highly Commended, Adult Category*

## Meteorite Slice

It's like looking down on  
Guangzhou at night  
from thirty-six thousand feet.  
Flecks glitter and wink  
as I shift from foot to foot  
in front of the glass case.

Yes, a city at night  
seen through a rounded pane,  
can seem like a mirror of the night sky  
whose constellations keep their map  
of all the secret meanings of our lives.

And from which this meteor fell  
trailing a scar where it landed,  
was later, lifted and split  
to reveal the silky black  
and starry scape of its core.

The description says it *originated deep  
in the heart of a small planet  
where metal and rich mantle meet.*  
That was 4,560 million years ago,  
well before tiny gold fires

of streetlights  
or darkened rows of homes  
or pitch-dark fields  
or pores of lakes and pocks of shadow  
or the river rise of a hill.  
Yet it had in it an idea

of the order we see (from above) below.

*Grace Wilentz*

*Highly Commended, Adult Category*

## **Stargazing in the Waiting Room**

*trying to avoid diabetic retinopathy*

I close my eyes at the surgery because everything blurs.  
As I wait, my mind's eye fills with the hospital ward  
where they diagnosed me, age six, not quite believing.

A week of white walls, learning life-long injections,  
practising on an orange, weighing food for carbs,  
waiting for Mum and Dad to tell me different...

I open my eyes for real now; light floods my pupils'  
dilated tunnels. Things warp. Faces become smudges,  
words merely shadows on a page I want to close.

Called in, I follow a green dot while a man scans  
my retinas. Year after year, he tracks my eyes  
as if the night sky, two bloodshot moons on screen.

Later, he will study them in detail, chart the sharp stars  
of burst veins, cloudy spots, abnormal traces...  
He'll tell me what he finds, then try to foresee

my future sight, help me guard against the dark.

*Sarah Leavesley*

*Highly Commended, Adult Category*