

*dlr Local  
Voices*  
Poetry  
2020

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## *dlr Local Voices* Poetry 2020

In May 2020 as part of the Artworks Home project Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council asked four local professional poets to write poems as a way of keeping in touch with people during the Covid 19 crisis, especially those who might be cocooning. Poets have a unique talent of expressing beautifully in written form emotions felt by many and we are lucky to have such a wealth of talent in the County. We hope you will enjoy these poems by Katie Donovan, Lucinda Jacob, Paul Perry and Jessica Traynor.

Simultaneously Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council hosted a poetry competition and was delighted to receive some amazing entries. The judges had a tough job deciding but we are sure you will agree selected some very worthy winners. Thanks to everyone who took the time to enter and a big congratulations to all our winners!

This booklet showcases some of the work from the professional poets and the competition prize winners. We hope it gives you great enjoyment reading it and that it acts in future years as a literary record of this time in our County's history when our communities came together by staying apart.

*The poetry competition was generously funded by Creative Ireland.*

# Katie Donovan

## *Feline Lockdown*

Fighting to defend  
his territory,  
our cat is mauled  
by a younger,  
hungrier male:  
slinks home, suffering  
a fang-punctured neck;  
a shredded ear.

He must wear a collar,  
and stay inside,  
while the wounds heal;  
grows itchy and restless  
as the stitching chafes;  
the scabs tighten.

He scrawbs the doors,  
the windows;  
claws the lock  
on the catflap,  
howls to be free.

He gazes at sun; trees;  
the temptation of birds.  
His eyes lose  
their bright gloss.

This imprisoning  
feels like forever.

## *Marking Time, Dalkey*

Our morning swells  
with the sonority of bees –  
bumbles, in their fluffy coats,  
hover over the rosemary  
and wild garlic;  
sip from the pink cups  
of lungwort.

Afternoon, and a kayak  
pulls in at the island,  
where distant goats roam;  
we squint in the sun,  
spotting a seal lift  
his salty, whiskered head  
from the rippling water.

Later, in the quarry,  
where we take an evening stroll;  
a lone wren fills  
the gorse-studded hollow  
with resounding song.

The setting sun  
warm on her back,  
a fox creeps  
along secret paths;  
reaching the tall grass,  
she rests by the cowslips,  
under our apple tree.

# Lucinda Jacob

## *I Love My Dog*

Because she wakes me by jumping on the bed  
Because she licks my face while I push her away  
Because she scratches at the door and whines to be let out  
Because she always wants to go for a walk  
Because she loves to run after her ball  
Because she brings it back for me to throw again  
Because she runs and jumps in the air to catch it  
Because she wants me to throw it again  
Because she knows I will throw it again  
Because she doesn't let me stop throwing –  
Because she wags her tail all day

## *Dear Tadpoles*

Dear Tadpoles,  
I haven't seen you in a while.  
How are you? Keeping well?  
I have to stay in the shade  
under this leaf  
but my neighbour snail is here  
so that's a relief.  
I'll look out for you in the pond.  
Please write, or otherwise respond.

Well, must stop,

Got to hop,

All my love, Mum

# Paul Perry

## *Lockdown Haiku-Variations*

— 1  
morning: the magpies screech and rattle  
spring sunshine  
the island holds its breath

— 2  
night: a red fox and its cub  
saunter down the street unafraid  
beneath a super moon's orange light

— 3  
out walking –  
children's toys stare out  
the windows of quiet houses

— 4  
forget the news tonight  
I want to hear music  
the sounds of something beautiful

— 5  
I cycle around Marley  
its gates are open  
but only for cocooners

— 6  
my mother rings  
choc-ices  
she wants me to bring choc-ices

— 7  
on Zoom this morning I talk  
with students about Wallace Stevens  
about imagination and reality

— 8  
We're not to feed them bread  
The ducks  
We're not to feed them peas

But my son still thinks  
That they're the best  
Because they can swim and fly!

— 9  
In Marley Park  
There is a waterfall  
A secret waterfall

My son and daughter run  
Over and over the waterfall  
They're smiling and laughing

Like nothing has changed  
Like everything  
is just as it was

# Jessica Traynor

## *Hawthorn*

Your favourite place on our daily walks;  
a grass-pocked heap of earth,  
our watch-tower over wide playing fields.  
We clamber up, grasping tussocks of grass.  
*Watch, there's nettles. Be careful. Hold my hand –*  
but you slip away away, scouring the park  
for something, haring up and down  
this pint-size mountain, raising cabbage whites  
and common blues from ragwort,  
shaking dandelion clocks like some  
distracted interrogator. The far trees  
hold your gaze, the closest one a hawthorn,  
smothered in whipped drifts of flowers.  
*My brother is in the tree, you say,*  
and you're gone again before I can ask  
how the idea of a brother could take root in you.  
Some old cunning turns in me,  
and I pull a clump of low hanging flowers,  
breathe their tang of sex and death –  
leave them on my doorstep to wither overnight,  
a May charm against changelings, or harm.

*Boy on the Edge* after Simon Armitage

His eyes were foil milk bottle tops  
 pecked open by scavenging magpies  
 his speech was word-salad  
 tossed and drenched with French dressing

His hand was an anchor tethered  
 to an invisible ship in a storm  
 his neurons scrambled egg  
 sprinkled with pepper and salt

His thoughts were popcorn kernels  
 bursting in a microwave oven  
 his dreams were a London Tube map  
 thrown in a tumble dryer stuck on hot

His feet were urban foxes at night  
 scavenging in a dumpster  
 his skin was a swarm of Cuban crabs  
 crawling on orange legs to the Bay of Pigs

His nails were a yellow danger sign  
 at the edge of a vertical cliff  
 his anger was the imprint of an iron  
 burned on a white cotton sheet

His clothes were graffiti on the walls  
 of an abandoned warehouse  
 his reasoning was a kite on a string  
 whipped by the wind from a child's grasp

His regrets were unexploded WWII bombs  
 at the bottom of the ocean  
 The woman who visited him  
 was a replica of his mother as a ceramic cat

But her high-pitched miaow and pointy ears  
 didn't fool him and his Ma would never dress like that all in black  
 the next time she purred he planned to smash her into pieces  
 and superglue her back together the shape of his real mother

*Flower Moon, Redesdale: May 2020*

I wake not knowing which way I'm facing –  
 the door has moved.  
 Through thin white layers,  
 curtain and blind, the night is luminous.

Downstairs, the kitten mewls.

Angular light spills from the fridge.  
 I pour milk into her dish  
 watch little pink tongue lap.

Fruit flies hover over the plate  
 destined for the compost bin –  
 banana skin, mandarin peel, lime slices.

I take the plate to the front garden.

Above the terraced houses, the sky  
 is Prussian blue  
 a Japanese woodcut; full flower moon  
 a flat cream disc.

The wooden garden furniture  
 is all odd angles, an unsolved theorem.  
 Yellow streetlight fizzes on a water  
 glass. A light breeze  
 carries scent, floral, familiar.

I am back in my childhood garden  
 my father saying, *come on,*  
*come outside, smell the night-scented phlox.*  
 I throw my teenage eyes to heaven.

I remember the little phlox flowers, white  
 wheels with red hubs, remember  
 strawberry plants –  
 running, sprawling across soil ridges

sweet pea with delicate tendrils,  
 curling, searching  
 for a wire to cling to.

I don't dream him often.

He shows up now and then  
 a passenger in my car,  
 smelling of cigarette smoke,  
 petrol-soaked overalls.

*The Sky's Ever-Changing Colour*

Eat, sleep, work, repeat,  
It's the same thing every day.  
By week two there's no more books to read  
We've run out of games to play.

The same fake stories are recycled  
On the news again and again  
It's like we're stuck in a repeating time loop  
Of a day that never seems to end.

The only thing that changes  
From one day to another  
Is the weather outside the window  
The sky's ever-changing colour.

I feel a strange excitement  
As I pull up the blind,  
A strange thrill goes through me  
As I wonder what weather I will find.

Today dawn paints threads of amber  
Across a cornflower sky  
Soon the sun is shining overhead  
The low clouds drifting by.

The afternoon melts into evening  
White sunlight softening to an amber glow  
It's like looking at the world through a  
vintage filter  
Shadows grow longer as the sun sinks low

Twilight is a watercolour painting  
Indigo mingled with saffron and rose  
The sharpened silhouettes of trees  
and houses  
Signal the day has come to a close.

Night is a stretch of obsidian,  
Soon the moon begins to ascend  
The infinite blackness goes on forever  
With no clear beginning, and no end.

The yellow orb of light rises higher  
Stars begin to appear  
The faraway specks of hope  
Seem to say "We'll always be here".

It's the same sky outside my grandfather's  
hospital room  
He's too weak to use his phone  
But somehow, it's comforting that he can  
see the stars, too  
And feel that he's not so alone.

*Ceramics Class*

Putty in your hands,  
Our minds are moulded by your actions  
Our thinks and our dos and our says  
And our passions.

But hardened clay cracks under attempts at correction,  
Splitting ravines when you pry for perfection.

While you may shape us  
As a life shapes a tomb,  
As a pen shapes a letter,  
As a light shapes a room,

You don't make us,  
As the earth makes sand,  
As love makes lovers  
As does music make a band.

Every child is a gift,  
Not to the bearers but the world,  
A gift given when clay hardens,  
And it's wings are unfurled.

## Frances Browner

WINNER HAIKU

### *Lockdown*

on an empty pier  
waves crash, gulls cry  
dreaming of cherry blossom

## Caroline Bracken

RUNNER UP  
HAIKU

### *West Pier Dún Laoghaire*

boats shelter in place  
empty fish crates stacked  
on the quay

## Eva Valentina Mulvee

AGE 9

WINNER  
UNDER 12'S

### *The Glass Box*

My toes push  
into the cool garden grass  
It's the daily stretch with Joe.  
But my mind can't escape the daily deaths.  
I try not to think of my grandparents getting Coronavirus or waving through glass.

I see my friends through screens. Flat and pixilated.  
I dislike how the world feels now. Out of reach.  
On our walks past the Lexicon, my parents tell me to stay away from others, stay apart.  
Things are so different now.

The radio news talks about coronavirus nonstop.  
I kick stones into the water by Dun Laoghaire pier. *Come on slowcoach*, my dad shouts

The shops have glass separating us. We have to sit in the car when mum goes in,  
our fingers make designs on the sweaty windows. I try to make my sister smile.

I wish I knew what happens next. When will it come to an end? I'm tired of looking  
out windows.

*The Spirt that wasn't there*

I strode down the hallway,  
Everything was bare,  
It was so quiet,  
The doors seemed to stare.

No boys in the classroom,  
No pictures on the walls,  
There was no sound,  
No — nothing at all.

The Hall is now empty,  
The paint pots run dry.  
The 6th class boys —  
no chance for 'goodbye'.

I spent so much time here,  
My Spirit never left,  
Missing the sounds,  
It just feels like theft.

When this is all over,  
I'll make myself known,  
The 'Spirit of Holly Park' —  
through the boys I'll be shown.

Since 1994 Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council has taken great pride in developing and supporting the Arts. The Council views the arts as an important service that contributes to the quality of life for those who live in, work in and visit the County.

We are extremely proud of our reputation as a supportive home for the arts and believe in their intrinsic value and the vital contribution that they make to the wellbeing and quality of life of the County.

For more information on the Arts Office visit our website, [www.dlrcoco.ie/arts](http://www.dlrcoco.ie/arts), follow us on social media or sign up to receive our e-bulletin.



