

Strokestown International Poetry Prize Winners 2020

Judges; Poets John F. Deane and Enda Wyley

Winners, First, Second and Third

1. If I were to land

Judges' Comments;

'If I Were to Land,' is a stirring, accomplished, unusual and well-formed poem which immediately caught our attention. It's arresting opening line compels the reader forward into a beating narrative with memorable images. A striking poem, as much about love, as it is about loss – and ultimately, the heartbreak that freedom can bring. We were both delighted to award this poem First Place in the Strokestown International Poetry Prize 2020.

2. Every Day, I think of Those Years

Judges' Comments;

There is a nostalgic energy to this poem which remains with you long after reading it. A father yearns for the early years of fatherhood in Germany, the 'cool / fennel-laden air of northern summer nights,' and his cycling his young son home after a happy evening spent with his wife and friends. This honest, heart-felt poem, dense with evocative images of a time gone, has more than earned Second Place in this competition.

3. Whose Coat?

Judges' Comments;

A coat that has hung on a hook for twenty seven years carries a devastating story which is fluidly revealed in this moving poem. Anyone who has experienced loss, particularly that of a child, will identify with this courageous poem which will also reach out to all readers as a profoundly empathetic study of grief.

Seven other winners in no particular order:

4. Above and Beyond:

Judges' Comments;

There is an effective ease to this poem which celebrates a place and time in Japan a thousand years ago. Packed with exotic detail, this small, crafted poem, offers a surprisingly wry end.

5.The Reincarnated Ghost of R.S Thomas Interviewed for the Position of Editor of Poetry Wales, September, 2019.

Judges' Comments;

The reincarnated ghost of a famous poet fails an interview for the position of Editor of Poetry Wales in this quirky poem which is humorous and moving all at once.

6.The Pause

Judges' Comments;

This poem does exactly as its title suggests and causes us to pause and imagine all the lives which others might attribute to us, while also celebrating true friendship. An imaginative, well structured poem that engages to the end.

7.Two Teenagers

Judges' Comments;

An arresting poem which suspends a moment in time successfully.

8.Whenever my Dad Read to me

Judges' Comments;

This exuberant poem celebrates a father reading to his son and is jam-packed with imaginative comparisons which makes for a fun and poignant read.

9.Crocodile

Judges' Comments;

A crocodile languidly stretching across a hospital waiting room makes this a surreal poem worth encountering. But the poem takes a surprising turn and also inhabits the tragic story of the artist Modigliani's wife and the taking of her own life after his death. A memorable, unusual poem.

10.Pas de Deux

Judges' Comments;

A moving, meditation which offers possibility and hope to the reader, making this a tender, beautiful poem.