



Poetry

2019 Hippocrates Prize for Poetry and Medicine

First Prize, FPM-Hippocrates Open Category
The 2019 Hippocrates Prize for Poetry and Medicine

Claudia Daventry
for my Valentine in an fMRI scanner

Beloved,

It's because of the way your parahippocampal gyrus
 glows green under pressure. The way your parietal lobe
 (which, try as I might, I can't see as inferior)
 shows hyperactivity when I whisper sweet nothings.

For this alone I want to sail away to your bilateral insula
 in a precuneus coracle, drag it high on white sand, dance
 the cingulate cortex breathless and wild,

then pull you close and do the fusiform gyrus
 as the fiery plate of the sun drops
 below the horizon.

You are my frontal and limbic regions of interest.
 You alone are my dorsal hypoactive cluster.
 You have declared cerebellum on my own amygdala,
 o, stroll with me under the globus pallidus of the moon.

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First Prize, FPM-Hippocrates Health Professional Category
The 2019 Hippocrates Prize for Poetry and Medicine

Sharon Ackerman
Dementia Praecox

For Julia Gremer, BSN 1957-1917
Pain Clinic, University of Virginia

It begins with a coffee cup
 under the sink-
 How did it get there?

Laughing. A plant left to die
 root-bound in its pot, you
 who loved small, green things.

Was the dog fed?
 Was the dog fed? Stuffing
 kibble into your pockets.

Arms clamped, even the ribs
 defect, until your eyes freeze walk
 the coastline off San Francisco.

Where white barges blow
 a maritime horn and you sit
 in oversized pants beneath a lemon tree

As fog sweeps quite suddenly
 into the garden, stealing its history.

© Sharon Ackerman

The 2019 Hippocrates Young Poets Prize for Poetry and Medicine

Rebecca Byrne
The Butcher's Doll

There are two scars on both my thighs,
 mauve and inelegant.
 A battle axe instead of a hatchet
 was implemented to tear away the gentle flesh from sinning
 bone.

Sinful. Slothful. Succulent.
 These words all beginning with an s and semantically meaning
 wrong
 Sum up the equation. My bones are gone.

Slipped Upper Femoral Epiphysis
 A medical-jargon term for the fact
 That the surgeon's incisor knife is tearing through my thighs
 Is this the way that escaped victims of cannibals feel?
 A discordant, ratchet, rag doll lack of self.
 Cause your body disobeys health
 And has a taciturn fling with death.

The word Anesthetist is falling into disuse
 Apparently patients can't vocalise the word
 It's a stressful one, for sure.
 Anaesthesiologist is the new, hip-hop, popular choice.

However, when they place a gas mask on your face
 And make you laugh until unconsciousness kisses you still.
 I like to know the term for the androgynous person who kills
 you and then returns you
 To the living land of sin.

Afterwards, you briefly wake to see a blue nurse of purity walk
your trolley down some fleeting
Hall of white
You drowsy, and dumb. Presume Heaven is greeting you
through a veil of drugs.

Sometime later, many tickings of the clock.
You awake to a pain that's insurmountable by love, adulations
and imbalanced rock.
The most important milestone of the day;
They make you walk.
A step or two from the square on metal
That's more an abstract concept of a bed
Than a sleeping instrument.
The abnormal difficulty of a few, infinitesimal fairy steps.
Chokes you into dismay. You stand tall and immobile.

The physiotherapist doesn't play nice. A bad cop on TV
has more sympathy than she.

They let you home the same day
As you cried and fumed like a spoilt socialite.

Two weeks later, an appointment to the Orthopedic hospital is
due.
They must miss you.
Down you go, a torn and broken lump of human.
The doctor looks at your thighs once beautiful now marred
By ugly linear bruises.
Bye, bye to your dancing dreams my sweet, sweet child.

He commits the unmentionable even though it's perfectly prac-
ticed
He assures
He takes the staples out.
In reality, he orders a peroxide nurse to go carry out the filthy
deed.
One by one.
A sickening stampede of staples are torn from the battered
flesh.
You miss them. They were part of your body. A living organism
made from synthetic means.

The weirdest finding from the whole debacle
The staples were the easiest part
A whole company of drugs helps you start anew.

I'm a Phoenix, with the aid of a pharmaceutical crew.

© Rebecca Byrne

The poets and their prize-winning poems

Claudia Daventry has studied languages, poetry and psychology and worked as a writer, translator and teacher in France, Spain and the Netherlands before moving to Scotland. Her poetry and essays have appeared in publications including *The Dark Horse*, *The Island Review*, the *Irish Literary Review*, *Magma*, *Poetry London*, *Poem*, *Raum*, *Measure*, *Versal* and in anthologies from *Bloodaxe*, *Five Leaves*, *Smokestack* and *Luath*. Awards and commendations for her work include Arvon, Philip Larkin and McLellan prizes. She was placed first in the inaugural Ruskin prize and Bridport Prize. Her solo chapbook *The Oligarch Loses his Patience* won a Templar award in 2016.

She said: "*for my Valentine in an fMRI scanner* was inspired by the colours shown up by neuroimaging subjects with PTSD and TBI as the brain reacts to different stimuli, and seeing the beloved in a new light. Formally it's a nod to a kind of scrambled love sonnet which has two halves set as if magnetically drawn to one another, a sestet between the two quatrains, and I had fun playing with the Latin and Greek terms for areas of the brain, their functions and the images they conjured up, either via etymology or just the music of the words. In its essence it's about the 'subject' as a human being, and, more, loving someone who may be termed 'disordered' from the outside, but whose brain on the inside lights up in glorious technicolour – and whose trauma makes them beautiful."

The 2019 FPM-Hippocrates Prizes were supported by the Fellowship of Postgraduate Medicine, for which *Health Policy and Technology* is an official journal. Find out more about the Hippocrates Prize and the Hippocrates Initiative for Poetry and Medicine at hippocrates-poetry.org

Sharon Ackerman earned an M.Ed from the University of Virginia, Charlottesville and has worked as a nurse in the UVA Pain Clinic for fifteen years. Her poems have been published in *Heartwood Literary Magazine*, *StreetLight Magazine*, and forthcoming in the *Atlanta Review*. Her poem *Dementia Praecox* was written for close friend and fellow nurse Julia, who died of early onset dementia. She said: "The relentless theft of dementia brought us (her co-workers) to the edge of our assumptions about what makes us who we are, and where the soul, if one believes in souls, resides."

Rebecca Byrne is a student at Kilkenny College studying for her Leaving Certificate. She began writing when ten years old while a hospital in-patient. Two of her poems were published in the 2019 April edition of the international literary review *Qutub Minar*. She said: "The inspiration for *The Butcher's Doll* is auto-biographical. Most of my work tends to draw on previous, tangible experiences that encapsulate events in my life. This poem was written four years after my operation for Slipped Upper Femoral Epiphysis. Whilst being a "butcher's doll" I suffered from an asthma attack, causing one of my scars to be "mauve and inelegant". I wasn't able to do any form of exercise for four years after the operation and this is in part why my writing developed into a *raison d'être*."

The 2019 FPM-Hippocrates Prizes were supported by the Fellowship of Postgraduate Medicine [1], for which *Health Policy and Technology* is an official journal.

The 2019 Hippocrates Young Poets Prize was supported by healthy heart charity the Cardiovascular Research Trust [2].

Find out more about the Hippocrates Prize and the Hippocrates Initiative for Poetry and Medicine at hippocrates-poetry.org. All winning and commended poems in the 2019 Hippocrates Prize were published in the 2019 Hippocrates Prize Anthology [3].

References

- [1] Website for the Fellowship of Postgraduate Medicine: www.thefpm.org.uk.
- [2] Website for the Cardiovascular Research Trust: www.healthyheartcharity.com.
- [3] The 2019 Hippocrates Prize Anthology. Selected by judges Kate Adie CBE, Jennifer Clement, Jane Dacre DBE and Elizabeth Smither MNZM. Hulse MW, Singer DRJ, editors. The Hippocrates Press, London; 17 May 2019. ISBN 978-0-9935911-3-6.