

Poetry Series

**Sheena Blackhall**  
**- poems -**

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## Sheena Blackhall(18/8/1947)

Sheena Blackhall is a writer, illustrator, traditional ballad singer and storyteller in North East Scotland. From 1998-2003 she was Creative Writing Fellow in Scots at Aberdeen University's Elphinstone I has published four Scots novellas, fourteen short story collections and over 100 poetry collections, some of which are listed here (most recent first) . Two of her plays have been televised. She has won several national awards for Scots poetry and short-story writing. In 2009 she became the poet laureate for Aberdeen & the North East of Scotland.

# 10 Scots Poems From The Burnin Buss

innie, as a Bairn  
I am the bairn, Lizzie  
Ae day I'll growe tae be yer granminnie

I am weirin ma button up buits  
Ma hair's bane-caimbed tae clear ma heid o flechs  
Caught in ma schule ootower Migvie Moss

Ma harns are an iver-raxxin quaich.  
Latin & Scots baith ream atween ma lugs  
An in ma mou, roch sangs the shepherds' sing

I am wud's an unbrukken shelt  
Clean connached, ma faither's pet  
Oor ferm hoose sits nearhaun the Pictish stane  
Backed bi a Celtic Cross.

Fit's Time bit a flee's pech?  
I ken Auld Lear an New.  
I hae a wyce heid on young shoulders

Sune, ma faither will rin frae the hoose  
Lowpin the girse like a bawd  
Tae far ma sister Sally stauns there skirlin  
Stung bi bees, forced aff the cliff o Reason.

Dae bee stings caa fowk gyte?  
She wis ay a thochtie fey....

Ae day I'll be the bee that feeds ye hinney  
Ma grandother, I'll gie ye luv an lauchter.

2.A Scots Owersett of a poem by Pia Tafdrup  
Foo is this a human body?  
The craitur wauks on twa shank's meer  
An can makk eese o a star screwdriver  
It lauchs an greets lood  
It etts meat, sleeps, bit likewise spikks an sings

Philosophises an learns Spanish in its free time  
An takks tent o a drap o its ain bluid in a miscroscope  
It sens letters, a wechty pruif o its human life  
Like the singin o the yuletide sangs it has learned bi hairt  
An the maistry o the twinty times table  
Even fin its waukened up in the mids o the nicht

The lion trysts wi this craitur in a braid park  
Sees twa een, twa lugs an the tint fur  
It's the lion fa fins  
Fit's left ower is the human's name  
That plants sclimm up  
Whilst wirms, emerteens an hornygollachs heeze aroon  
A skirlin bird whyles launs on it  
The bird's nae dowie  
Anely the fowk fa devaul aside the stane.

Owersetts frae English translations o Classic Haiku  
Naebody cared tippence  
That the flooers' bonnieness dwined  
An I saw masel in the warld grown auld  
As the rain gaed on faain.....Ono no Komachi,9th C. woman poet

Takk tent o thon warbler-  
He's dichtin his dubby feet  
Aa ower the plum flooers....Issa  
Fin the bell's tune dwinnles  
The yoam o gean devauls  
Gloamin hauf-light....Basho

The bairn greets at her breist  
An the mozzie bites as weel  
The mither, sleepin....RanRan

Wydin ben the burnie  
In simmer, cairryin ma sheen  
Foo blithesome! ...Basho

A win this nicht  
An wee waves splyter  
The cweets o a blae heron.....Buson

Here an thonner hynie-awa  
The soun o rain throw  
The young leaves faain....buson

Thon hyne aff Bens  
Caught in the  
ee-jewels o the dragonflee...Issa

Foo braw the lift is  
Fin a lintie  
Has bin singin....Issa

Corn hairst in the Faa  
Loons skelpin a snake  
On a kintra roadie...Shiki

They hae hackit doon  
The sauch. Sae the kingfishers  
Hae vanished as weel....Shiki

Echt Myndins: a Scots Owersett from 60 Songs of Milarepa,  
Castles an steerie touns, they are sic airts  
Ye like tae bide in, spokes upon Life's Gird  
Bit mynd, they'll fa tae stoor as weel's yersel  
Efter yer corp has vanished frae the Yird!

Pride an the thocht o Fame's fit drives ye on  
This path ye traivel, a queer road tae pree;  
For mynd, fin ye are seek an like tae dee  
It gies nae bield fin Daith's yett swings ajee!

Kinsmen an friens are fowk ye luv eenoo  
An bide wi them, thinkin them best ava  
Bit mynd, that ye maun leave them aa ahin  
Fin frae the Yird it's time tae wyve ta ta!

Skiffies, siller, hame an bairns as weel  
These are the ferlies that ye haud maist dear  
But mynd, fin it comes time tae weir awa  
Yer hauns are teem. Ye maun leave aa yer gear!

Smeddum an virr, they may delicht ye noo  
An ye nicht prize them baith, as wurdly jewels  
Bit mynd, fin Daith cams chappin at yer hoose  
Yer corp will be fit anely for the mools!

Eenoo, yer hairt an harns, yer banes an braith  
Yer flesh an bluid are perfeck, mair or less  
Bit mynd ye, at the meenit o yer death  
They'll be as eeseless as a pile o aisse!

Sweet an mooth-watterin deinties bi the score  
Ye like tae ett, an think sic treats the best  
Bit mynd, fin Daith snips aff yer threid o Life  
It's dryin slivvers in yer mou at laist

Fin I sit doon tae think upon sic things  
I canna help bit bless the Buddha's lear!  
Pleisurs an passin ferlies o this warld  
Are nocht bit fireflauchts, this tae me is clear

I, Milarepa, sing o these Echt myndins,  
At the Guest Hoose in Garakhache o Tsang.  
Wi these clear wirds, takk tent, I gie ye warnin  
Turn tae the Dharma, an, my frien, think lang!

#### 5. Aesop's Wren as Listener

This foreneen I'm Aesop's wren  
Fleein up tae the lift  
On the backs o ithers' poems

#### 6. Veesitor

The morn should niver veesit yestreen  
I keeked throw a windae  
Expeckin ma aunt's physog,  
Reid-faced an floory frae bakin scones

A wumman wi a face like a skelped erse  
Glowered back at me,  
Steekin the curtains

An waur, the ley far I eesed tae wauk the kye  
Wis stappit wi streets caad 'Leafy Mews', Stone Lane

#### 7. Mediaeval Breid

Eftir the quake in hynie-aff Nepal  
Fin fowk wir stervin in pure poverty  
Mrs McGraw baked mediaeval breid  
Frae a recipe she googled up for tea

Riddlin the san an seawatter thegither,  
A richt doonpish o rain is jeelin weet  
Launchin the leaves doon gutters in a swither.

Ye'd think the lift itsel brukk doon tae greet  
The clouds turn wechty wi wae's scunneration,  
For rain, like tears, faa fin derk sorras meet.

An yird an floers are caad tae crockanation  
Fin dweeble stems, rain-sypit, canna staun,  
Life's fit alane fur dyeuks, the drookit nation.

I maun allow some shouers maun sloke the lan,  
Bit days an wikks o eynless onding dreepin,  
Dae little guid for wumman, beast or man.

An sypin moose an bawd wi watter creepin  
Abeen their hames, are far ower feart for sleepin.

#### Nor East Win

A wud- eed shelt gaes fleein by the meen,  
The North East Win's this charger. Nae reprieves  
For boaties caad tae smachrie by his sheen.

His braith is cauld. He wheechs aff chitterin leaves.  
Trees raxx their tethers, lowsin frichtit doos.  
The hairst is flattened, ilkie fermer grieves.

This Win is coorse, aa Natur fears his roose.  
Fusslin sae fierce an forcey he'd bumbaze.

The decks o fishin watter-draigglit crews.

The toun maun hunker doon on sic-like days,  
Afore this pouerfu Win, wi virr sae strang!  
A wheep ye'd think yer skin he near haun flays.

Sic days are dreich, His dirge, a keenin sang.  
Sae dowie, fowk are gled tae see the mirk  
Safe in their hames, his airy stangs aff flang.

Roon nyakkit neuks, this Win jags like a dirk.  
Rattlin the verra reef-tree o the meen,  
He shakks the lan, a futterat at its wirk.  
Bit brakks afore the micht o granite steen.

Yellowhammer's Nest: John Clare: Owersett in Scots

The Yalla Yeitie's Nest

Aside the timmer brig a bird flew up,  
Flegged by the herd lad as he sliddered doon  
Tae reach the dyew-weet brummle—come, let's boo  
Hunt oot its nest—the burn we needna dreid,  
Thon's hardly deep eneuch a bee tae droon,  
Sae it sings hermlless ower its steeny bed

—Ay here it is, bigged hard teetle the sheuch  
Aneth the swatch o girse that spinnles teuch  
Its husk seeds heich an slim—it's roch in plan  
Wi sun-fite stibbles an the sair-crined fare  
That last year's haist left lyin on the lan  
Lined thinly wi the sheltie's pit-mirk hair.

Five eggies, pen-screived ower wi ink their shells  
Screived ower wi inky scrawls, like oorie Ides  
As natur's barderie an kintra spells—  
They are the yella yeitie's an she bides  
Maist bardie-like far burns an flooery weeds  
As swete as Castaly (sae notions growe)  
An thon auld mowdie's humph, like Parnass' knowe  
Her dearie cocks abeen, his thochties turn  
Ower aa her joys o sang—sae leave thon howe  
A blythesome hame o sunsheen, flooers an burn.



Yet in the doucest airts, ills wecht the powe, Aside the timmer brig a bird flew up,

Flegged by the herd lad as he sliddered doon  
Tae reach the dyew-weet brummle—come, let's boo  
Hunt oot its nest—the burn we needna dreid,  
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Her dearie cocks abeen, his thochties turn  
Ower aa her joys o sang—sae leave thon howe  
A blythesome hame o sunsheen, flooers an burn.

Yet in the doucest airts, whyles, there comes ill,  
A scunnerin weed that connachs ilkie yird;  
For snakes are kent, cauld, deid, wioot a wurd  
Tae watch sic nests an grip the helpless young,  
And like as no, the plague becam a guest,  
Leavin a hooseless hame, a bladdened nest—  
An dowie has the yalla yeitie sung  
Fin sic like waes hae rived its teenie breist.

A scunnerin weed that connachs ilkie yird;  
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An dowie has the yalla yeitie sung  
Fin sic like waes hae rived its teenie breist.

Sheena Blackhall

# 10 Scots Poems From The Poetry Hat

## 1. Færmntoun Idyll

The sharny parks lie hett in the heicht o Simmer  
The kye staun pugglit an trauchelt in the girse  
Flees heeze aroon the hochs o the Friesian milker  
Her dreepin teets are fu as a miser's purse

The ferm hoose coories doon aneth the wids  
Aneth the wids an doon ablow the Bens  
As bonnie an airt as iver graced the kintra  
Bricht wi poppies an thyme frae the uplan glens

## 2. Daisie

Fa could eat Daisy sae fite an sae fair  
Wi her wattles sae reid an her caimb in the air?

Nae mair eggies an sodjers in china egg cup  
Gin ye thrappled puir Daisy an byled her up

## 3. Burn o Vat

Siller rins the Vat at gloamin  
Skirped wi whisky-glents o gowd  
Growin derkness mangst the fir trees  
Catch the antrin prearlin cloud

Trinkle trinkle rins the Burn  
Treetlin ower the troot-broon steen  
Bonnie riverie o the Heilans  
Hashin on till warlds be deen

## 4. n an Cat

Miss Geddes steers her parritch doucely  
A lanely secretar in her flat  
An aa she has for company's  
The TVscreen an her green-eed cat

Miss Geddes warssles intae wark

Far colleagues barely ken her name  
Tho she's vrecht there nigh saxteen year  
An ilkie scunnerin day's the same

In sun, in snaa, in haar in weet  
Chyned tae her desk like some auld soo  
An ilkie cheenge is smaa an quaet  
Anither wrinkle ower her broo

Her cat, Flitch, has anither life  
He lowps frae hoose tae street at nicht  
An fin the meen hings ower the stars  
His een bleeze bricht wi eildritch licht

His claws are reid an raxxed tae kill  
His back is boeed, his teeth glent sherp  
Till pammerin sleekit ben the wids  
He grallochs birdies in the derk

His friens are Minnaloushe, Sabine,  
Nekobus, Makalu, Lucifer  
An little Miss Geddes kens o this  
Fin Flitch cams hame like a Sanct, tae purr

Wee Crows  
Twa wee craws withoot their maws  
Gaed aff tae see the toon  
They drapped, for fun, tae chaw a bun  
A car caad twa craws doon

tions on the Scottish Scone Eating Ceremony  
Tyrone McGraw, aged three  
Stuffs hauf a scone in his mou  
In a winner.  
Jam squelches doon his chin  
In jammy runnles  
'Pure deid brilliant, maw, ' sez young McGraw

Miss Clarissa McBride  
Beheds her scone, perjink like, wi a knife

Her crannie cocked, in the noted genteel mainer

The scone lies quartered like Wallace  
The clarty strawberries, the hero's reid intimmers  
Oozin ower the fleshy dough, like bluid

Rab Duthie, tattooed welder,  
Opens his piece-box wi a sigh.  
'Nae scones again, ' he murns  
'I'm nae some coffin-dodger.'

Kirsty McFaddyn an her professional peers  
Sook their Proseccos, turn the ashets roon  
Ett the peely wally triangles o breid  
(thin as a leaf, wi cucumber atween)  
Savin the scones for last

They tap it aff wi cream..  
Scones, for the fashionistas

the Carnies  
Faithers stravaig by rides  
Baldies wi shaved heids, their pynts wallop  
Lowse abune their trainers,  
Their bellies shooglin, builder's bum ahin

Littlins, plottin wi swyte, plap past  
Wi faces like wee hairst meens, rosie-reid wi rinnin  
Ice cream melts in cones  
Pygmy volcanoes eruptin treelips o fite

Weet hippens wechtit doon wi pee  
Gar babies waddle like dyeuks

Trauchelt, the antrin toddler losses the plot  
Skirls, snotters, greets, fleein in aa directions  
She stamps her feet wi roose, a bylin kettle hotterin

The waltzers birl, a blur o skyrie cars  
Stappit wi skreichin quines  
Tae a dirl o lug-crackin music

Showdie powdie the pirate swing boats  
Raxx heich tae the lift  
An back. The Muckle Wheel furls roon  
Like a Buddhist prayer wheel  
Lauchter instead o prayers, wauchtin throwe the air

The makkie-on warld o the carnies  
Far baddies aywis losse, has its ain glamourie  
Aabody aff doon the Yalla Brick Road  
Faister than a sports car at Le Mans

A fite wifie wi purple taenails  
Gluggers doon the dregs o a frappacino  
The play neuk for bairns is  
Saft as a heeze o burgers. They stot an winna brakk

Aabody etts on the hoof like a herd o Friesians

er Callum Brochan, described as Scottish Food  
Maister Callum Brochan  
Is a sonsie wee pudden o a chiel.

Frae ahin, his bihoochie resembles  
Twa cloutie dumplins fechtin in a pyoke

It's as weel nae tae staun ower near him  
His oxters bowf  
Like the choicest fried kippers  
Left twa days in the rain

His hair is taiglet like a bummil buss,  
The colour o Irn Bru

His teeth are the hue o tablet,  
Saft an broon wi sookin  
Pandrops tae smush durin kirk sermons

His lugs are like twa mushies  
Growin ooto a muckle neep  
An his een are wee an weetie

Like blueberries new pickit  
Bi an auld wife wi forcey thoomb

His wyme is as wummly as cranachan,  
An his braith is wersh as goosers  
Kirned wi dulse bree an ingins

Nae tae aabody's taste,  
Bit watch his face licht up at  
A deep fried Mars Bar!

endum: Eurydice Tint  
A flashmob o mair nor 1,000 roarin 'Ay'  
Stappit the auncient Castlegate o Aiberdeen on a Setterday rally  
Chantin, flag wyvin fowk  
Bairns wi Saltire faces  
A dug weirin its fite an blue jaiket  
Gas wirkers, ile wirkers, halflin, littlins  
Auld bodachs, chauncers, skiffies, sparkies  
Cheerin ahin pipers, hippies, students  
The world an its wife on the rin up tae makkin history

Wallace's wirds dirled ben the granite cassies  
Bruce on his shelt, raised his haun tae the lift,  
In the killin hoose, the office, the mart  
In the picture hoose, the howff, the skweel  
The spikk on ilkie neuk wis about the Future  
Posties, porters, bikers, hikers, argy bargyin

An syne, the votes war connted  
Hopes cam tummlin doon  
The aisse o yestreen steered up wi virr an smeddum  
Swypit awa like stoor  
Fit a difference a day makks!

The scales o indecesion had trimmled an cowped  
At waddins, kistins, christenins  
At ceilidhs, bevvies, rammies  
Aathin hung on the threid o brakkin news

Fit ouiji boord cud hae faddomed thon ootcam?

This day oor kintra cud hae raxxed its auncient wings  
Taen flicht an soared

Bit like Orpheus luikin backwird at Euyrice  
Dootin the pouer o oor richt tae a blythe new stert  
We loused the grup on oor ain Weird an Kintra  
An watched, pur gowks, it scalin like Scots mist

Bs

A bidie-in called Beldie wis bidin at Braeside  
Wi a bowdy-leggit Brocher, bynamed Bill  
She wis boggin, a richt bletherskite  
Bumshayvelt, bap-faced vratch  
Fin her birse wis up the bizzim near could kill  
Bob wore the breeks, the birkie, breengin blootered ben the hoose  
Wi a beezer o a beilin on his snoot  
He'd bowf Belle on her bihhochie, gar her bubble fit tae burst  
Black-affrontit ither bodies gaunb about

It ay eyndit wi a bosie, for Bll hid a buttery wye  
An fir wis twa blaik een cfin yer in luv?  
It wid gie ye the dry boak tae see them bbbin tae the Broo  
Like twa mochles frae a midden, haun in glove

a Stewart MBE 1937- 2014  
Born in stable in Blairgowrie  
Blessed wi lear frae a traiveller's tent  
Sheila Stewart, a hawker's dother  
Sang for a Pope an a President

Berry pickin an besom makkin  
Traivellin the glens in a shelt an cairt  
Puin the flax an gaitherin corn  
Thirled tae the beat o Nature's hairt

Last o the Stewart tribe o Blair  
In Princeton, Harvard, she spakk wi virr  
Sang wi the conyach in her sowl  
Frae years o warssele in ootlined smirr



Bullied an thrashed mangst the scaldie pupils  
'I'd burn ye aff the face o the earth'  
A government body telt her faimly  
Little they kent o the traivellers' wirth

Tattie-howkin, hawin the neeps  
Fresh-watter pearlin, hairstin braw  
Hamish Henderson thocht her heirskip  
Wis reamin fu as a watterfaa

Kent an heard bi Royals an commons  
(Aa the world is the traiveller's stage)  
Dother o the Queen o the Heather  
Mither, traiveller, singer an sage  
She'd hair as blaik as a corbie's wing  
The muckle sangs fand a perfect reist  
In her, the bairn o a maister-piper  
The jewels o Scotia bedd in her briest  
Born in stable in Blairgowrie  
Blessed wi lear frae a traiveller's tent  
Sheila Stewart, teller o stories  
Talent like thon is born, nae lent

Sheena Blackhall

# 10 Scots Poems From The Poetry Lesson

n at Jealousy: An Owersett in Scots o a Poem bi Marina Tsvetayeva

Fit like's her life wi the ither ane?  
Easier, is't nae? Ae straik o the oar  
Syne a lang coastline, an sune  
Even the myndin o me

Will be a floatin isle  
(in the lift, nae on the watters)  
Speerits, speerits, ye'll be  
Sisters an niver luv

Foo's yer life wi an ordnar  
Wumman wioot godhied?  
Noo that yer ruler's bin dinged doon (an ye hae stept doon)

Foo's yer life? Are ye fashed  
Flinchin? Foo dae ye rise?  
The tax o daithless vulgarity  
Can ye thole it, puir chiel?

'Squallochs an stooshies- I've haen  
Eneuch! I'll rent ma ain hoose.'  
Foo's yer life wi the ither ane  
Noo, ye that I chuse for ma ain?

Mair tae yer taste, mair tasty  
Is't yer meat? Dinna girn gin ye cowk.  
Foo's yer life wi an image  
Ye, fa wauiked on Sinai?

Foo's yer life wi a rareity  
Frae this warld? Can ye (truith be telt)  
Lue her? Or dae ye feel affront  
Like Zues' reyns on yer broo?

Foo's yer life? Are ye  
Weel? Foo dae ye sing?  
Foo dae ye thole the grue  
O an undeein conscience, puir chiel?

Foo's yer life wi a daud o market  
Gear at a heich price  
Eftir Carrara merble?  
Foo is yer life wi the stoor o

Plaister noo? (God wis hackit frae  
Stane, bit he's blootered tae smithereens)  
Foo dae ye live wi ane o a  
Thoosan weemen, eftir Lilith?

Stuffed wi newness are ye?  
Noo yer grown cauld tae magic  
Foo's yer life wi a  
Yirdly wife, wioot the secunt

Sicht? Tell's, are ye blythe?  
Nae? In a nerra lair? Foo is  
Yer life ma dearie? Is it as  
Hard as mine, wi anither chiel?

n Tree  
Twenty fit in heicht, the gean tree stude  
Twenty year auld, a trunk o poorple grey  
Scrattit aroon its girth wi creamy scoors

Green leaves teethed wi jaggy pynts  
That dwined tae crammosie in the cauld rife Faa  
Its leaves gaed maet for gollachs, flichterin mochs  
In spring its floers gied nectar tae the bees  
The geans war ryped bi blackie, mavis, craa

In April floers war petals, bridal-braw  
Hingin in boorichs, somelike fairy quaichs

Drappit fruits war snappt up bi brocks  
An hurcheons snocherin oot frae dubby sheughs  
The timmer brunt rocht weel- a scentit lowe  
Hard hinney-coloured timmer  
The resin chawd bi bairnies plunkin skweel  
The verra stalks war byled, tae treat the kink hoast

Ayont the tattie park, aside the dyke  
Hard bi the midden stude the muckle gean  
The midden held the ferm's orra trock  
Deid kittlins, fooshtie stock, bymshayvelt cloots  
Sharn, walie dugs wi chippit paws, ane heidless  
A suitcase wi the boddom duntit oot

#### College Revisited

I lue the wye the win blaws ben the trees  
I lue the wye Dons spreid philosophies  
I lue the ivy creepin ben the waa  
The cloisters, quad, a scholar's quaet fitfaa

Bit maist I lue the sna that flicyhters saft  
Like swansdoon, happen aathin fore an aft  
Until, aa roon the college, zebra trees  
Staun cranreuch bricht in pearls an ebonies

#### 4. Twa Scots Owerset of poems bi Miklós Radnóti Postcaird 4

I drappit aside him. His corp rowed ower.  
It wis ticht as a towe afore it snaps.  
Shot, back o the heid-

'This is the wye ye'll eyn.  
Jist lie quaet, ' quo I tae masel

Patience floers inno daith noo.  
'Der springt noch auf, ' I heard abeen me.  
Derk yirdy bluid wis dryin on ma lug.

Szentkiralyzabadja October 31,1944

I Dinna Ken  
I dinna ken fit this kintra means tae ithers, this wee kintra  
Fenced in bi fire, ma birth airt,  
world o ma bairnhood, sweyin hyne aff  
I grew oot o her like the young branch o tree,  
an I hope my corp will sink doon in her.

Here, I'm at hame. Fin ane bi ane, busses boo at ma feet,  
 I ken their names an names o their flooers.  
 I ken fowk fa wauk the roads an far they're gaun  
 an on a simmer evenin, I ken the meanin o the pain  
 that turns reid an treetles doon the waas o the hooses.  
 This kintra is anely a map for the pilot fa flees ower.  
 He disna ken far the poet Vorosmarty bedd.  
 For him factries an roosed barracks canna be seen on this map.  
 For me there are girelowpers, kye, kirk steeples, douce fairms.  
 Throwe binoculars, he sees factries and ploeed parks:  
 I see a wirker, shakkin, feart for his wirk.  
 I see wids, orchards thrang wi sang, vineyards, graveyards,  
 a crined auld wumman fa quaetly greets an maens amang the mools.  
 The Industrial plant an the railway maun be connached.  
 Bit it's anely a watchie's sheddie an the chiel stauns ootbye  
 sennin messages wi a reid flag. There are bairns aroon him,  
 In the factory yaird a sheep dug plays, rowin on the grun.  
 An there's the park an the fitprents o luvvers from hynie back  
 whyles kisses tasted like hinney, whyles like blaeberries.  
 I didna wint tae takk a test ae day, sae on ma wey tae schule  
 I hirpled on a stane at the lip o the sidewauk.  
 Here is the stane, bit frae up there it canna be seen.  
 There's nae instrument tae show ony o it.

5.A Scots Owerset o the poem 'School' bi Miroslav Holub

A tree cams in, booin, an sez:

I'm a tree

A blaik tear draps frae the lift an sez:

I'm a birdie

Here noo, nearin alang a moosewab

Cams a ferlie like luv

An it sez;

I'm seelence

Bit syne there sprauchles afore the blaikboord

A national democratic

Shelt in a westcoat

Sayin ower an ower

Cockin its lugs tae likie airt

I'm the virr ahin history  
An  
We aa  
Lue  
Progress  
An smeddum  
An  
The roose o fechtors

An syne fae ahin the classie door  
Treetles a thin Burnie  
O bluid  
For here starts  
The quarterin  
O the blameless

Hierarchy o Wirds  
Fantoosh, genteel, pernickety, heidbummer  
Weel-heeled, siller-speened prood and vauntie,  
Cock-crannied, mim-moued, braw-like bosker  
A stoater, a stammygaster, minted lairdie

Reid biddy, rammy, stooshie, pyocherin  
Oxter-stank, spayver-spunk, , knapdarloch, nyaff  
Orra, bumshayvelt hallierackit snocherin  
Bowfin, mingin, snottery-nebbit scruff

Torn-faced, skitter-pot, fooshtie scunner  
Gallus, blether-skite, bampot, dour  
Chanty-rasslin numptie, haiverer, teuchter  
Girner, sklyterer, slorach, hoor

chó / A Dug

owersett in Scots o a poem bi Nguyen Do. Frae an Inglis translation o the  
Vietnamese bi Paul Hoover & Nguyen Do

he's dowpit thonner day bi day — a hungeret dug  
he spens aa his virr, rinnin brakk-neck roon his hame  
bowfin at taeds, gurrin at wyvers  
reivin flooers cause he thocht they wir meat, byled rice  
thon's him  
a wechty rain floods his een

tae keep on bowfin is eeseless  
anely the girse lowpers takk tent!  
aneth the sit-ooterie, he manes an raxxes oot on his wyme  
tae lick at the watter; foo guid the taste o watter is!  
syne he faas asleep, dwaumin an fu o leisur  
aneth a sweet guava tree, along the sit-ooterie, there's a burn o rainwatter  
as in his dwaum  
he cocks ae fit up  
peein like a hero!  
Pleiku, Rainy Sizen, 1988

ons in Scots o Prose an Poems bi Baudelaire

Le Spleen de Paris XLIII: Le Galant Tireur, version in Scots of The Merksman  
As the cairriage breenged ben the wid he telt the driver tae dauchle in the airt o  
a sheetin raw, sayin that he wad like tae hae a fyew shots tae kill time. Isn't the  
killin o the monster Time the maist ordnar an legal darg o a chiel? —Sae he  
genteely gaed his haun tae his lued, douce, an scunnersome wife; the oorrie  
wumman tae fa he owed sae mony pleisurs, sae mony sairs, an mebbe, forbye, a  
muckle skelp o his genius.

A pucklie bullets gaed wide o the intendit merk, ane o them finged far inno the  
heivens, an as the chermin craitur lauched deleeriously, takkin the rise o the  
mistak o her man, he turned tae her wi a grue an quo: 'Tak tent o thon dall  
yonner, tae the richt, wi its neb in the air, an wi sae vauntie a weel, ma dearie, I  
will makk on tae masel that it's yersel! '

He steekit baith his een an pued the trigger. The dall wis snodly heidit. Syne,  
booin forrit tae his lued, douce, an scunnersome wife, his aybydan an peetiless  
Mysie, he kissed her wi respek upon the haun, an addit, 'Ochone, ma dearie, foo  
I thank ye fur ma skeelieness! '

L'Albatros, version of The Albatross

Aftimes, fur a wee fun, the chiels o a crew  
Caught an albatross, thon muckle sea bird  
That latchy-like follaes a ship  
As it rowes ower the deep satty sea

New dowpit doon on deck  
Thon king o the lift, hyterin, affrontit  
Dowie, lat its braid fite wings  
Draiggle aside it like oars

Thon winged traiveller ...  
Foo dweeble an unca he is  
Sae braw afore, noo sae gypit an ugsome  
Ae chiel ettles tae stap a cuttie pipe in its beak  
Anither hirples, takkin the rise o the styterin bird

A bardie's like this laird o cloud an lift  
Fa's sib tae the storm an lauchs at fortune's arras  
Fin cast doon on the yird, he gets the hee-haw  
His muckle wings a hinner tae his waukin.

Vers Pour Le Portrait De M. Honoré Daumier, version of Verses for Honoré  
Daumier's Portrait

The chiel fa's physog this shaws  
In airt mair tentie than the lave  
Teaches us wycely the best wye  
Tae lauch at oor ainsels

He stauns apairt in mockery  
His smeddum's byordnar  
In peintin Coorseness an its ill hairst  
Sae pruvn the brawness o his hairt

Melmoth or Mephistopheles  
His lauchter isna sib tae theirs  
The lowe o Alecto fleers  
Tae birssle them, yet gars us jeel

They cam tae regret their lauchter  
Sae sypit in twa-faced sleeness  
While his clear, ootsheenin smile  
Shaws him tae be a chiel baith honest an guid

The Voice: La Voix version in Scots  
Ma crib wis neist tae the librar, a Babel  
Far makkie-on hodged aside science, myth an fowk spikk  
Greek stoor wi Roman aisse wis seen in thonner  
An me, anely the heicht o a folio  
Fin twa voices spakk tae me: 'The Yird's  
A cake, ' quo ane, 'an stappit wi sweetness.



I can makk yer hunger full yer wyme  
Foriver an aye wioot devaul.'

Anither telt me, 'Come awa, wanner ben dreams wi me  
Ayont lear, thocht or the ordnar.'  
Thon voice sang like the win ben the shore  
An tho douce-like, fleggit me mair

I made repon, 'Sweet voice! ' an frae thon day  
Could niver tell ma Sorra or ma Weird

Ayont the muckle vista o this life  
I see fey warlds, at odds wi ma ainsel  
Delichtit prey o ma secunt sicht  
I rug muckle snakes, bitin ma cweets  
An like an auncient druid frae thon time  
I've lued the desert, fand the sea celestial  
I've grat at ceilidhs an lauched at kistins  
An fand in wershest wines a slokin sweetness  
Lees for facts I lue tae swallae hale  
An aftimes faa in a hole, fin glowerin at starnies  
Bit the voice is pleased. Keep dreamin, it is kent  
Nae wyce chiel dreams o beauty as weel's a gype.

To A Girl From Malabar: Une Malabaraise: Scots version  
Yer feet are brawer nor yer hauns, an sonsier.  
Yer hurdies are creashier nur fite hochs.  
Yer makk is douce an fresh tae a thochtfu chiel  
Yer velvet een are derker nur yer skin.

In hett blue lans far yer god gied ye life,  
Yer darg, lichtin yer maister's pipe an makkin siccar  
The coggie's weel stappt wi pure watter, the pottie, wi scent  
Or wheechin aff the mozzies, thonner ye gaed  
Fin dawn sang throwe the reeshlin girse tae buy  
Plantains an pineapples frae the nearhaun market

Aa day, barfit an free ye wannert  
Thrummin auld unkent tunes an fin at the hinnereyn  
The sun gaed doon, bricht reid ootower the lan  
Ye flang yersel doon on a bass o seggs

Yer floatin dream wis fu o hummin birds  
Aa blythe an flooery as ye are yersel

Foo, blythesome bairn did ye cam here tae France  
This lan heezin wi fowk... bi fit mishanter...  
Fin tae yer tamarinds ye bad fareweel  
Bletherin wi the sailors o the crew?

Bit noo, hauf-nyakkit, rigged in dweeble muslin  
Cauldrife haar an snaa blatterin yer chitterin skin  
Coorse steys ruggin in yer wyme  
Foo ye maun miss yer tint auld wytes o freedom

Noo ye maun pyke yer denner frae the dubs  
An sell the perfumes o yer flesh an bluid  
In oor fool haars, wi yer forehooied een  
Ay ettlin tae catch a glisk  
O ghaistly palm trees sweyin

A Thocht: Recueillement, Scots version  
Takk tent, Sorra, keep a calm sooch  
Ye prayed fur gloamin; it faas, is here  
A derksome air enfaulds the toon  
Bringin peace tae some, wersh thochts tae ithers

Fin the worthless boorich o fowk  
Wheeped on bi pleisur, thon torturer wioot aa mercie  
Gyang tae gaither wae in slavish rejoicin  
Gie me yer haun, Sorra, cam wi me  
Hyne awa frae them. See the deid years hingin  
In orra duddies on the balconies o the lift  
See foo Regret, smilin, breenges up frae the deep waters

The deein sun gyangs tae sleep in a close-heid  
An like lang grave-cloots treelipin frae the East  
Lippen ma jo, hear the saft nicht comin

en Field

Fower days ye lay far ye fell in the dubs o Flodden  
A henwife hirpled by blawin her neb wi her thoomb

Teethless an humfy backit, she rypit yer purse o siller  
Yer twa ee sockets, sichtless, (hoodies maun ett as weel)  
Gapit at this mishanter tho yer twa deid lips bedd steekit

Craas, bluid-beakit, powked yer intimmers oot  
A glut o deinties (heich born lords dine weel)

Aa aroon lay kinsmen, a jeelin hairst,  
Laid oot like an armourer's rowp in a charnel hoose

Shields, pikes, muskets, cannon, laired in the clorty muir  
Aroon some friens war maenin takkin a snail's time tae dee

An English page loon ryped yer iron gauntlets  
An aye the weety smirr fell on the gralloched shelts  
An mithers' sons forby

n Poetry: Owersetts in Scots frae Inglis Translations

In the Field Filling Up with Snow translated by Chae-Pyong Song and Anne  
Rashid

By Seo Jeong-ju:

It's aa richt,

It's aa richt,

It's aa richt,

It's aa richt-

the snawflakes drap in drifts,

wrappin roon even the soun o teeny pheasants an quails

gyaun hame tae their nests.

It's aa richt,

It's aa richt,

It's aa richt,

It's aa richt

the snawflakes drap like cotton oo,

wrappin roon even the soun of young quinions wi reid chikks

gyaun hame tae their nests.

It wraps roon even the soun o ilkie weird gyaun hame,  
the greetin,

the lauchin,  
the wechtit doon fowk  
noo risin up strangly.  
Tae the sonsie anes, sonsie tear merks,  
tae the wee anes, wee lauch lines;  
the soun of muckle stories an tooshtie stories  
gyaun hame, fuserin softly.

It's aa richt,  
It's aa richt,  
It's aa richt,  
It's aa richt  
the snawflakes drap wioot devaul,  
Wrappin roon even the soun o mony Bens-  
the Blue Bens\* gyaun hame.

The Snowy Night by Moon Tae-jun: Translated by Chae-Pyong Song and Anne Rashid

Ochone, ma dearie  
wha had glaiss-grey een;  
ochone, the siller scales  
that bleared yer een.  
The nicht snaw faas.

Ochone, ma puir dearie  
wha wrapped ma craig  
wi a fite towel an dichtit ma face,  
a blissed quaet draps doon  
upon the lanely yird  
I steek ma een  
tae mynd the time  
yer hauns dighted ma face.

The Word of the Wind by Mah Jonggi (1939-) Translated by Chae-Pyong Song and Anne Rashid

Eftir aa o us leave,  
Gin ma speerit gyangs by ye,  
Dinna think even fur a meenit it is  
The win that sweys the spring boughs.  
The day I'll plant a flooer  
On a neuk o the shadda  
Whar I got tae ken ye;

Whan the floer briers,  
Aa the dowieness that grew frae oor kennin  
Will cheenge inno petals an flee awa.  
It will cheenge inno petals an flee awa.  
Though it is ill tae thole, hyne aff  
an eeseless,  
How can we meisur aa the ferlies in the world  
Wi anely a wee ruler?  
Whan ilkie noo an then ye turn yer lugs tae whar the win blaws,  
My dearie, dinna forget even gin ye grow trauchelt  
The wurd o the win that cams frae hyne awa

The Leper by Seo Jung-ju (1915-2000) Translated by Chae-Pyong Song and Anne Rashid

The sunlicht frae the lift  
Filled the leper wi sorras  
He ett up a bairnie  
Whan the meen raise ower the barley park.\*  
Aa nicht he grat reid cries like floers.

The Flower by Kim Chun-soo (1922-2004) Translated by Chae-Pyong Song and Anne Rashid.

Afore I cried her name,  
She wis naethin  
Mair than a meevement.  
Whan I cried her name,  
She cam tae me  
An becam a floer.

Like I cried her name,  
Will some body please cry ma name  
That suits ma licht an scent?

I lang tae cam tae her  
An cheenge inno her floer.

We aa wint tae becam somethin.  
Ye, tae me, an me, tae ye,  
Lang tae becam a glisk that winna be forgot.

By the Winter River by Ahn Do-hyun (1961-) translated by Chae-Pyong Song

and Anne Rashid

The river tuik peety on the dweeble snawflakes,  
that lowped doon inno nane ither than the river watter  
an disappeared, thawed wioot makk.

Sae, it breenged an birlid,  
tae cheenge its poseetion  
afore the snawflakes strukk its watter.

Ilkie time it birlid, the river watter made a wud soun.

Unkennin,  
the innocent snaa drapt eynlessly  
an the river,  
frae the nicht afore,  
sterted tae jeel tae thin ice, beginnin frae its edge,  
sae it nicht save the snaw wi its ain body.

Winter. Snow. Tree. Forest by Ki Hyung-do (1960-1989) Translated by Chae-  
Pyong Song and Anne Rashid

The snaa  
biggs up here an yonner,  
wioot bein able tae win aa the wye oot o the wids.

&quot;Is it yersel?  
Dinna hash.&quot;

Dunt. He faas doon,  
knelled by a sherp blade.  
I gyang hame,  
ruggin the tree.

As I hack aff the twigs,  
I lippen tae the seelence o the tree:

&quot;I'm here.  
Daith is unmasked life.  
Oor lives, oor winters are like thon, tae.&quot;

We kinnle a lowe  
towards the skaith  
that's some like oorsels.

The nicht in the wids ayont the windae

breenges its body for a deeper quaet.

Till I confirm ma clean daith  
I willna be here,  
keepin a bonnie distance frae whaiver strikks a lowe,  
an warmin ma hairt bittie by bittie.

The mornin risin in the late winter  
is whit cams tae makk the maist perfeck natur.  
Eftir,  
agin the airt the snaw thaws an rins  
oor spring will cam.

Sheena Blackhall

# 10 Scots Songs From The Speerit Hoose

Maiden

A maiden stude in Embro toun  
She kissed the necks o mony  
The High Street wis her favourite stance  
An she wis cruel bit bonnie

The weemin booed as they wauked by  
The maiden, staunin stinch.  
The menfowk doffed their bunnets low  
Tae venerate the wench

At ten feet heich she gart ye pause  
A steel mou, sherp an bricht  
Her sides war aik, her jaws war mair  
Than siventu pun in wecht

Twa centuries thon maiden served  
As Scotland's guillotine  
She heidit lairds an commons baith  
Daith's skeelie killin queen

She heidit fowk for reivin shelts  
For incest, treason, murder  
For forgery an sic like ploys  
Like aipples sliced asunder

She killt a rowth o Reekie's fowk  
A meenister, a baker  
A marquis an a belted Earl  
A housewife an a tailor

'The sweetest maiden I hae kissed'  
Sae Archie Campbell said  
(The 9th Earl o Argyll, as he  
Lay doon, as if tae bed)  
The maiden drapt her gantin mou  
An ower her briest he bled

They say she's flitted ower the toun



Tae Scotland's Royal Museum  
Dis she ay thirst for human bluid?  
I'd sweir she dis, the bizzem, !

## 2. Granite

This is the wye the toon wis biggit  
Granite steens for hoose an haa  
This is the wye the toon wis biggit  
Tholin the sleet an snaa

Doon in the quarry hole they howkit  
Quarriers aa, quarriers aa  
Doon in the quarry hole they howkit  
Tholin the sleet an snaa

Blast o explosives birthed the cassies  
Statues braa, hames an aa  
Blast o explosives birthed the cassies  
Tholin the sleet an snaa

Noo the days o the quarry's ower  
Dwinnlit awa, dwinnlit awa  
Its granite steens staun hard an glitterin  
Tholin the sleet an sna

Wyceness o the Wids  
The wids hae wyceness, learn it weel  
Fin Winter's breezes cauld showd  
Their branches, aa their treisur's scaled  
There are nae pooches in a shroud  
Letting the little birds of chance  
Perch on my withered handle  
Like a Norse ship's prow.

4. In Praise o a Heilan Ben, Aiberdeenshire Heilans  
Slidder an scree, the smush o granite  
Crummlit tae grit bi the Winter's teeth  
Clouds abune. See-the erne is sailin!  
Fit care I fur the boats o Leith!

Bummers are heezin ower the heather  
Wechtit doon bi their rypit prize  
Pine an fir & the spruce tree fusperin  
Brawer then Glesga toun's high-rise

Here's bog-myrtle in boggy boorichs  
Cotton girse an the tang o thyme  
Lichen, asphodel, spottit orchis  
Better than Ayr far the gowfers dine

Juniper, larick, birk an rowan  
Jewelled aيدر, a stag at dawn  
Stampin his forefit, antlers branchin  
Dundee keelies...can ye match thon?

#### 5.A Prayer for Aiberdeen

O Lord, luik doon on Aiberdeen  
May aa its projecks thrive  
An tae thon fowk fa wish it ill  
Gie clap an bellyrive

ship

G'wa craiked the craa, I ain this park  
His feathers, a warlock's cape  
An hobble-dee-cobble-dee ower the girse  
He pyked at the sheetin brake

The gamie held the craa in his sights  
Twa barrels gaed bang thegither  
An aa that left o the bigsy craa  
Wis puddens an hauf a feather

Lately, ma hairtlans are islands  
Ma kind are hickled awa in reservations  
Ringed roon bi hooses an tarmac

We fyew remainin breets

Coorie thegither an chitter like dried leaves

Ae day we'll be a fitnote in a buik  
'This craitur wis a bawd  
Speerit o Corn. We didna need it noo  
Aa men ett couscous, or peels wi jist  
The richt nutritious additives.'

innie, Lowe, Hair

Her hair wis siller, her broo wis mither o pearl  
Her moo wis blueberries, wi a hint pink  
An fin she lowsed her hair frae its nest o preens  
It tummlit doon like a skinnymalinkie linn  
A saft drappin atween the steady boulders o her showders

The tortoiseshell caimb catched a yowedendrift o taigles  
In its tabby teeth. Her fingers wyled the sheddins in a cloud  
An offerin tae the lowe's reid, hungerin flame

The siller hottered in Daith's alchemy  
Shrivelled blaik an horrid up the lum  
Like a deevilock birsslin in the stangs o hell

Eftir the hair, the prayer  
The grissly knees creaked doon tae touch the fleer  
The wrinkled palms, knittit in contemplation  
'Oor Faither, ' she murmured....wirds like an incantation  
Doon tae the Amen  
An the lowe in the hairth brunt normal  
An bricht again

Speerit Hoose

I bigged a speerit-hoose in a neuk  
At Halloween. In the derk, I wyted  
Aneth the meen they cam flichterin back  
The quick an the deid, lang separatist  
Wi tang o leather an heath, ma faither  
Wi stank o poother an peint, ma mither  
Granminnie's guff wis fusky an mint  
An Chae, ma brither brocht in bear-scent

Like rikk they furred in the darksome hoose  
Aa thegither, we'd lang bin sundered  
An I thocht wi a grue o fowk lang gaen  
The hinney o luv that daith hid plundered

#### Birk Trees

The birk trees cercled Birkenau  
Witnessin bodies burn an shift  
Sae mony deid, sae mony lives  
Furlin as rikk intae the lift

Sic bonnie trees, sic eildritch trees  
Did aa their pouers dwine tae nocht?  
Blin, deaf an dumb tae peety's wints  
Gied nae remeid tae sanctuary socht

The birk trees cerclin Birkenau  
May leaf an bark an sap catch blicht  
Foo can ye thrive, fin anely ghaists  
O victims, maen in eynless nicht?

Sheena Blackhall

# 11 Poems From An Inside Job (English)

## 1. An Inside Job (1)

'And only click the switch, when you hear sound'  
The audiologist said.

I closed my eyes to concentrate  
And through the open doors of hearing  
A single note sang out  
And like a pebble cast into a pool  
Ripples of sound reverberated softly  
She stopped the test, abruptly.

'So many clicks...but I fed in so few! '

'But they were real, I heard them, ' I exclaimed.

'Who knows what happens in another's head? ' she said;  
'I've had some say they'd bagpipe music there  
And choirs of angels...that's another corker  
And even castanets like in Majorca.'

She was looking at me as if I was a nutter  
In vain, I protested that  
The quiet echo was real inside my brain  
The aural version of an oral stutter

In truth, it's nice that science draws a blank  
Not knowing what's inside each dark think tank  
And so my dreams are safe, no MRI  
Can scan and decode mystery on the sly

en the Lines

The poetry book was squashed  
Between a low-carb diet manual  
And a detailed map of inner city Edinburgh

It was a prestigious poetry book

It had been launched some years before  
To the clink of wine glasses  
And the whiff of garlic bread  
To rapturous effusions from 'Enchanted, Inverkeithing'

True, it had not travelled widely  
Was rarely handled. But it had aspirations

The low carb diet manual  
Boasted a print run of thousands

It had caused more fat to be melted  
Than all of the crematoria of Glasgow

It professed to be an asset to the nation  
'What, ' (it asked the poetry book)  
'Have you ever done to combat diabetes,  
Or heal the hammered livers of the Scots? '

'Mens sana in corpore sano' countered the poetry book  
To which the detailed map of inner city Edinburgh exclaimed,  
'Ah, but can you direct the feet of the globe  
To the pub at the World's End? '

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For thirty years and more he was a deletion,  
From family matters, the non-appearance  
At funerals, weddings, deaths  
He fled our salt-grit Scottish town  
Choosing Brazil, the lure of the get-rich-quick,  
The modern conquistador's paradise

His colleagues lived in compounds,  
Shot and killed intruders from the favelas  
Where cocaine traffickers swam the slums  
Like finned pirhanas honing in on loot

Amigos amigos, negócios à parte.  
Friends are friends, business is business,

His favourite saying, his modus operandi

Strolling through the internet today  
I typed in his address, my long dead sibling  
His name flashed up, like Lazarus up-rising

the Great Wall of China (1)

On the twin-edged spine of the hunch-backed Chinese Wall  
I heard not silence but chatter, not birds, but speech  
The clicking of multiple cameras, freezing faces  
To feed the gnawing hunger to be remembered  
The need to give impermanence Angel's wings

At the Great Wall of China (2)

Seen from the stars, the Great Wall's bones  
Ridged in ramparts, stone on stone  
Moon-shot elf-bolt, flying, falls  
Strike its sides with lightning scrawls

Mortar dark with human blood  
Has outlived the drought, the flood  
Mason, master, warrior-band  
Power and person turned to sand

5. Edinburgh

The stumps of a bridge sat gap-toothed in the Forth  
Much ado about nothing, going nowhere

The day was ajar with happenings glimpsed on the sly  
The capital was a skating rink of traffic  
In the hierarchy of transport, Tram was king

An insomniac drunk was using the bridge as his hearth  
As a bridal party sallied out from a kirk  
The women in hats like lampshades, fashion's scaffolding  
Their menfolk, bald or pigtailed, moneyed people

Tourists shunted along on throbbing feet  
A roadie hoisted his tattooed, sweaty arm  
Like a builder's crane with a beer tin fixed to the end  
Somebody's spittle fizzed on the heart of Midlothian

A Japanese student in cappuccino stilettos  
Picked her way down cobbles as wet as sushi  
Sir Walter Scott on his pigeonholed airy plinth  
Smiled down on lovers locked in a lip-stuck kiss

'Dae ye ken, hen, ' said a Glasgow guy to his girl  
'In Edinburgh, men cock their crannies tae masturbate.'

## 6. Desmond's Giro

Veins bulge in Desmond's giro  
His cash-flow's silted up  
No funds to fuel his life style  
No dosh to live it up

Veins bulge in Desmond's giro  
It needs a little op  
To free him from dependency  
Give benefits the chop

nettes

Skeleton bones clack like chopsticks  
A Gothic puppet with reptilian eyes  
Peels smiles from children's faces  
In a flash, the compass of emotion  
Jitters from joy to fear

Pierrot the clown forlornly blows a balloon  
These marionettes are large as human dwarfs  
Each string is barbed with a sting  
A direct line to Nightmare's memory pouch



us

Lean upon writing as a crutch

A therapeutic coping aid

Pain is released through written words

In lines where ghosts of hurts are laid

Don't be a victim- challenge Fate

Use writing when you feel dismayed

Such tiny literary seeds have mighty sheltering orchards made

## 9. Blackpool (1)

50% of those in Blackpool smoke

17% of folk are unemployed

There's poverty, drugs and crime on its estates

Dole tourists enjoying their benefits, seaside

The bucket and spade attraction has collapsed

But still its promenade parades the expected

The fortune-tellers, public houses, trams,

The donkeys, fish-and-chip shops all infected

With the listless hopelessness that Autumn brings

October in Blackpool's a junkie who's relapsed

They've got a Hopper bus that trawls around

The Zoo, the Stanley Park, the Model Village,

Sandcastle park, the Tower the Pleasure Beach

In the mizzling rain there's little joy to pillage

Red rose of Lancaster's on every cheek

Bitten by sea-fret, wind slap, autumn chill

Clog dancers thump a back stage cheerlessly

Faggots congeal on plates like greasy swill

Above this soars the tower, 5 million bricks

Two thousand and five hundred tons of steel

A quite heroic structure, it's survived

A million holidays, gulls constant squeal

## pool (2)

Two pensioners arm in arm

Stroll creakily along the Blackpool pier

Three inky crows avoid them  
Too slim pickings

The Season's passed for paddling  
The only slap and tickle is the water  
Kissing the legs of the pier

Muckers

The Muckers is the name of a football gang linked to Blackpool FC

Trashing buses, scratching vans  
Fighting fans and football bans

Clashing with the police in pubs  
Violence, terror, brawling thugs

Smashing buses, firebomb lob  
Rammy Arms Crew, Benny's mob  
Bottles, glassings, mayhem, swearing  
Bisons' riot café, wearing  
Scarves and badges, shouting, slashing  
Burnings, stabbings, gougings, crashing  
Windows shake a peaceful place  
Football shows its ugly face

Sheena Blackhall

# 11 Poems In Scots (Comings & Goings)

The World's Eyn

1977. Test o the Space Shuttle Enterprise

The Sex Pistols skreighed their styte.

Morph bauchled ben the screen

Reid Rum won the Gran National again

Star Wars Sci Fi premiered in picture hooses

Elvis Presley deed. The world murned.

Christine Eadie an Helen Scott gaed oot on the toon

Aged 17, a quines' nicht oot in Embro

Last seen leevin inbye the World's Eyn Howff

Waukers fand Christine's corp in Gosford Bay

Nyakkit. Helen, sax mile awa in a stibble corn park

Baith quines hid bin threwshed, gagged,

Bun, thrappled an raped

Nae attempt wis made tae hap their corpses.

26 years gaed by. The programme Crimewatch

Tuik an anonymous caa, fresh evidence

Hid bin fand. A when years eftir

The quarry wis finally catched.

Angus Sinclair, let aff aince, retried

Fand guilty, will be free fin he's 106

Facin a heicher coort than mortal judges

Eftir the Battle o Flodden, Embro bigged a waa.

The world ootbye thon waa wis the World's Eyn

Twa teenage quines discovered the truith o this

Fin ae nicht's innocent pleisur turned tae horror

Twa Scots Owersetts o Sangs frae the Muckle Furth frae Inglis translations bi  
Thomas A. McKean, Director of the Elphinstone Institute

Warlds Apairt

I haud ye in ma airms, an thon is fan it sterts

I sikk faith in yer kiss, an peace inbye yer hairt

I taste life on yer mou I lay hauns on yer hurts

Bit luikin in yer een, I ken we're warlds apairt

Far the hyne oceans sing an raxx their swallin tides  
In this dry tribbled airt yer brawness it abides  
Doon frae the muckle Ben, the road it rowes tae derk  
Neth Allah's blessed rain, I ken we're warlds apairt

Ower muckle, nae eneuch, is fit Truth seems eenoo  
Haive Truth itsel awa, its in a kissin mou  
Yer skin upon ma skin, oor beatin hairt tae hairt  
Life walcoms us inbye, the Deid teir us apairt

We'll lat bluid bigg a brig frae Bens up tae the starns  
We'll tryst upon the ridge, atween oor warlds apairt  
We've got this meenit yet, afore its stoor an derk  
Let's takk the gift o Luv, the gift that's frae the hairt

Tae the Wud Tarek River  
On a heich bank o the Tarek x2  
We Cossacks brocht 10,000 cuddies  
An the park wis happt an the bank wis happt  
Wi thoosans o knifed an shot bodies

Chorus  
We lue life brithers x2  
There's nae wae whyle we're wi oor chieftain  
We lue life brithers x2  
There's nae wae whyle we're wi oor chieftain

An the first rifle shot x2  
An the first shot hurtit ma shelt  
An the neist rifle shot x2  
Wi the neist rifle shot I wis killt

Ma wife will lament me x2  
She'll mairry again an forget me  
I'll anely miss freedom, freedom an fecht  
Ma auld mither dear an ma cuddy

The Gloveress  
Calf skin gloves haun stitched wi pure silk threid

Years I trained tae dae this bluidy job  
Makkin gloves fur spyled wealthy weemin

Set tae the trade frae bairnhood, I wis  
The wages puir. Whyles, I machine the gloves  
Whyles line them, cannie-like wi mappie's fur

Pernickity customers micht order buttons  
Or silk inbye, an fancy falderals  
Thon's fikey wirk. Oors o a thankless darg  
Saxteen oors a day, wi a pittance ower  
Tae pye fur coal, rent, meat, an caunle-licht  
The fowk fa weir the gloves, the great an gweed  
Fund kirks an theatres, gyang tae pairties, races

Ma sister leaves the hoose bi owl-licht  
Tae sell hersel in the streets, a common hoor  
Or we wid sterve, oor bairns wad dee o hunger

Ma mither takks in washin. Hauns reid raw,  
Reid raw an hackit. Nae fine gloves fur her.

The King o the Scottish Gypsies: William Billy Marshall 1672-1792

King Billy cud sing auld ballads lang  
Cud fecht like a wolf, wis slee an thrawn  
Jess Smith, telt fowk that the traivellin clan  
Cam whaur a feather is born, seeds blawn

Oh the Romas' feet are restless kind  
The Roma's spikk is kent bi the fyew  
The Roma lue the wyes o the wids  
The siller glents on the mornin dyew

Bill wore the skin o a lamprey eel  
Bun roon his wrist in the boxin ring  
He'd howk at een, he'd club, he'd kick  
Like a tyke wi a ratten, the Randie king

He'd seventeen wives, this dun-skinn't cyard  
An bairns as mony's the seeds o thrissles□  
He'd served wi Marlborough, sodjer an tar

Wis a fu o blether's a kist o fussles

The Faas, the Baileys, the Youngs, the Taits  
Whariver the gangrel bodies gaed  
Wi their waggons, their shelts, their tinkler tools  
War gweed tae the fowk fa pyed their trade

King Billy levelled the laird's lang dykes  
That held the watter back frae the puir  
The Royal fences he cowped as weel  
Syne meltit awa tae wid an muir  
His banes lie deep in Kikcudbright kirk  
His stane has horns o the Zodiac ram  
Crossed speens..may the Roma ne'er ken wint  
An coins, a meal for a hungeret man

Oh the Romas' feet are restless kind  
The Roma's spikk is kent bi the fyew  
The Roma lue the wyes o the wids  
The siller glents on the mornin dyew

Reid Licht Embro  
The night brings hoors an hoolets oot  
The howfs are hotchin, promise pleisur  
For houghmagandie there's nae doot  
Some wirk the streets tae gaither trisur  
Bit fa's the prey an fa's the raptor?  
Quine wi nails crammosie reid  
Hoor or her pye-by-oor captor  
Wi murderous thochts, whyles in his heid?

Spaewife-Speirin  
Spaewife, oh spaewife, fit weird's left tae dree?  
The plaidie unraivels, as faist as it's vrocht  
Will the yet forrit be snecked or ajee  
Mishanthers cam readily, unseen, unsocht

Spaewife, oh spaewife, I carena a whit  
Ma banes are turned bruckle an fain wad I flit  
Spaewife oh spaewife, fin this world's ahin  
Wll my laddie be staunin tae welcome me in?

Spaewife oh spaewife, I'd drap like the corn  
Gin there's a here-efitir, I'd leave life the morn

The Alternative Tourist Tour of Properties Owned by Nyaffs  
In Aiberdeen takk a turn roon a seaside High Rise  
Check oot the guff o pee in the lift, the brukken intercom  
The graffiti scrawled ower the waas on the secunt storey  
Fur the ultimate frisson (by-passin the stank o fish comin aff the sea)  
Step ower the druggies jackin up on the stairs  
Dinna pet the pit bull on the landin  
Its teeth are mingin. Its temper's legendary

In Dundee, veesit anither colourful schemie  
Step throw the yett o flat nummer thirtythree  
The guide weirs leopard skin tights  
Is perma-tanned like an orange  
She luiks like a chanty-rassler on a spree  
Dinna feed her fartin cat  
It'll gie ye flechs an gob on ye  
Makk sure yer inoculatit fur dysentry

Embro's sublet aff frae a close is a must  
Takk tent o the gairden's lanscapin  
The rippit sofa stukken wi gaffa tape  
Luik on the scene wi envy, Mr Paul Getty  
The brukken Ikea press, mangst the nettles an dug keech  
The peelin plaster gnomes, an the terracotta warrior  
Minus twa airms like the Venus de Milo  
Chappt aff bi a minger wallopin a machete

In Glesgae, step inno an up-mairket semi-detached  
The guide here, Fat Shuggy, is modellin his favourite gear  
A mankini aneth a peenie wi plastic boobs  
Based o the paps o ane o thon Hollywid stars  
Check oot the thatch o his chest hair  
Ye cud beery Govan in it. His bling can be seen frae Mars  
Inverness features a bijou but-n-ben  
Fur European wirkers. Nine o them share a bed  
In shifts o three. The bath has twinty nine tidemerks

The loo boasts a crinoline dallie ower the lavvie roll  
There's an Elvis Presley lampstain wintin a shade  
The ashtray is reamin wi tabbies. The carpet's clarty.  
Like yer waukin on doorbell chimes 'Amarillo'  
Jist for es makk up the protein in the soup  
The plastic floers in the windae hae brewer's droop

Whuppity Stoory as Mither  
(Whuppity Stoory is Scotland's Rumpelstiltskin)

Whuppity Stoory's bin spied in Mamas & Papas  
Buyin babby claes fur a new-born littlin

Adoption agencies wisnae sympathetic because:  
She wis three hunner year auld  
She wis a puir role model  
She wis a caird-cairryin pagan  
She keepit puddocks in the kitchie  
She cudnae answer the questions on British ceetizenship  
(Bar aa the info about Jamie Saxth)

The fertility gadgie widnae treat her because:  
Her ovaries wir crined as hizzlenuts  
Her wyme wis a howked-oot Halloween neep  
Her titties wis dry as the Kalahari desert  
It wid be like sawin seeds in a teem chunty

Bit she kent hersel she'd be a braw mither  
Better than thon girnin gype wi the seek grumphie  
Sae easy tricked intae giein the bairn awa  
Whuppity story dreamt that herself an the laddie  
Wid flee tae Disneywarld on her breem  
She'd makk him the warlock o aa warlocks  
It's nae as if thon gype, his mither  
Wid iver jeloose her name...

Welcome tae the World  
Welcome tae the warld new littlin  
Bare an Bonnie, welcome in!  
Aa yer lifetime lies afore ye



A hale journey tae begin

May yer days be fulled bi pleisur  
May health be yer greatest treisur  
May luv find ye, in gweed meisur  
Bonnie littlin, welcome in!

Infant Joy, by William Blake, owersett here in Scots

Blythe Bairnie  
'I hae nae name;  
I am anely twa days auld.'

Fit'll I call ye?

'I blythesome am,  
Joy is ma name.'

Sweet joy befaa ye!  
Braw joy!  
Sweet joy, bit twa days auld.  
Sweet Joy I caa ye:  
Ye dae smile,  
I sing the whyle;  
Sweet joy befaa ye!

Sheena Blackhall

# 11 Poems In Scots From Mongolia To Fyvie

Wird

Fin ye are waukent  
Dae ye takk tent o the souns o the world?

Ma first wird wis TREE  
I spak wi the tongue o a tree  
I stude witness tae the risin sang o the mavis  
Ooto the chitterin rowan

Oot frae the sheenin fleer o the wids  
I watched leaves faa an tummle aroon the kye  
In ma uncle's parks, as they chawed the snawy gowans

Tree reeshlin follaed me hame an intae ma dreams  
Fin I steekit ma een, I felt ma ain sap risin

g

The Mither Kirk o Aiberdeen is thrang  
Wi leevin fowk an speerits' oorrie sang  
A peaceful neuk tae dauchle, claik an meet  
Oot o the steer o traffic in the street

The bells ring oot, the scurries skreich aboot  
The sonsie doo stravaigs in's city suit  
O dowie feathers, cluckin roon for breid  
The watery sun sheens doon on the spire heid

Here sleeps a meenister, a poet, professor  
A Princess, wizard, sodjers, an explorer  
A hawker wi a goldsmith neist a warder  
An engineer, aa in their hinmaist herbour  
The artist wi the constable, the vratch  
Aa quaet aneth the mools, their last reef thatch

An by the stanes, the antrin seat's plunked doon  
Tae rest the trauchelt wirthies o the toun.

Here, past an present gaiter wi their friens  
An tell the tale o their lang beeriet beens

World accordin tae the Rev Angus MacFrewn

Hoors an jaads in Hell Fire fry  
Papists, Hornie's prods'll job ye  
Lord, upon yer chosen son  
Smile, an bring yer blissins tae me

Hindus, Buddhists Sikhs an Jains  
Gie them plagues, on-eyndin rains  
Anely save the world's Wee Free  
We're the boys tae bide wi Thee

Friars an archaeologists  
May ye hodge wi brimsteen burnin  
Aa ye moochers bi the kirk  
In Hell's pit ye'll aa staaun girnin

I'm the servant o the Lord  
Come tae soor ye wi a Wird  
I'd ban ilkie play an pleisur  
Dish oot skaiths in wechty meisur

May ye shakk doon tae yer sark  
Cloutie's pit is grim an sterk

Heid Debbie

Smack Heid Debbie is ma gaun-aboot name  
I hinna got a life an I hinna got a hame  
I wis smokin skunk fin I turned thirteen  
Takkin meth, crack an huff, afore I wis saxteen

Boomers, beannies, ecstasy an hash  
Blue heavens, joy juice, for giein me a rush  
Dance fever, magic mushies T.N.T  
Gin ye wint tae see a junkie takk a keek at me

Extract from *Fyvie*, a prize winning play by Les Wheeler & Sheena Blackhall  
(Scene 2)

In the wids. Twa widlan craiturs, rigged oot heid tae fit in  
green...feys/hornygollachs.....are rinnin backwirds an forrit in a fine steer

Fey 1: Fyvies wids are derk an deep  
Fyvie's far queer ferlies sleep  
Reeshlin trees an rinnin deer  
Speerits roon the castle steer

Fey 1: Somebody's comin!  
Fey 2: Somebody's comin!  
Fey 1: Fa can it be?  
Fey 2: Fa can it be?  
Fey1: I heard he's a pouerfu shennachie  
Fey 2: Foo'll be ken him?  
Foo'll we ken him?  
Fey 1: Wheesht! Here's oor king and his lady!

Cernunnos, the Horned God o the wids, weirin his stag's antlers, steps forrit,  
leadin his wife, a roe deer wi sma horns, ontae the side o the stage

Deer Queen: Oh husband we maun warn our fowk  
Tae offer nae discourtesy  
He kens the Future an the Past  
This Tammas, wi aa-seein ee

Stag King: A mighty warlock, ill tae cross  
He has the gift o prophesie  
An oorie story, wid-fowk aa  
In truth, an eildritch history:

Fey 1: The day grows gurly, the sun's awa  
Fey 2: The thunner cracks an the coorse wins blaa

Stag King: He comes, he comes, wife. Quick! Draw back  
It's an ill omen fin the Weather's black!

The Stag King an Queen boo doon tae touch the grun wi their foreheids. The  
widlan craiturs cooer awa. Tammas the Rhymer, steps on stage, haudin a heich

wizzent stick. He dunts it three times on the grun afore the open yett o the castle. Wi a knell, the yetts swing tee, as the lichtenin rummles an flashes. The warlock turns tae the audience an heists his airms an stick tae the air.

True Tammass: Fyvie, Fyvie thou'se never thrive,  
As long as there are three stanes three:  
There's ane intill the highest tower,  
There's ane intill the ladye's bower,  
There's ane aneath the water yett,  
And thir three stanes ye'se niver get

Widlan Craiturs circle the warlock

Here starts the curse o Fyvie's stanes  
Ane is hid in the auldest touer  
Ae sits an greets in the charter room  
Aneth lies far the Ythan's waves rin ower

True Tammass knells his staff three times on the grun.

True Tammass: Watch the Future ye will see  
Murder, daith an mystery  
Widdershins I furl awa  
Frae this wid o erne an craa  
True Tammass wauks aff, Widlan Craiturs perform a dumb show o the history o the curse:

Stag King: Three stanes war bigg't in Fyvie's was  
Taen frae the true Kirk's Haly lair  
Until aa three o them gyang back  
Nae firstborn loon will be an heir

Deer Queen: The first bides in the Ythan Burn  
The secunt stauns in Preston Touer  
The third bides in the Charter Room  
Kent tae the fowk as 'Lady's bower'

Stag King: Born at Dunfermline toon in Fife  
Prince Charles I, tae Fyvie cam  
An he wis slaw tae spikk, tae wauk  
A sickly, shargeret royal lamb

An at his eyn the heids-man's aixe  
Cuttit his thrapple threids in twa  
The smitt o Fyvie raxxed sae far  
It helped tae bring his sair doonfaa

Deer Queen: Fin Lady Meldrum deed herein  
Her body wis sealed in the waa  
A secret room in Meldrum Tower  
Fa enters, gars a curse doonfaa  
She wauks, a lady aa in Grey  
A speerit o the itherwarld  
Can flit ben misty corridors  
Tae ghaistly tricks an cantrips thirled

Fey 1: Syne Liliass Drummond cam tae bide  
Sterved in the touer an sae undone  
In Fyvie, Sandy Seton's bride  
Because she cudna bear a son  
Seen eftir, fin the laird wis wed  
A secunt time, on hinneymoon  
Ootbye their windae, eildritch skirls  
Liliass name, cut upside doon  
An fin she wauks in robes o green  
The guff o roses fulls the air  
For murder disna leave the beens  
Tae saddle peacefu in their lair

Fey 2: A ghaistly bagpiper is heard  
Fa's fingers war hacked aff langsyne  
An whyles, a phantom trumpet souns  
For Tifty's Annie, bonnie quine

Hermless she wis, an douce as weel  
Beaten an kicked like ony sack  
For luv in the laird's trumpeter  
Her brither broke the lassie's back

An noo she wauks ben Fyvie's wids  
Foriver murnin her tint luv  
At gloamintime, the leaves amids  
Fa coortit her, wi rose an glove

Stag King: A battle bi Montrose wis focht  
Wi Irish sodjers in the line  
And there, a luvseek captain deed  
O luv for a young servant quine

Stag King an Deer Queen merch roon the stage beatin a drum:

Fey 1: There are stains o bluid on Fyvie's flairs  
There's a murderer's bust in the Librar waa  
There's a room wi a curse, that's killed twa lairds  
Their wives turned blin in thon fated haa

Fey 2: Tammas the Rhymer, strang, yer curse  
Doon the centuries cast its weird  
Tammas the Rhymer, warlock, bard  
Pouerfu shennachie, famed an feared

Thunner an lictenin crack an aabidy rins fleggitt awa

6. Poem Inspired by the painting: Sir James Matthew Barrie, 1860 – 1937 by Sir William Nicholson

Tea an Scone wi the Neverlan Lad

Keekin up frae ma pot o tea  
Abune ma richt lug  
I spy Scotlan's verra ain Michael Jackson

Jamie, Peter Pan Barrie...  
The chiel fa niver grew up  
Hauf-bairn, hauf mannikin  
A shilip wee craitur  
Sair in need o a shave

Shaddas aneth his een  
Hint at sleepless nichts  
Recedin hair, a hingin luggitt mower  
Like a deein hairy oobit

Ye'd takk him fur an unnertakker's clerk  
A neckie like tae thrapple him  
A wrinkled, orra sark

An a sleekit luik like a nesty futterat

Jaiket near droonin him  
Sma boukit as he is

I sweir I hear Hook's crocodile  
Tickin awa, as I poor the tay frae the pot

## 7. Tree o the Sidh

At nicht the hoolet's skreich dirls on the lug  
Afore she wheechs awa, in seelent flicht  
The auld meen hauds the young meen in her airms  
Foretellin it will be a gurly nicht

The deein leaves are trimmlin on each bough  
Rosehips an hawes spirk aa the sheughs wi reid  
The cranreuch dyew makks pearls on blades o girse  
Langsyne the foxglove trumpets blawed an deed

The chitterin yowes scrat up some dauds o neep  
Leave tooshts o oo mangst briers at its reets  
Tree o the Sidh. Fin starnies raxx their beams  
The eildritch feys frae roon the bent twigs teet

Till mornin brakks. They creep back tae their lair  
Inno the cracks an crannies o the bark  
Tree o the Sidh, an itherwardly hame  
Hotchin wi feys aneth its siller sark

## 8. Poem inspired by the painting of The Cromartie Fool by Richard Waitt (1731)

The Cromartie Feel

The Cromartie Feel's got neives like hams  
His kail reet's strang an furly  
His broos are thick as thrissle taps  
His hudderie heid is curly

His semmit's as glaury's a heilan bog



His jaiket's raggit an torn  
His belt's a towe wippt echt time's roon  
Wis there iver a feel like thon?

He plays the laird at Halloween  
The nicht o the restless deid  
An a neep howked teem frae the yirdy park  
Has mair harns in its heid

a Wumman Lues a Chiel: An Owerset in Scots o a Poem bi David Lehman Frae  
Columbia: A Journal of Literature and Art.

Fin she says Glenmorangie she means Glayva  
Fin she says romantic she means onchancy.  
An fin she says, 'I'll niver spikk tae ye again, '  
she means, 'Pit yer airms aroon me frae ahin  
as I staun waefu at the windae'

He's supposed tae ken thon.

Fin a cheil lues a wumman he's in Glesga an she's in Kirkcaldy  
or he's in Embro, screivin, an she's in Dundee, readin,  
or she's weirin a ganzie an sunglaises in Princes Street Gairdens an he's  
rakin leaves in Cambridge  
or he's hurlin tae Aiberdeen an she is staunin dowie  
at the windae owerluikin the bay  
far a regatta of mony-coloured sails is on the go  
while he's stucken in traffic on the Steenhive motorwye.

Fin a wumman lues a chiel it is ten by ane in the mornin  
She's asleep he's watchin the fitbaa scores an ettin pretzels  
suppin ale  
an twa hours eftir he wakkens up an hyters inno bed  
far she bides asleep an affa cosy.

Fin she says the morn she means in three or fower wikks.  
Fin she says, 'We're spikkin about me noo, '  
he stops spikkin. Her best frien cams ower an says,  
'Did somebody dee? '

Fin a wumman lues a chiel, they hae gane

tae sweem nyaakit in the burn  
on a blythe July day  
wi the soun o the linn like a keckle  
o watter breengin ower smeeth stanes,  
an there is naethin unca in the mappamoun.  
Ripe aipples faa aroon them.  
Fit else can they dae bit ett?

Fin he says, 'Oors is a faist-meevin era, '  
'thon's gey wyce o ye, ' she makks repon,  
dry as the wine he's suppin.

They fecht aa the time  
It's a braw plisky  
Fit dae I owe ye?  
Let's start wi an apology  
Ah richt, I'm sorry, ye dickheid  
A signs held up sayin 'Lauch.'  
It's a seelent pictur.  
'I've bin birzzed wioot a kiss, ' she says,  
'an ye can quote me on thon, '  
thon souns braw in a Glesga accent.

Ae year they broke up seeven times an threatened tae dae it  
Anither nine times.

Fin a wumman lues a chiel, she wints him tae meet her at the  
airport in a furreign kintra wi a jeep.  
Fin a chiel lues a wumman he's there. He disnae girn that  
she's twa oors late  
an the fridge is teem

Fin a wumman lues a chiel, she wints tae bide waukent.  
She's like a bairn greetin  
at nichtfaa because she didna wint the day tae eyn.

Fin a cheil lues a wumman, he watches her sleep, thinkin:  
as midnight tae the meen is sleep tae the best lued.  
A thoosan fireflauchts glisk at him.  
The puddocks soun like the strings  
o the orchestra warmin up.  
The stars hing doon like pearlins the shape o grapes.□

## Mongolian Poets

This is a Scots Owersetting of 'The Heavenly Sky, ' a song by Danzanravjaa, Dulduityn Danzanravjaa (1803–1856,

### The Heivenly Lift

Heiven is hale.

Let's haud an enjoy echt eildritch feasts.  
Fin clouds appear an the time o rain cams,  
Fit is the difference atween the altar an the yett?  
Fin meevement stops an the time o daith cams,  
Fit is the difference atween auld an young?

Fin ye plant a moiler tree,  
A snake an pyson will cam frae the tree.  
Fin ye makk friens wi a coorse body,  
Ye'll learn coorse wyes frae them.

Fin ye plant a spreidin tree,  
Frae ilkie branch the fruits will growe.  
Fin ye hae frienship wi a gweed body,  
Brichtness an wyceness will cam.

Even tho there are mony heivenly starnies,  
The brichtest anes are anely ane or twa.  
Even tho there are mony eirdly craiturs,  
The wycest anes are anley ane or twa.

They say that cauld weather brings a jeelin win,  
An that the floer in the corrie will thrive  
Fin ye are blythe.  
Tae spikk o wae brings doon wae.  
Hae mercy, three sanctly bodies

By Chinggis Khaan (1162-1227)

Gin ma wee body is trachelt  
Then let it be trauchelt.  
Bit ma great government

Let it nae unraivel.  
A mighty body can win ae victory.  
A mighty speerit can win mony!  
Dinna be disjaskit that the wey is lang;  
Gin ye gyang forrit, ye can reach it.  
Dinna be disjaskit that the wecht is sair;  
Gin ye heist it, ye can cairry it.

From A Pair Melody of the Stone Monument: An Anthology of Mongolian Poets  
with selections by G. Ayurzana and translations and commentary by M. Saruul-  
Erdene.

Owerset in Scots o Twa Contemporar Mongolian Poets  
Frae English translations by Simon Wickham-Smith and Lyn Coffin

The Sang o the Stanes bi G. Mend-Oyoo

Gowden neth the blearie sun which fills the ritual urn,  
The watters of gweed fortune shooer inno air.  
Amangst tears an wae, this is a benediction.

An foo mony siller pieces are there in thon leevin watters?  
An are stanes rare on the braid sans o Ongon?  
There are gollachs amang thon lucky stanes.  
They takk the stanes awa, kittle up the shelts,  
An faither's wheep cracks like lightnin an thunner.

"Hae ye rypit oor lucky stanes?  
Pray tae the Buddha an speir forgiveness!  
Keep yer lugs open, the current is strang!  
Bring on the sang, cry it furth! "

The flow o bricht smeddum dwines awa,  
The voices frichtened aff thon fawn-coloured shelts.  
They tuck in their heids far the twa auld bodies are,  
They regret foo little they understaun the warld.

This bleezin day meevin the maitter o games,  
The splooterin watter is taen aback.  
Returnin aa the stanes, I repair ma mistaks  
The sang o the gifts cams gurglin.

Leaf bi Bavuudorj Tsogdorj

Young trees in Autumn  
Haive doon their leaves.  
The byordnar fiery leaves are  
The same's ma fitprints.

Sheena Blackhall

# 11 Scots Poems From Flat Out

e Abhors a Vacuum (Aristotle)  
In the wyme's chaumer  
Velvet drapes wyte tae be swypit aside  
Eftir the ficher o fore-play  
Tae swacken the hinges

Flaps grup at the incamin body  
Like a sea-floer grups the satty maet that feeds it

The chaumer trimmles eftir the incamer depairts  
Syne steeks its yetts  
Fair foonert wi the eftirstang o pleisur

: Inspired by the painting 'War' by Marc Chagall (1887-1985)  
Flicht an exile. Twinty years eftir World war II  
This pictur tuik twa years tae execute  
A hallyrackit, bumshayvelt cairt,  
Wechtit doon wi fowk  
Flees frae a birsslin toun

Ahin the cairt, a cheil hyters on shank's mere  
A stappit pyoke ower his shooders  
Aa he ains in life.

In derkness, tae the richt  
Jesus hings on the cross, takkin nae tent.

A muckle fite lammie breenges ooto the grun  
The sacrifice tae Peace  
Or is't a goat bein fed tae the lowe?  
Puir Jewish scapegoat risin in rikk tae Heiven.

tos: inspired by the painting Night Hawk by Edward Hopper  
We aa ken at least ae body fa wauks alane  
An ootlinn, giein the hee-haw tae the world  
Turnin their face tae the waa.

Ane sclimmt a Ben in Winter,  
Dooned a bottle o fusky, tapped up wi peels  
Syne fell asleep foraye in the blin smore

Anither blew his heid aff wi a gun,  
A fine-like sottar for inthers tae redd up eftir

Haun on hairt,  
Hae ye niver thocht like thon  
Crossin a brig, or heich on a cliff tap  
Tae step frae noo tae niver in ae wheech?

Gin ye hinna, ye maun be a lucky cheil.

Beetle in the Box

connached-pyocher-scunner-clachan-dumfounert-wattergaw-clishmaclavers-  
mart-hurcheon-whigmaleeries-hudderie-yowedendrift-malagarooze-mochie-  
emerteens-teuch-stooshie-bihoochie-skelp-disjaskit-tcyaav-smeddum-smachrie-  
kirk-wally-dugs- plook-harns-jaad-heeze-aybydan-tapsalteerie-merrymatanzie

Flat Earth Society

Is the Eird a baa?  
Weel, sudn't we faa  
Fin it birls ben the lift like peerie?

Sudn't kangaroos bluid

Rin aa tae their heid  
Fin Australia hings tapsalteerie?

I think it's a discus, an ashet, a frisbee

This kenspeckle plook o a planet  
In a thoosan years mair  
Science will, I am shair  
Pruve the Eird is as flat as a bannock

Souling Song

Chorus (repeat after each verse) :  
A soul, a soul, a soul cake,  
Please, gweed wumman, a soul cake,  
An apple, a pear, a ploom or a gean,

Ony gweed thing this Halloween.  
Ane for Peter, twa for Paul,  
Three for Him that vrocht us aa.  
God bless the maister o this hoose an the mistress as weel  
An aa the teenie bairnies that roon yer table reel,  
Likewise your lads an lassies, your kye an aa tae spare  
An aa that bides inbye yer yetts,  
We wish ye ten times mair.  
The lanes are unca clarty an ma sheen are unca thin,  
I've got a wee pooch I can pit a penny in.  
Gin ye hinna got a penny, a ha' penny will dae,  
Gin ye hinna got a ha' penny, syne God bless ye.

#### 7. The Aborted

Noo at the turnin o the Deid Thraa o the year  
Open yer yetts tae midnight, the fyauch o Daith  
Dae ye hear the pammer o wee tint feet  
Yarked frae the wyme afore they first drew braith?

Wee ghaists, the nameless anes  
Shilpit an quaet, that niver larned tae spikk  
The unborn wheech along teem streets like rikk  
Green leaves, plucked doon in Spring  
Millions o micht hae bins like snuffed oot caunle wikk  
Their anely merker in Yule's cauld on-ding

The clocks o Time tick on  
An they can anely watch blythe quines an men  
Live oot the lives that wir denied tae them.

Widda Baxter's Wae-Sang  
Fit means the future tae me?  
I hae tint the luv o ma life  
He held oor merriege dear  
Twis a pleisur tae be his wife

Sangs?  
He'd a lintie's knack  
O wheeplin douce an bonnie  
Cryin me back



I gaed tae a public concert  
O Bartok, Chopin, Bach  
In the taxi leavin eftir  
Thon's far I missed his lauch

I gaed on a tour o Egypt  
Hame o the tribbled Nile  
Bi the stoor o Thoth an Isis  
Thon's far I missed his smile

Syne I kent at last, he'd left me  
Like the shards frae brukken glaiss  
I wyle oot the myndin's splinters  
The loss that hurts the maist

Yeities

Inspired by a wildlife photo by Catriona Low

Yalla yeitie, bricht as breem  
Harbinger o Simmer days  
Like a fleein skirk o sun  
Wheepin, wheepin ower the braes  
Yeitie wi the yalla croon  
Dingin waefu thochties doon

Butterflee Effect

Fur wint o a nail the shee wis tint.  
Fur wint o a shee the shelt wis tint.  
Fur wint o a shelt the rider wis tint.  
Fur wint o a rider the battle wi tint.  
Fur wint o a battle the kingdom wis tint.  
An aa fur the wint o a horseshee nail. (traditional)

Last nicht I saw the ragin Dee  
Cam roarin brack neck doon in flood  
Like a broon shelt that's bukken free  
An kicks an rears unbridled, wud  
Cars, hames an larries tossed aboot  
Brukken like kinnlers in the faem  
It crummlit roads tae smithereens  
Like a spyled bairn, tired o a game

It buckled brigs, as if tae say  
Hae ye the pouer tae dae the same?  
Aneth the meen, the Dee'd begot  
A fearsome mighty juggernaut

Sheena Blackhall

## 12 Poems (English) From The Poetry Hat

1. Making a Poem Hat (non bai tho (poetic conical hats) .

A simple conical hat is made in 15 stages,

First, you must get to the forest

To collect young leaves of the tree named 'Bo Qui Diep'

Next, the tender leaves are exposed to mist

Then dried and ironed

Now, form a bamboo frame

From 16 bamboo splints.

Attach the leaves to the frame.

This stage is called 'cham, ';

Made by the hands of young girls

Two thin layers of leaves.

The hats are covered by oil

And dried beneath the sun.

Craftsmen add poems and paintings of Hue

To the slender leaves, creating 'non bai tho';

(poetic conical hats) .

How grand to carry a poem upon your head

Like a flower or a basket of fruit!

ck's Lair

The warlock lies in the kirkyard

Along with his black familiars

Restless under the sod

Between Heaven and Earth

He is neither fish nor fowl

His soul's in limbo, a half- thing,

Lucifer's turncoat follower

The shadow on a window of the kirk's

A coat of corbie's feathers,

Worn by black-souled Angels

Wheeling over their long departed master

Gold of the sun beats down  
On unhallowed bones  
The reedy grass on the grave  
Still whispers his spells  
His power's a byword, a whisper  
Branded into the memory of the parish

ant Square

Pheasant Square has a statue at its heart of  
The Prince of Wales pheasant,  
*Phasianus colchicus principalis*

The square is located in Birnam Wood,  
Between the Birnam oak  
And the famous Birnam sycamore

The lower branches of the oak tree rest on crutches  
The first 10ft of the trunk itself are hollow  
Providing cover and shelter for any pheasants of rank

Macbeth himself awarded all pheasants  
The freedom of this wood being citizens  
Of the ancient kingdom of Animalia

Males are frequently seen taking the air,  
Being foppish and fond of bright colours

Females are not expected  
To flaunt themselves, but to hold to modesty  
In all matters

At pheasant ceremonials, invitations are sent  
Across the world to those of the blood royal, to:

Lady Amherst's pheasant  
The Nepal kalij pheasant  
The Vietnamese pheasant,  
The Siamese fireback,  
The Tibetan eared pheasant,

The Mikado pheasant,  
The Mongolian ring-necked pheasants  
The Tarim pheasants,  
The Chinese ring-necked pheasants,  
The Malayan peacock-pheasant,  
The Bornean peacock-pheasant,  
The Palawan peacock-pheasant,

There is a memorial to Sir Frances Pheasant, Duke of the Ten Plumes

The pheasant law court lies under a spreading dule tree  
The prison's under the jurisdiction  
Of the county gamekeeper

For the High Treason of contributing recipes  
To a book of game-bird cooking,  
Sir Cockburn pheasant was held up by his spurs  
And roasted on a slow spit until done to a turn

(numero uno)  
Blue, headless, Eve burst from Adam's cage of ribs  
Hairy pitted, sweating, stinking of fish

A flash in the pan, a seven day's wonder  
Or so the snake thought, till she crushed its head

A strange birthing indeed.  
Was it a liberation, or a curse?

Expelled from her sanctuary  
Her children have soiled the oceans,  
Polluted the clouds  
Was Adam an accident,  
Eve an afterthought?

The knowledge she found in the apple  
Wasn't the nicest kind. It nurtured deceit and treachery  
Harboured nuclear power and genetic tinkering

The Goddess sits in the TV screen  
While baying crowds applaud a pimply twerker

The Goddess's name is Kali, ruler of death  
Blood and rage are her gifts to womankind  
Eve's her adopted daughter  
Making a charnel house of all they find

#### 5. The Washington Café

To the left, unseen, a ferris wheel is turning  
In the carnival pleasurelands  
Jugglers perch over money piles  
Oilmen treat screaming girlfriends to trips of terror  
Bonsai gulls high up in the ether  
Sail through nimbus and cirrus

The Washington Café's a promenade institution  
Italian ice cream made on premises  
Bacon roll buttered and oozing trickles of taste  
This is cloud no nine in child heaven  
The table parasols fold their wings like flamingos

On the beach below, sandcastle moments  
Are passing in full sail, loaded with chuckling children  
Plastic shovels tip sand into groin and cleavage  
Until the promised paradise appears  
A knickerbocker glory by Canale!

#### 6. Winter Tale

There's a lost path in that cavernous, ancient avenue  
Owl haunted knots and gnarls, peer from the creaky boughs

Sparrow shivers in her lodge  
Hops between cobwebbed cavities  
Alder, yew, and willow her silent witnesses

Withered arching branches support the sky  
Like locked grey skeletal antlers of rutting stags  
This tunnel of wind's been seasoned by ninety winters  
Northerlies batter the draughty tree-roof  
Autumn has threshed the beeches bare of leaves

The forest floor is an eerie, noiseless, tapestry  
Of needles of pine and fir. The ghostly hare  
Hides here, in his ermine coat

w

That meadow where I watched the cornflowers dance,  
Away beyond the farm house washing line  
I spent my childhood Sundays there, not thinking -  
Such places should be frozen points of time  
Garnered and stored, sad moments to enhance  
Now when the heavy years are grave-wards sinking  
When cold Ambition's bites no longer hurt,  
And all my gains, no more than empty creels  
I will put on the hermit's outworn shirt  
Foreswear the earthly joys of waste and feasting  
Follow my thought, that to the meadow steals  
A place so dear my mind will not let go  
That path where in the sun the poppy turns  
Where peace and insect hum together grow  
Each harebell its bent slender neck reveals  
Its modesty that all flamboyance spurns  
And here, the foxglove sheds its petalled skin  
An ragged robin wears a homely dress  
The field mouse in the grass finds comfort in  
The lesson that each tiny creature learns  
By instinct, all things fade to nothingness  
And winter strips away all that is vain  
No matter that for yesterday you yearn  
The meadow, though, in memory I retain,  
A balm in old age and its emptiness

Key

Come in, the strange key hinted:  
To a chancel of nightingales  
To a black angel's workshop  
To a hummingbird's ballroom  
To the cage of a Chinese chaffinch  
To the charred bones of an ex-marriage  
To a reef of seahorses  
To Michael Finnegan's coal bunker

To Mrs Fitz-Gerald's hysterectomy

9. Fox-Trot

When Mr Fox trots out  
The tossed dice of the hours are loaded in his favour  
Which is why he came to jump over the lazy dog  
Giving the pack the slip one Boxing Day  
Leaving the huntsman red in the face and raging

10. Rainforest Shack

The wooden shack in the rainforest  
Is painted in rainbow colours

Beneath the swaying coconut palms,  
It's near the shady trail  
Of an overgrown rubber plantation

The birds from the rainforest are currently  
Checking out secluded beaches, flourishing mangroves.

The occupant of the shack  
Is diving, in a coral reef 5,000 years old

Around him swirl sea hares,  
Sea squirts, octopii, starfish,  
Sand dollars, sponges, cuttlefish

Tourists tread a boardwalk through the mangrove,  
Into the very heart and bowels of Eden

Singing Bowl

The moon loves her singing bowl  
It hums the song of the Universe

Om gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha

Along the old Silk Road,  
Nepal, Japan and China,  
India, and Korea,



The children of the singing bowl  
Chime out the stages of thought  
For the Buddhist Faithful

Om gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha

Harmonic overtones reverberate  
Over the Ocean of Storms  
The Sea of Serenity,  
The Sea of Tranquility  
And all moon's many craters

Om gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha

& the Maiden  
(With apologies to Elizabeth Bishop, 'One Art')

In Earth and space there's only one real master;  
When aged and infirm, He's heaven sent  
When Death comes knocking then it's no disaster.

When life has lost its savor, you can't muster  
The strength to face the days, your courage spent.  
Then Death comes as a friend, a kindly master.

When you lose friends and family...faster, faster:  
You too will wish to go where they've been sent  
To sojourn. Death will not seem a disaster.

But gaze upon a death mask made of plaster  
Of child or maiden, then the heart is rent.  
No words can soothe, however wise the pastor

Look upwards to the sky, there's nothing vaster,  
The stars swim there, in some black continent.  
And yet so cold. In youth, Death's a disaster.

However truly carved, the alabaster  
Is not the living soul, that's evident  
Death of the young's a lesson hard to master  
Like gentle fruit, frost-blasted, a disaster

Sheena Blackhall

# 12 Poems In Scots From The Housewife's Dream

deen Herbour  
Aiberdeen herbour,  
Tarry watter  
Seagill skirl  
An North Sea chatter

Like wives o the warld sat doon tae news  
Ile ships rest frae their latest cruise

## 2. The Puil

Cauld is the puil at the fit o the brae  
Far the wechty troot lies pechin  
Its muckle great moo castin bubbles abeen  
As the watter vole sits flechin

Creashie an green, the puddock craiks  
Fa's dowed on a steen bi its side  
Far the daddylanglegs swippert an swack  
Wauchts past wi his treelipin bride

An ay the gean tree blossom faas  
On the girse an the watter's tap  
Like scentit snaaflakes whummlin doon  
Frae Heiven's cloudy lap

## 3. Ozzy the Cat

I'm roon an I'm fat  
I'm Ozzy the cat  
I'm playin ma squeeze box  
In tune and nae flat  
In fact I'm the anely feline aroon  
That busks on the cassies tae cheer up the toon

## 4. Bat your Lashes

I'm a bat I like tae hing  
Like kipper a smoky hoose

I've a furry kyte wi wings  
Somethin like a fleein moose

Upside doon bats see the warld  
Strung up bi oor clookit taes  
Like pegged washin on the line  
Raws an raws o funeral claes

#### 5. Dauncin Crow

Did iver ye see a dauncin crow?  
Ye've seen ane noo. Am I nae brow?  
I fluff ma feathers an shoogle ma dowp  
I skreich, I skirl, I birl, I lowp  
The anely daunce I dinna like's  
The fox trot. There's ane ower the dyke! !

#### 6. The Fleein Kirk

Afore the toun wis waukened  
Afore the doon an oots crawled ooto their pits  
Afore McDonalds wis thrang wi brakkfaist burgers  
St Nicolas kirk took scunner at the hale jing-bang  
Sprouted a pair o wings, an o a suddenty, flew!  
Aa its bells war ringin thon bricht mornin!  
Luik ma, a fleein kirk, a wee loon telt his ma

Sic a bumbazement! Sic a stammygaster!  
Dumfounert, Cooncillor Willie Young luikit up  
Disn't thon beat aa, quo he

The day St Nicholas kirk knocked  
Embro's trams  
The leanin touer o Pisa  
An the Loch Ness Monster  
Inno a cocked hat

#### 7. The Bath

High Blantyre pit wis kent as 'The Fiery Mine'  
Because o a gas caad firedamp, methane-blichtit

Ae dreich October mornin afore the dawn  
Twa hunner an twenty men gaed doon the shaft

Three oors later, the pit mou ganted wide  
A lowe like the flames frae Hell fleered up tae the lift.  
Near aa bit a haunfu war caad tae croconation

Eftir the greetin an girnin, cam the kistins  
The widdas, the faitherless bairns,  
The miners lowered doon tae the derk foraye

Mrs McDuncn gaed hame tae a clean bath  
Nae seety tide merks, scum frae coal pit seam  
Spotless. An thon's the thing that brukk her hairt.

#### 8. Ode Tae Kail

Curly kail ye thole the weet  
The cloor o wintertime  
Bairn o the yird, the cauldribe frost  
Pits sweetness in yer wyme  
Curly kail, yer wrunkled leaves  
O Greens, makk ye the Queen  
Steamed byled or fried, an honest dish  
In truth, the puir man's frien!

#### 9. In the Ancestral Kirkyaird

Ootbye the kirkyaird waas  
Lie unchristened bairns an suicides  
Murderers an the like,  
Beeriet atween 9pm an midnight  
There, or far fower roads meet  
Laid face doon sae they canna rise frae the grun  
Tae fash the leevin  
Ooto sanctuary, ooto place an mind

Inbye the waas, the last man beeriet's  
The watchie, guairdin the kirkyaird ghaists  
Gin the mools are new howkit,  
Somebody's ready for kistin  
In a hoose nearhaun  
They'll be girnin an greetin an wae

The hauns o the clock'll be stoppit  
The keekin glaiss happit  
An aa the curtains drawn

Three days o a wake vigil  
The mourners'll sit wi the corpse  
Wi a lichtit caunle

Syne it's fit-first oot the door  
On the showders o kin  
For the hinmaist journe on Earth  
We aa maun takk in time

Naethin's iver surer than Daith itsel

10. Hermitage Castle  
The castle stauns on Liddesdale  
Whaur the Border reivers rode  
Ained bi the Lord De Soulis  
Accursed, thon dreid abode

His servant steeped in wickedness  
Robin Reidcap bi name  
Trusted bairns tae the castle haa  
Awa frae their lawfu hame

An there, wi the warlock, Soulis  
He cuttit oot their hairts  
Tae feed the Deil their maister  
Wi Vertue's tenderest pairts

Till Thomas the Rhymer caughted him  
An bund him wi towes o san  
An in a pot o bylin leid  
He killt thon evil man  
Bit aften in the gloamin  
Ye'll hear them skirlin yet  
The ghaists o the murdered bairnies  
Skailt bluid will ne'er forget

Open Letter tae the Tounsfowk o Aiberdeen

Guid friens, I here set doon  
The terrible cost tae the public purse  
O burnin twa Aiberdeen witches

Item ane: £1 12s for fower tar barrels  
Item twa: 13s 4d for the stake (an a chiel tae cairry it)  
Item three: 6s 8d for twa iron barrels

Item fower: 6s for sax lengths o towe,  
Item five: £2 13s 4d. Twenty sax loads o peat tae burn the limmers  
Item Sax: 13s 4d tae John Justice the executioner for throttlin them  
Item Seeven: £1.10 for a rowth o timmer  
Aa this layoot tae feenish twa deevilish sinners!

Aa this, maisters, an pyin the guairds in the Tolbooth  
Mairower the torturer's fees for garrin the witches confess  
Nae tae mention the upkeep o thumb screws, leg irons, duckin steel  
Forbye giein feed an drink tae the jyled prisoners  
An waur, the time an costs incurred  
Bi the Justice Coort, the Provost an fower baillies  
Nae forgettin the jury. Is this aa tae be tholed?

As if this wisna eneuch, guid sirs,  
The blockhouse on Pocra Quey  
This verra year's bin thrang  
Haudin crews in quarantine, suspeckit o cairryin plague.  
The gallas aside it's aywis hingin pirates,  
Raxxin their thievin thrapples

Fowk ay winner far the toun siller gaes! Weel sirrahs.  
Nae on baillies holydays an fancy claes!

Thrifty Bard  
Paper was vrocht wi linen cloots,  
Auld fishin nets, leather frae buits  
Mony a mickle maks a muckle  
Thrift makks much o a teenie puckle

Turn ower the legal rigmarole  
Ye'll fin a poem will succour yer soul  
Mony a mickle maks a muckle  
Thrift makks much o a teenie puckle

Takk a leaf frae the buik o Will Dunbar  
Gin the Muse comes chappin on bus, in bar  
Screive yer poem on fit comes tae haun  
Think o the trees in a furreign land  
Mony a mickle maks a muckle  
Thrift makks much o a teenie puckle

Sheena Blackhall



# 14 Poems From The Housewife's Dream

## Elephant Blues

I'm the pink elephant in the alki ward  
I'm the jumbo that hoovers up gin  
It's a British disease from the Empire Days  
I drink oodles of it at tiffin

I see two of everything, totter about  
But an elephant never forgets  
I've hidden a bottle behind the fridge  
That I stole from the local vets

## Knees

TV serves meaning up on a plate  
Like a fast food takeaway,  
A two minute microwave meal

People who visit galleries  
Must put effort into the viewing

Each artist nails his colours to the mast  
Look long and hard.  
He is slowly unbuttoning his mind

But let's face it, you came in here to enjoy the quiet  
Nobody kicks their heels or flashes their knickers  
Outside of the frame.

Enjoy the honey dripping from the hive of paint  
Each picture's the bees' knees

## Housewife's Dream

In the drudgery of day  
Baking, sifting flour refined  
Makes a blizzard in the bowl  
Cribbles through the sieve of mind  
Monstrous mounds of ironing  
Seem to mate and multiply

How she loathes, recoils with hate  
From their detested progeny

Fancy floats to sheets of ice  
High above the here and now  
Like Chagall's fantastic sky  
By its moon, a flying cow

4. Shock Wave, Hiroshima  
After it left the hatch  
It fell for 53 seconds  
Then the bomb exploded

The plane, rocked in the shock wave  
A clear, sunshiny day  
The cloud, rising and boiling  
From the city below  
That looked like a spill of tar

On the ground, the air was heavy with yellow smoke  
White flakes of powder dropped like burning snow

All the buildings for miles burst into fire  
Trees and sweet potatoes smoked and burned

Iron itself was melted  
Like Hungry Ghosts, the people ran and ran  
And all the while their skin peeled off like paper

Gwyn  
My name is Nell Gwyn, I am witty and slim  
Coal Yard Alley was where I was raised  
My ma ran a bawdy house, famed in the town  
Where her zeal in the bedroom was praised

I cross-dressed for a time, like a tar of the line  
Then sold herring and oysters and gin  
And at Old Drury Lane, I won oodles of fame  
Selling oranges, comforts and sin

But jesting apart, I'm the tart with a heart

As Charlie, the King, can attest  
For we frequently sport in and out of the court  
Both over and under my vest

Seven hundred and thirty five pricks I assuaged  
And every one was a cad  
Then I settled for one, for when all's said and done  
Too much of a good thing is bad

#### Grown Up

She seems a very melancholy being  
To be so young yet to appear so dead  
To life. The Gothic look is unappealing  
As if she'd risen from a vampire's bed  
Or forged a friendship with a hoodie crew  
She should be dancing, laughing, but instead  
Her pouting hints at hurts which do not show  
Perhaps a lover's tiff? Some darker ill  
Self-hatred brings so many youngsters low  
They all aspire to be top of the bill  
Be famous for five minutes on the air  
Forever seeking the next buzz or thrill  
And when fame proves elusive, they despair  
And sulk and mope and sigh, and tear their hair

#### 7. The Pylon as Stalker

Once I saw a pylon,  
Deep in the heart of a blizzard  
Its power lines down  
Like a christening shawl unravelled

That image stalked me  
Thrust four thoughts into my mind  
Like shopping I hadn't intended buying

Aloneness  
Alienation  
Silence  
Melancholy

No point of reference  
Madness personified

r Pods  
On the first day of May  
In the land of Tir nan Og  
Wigwam gave birth to Wickerman's quads

It was an odd coupling  
Wickerman was originally drawn  
To wigwam's bulbous shape

He had developed a taste for traffic cones and party hats  
Which he had seen at Glastonbury  
Before his annual ritual burnings

Wigwam adore his woven look,  
The way he wrapped his arms around her  
So strong, so flexible.

It's always the children who suffer, isn't it?  
They were neither either tent nor fence,  
Four pods seeking an identity of their own

#### 9. The Eviction

The sheriff's officers came knocking  
Wilful non-payment of rent is a serious matter

She left in the clothes she stood up in  
(A pair of rolled down nylons and a hat)  
Dragged a bale of bedding over the cobbles

A bed was found for her in a psychiatric unit  
A nightdress was provided, free of charge  
Another civic cover up for poverty

Chennai Carrom Player  
Carrom is played in India  
Ancestor of snooker, pool and billiards

It is played with counters  
You flick the pieces into the pockets  
Using a striker.

Children as young as seven  
Can learn it easily.  
It is played all over Asia, for cash prizes.

A Chennai girl, became a world champion,  
Untouchable, her parents and two sisters  
Lived in a single room in a city slum  
Her pa sold fish  
She wanted to help her family.  
£14,000.00 this girl won!  
Her neighbour, a rag picker, wed at age 14  
Picks plastic waste from the street to feed her family

This neighbour's cousin is a sewer diver  
He's rich...gets £3.50 every day  
To clear the drains of filth, without protection  
He will not live long, but can fill his belly.

Serious play, the simple game of Carrom  
Every strike may bring food on the plate

11. Four Things Seen on a Fine May Morning  
Two crows strung on a wire  
Two dandelions, wafting  
A rutted hill track, grassy bridle road  
A cow, quietly shitting

12. Twenty Geishas  
Twenty Geishas went to sea  
In a vessel of polished pine  
The trades' routes offered to fill their coffers  
For sharing their virtues free

The Flying Dutchman closed his sails  
For the Geishas to step aboard  
And what transpired it certainly fired

Their spirits which simply soared

The Marie Celeste, they encountered next  
Do you wonder it's not been found?  
With kisses of honey and blandishments sunny  
The steersman he ran aground

So if twenty Geishas you should see  
When you're sailing the ocean wide  
Don't let them on deck, your ship they will wreck  
Keep hard on the starboard side!

n Country, Rothienorman  
The dark land of the farm lies buried under snow  
Glittering like mica, black trees in the sun  
Cast long blue shadows

Kesson country, where Jessie Grant McDonald  
Born in a Highland workhouse  
Came, via a Skene orphanage,  
Cornhill Asylum and marriage  
To drudge as a cottar's wife

Winter has made for the earth  
A quilt of frost, bare but beautiful  
Needing nor seeking any ornamentation

A lone bird trills in a thorn  
It is peaceful as the grave

After the cries of troubled souls  
In the locked wards of the town  
After the squalid grunts of her mother's  
Clients, coupling in an Elgin slum  
The dark lands by Fyvie, empty and cool  
Lay in her mind like a balm, an outstretched virgin  
Untouched, pristine and calm

14. Hieronymus Bosch, Hieronymus Bosch

Hieronymus Bosch, Hieronymus Bosch  
Have you heard of the orange tree glade  
Where cockles and shells whisper charms and spells  
And peacock-tail flowers are arrayed?

Hieronymus Bosch, Hieronymus Bosch  
The shades are luxuriant brown  
And up in the sky, where clouds dawdle by  
There's a serious child, upside down

Hieronymus Bosch, Hieronymus Bosch  
The vista's expansive and grand  
You may see the sun float, like a wind-propelled boat  
Through a nimbus the colour of sand

Hieronymus Bosch, Hieronymus Bosch  
Step into the world of Joe Fan  
There's a ladder that leads to a book in the reeds  
Just the home for a Renaissance man!

Sheena Blackhall

# 14 Scots Poems From The Gargoyle Man

## 1.A Border Yowe on the Referendum

Miles an miles o English girse  
Miles o English yowes  
Keechin on the bosky braes  
Chawin up the howes

Aince the referendum's by  
A yowe will ay be oo  
Fower mutton shanks wi puddens  
Makkin haggis, soups an stew

The English yowes will still say baa  
As yowes hae daen afore  
Whether or no the vote swings roon  
Tae steek Auld Scotia's door

## 2. H.M. Open Prison Leyhill/Tortwoth Court Mansion

This gran auld English manor hoose  
Has neebors ower the hedge  
As quaet an as private  
As a plot o fenced in veg

Aye, rapists, murderers, muggers  
Sleep ower the wye, nae fuss  
Fit ither lives I winner  
Bide parallel tae us?

Oh jyle birds, bonnie jyle birds  
Yer prison has nae waas  
Sae spreid yer wings an flaff awa  
Like aa the ither craaas!

## ty Matters

Like herds o Indian jumbos  
The clouds gyang thunnerin by  
An should ane drap upon oor heids  
It's ta-ta you an I



Twa poems bi Ryokan Owersett in Scots

eyn o the year  
The eyn o the year  
The hale warld birls  
Wi the hotter an steer o gift-giein

Anely ma theekit hame  
Bides peaceful an quaet  
Fit kinno thanks can I gie tae Buddha?  
Ae stick o incense  
Ae while o meditation

raps on the Banana Leaves  
Fin yer auld an fooshtie  
The slichtest soun waukens ye  
Ma licht flichters, a gloamin shooer passes  
I smeeth ma bowster an in seelence  
Lippen tae the doonpish  
Drappin throwe the banana leaves  
Fa can I share the feelin o this meenit wi?

Twa Poems bi Wang Wei Owersett in Scots

a Frien aboot tae gyang Hame Soothwards  
Ten thoosan miles aa aroon  
Spring warms inno Simmer  
Ower three muckle rivers,  
Anely a puckle migratin birdies rise  
The Han River is braidenin inno Heiven

A lanely guest sets aff for Ying  
In Yun, young rice growes braw  
In Shu the veggies are fat  
Hingin ower the toun yett an glowerin  
I see a frien's bricht jaiket

Hyne awa an dwinnlin

n Aboot ma Fite Hair

Aince I had pink chikks. Noo ma teeth are blaik

O a Suddenty, ma fite hair's

Like a loon's pigtail, saft an huddrie

In ae life, foo mony times can the hairt brakk?

Gin I dinna turn tae the yett o Naethin-ness

Foo can I cleanse ma hairt?

Ma Toun Kens

It kens the satty skelp o the North Sea tide

It kens the dirlin skirl o the fierce sea maws

It kens the fremmit leids the herbour brings

It kens the haar an the springtime's wattergaws

It hears the bells chime in the Mither Kirk

It hears the dirdum-dree o the traffic soun

It hears the saft curmur o stravaigin doos

It hears twa rivers, gaun tae the sea tae droon

It sees the beggar priggin siller in neuks

It sees the trauchelt shopper, the business chiel

It sees the mither's ringless haun, her tcyauve

It sees the littlins breengin alang tae skweel

It murns the peace o mediaeval times

It murns the sprauchle o suburbs raxxin oot

It murns tint birds, an burnies biggit ower

It murns that Orchard Street bears nae mair fruit

9.A Letter Tae Rabbie Burns

Weel Rabbie, here's a line or twa

Tae say Man still believes yer braw

Ye've lowsed sae mony thochts tae blaw

O'er Ben an brae

Yer still ten heids abune us aa

On yer Birthday

Ye'd hae nae lack o weeminkind  
Thin, creashie, orra, roch, refined  
Aa willin tae be wined an dined  
Nae kirk tae bray  
'Gainst houghmagandie's bump an grind  
On yer Birthday

Ay Rab, ye'd be a media star  
A global hit baith near an far  
Dogged bi the press at ilkie bar  
Each wurd ye'd say  
Wad still dunt Wonder's yetts ajar  
On yer Birthday

Birk bi the Lochan Spikks  
Booin abune the loch  
Leaves are ma listenin lugs  
They swey tae the glugger an glumph  
O win-skelped waves  
Ma reets rin faddoms deep  
Unner the loch's blaik foun

A stipple o green  
Nae cradle swings sae sweet  
I ken ma place  
I'm reared tae thole the Sizzens  
I am weirin ma simmer gown

Ma sap hauds auncient lear  
Ye hae forgot. The wirm chaps at ma yett  
Ae day it'll ding me doon

It is eneuch, betimes, tae reap the hairst o sun  
Afore the lowes o Autumn burn ma briest  
Afore the Winter takks me for his bride  
Slippin anither ring roon ma timmer wyme  
Afore the blin drift an the cranreuch's stoun

e Aged Ane  
Winnie disnae gie a snuff  
Winnie disnae gee her ginger  
Takk awa her favourite toy  
Watch her, ragin, gyang her dinger

Winnie sleepin's like an angel  
Winnie waukent's foo o tricks  
Bubblin on the edge o spikkin  
Toddlin in her romper brikks.

Winnie's een are fu o mischief  
Caa her ower, a jack in box  
Up she lowps, a hardy gurrin  
Like a Vernal Equinox

A sweet bud, a curly powe  
She sclimms her faither's shanks until  
She is heistit for a bosie  
Boos aa comers tae her will

The Bruce set doon a firm decree  
That each chiel wirth a coo  
Maun makk a yew bow for hissel  
Tae fecht as weel as ploo

Syne ithers ryped the yew tree's side  
For bagpipes, shuttles, chanters  
Blythe clarsachs, sae thon hinneyed strum  
Micht sweeten life's mishanters

The yew growes doon aneth the mools  
Its reets drink corpses' bluid  
An as the bodies dwine awa  
Freed sowels wing roon its heid

13. In the Solstice Lowe I Burn  
In the Solstice lowe I burn

Jaw o yowe tae jyne the flame  
An in daein thon I murn  
Aa that dees, an sae I nane  
In ma heid, the waukrife deid  
Filin ben the birlin rikk  
Loued or hated, kind or cauld  
Slaw an ugsome, bonnie, quick

As thon spirks rise tae the lift  
Sae like aa the lave I'll shift  
As a nest, wi patience vrocht  
In a meenit's blawn tae nocht

erins

I heard a leverock in the lift  
I saw a bawd lowp brave an braw  
The taste o truth wis in ma mou  
As wersh as ony bitter haw

I brushed a nettle wi ma shank  
An reid ma skin raise stang  
Quaetened the stoun. Amangst the thrang  
O sights an souns the day set oot  
Like ony host lays oot a feast  
The soun I langed for maist ava...  
The hoolet cryin in her resst

□



# 15 Scots Poems From An Inside Job

1. In Praise o Sir Patrick Geddes Born Ballater, 1854 - died, France 1932

Ballater born, in Autumn's frost, fin sheughs are bricht wi hips an haws  
Young Patrick Geddes lued the lan... 'By leaves we live, ' his motto was

A sodger's loon, hame-schuled an bricht, his lear ne'er driven bi the tawse  
A polymath, peace warrior, 'By leaves he lived', a wirthy cause

His symbol wis three cushie doos..sympathy, synergy, synthesis  
A paradox, unorthodox, 'By leaves we live, ' his motto was

Nae the three Rs bit the 3 Hs...hairt, haun an heid should be the laws  
quo he, tae educate young harns, the leaves that win o learnin blaws

A Francophile, toon plannin star, he strode intae the lion's jaws,  
In Palestine, planned Tel Aviv, biggt weel an wycely, buffed its claws

A Maharajah fur a day, in India he gart fowk pause  
Scoored orra neuks o stank, disease an in their stead, raised healthy haas

Amang the shackers o his warld, thon Fowk fa form thocht an laws  
He stauns aside the foremaist rank, 'By leaves wi live' his motto was.

deen

Seagulls skreichin in yer lug like banshees  
Granite spirks like fire in Union Street  
The claik o Eastern Europe's on the cassies  
This ile port far mony kintras meet

Rowies, stovies, Cullen skink an haddies?  
Chirizo, pizzas, burgers, sushi, coke!  
The buskers frae Romania are fiddlin  
Siller ooto the antrin tourist's pyoke

Twa universities are thrang wi students  
Frae China, India, Nigeria  
Arabs an Poles keep auld religions eident  
Oor Scots fowk worship clubbin an fitbaa

Oor grannies are tattooed like auncient sailors  
Spray tanned an weirin Primark teenage claes  
The Nor sea is the thing that niver cheenges  
As gray an gurlly as in Norseman days

### 3. An Inside Job (2)

The airt far poems cam frae  
Is far dark watters meet  
Far swans in pearled feathers  
Slide lichtly, mute an sweet

The airt far poems cam frae's  
A bibblin Heilan burn  
June sunsheen gars it skinkle  
Like gowd frae butter churn

The airt far poems cam frae  
Hauds coggies in the stoor  
Far aa the dregs o hertbrakk  
Dreep sypins, wersh an soor

The airt far poems cam frae's  
Far aa the tears that drap  
On ilkie kist's doon-pittin  
Mell, wi the yird on tap

The airt far poems cam frae  
Is like the traivellin tide  
Wi treisurs, joys an nichtmares  
World-gaithered in its side

Seen frae a Bus

Craas perched on wires hing doon their dowps  
O feathers, sae they winna cowp

For gin their tails stood straicht as leeks  
They micht faa ower an brakk their beaks



Cannie Miss Him: Glasgow

Glaswegians wear no masks. They take no prisoners.  
A bearded busker smells like a badger's burrow  
A junkie with staggers is spirited off by the polis

Sauchiehall Street. The unaccustomed heat  
Incites a baring of flesh to equal Ibita

'Whaur's Donald Dewar's statue? ' repeats a turbaned Sikh  
In the insignia of a Glasgow traffic warden  
'He's twa streets doon. A wee green man, so he is,  
Wi a pointy nose. Ye cannie miss him.'

Craw: A Scots Owersett o a Poem bi John Clare

Foo peace-fu like it seems for lanely chiels  
Tae see the craw flee in the Heivens gran  
Abune the wids an parks, ower cantie lea  
Thon spikks o clachans or a hoose nearhaun  
Ahin the neeborin wids, fin Merch wins heich  
Teir aff the branches o a muckle aik

I lue tae see thon lum-swypers flee by  
An hear them ower the wizzent widlan craik  
Syne jink apley frae hidden widsman's straik  
Fa warssles daily in the tress doonby

I lue the seety craw, wad niver spyle,  
Its Merch day, blythely skreichin its joy oot  
I lue tae see it sailin back an fore  
Far parks an wids an waters spreid about

7. Three Scots Owersetts frae Banes o Cuttlefish bi Eugenio Montale, frae Inglis  
Translations bi Antonio Mazza

A Nearhaun Glisk o Glamourie  
Day waukens again. I shaw it as a dawn  
O threidbare siller on the was

The steekit windaes strippit glimmer  
The darg o the sun resterts  
An the ootspreid voices dinna bring the ordnar stooshies

Fit wye? I think on an eildritch day,  
I reward masel. The pouer that aince gied me virr  
Will ream ower ghaistly an oorrie frae the gran langsyne  
Noo, I'll raxx oot. I'll leave ahin heich hooses, nyaakit streets  
I'll face a kintra o unmarked snaa soft as lanscapes in a tapestry  
A latchy sunbeam'll skyte frae the snaflake lift  
Stappit wi unseen licht  
Wids an knows will spikk tae me reesin oot cheerfu comebacks

Gledsome, I'll read the blaik signs o branches ower fiteness  
Like a necessary alphabet  
Aa ma yestreens will appear afore me at aince  
Nae soun will ding doon this lane blytheness  
Some Merch cock will takk the air  
Or drap doon tae saddle on a palin.

### The Skaith o Leevin

Aftimes the skaith o leevin I hae kent  
It wis the chokit burn that gluggers  
It wis the up-furl o the druchtit leaf at noon  
It wis the sheltie cowpit aff its feet

Nae blythness hae I kent  
Forbye the ferlie that shaws  
God disna gie a hee-haw  
It wis the statue doverin at noon  
An the cloud, an the merle heich-liftit

### Blytheness Won

Blytheness won a body wauks  
Wi ye on a knife's edge  
At the een, yer a blae licht that glimmers  
At the fit, thrawn ice that cracks  
Sae he fa lues ye maist, he sudna touch ye

Gin ye fa in wi wowels reamin wi wae  
An brichten them  
Yer mornin's sweet an steerin like nests in eaves  
Bit naethin quietens the greetin o the wee loon  
Fa's baa rins aff amang the hooses

8.I am

I am the birdie cheepin ower the lea  
The lea itsel an ilkie blade o girse  
The siller that belongs tae aa, or nane  
That takks a different form in ilkie purse

I am the traivellin ee, the mansion gran  
I am the tiger an the tiger's prey  
I am the wave, the seagull an the san  
I am the rotten an its nest o strae

I am the brierin rowan on the ben  
I am the dwinin leaf upon the aik  
I am the thocht that glents in ither's een  
I am the blitheness in the spurgie's claik

I am the shadda neth the thorny tree  
I am the cock that cries atap the spire  
I am the dreep faas frae gurly lift  
I am the spirk that crackles in the fire

I am the marra in the sodjer's been  
I am the unborn bairnie in the wame  
I am the rose, the thorn an the stem  
I am the reef that haps the hermit's hame

For I am Aa an naethin, ane in Aa  
The pluff o stoor fin that greets each spurgie's faa

Owersets of Two Tamil Mediaeval poems found in English, from William  
Dalrymple's 'In Search of the Sacred in Modern India'

Her Airms

Her airms are as bonnie  
As a gently meevin bamboo  
Her een are fu o peace  
She is hyne awa  
Her airt's nae easy tae win tae  
Ma hairt is wud wi langin  
A plooman wi a lane coo  
On a lan aa weet  
An ripe fur the seedin

Ma Luv

Ma luv  
Fa's bangles glent an ching  
As she chases partens  
O a suddenty stauns blate  
Heid booed  
Hair happen her face  
Bit anely till the wae o gloamin's by  
Fan she'll gie me the  
Fu pleisur o her breists

Devadasi: A 16th Century Poem from the temple of Tirupathi, translated by A.K. Ramanujan (1929-1993) , here owersett in Scots

I'm nae like the lave  
Ye can enter ma hoose  
Anely if ye've siller

Tae step ower the yett  
O ma hoose  
It'll cost ye a hunner rupees in gowd  
For twa hunner ye can see ma sleepin chaumer  
Ma bed o silk  
An climm inno it  
Anely if ye've siller

Tae sit bi ma side  
An tae pit yer haun  
Bauldly inno ma sari

That'll cost ye ten thoosan

Siventythoosan'll win ye feel  
O ma fu roon breists  
Anely if ye've siller

Mair siller'll bring yer mou close tae mine  
Tae touch ma lips an kiss, tae hug me ticht  
Tae touch ma muff an get tae birze wi me

Lippen weel  
Ye maun bathe me  
In a shouer o gowd  
Anely if ye've siller  
er

October. Noo the parks are ploeed  
The mowdie's humfy-backit trail  
Lies ower the girse in yirdy clorts  
A bawd rins hirplin ben the kail

Wee cheepin birdies in the beech  
Chirp oot, weel happit bi the leaves  
That hinna drapt, for Winter's bite  
Has yet tae bare the muckle trees

The bens ahin the loch o Skene  
That rise sae blae intae the lift  
Still laird it ower the parks an fermes  
That hinna yet bin gart tae shift  
Bi the ootraxxin toun that spreids  
Its graspin clook ower kintraside  
Here aa is quaet, nigh gloamin time  
Fin latchy cushies hamewird glide

Shaddas Atween the Trees

Fit bides in the shaddas atween the trees  
Far naebody sikks tae gyang,  
Barrin the midgies dauncin there  
In the hauf licht, wee an thrang?  
There's fusers o paws in the oorie wids

Hett fittin it ower the girse  
An tapsalteerie leaves cowp ower  
As if fleein a warlock's curse

The shaddas atween the trees are derk  
An seenister, fey an sleekit  
Fin the lift in the scratty airms o aik  
Wi midnight starns is theekit

I lue the shaddas atween the trees  
Far nocht bit the wud things dwell  
For there creeps the fiery, secret tod  
As lane as I creep masel

oied

Dowie, dowie ben the brae  
Dowie doon the road  
Steps the bairned lassie  
Wi her wechty load

Kissed an cuddlit easy  
Luv wis faist tae flit  
She maun bide her lane noo  
Wi nocht tae dae bit knit

Nocht tae dae bit sit at hame  
Luv seeds growe far they faa  
Saxteen years o mitherin  
The slowest crap ava

Castlemilk Lads

Chae Gordon ran wi a Glesga gang, The Cumbie,  
Did time fur fechtin. Niver used a blade  
Chapped on the heid wi an aix, whaun still a halflin  
Nae winner his hair sticks up like a hurcheon's prods

See thon wee scar abune Chae Gordon's ee?  
He haived a bottle o cider intae a midden  
It stottit richt back oot an struck him hard  
Growin up in the Gorbals gied him scars

Raised in a boddom flat on Inverkip Street  
Doon bi the Clyde, whaur Johnny Begg wis brewed  
Barrels, stank o fuskey, big dray shelts  
A neon licht that blinkit aa nicht lang  
'Takk a peg o John Beg'....queer lullaby.

Chae's faither wis a busker, cam hame blootered,  
Whyles they selt auld claes in Paddy's mairket  
The coat in the photy's speecial, though  
Brand new!

His sister Catherine, she wis killt bi a larry  
Three year auld, nae road sense. Niver luikin....  
Chae blanked it. Didna wint thon in his heid.  
Ae meenit here, . the neist, a smudge on tar

Peter leans his chin on Charlie's shooder  
Granparents raised him whaun his mither deed  
TB...it cairriet aff a when o ithers  
His faither wis a scaffie, sortit toys  
Frae trock he fand in buckets for the tip

Rab Carnochan, third o three laddies  
Da wis a plumber, ma worked wi the Co-op.  
Raiked aroon wi the lave, stole neeps frae gairdens  
Click! The shutter faas. The trio's caught

#### 15. Miracle on Princes Street

I wis dowpit doon in an Embro café,  
As ye dae, aroon three in the eftirneen,  
Fin wheech cam a tram, like an electric eel  
A miracle o modern engineerin  
A bumbazement. A stammygasster. A whigmaleerie

Nae a trick o the licht  
It wis a clear day, ye ken.  
A wumman nearhaun near chokit on her scone  
This tram wis the first o its breed tae skyte ablow the Castle  
Eftir a brakk o fiftyseven years

Ooto ma left ee I luikit at a Windae Display  
In a gran shop fur Embro's genteel market  
Twa mannekins stude wi their claes aroon their queats  
As nyakkit as fin plastic first produced them

Their glaiss een glowered at the tram as it sliddered alang  
On its vergin shottie o traivellin  
An I's warrant ane o them winkit at the driver!

Sheena Blackhall



# 15 Scots Poems From The Gype

## The Gype

I've a face like a bap an a neep shapit heid  
Fur mair than three hunner year I hae bin deid  
An me bein glekit I quickly wis feed  
I'm the Laird o Udney's feel

Ma hair's like a coxcaimb, fowk caa me a gype  
Bit I'm wattered an fed (an I'm nae ane tae clype)  
Ilkie shank is as skinnymalink's a drainpipe  
I'm the Laird o Udney's feel

I am coo an goose herd tae the Laird at the Haa  
I tied towes roon his geese necks an thrappplit them aa  
Bi mistak, bit himsel widna turn me awa  
I'm the Laird o Udney's feel

I telt him the geese hid bin chokit wi greed  
An they'd stappit thirsels ower forcey wi seed  
Me bein a gype, naeb'dy thocht I hid leed  
I'm the Laird o Udney's feel

Fin the Castle o Knockhaa wi flames burnt thrang  
Ma tyke raised me up wi a bowf lood an strang  
The maister slept on till a kistie I flang  
Throave the windae an saved him, it made sic a bang  
I'm the Laird o Udney's feel

Ma Mistress sent me on the Jacobite's cause  
Wi letters...nane stopped me (a feel kens nae laws)  
Bit the castle wis selt intae Hanover's paws  
An the Haa wis gien ower tae thon reid-coatit craws  
Nae mair eese fur Laird Udney's feel

Ae nicht I wis drookit in peetiless rain  
Atween fever an puirtith I scarcely won hame  
Dinna beery me like a breet wis ma refrain  
Bit they laired me unmerked wi nae cairn or heidstane  
Fur the Laird o Udney's feel

A century later fowk set thon tae richt  
An noo I've ma name on a stane in full sicht  
O the warld, Jamie Fleeman, sae sirrah, gweed nicht  
Frae the Laird o Udny's feel.

The Murmichans

The Faerie Queen rides oot o nichts  
Heid o the Host...Unseelie Coort  
Her sheltie's mane has tinkling bells  
Deevilish is her eildritch sport

Nuckelavee gyangs back an fore  
In kirkyairds, ben new howkit mools  
The corp, sooked dry inbye its kist  
Canna buy life for ony jewels

An hyne awa a hoolet sabs  
Will o the wisps licht up the muir  
Tae tryst men men intae daithly bogs  
The meen hings yalla, wae an queer

In oorie glens pale ghaisties flit  
An widdendremes cam coorse an chill  
Shellycoats rattles throwe sea haar  
Murmichans' weird's tae dae man ill

Time Warp: 1897-2017

Great-grandsire ran his empire frae this shop  
Tradin the milk hurled in frae his dairy farms

Noo it's the Corner Tree Café  
Fake Edwardian/ Victoriana theme

Hurricane lamps wi bulbs instead o wicks  
Hing frae the windaes, relicts o somewye's past  
Washed up like trendy driftwid

A railway clock ticks ower boxies frae Whitstable  
Fishmerket cockles an winkles stamped on its sides

Great grandsire's brakkfast wis brose  
Fresh frae the udders o his milkin kye

A daud o breid fur denner, hotchpotch soup  
Needs an tatties an ingins grown in his ain kailyaird

Noo café clientele claik in the chaumers  
Scones reest in a birdcage. Vintage widden boxies  
Haud chintzy furliegors. (Elizabeth Draper- silks and threids  
O Paradise Raw in Lunnon's Bethnal Green)  
Menus are screwed on slabs o smeeth planed timmer

The dairy cairts aince clunkit ower the cobbles  
Muckle cans clink-clinkin as the shelts'  
Sheen struck the grun, the cans war reamin fu  
O cream tae full toun failmies cuppies, tins an joogs

Eenoo the menu's firmly cosmopolitan  
Café latte, café mocha, espresso  
Green tea, Cappuccino, Americano,  
The sannies are stappit wi voodoo mango  
Pesto, hummus, olives, an pastrami  
Brie, chorizo, dill crème fraiche et al

Tea-total, ma fermin kin fa ained this airt  
Micht hae approved o the liquid refreshments here  
The café serves up smoothies, mango, papaya  
Peach, sweet tattie, wud English elderfloer  
Bollywood dreams chai an E teaket teas  
Milk o soya, almond, coconut

Nae waucht o sharn an strae  
Nae swyte o wark sypes frae the ghaists  
Fa aince vrocht in this neuk  
The claik aroon is global an genteel

The Hoolet  
The hoolet sat in the hoolet's tree  
He cockit his lugs an he listened  
An fit wis his name I canna weel gie  
Fur I'm nae richt sure he wis christened

He sat on his branch, I lay in ma bed  
We twa watched ane anither

He fleched his oxters, he preened his wings  
Wi niver a skreich nur a blether

He furled his heid frae wast tae east  
He cast his een up tae the meen  
He pykit his cloaks an he shoogled about  
Syne dauchled as still as a steen

The meen wis fite an the hoolet wis fite  
He wis winnerin 'Fa's thon vratch  
O a fremmit body abed in the hoose  
In a neuk o ma huntin patch? '

He luikit lang wi his glimmrin een  
His feathers pluffed oot bi the win  
Twa carnivores in the mids o nicht  
Jist takkin each ither in

The Jaickies

The jaickies are aff frae the lum again  
Hae they gotten a time-share in Aden?  
Mebbe they're sikkin the win in their wings  
At the crack o the Bullers o Buchan

Wad the jaickies be paiddlin wi roch drookit claws  
On Peterheid's cauld sanny stran?  
Or checkin fur ghaisties at Slains dae ye think?  
Or the tatties in Tipperty's lan?

The hoodies ne'r set aff on furreign stravaigs  
Tae Strichen, tae Mormond or Fyvie.  
Sae fit trysts the jaickies tae savour delichts  
In Langside or Turra or Crivie?

Oh jaickies oh jaickies cam back tae yer lum  
As neebors yer perfeck, yer blin deaf an dumb  
Tae oor ongauns. Ye niver gee should we gae raikin  
Niver spikk o oor craps fin at marts fowk are sklaikin  
Tho a chucken is braw, clockin free reenge or pen  
A lum's nae a lum wioot jaickies ye ken

### Twal Wild Geese

Twal wild geese wauk beak tae dowp  
The corn in the parks blaws brawly  
The win in the birk gars the green leaves lowp  
An the clock o Time ticks slawly

A tod whyles cams tae the cattle yaird  
The corn in the parks blaws brawly  
He struts wi the pride o a bunnet laird  
An the clock o Time ticks slawly

Fin first I cam here, a growthy seed  
The corn in the parks blaws brawly  
The oats grew heich as ma wee bairn heid  
An the clock o Time ticks slawly

A shelt still ploood the gweed broon grun  
The corn in the parks blaws brawly  
An the yolks o the eggs war bricht's the sun  
An the clock o Time ticks slawly

Noo the kye are selt an the staas are teem  
The corn in the parks blaws brawly  
An masel grown auld bit the girse still green  
An the clock o Time ticks slawly

### The Seelent Cell

The dowie soun o the Boddam Coo  
Manes ben the cauld rife lan  
Ootbye the Nor Sea wars agin  
The rocks, the haar, the stran

In the seelent cell the prisoner lies  
In the derk, wi his thochts alane  
He's tint aa sense o day an night  
A lowe wioot a flame  
The warld ootbye is deef tae his waes  
Nane ken he's steekit there  
In the leevin hell o the seelent cell  
Pit mirk an teem an bare

An warder in fu riot gear  
Fin the door like the lid o a can  
Is opened...a wud breet breenges oot  
A breet, that aince wis a man

O the seelent cell wis blaik's then pit  
At the fit o the deepest mine  
An thon's far the hardest prisoners  
War sent tae serve their time

Gentle Johnny Ramensky  
Johnny was a miner's son  
Brought up in Glesga toun  
Grew up tae be a safe brakker  
Weel kent for miles aroon

This Lithuanian convict  
Afttimes brakk free o jyle  
They caught him and they shackled him  
His escapades tae spyle

Bit fin the public kent o this  
They tuik the cause in han  
Gart shackles tae be banned foraye  
In prisons throw the lan

Fin WW2 wis ragin  
Gentle Johnny jyned the fray  
He trained as a commando  
And wore the Green Beret

They drapped him intae Italy  
Tae fecht agin the Hun  
A saboteur an safe-brakker  
His medals, bravely won

Bit fin the war wis eyndit  
He tuik up the burglar's role  
On gamblin an the dug track  
Gaed the siller that he stole

He sickened in the prison  
He deed within a day  
An Gentle John Ramensky  
Passed intae history

Sydney Goodsir Smith

Whit o the Warks o Sydney Goodsir Smith  
A Lallans, poet, artist, dramatist?  
A mighty screiver o the Scots Renaissance  
A pouerfu playwricht an a novelist

Born in New Zealand, as a halfin lad  
Moved ower tae Embro wi his faimily  
At Oxford, studied History...wine, in France  
An practised Art in blythesomeItaly

His wirds ye'll find in mony skeely buiks  
Skail Wind, The Wallace, Under the Eildon Tree  
Carotid Cornucopius, Lines Review  
Kynd Kittock's land aired on the BBC

The Grace of God and the Meth-Drinker's much lued  
The Wanderer, The Deevil's Waltz read weel  
So Late into the Night and Figs and Thistles  
An wirds on Robert Ferguson, puir cheil

His drawins edited bi Chapman Press  
Orpheus an Eurydice, his poems, colleckit  
An mony screivins upon Scottish lear  
An ither buiks, wi doucest wirks, selecktit  
Ye'll fin his wirds set doon in Makar's Coort  
His banes lie quaet in cauldribe Dean kirkyaird  
Kent as 'the kilted kiwi' or 'The Auk'  
Kenspeckle body an a mighty bard

Rowan

The rowan disnae argy wi the win  
It bides jocose in its birth spot

It lichtens the wid wi flouers  
Like bridal wreaths  
It brichtens the wid wi berries  
In autumn lowes.

Its leaves reeshle an fuser like a fugue  
Its life is green, fite, reid  
Spurgies flee tae its branches  
Deevilicks fear its pouer

I cairry ye  
I cairry ye inbye ma hairt  
An while I live ye'll niver dee  
Until ma een are steeked foraye  
An eftir, fit will be will be

Simmer Moods: A Scots Owersett o a Poem bi John Clare

I lue at gloamin tide tae wauk alane  
Doon nerra wynds ower-hung wi dyewy thorn  
Far frae the lang girse in aneth the snail  
Pit-mirk creeps oot an sproots his feartie horn  
I lue tae dwaum ower leys jist newly mown  
Far dwinin girse perfumes the gurly air  
Far bees raik roon wi waesome, wabbit drone  
In vain fur flooers that briered nae langsyne there  
Whyle in the sonsie corn the happit quail  
Skirls 'weet ma fit' an hid as thochts unborn  
The fey-like corncrake steps aroon the rail  
Hubbers 'craik craik' like vyces neth the grun  
Richt gled tae meet the gloamin's dyewy veil  
An see the licht crine intae derk aroon

Yule-Daunder, 1957

I gaed oot tae the winter drift  
Tae see the toun aa happt in fite  
An ma wee shadda streekit lang  
Far cranreuch cauld did nip an bite  
An stervin robins on the wing  
Duntit sma shmoodricks aff the twigs



An ilkie lum fite toories wore  
A snaa shawl happit aa the brigs

The wynds war seelent in the cauld  
Rikk raise frae lowes in ilkie hoose  
The clocks war reid as poppy flooers  
The cushie doo's curmurin crouse  
Noo I am auld's Methusalah  
I dinna daunder in the sna  
I coorie in the hoose's warmth  
Leavin the storm tae gull an craa

An my bairn fitsteps vrocht langsyne  
Hae thawed awa like Time itsel  
Sae short the space atween the crib  
An kist that knolls the kirkyaird bell

Brither Masons

Mozart, Robert Burns. Benjamin Franklin  
Alexander Pope, Gilbert (an Sullivan) ,  
Sir Alexander Fleming, Peter Sellars  
Sir Walter Scott, John Wayne, an Sun Yat Sen  
Atlee, Garibaldi, Dr Bernardo  
The Duke o Wellington, John Glen

Roosevelt, Louis Armstrong, Trollope, Garrick  
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sir Winston Churchill  
Kitchener, Kipling, Wesley, George the Fourth  
Jenner, Hogarth, Sheridan, Buffalo Bill

Fowk said the clachan's Masons kept a goat  
That brukk its towe an chawed fowks' hingin waashin

They beeriet granda free, a hale clanjamphrey,  
Weirin their braw regalia, lambskin aprons  
An uncle, bein honoured bi his lodge  
Wis blaik affrontit bi his drunken wife  
Teemin a glaiss o fusky ower his heid.  
Nae winner Brithers ban females frae meetins  
Ye widna wint sic cheils tae be misfittit

Kenspeckle Chiel: Robert Lovie    Tune: The Barnyards o Delgaty  
A laddie frae New Aberdour  
He gaed tae Broch's Academy  
An bein smert he larned faist  
The winner's door he caad ajee

Chorus

Doric, Compere, Manager  
Entertainer, clivver cheil  
Blythe an couthie, kind tae aa  
Weirs the Heilan costume weel

For twenty years Rob Lovie bedd  
At Fyvie Castle- sic a hame  
A hunner rooms an veesitors  
In thoosans...nae twa days the same

Chorus

He rules the reest at Braemar Games  
Keeps up wi cabers, dancers, pipes  
Fin clansmen cam frae hyne awa  
Helps aabody frae chiefs tae gypes

Chorus

The Duke o Rothesay socht his aid  
Tae launch the Rothesay Rooms sae braw  
Tae gie a heist tae Ballater  
Fin floods near washed the toun awa

Chorus

Pied piper o the North East land  
His bothy ballad Doric's real  
He's lichtened cruise ships wi his claik  
And Glesga's Commonwealth Games as weel

Chorus

Be't Royalty or common fowk

This lad o pairts pits aa at ease  
The ghaists o Fyvie Castle ken  
Tae bide wi Robert is a breeze

Chorus

He is the Fyvie Pimpernel  
Jist try tae catch him on the phone  
They seek him here they seek him there  
Blink twice an Robert Lovie's gone

Chorus

Sheena Blackhall

# 15 Selected Love Poems In Scots

d

Oh cauld's the doonrush o a burn  
In winter's iron thraa,  
Bit caulder still's a merriage bed  
Fin luv has stolen awa.

Far niver gowden sun luiks doon,  
Sae derk's the gairden boer→  
Bit derker yet's the hairt o man  
Far skaith an sorra coer.

Oh deep's a dreich an dowie loch  
Far salmon niver sweems,  
Bit deeper still's the cruel mire  
That smores a bairn's dreams.

Oh I wad don the gown sae green,  
Wi lilies hap ma head  
An like Tam Lin the elfin knicht,  
Step ower the burn o bluid  
That rins between this eirdly warld  
An kingdom o the fay,  
Far niver mortal feet may gyang,  
Nor mortal thochts bring wae.

Bird o Paradise,  
Spirk o Original sin,  
An efterthocht.  
A rib o the yird  
Rowed up in a cutty claith;  
A wanton, a limmer,  
The hurly-gush o the river's  
Nae fur ye.

Strae-dallie, a peach, a leech,  
Ye're the stank o a gairden puil!

Quine, ye're a chaip bawbee,  
A vessel, a vassal haudin the  
Wine o yer Lord's creation.  
Spunk that kinnelt temptation,  
Ye war framed fur the fire,  
Fur the Fa,

Frae the verra first.  
Ye an the serpent  
Scapegoats.  
Baith accurst.

Keepsake  
for the late Charles Middleton (1907-88)

Fin I wis wee, wi leaward lug,  
Ma faither's Scots wis branch an bouer;  
An ower ma bairnhood, like an aik,  
His thochts an wirds war leaf an flouer.  
Far ither's een turned soor an blear  
On dubby park or dreepin Ben,  
Settin their sights on gowd or gear,  
Priceless, he caad the Tullich glen.

Fowk's mortal reets rin strang an deep,  
Sae, at the hinmaist o his span,  
I laid him in his last, lang sleep  
Near far his worldly ploys began.  
Beeriet the bane, bit nae the virr,  
Langsyne it fand anither reest→  
Gin I draw nigh tae Lochnagar,  
A deid man's hairt lowps in ma breist.

#### 4.A Drap o Bluid Faas in the Wine

The bairnie at its mither's breist  
Bides in a beild it sune maun tyne→  
A gorblie, cowpit frae its reest→  
A drap o bluid faas in the wine.

The halflin cairries at his core  
The mortal guff will gar him dwine→

A ratten chitters at his door  
A drap o bluid faas in the wine.

A lass pits on a gowden ring,  
A may, becam a merriet quine→  
A lintie clippit i' the wing  
A drap o bluid faas in the wine.

Halflin's Jo

His hairt's an aipple ony Eve nicht pu;  
Gin I cud wyle fur him a quine,  
I'd pyke him ane fa's kisses brimmed the mou→  
Lang, sweet, an slokin as the pearly dyew.

Her spik wad be a madrigal o spring;  
She'd seem mair magical nur ony Beltane meen,  
Makkin his noons rejoice, his sleep-rowed midnichts reem  
Wi secret pleisurs, rich delichts  
That ony prince wad teem his rarest kist tae pree.  
Fur she wad be a marble temple in a dwaumin sea  
The sweeshlin tides keep fite  
Aroon the idol keepit at her core,  
She'd be his acolyte...  
Syne, in his inmaist breist-bane,  
I'd cut strang, agin the time  
Fin cynic age the pith frae life has dung:  
Aince, he wis bonnie, weel-beluv'd, an young.

6.A Thing Of Beauty Is A Joy Forever  
Birse farmer, circa 1963

Heich simmer makks the hochs a love-juice cauldron.  
Dauchlin astride a sunshine-drookit dyke,  
I heard an engine purr, an iron bawdron,  
The bowfin o a coo's-lick touslie tyke.  
Syne suddent, frae ayont deep-shaddaed trees,  
A fairm-chiel drave his combine ower the Ian-  
The jetty curls upon his broo ableeze  
Wi sun, as ony bonnie Grecian Pan.  
Braid showders, glistenin broon, the loon, bare-backit  
Sat squar abune the corn, like a young God

Ridin alang the barley-rigs half-nyaakit,  
Watched bi a lustfu virgin an a bawd.

Reid kerchief lichtly wippit neth his chin,  
A mou wad sook the hinney frae a bee,  
Sweet fusslin, ower the birrin chariot's din;  
He smiled full on me, wi a bull-black ee.  
Twa birdies flichtered, coortin ben the corn,  
Syne drappt tae couple, as pretensions turred  
Their birdsang like the sounin o a horn,  
Biddin me cast ma bairnhood tae the yird.  
He raise tae cry his tyke, the stoot claith held  
The fite swan o his secret manhood trussed  
As faist's a muir-fire wi a breem is melled;  
I kent the gnaawin thorn-stob o lust.

Fur Houghmagandie!

The makk o man is richt designed  
A wummin's pud tae pleisur  
Gin he's weel-hung, she'll draa the bung  
Tae praise him in guid meisur,  
An he may chap his tirlin-pin  
Her yett tae caa ajee,  
Fur ilkie merry maid maun hae  
A jo tae birzel wi.

The mount o Venus boos tae grip  
A stick o Adam's stock;  
The tappit hen lies doon afore  
The crawin o the cock.  
In mony's the hame at dawn o day,  
The spurtle bangs the coggie,  
An gin it winna, wives will gie  
The guidman's cod a shoggie.

Sae shortsome, shortsome is the nicht,  
Warmed bi anither's shanks  
Weel leeze-ye `tween the snawy sheets  
Fin luv kicks aff the branks.  
Some worship lear, an ithers gear,  
Gie me a rousin randy

A brawny back tae stap a crack,  
Syne heich fur houghmagandie!

#### 8.In Flagrante Delicto

Twa baas cam chappin at ma yett—  
The glory o the spheres!

till the Unborn Bairn

Ye slippit aneth ma breist;  
Murmerin thrum o life,  
Soomin in secret watter,  
Kittle an blythe.

I maun cairry an keep ye—  
Bairn i the bane,  
Trimmilin sap i' the leaf,  
Wecht i the wame.

Ye are the lichtenin faa,  
Stag-bolt deep i the derk;  
The lowe that ma laddie gaed me,  
The reid man-sperk.  
Ye are a lightsome creel,  
The pledge he canna brak,  
A brierin seed i the dreel,  
He'll nae win back!

#### Serpent's Sang for A Makar

Gin I wis ivy, I wid twine  
Yon lang, lean limbs, unyieldin's stane,  
Sear laggard thocht; a kinnelt vine,  
Wi leaves o langin fill his een.

He'd learn tae loe me quick eneuch,  
Gin he war bane, an I war bluid—  
A flytin tide, I'd draw awa,  
Leavin him pale, as I am reid.



I am the serpent in the stoor;  
Though lower than the dust I lie,  
I haud the knowledge o delicht,  
O fa daur pass me by?

A thoosand-fauld they crush my heid,  
I hiss in rise an multiply.

r Woon

Smoorichin saftly throw the fir,  
A wooer in a silken veil  
Is the sleety smirr;  
The doon-scud i the burnie's dreel,  
Dird-dirlin roon frae tap till tail  
Is the fiddler's reel.

The birks staun ootlined, chitterin cauld—  
Quines clad in cassen claes  
At a Ne'erday ball.

The blinterin, blichtit sun's a faithless lad,  
Fas fickle favour blears ower hoose an ha;  
Bracken's a glekit, feckless, tummelt lass,  
Cowpt ower, roch-wooded, amang the secret sna.

O love's a bigsie burn that's naething blate—  
Wormin its viper's wye till the brae's briest,  
Or wild an wanton, terrible in spate,  
Wad wed without the blessin o a priest.

As ice crack tinkles sherp afore the thaw,  
So cauld rife winter brakks the simmer's lyre,  
The clook within the eagle's sweengin claw;  
Love's but a yowie, sneck't on barbit wire.

Slichtit Lassie's Sang

Hard an sudden, as the huntsman's shot  
Sinks i' the safteness o the snawy dove,  
Deep as the dirk on its derk business quests  
I' the gralloch o the stag,

Sae wad I loue ye, love.

I'd mak my skin as firm's a coral bed  
Far on fite flesh ye'd slip like ony eel;  
I'd be the sea-anemone, that's poised  
Tae clook, an claw, an steal  
The smaaest pleisur, frae the gangrel faem,  
Till, lang an slow the shuddrin tide draws back,  
A sated eagle, gluttet o her prey,  
Syne wad my talons slack.

I'd be the yird, an ye wad be the tree  
Sae straucht an siccar, raxxin fur the lift.  
The cloud may haud the leaf — an I'd agree  
Tae grip the reet, sae ticht ye'd niver shift.

Gin thochts be lochan's waves, it's hairmless thinkin;  
The watter seeks the san, an haps it roun.  
The fish may loup the linn, as swack as jinkin,  
An niver droon.

Bit ay I wauken, like a hungry ghaist  
That's traivelled ower a brae o barren stane,  
Kent anely consummation o the mist,  
Swickit o warmth, ma bonnie lover gaen.

Tryst

Twa lovers trysted bi the birk,  
The lass had munelicht in her een—  
Bit creepin saftly throw the mirk,  
The waukrife lad had nane.

Warm was his kiss an strang his airm,  
The blin-sicht mowdie turned awa,  
Nae lad sae fine could mean her hairm,  
Her bridal guest, the hoodie craw.

A lass gaed up the ferny hill,  
A gowk came back wi feint a word;  
The cankered worm wis on its broo  
And in its wame, the yird.

Beddit

The wids are wide, the heather's thick—  
It wraps her roon, a bonnie plaidie;  
The bracken widna clype nor cheep,  
The lea-lang nicht, he held her steady.

An fin auld age creeps in twa-fauld,  
Makks o a maid a dottled deem  
She'll hug It tae her like a shawl,  
Yon nichts she beddit i' the breem.

Buik learnin's gran – a puckle lear  
Pits pith an pouer in yer pow;  
The lips were vrocht for kittler cheer—  
Set on anither's, cracks a lowe,  
Caa's caution rikkin ower the whin;  
The bluid gangs soondin like a drum,  
Braith braks on braith, a boundin linn,  
An searin hett's the brand's owercome.

Love sunders lad an lass in turn,  
Can ne'er be brukk, nor broukit;  
Aince pree the wave, yer doon the burn,  
Yer ower the heid, an drookit.

#### 15. Lot's Wife

Luikin back, she saw her maiden-sel  
Her sma breist, warm  
In the palm o his langin,  
The sliddery girse, the broon yird  
Movin aneth them.  
Twa in ain,  
A Beltane jinin,  
Makkin a wummin  
Oot o a trimmilin quine;  
An wee an far abeen  
The branchin wid,  
Booin its airms in blessin.

The waddin ring held constant;  
Time didna twist the circle,  
Naething cud grind it doon,  
Wechtit gowd.  
Lord, it wis sweir tae shift.

Ye wid hae thocht twa fowk,  
Wi the early pech o passion spent,  
Cud still luik at the road afore,  
An nae tak scunner.  
She swithered, luikit back.  
Aathin she did, gaun forrit,  
Wid be a faat.

Sae wis't a winner,  
The first steen tear  
Frae her hardenin hairt,  
He wid neither heed, nur need,  
Hid the taste o satt?

Sheena Blackhall

# 16 English Poems From The Poetry Lesson

Cat

My cat has a whiplash tail  
a sandpaper tongue  
Despoiler of bird sanctuaries  
his bloodlust never lessens till it's sated  
though even streetlamps sway in a Winter gale

With eye popping speed he pounces  
though the road is padlocked with ice

He walks the line between killer and purr  
with paws both pussy soft and gangster-razored

He is light-footed, dispensing with condiments  
Shaking a rabbit like a baby's rattle

Page

the page is listening-  
open your heart to it  
paper will not judge  
will not begrudge you  
a moment of its time

the page is listening-  
empty your mind in it  
no need to clock in, clock out

it is always ready  
to turn a new leaf

lift your pen  
and touch it

it'll open its ear like a flower

ation on a Year Gone by  
The year's rolled by like a cloud of pristine white,  
Carrying parcels of days, weeks, months, all mounting

Up in a pile of sun, and rain and night.

They're not coming back, not ever, try as you might  
You can't stop a single minute from disappearing  
Your hopes and fears and imaginings, out of sight

Just sit in each moment, the grey, the dark, the light  
Set thinking aside, and concentrate on breathing,  
Sit quiet, in peace, put worry and care to flight

The raindrop weathers the stone, though small and slight  
And Time, the file, your limit of days is grating  
Think, if you must of a butterfly, slim and bright

Flowers and scents are the sum of its whole delight  
Oh copy its ways, you there, when your mind goes racing;  
Brooding on harms and imagined acts of spite

The moon in the sky sees mushroom and harvest mite  
Rise and fall in their season, seed to ending  
Though aeons may pass like dust, the stars sit tight  
Let each day follow the wind like a child's kite

e Can I have a Pet

Please can I have pet with a pelt like water?  
Please can I have a pet with a luscious nose  
Please can I have a pet who needs no walkies  
Please don't give me a dog...not one of those

Please can I have a pet who steps out sassy  
Like the Queen of Sheba visiting New York  
Please can I have a pet with eyes like spitfires?  
Please don't give me a pig....I don't like pork

Please can I have a pet like a high wire leaper?  
A pet that blows by, light as a summer's blouse  
A pet as supple as olive oil in a pitcher  
Please don't give me a gerbil, or a mouse!

Please can I have a pet with claws like razors  
A pet when stroked, that sings like a crystal bowl

Please can I have a pet to share dark hours with  
Please...can I have a cat with a midnight soul?

a Landed Trout  
Wings hitched up on either side  
A gull flaps moodily over the ice  
Like a cowboy gunman  
Ready to squawk a challenge

A duck shakes its tail  
The feathered Primavera of the pond

Robin clicks into the frame  
Like a high-speed snapshot

A most immaculate blackbird  
Checks me out for swag

High in the trees a throaty pigeon mumbles  
She must be sucking marbles for elocution

Behind a fence a raven rasps a greeting  
Raw as Edith Piaf on 60 a day

And here's a ridiculous Spaniel  
A gangster's moll of a beast  
Wearing a crimson basque to keep her warm

All under a single cloud like a landed trout  
Grey cream and stippled pink on mother of pearl

The Spuriousness of Speech  
After a chatter of greetings  
Silence sweeps up words  
Into piles of withered letters

Puffed up words that sprawl  
Like Myxomatosis, Bacchanalian  
Trepidation, obtuseness

Fleshly words, like shape-shifter  
Twin-barrelled, head banger  
Spare words like ache and stone and love

Language can be muscular or flaccid  
Obese or anorexic, pale or florid

Now that my skin has wrinkled like a walnut  
And suburbs breed like rabbits  
More and more I live in the time of small bones  
Stretched over my childhood summers  
No words then gave voice to  
Bird song, fish splash, sun

er- Man

My friend Dermott was deep's the Atlantic  
Snappy's a lobster in a pot  
He'd spin thoughts like a netting shuttle  
A perfect broth of a seaman Scot

Dermott bobbed through life like a walrus  
Until love, like a gale toothed white  
Roared him off like an outboard motor  
Into the darkest storms of night

Hopeless then like a shipwrecked whaler  
Dermott's sweetness soured to spit  
Took rejection hard as a halibut  
Dug a grave and jumped into it

e, Glen Gairn

I loved the afterglow of reflected light on the water  
Like a willow's blessing  
On the passage of tiny trout over sun-warmed ripples

I loved its drips and how it made sound echo  
Innocent bridge unnoticed by birds above  
Its water carried childhood hours elsewhere

I loved the burn's flashes, its glittering boats



Of sun, its stainless motion  
How leaves fluttered beside, like butterflies' wings

My bike drooped in the grass, up by the road  
Everything then was huge to a child's eye  
A snail could fill my hand  
Daisies were most precious charms and bracelets  
Laced round my ankles, wrists,  
Upon my crown

d  
From time to time your memory hoists its fin  
and when the fin begins to break the deeps  
from yesterday it's like a salmon's leap  
and when the sun shines down, it's beaten gold  
and through the gold are scales, all dropping tears  
like snowdrops' heads and when my heart cracks wide  
and yearns a pack of wolves begin to howl  
and this is when I know you'll not be back  
Never to see your face, not now, not ever  
Death bears the dearest off, accursèd river.

Khan  
I've heard it said that Kubla Khan  
Was twice as big as any man  
And when he went to have a poo  
It was so large it blocked the loo

Inuit  
An Inuit with halitosis  
Could never greet by rubbing noses  
He strapped a sausage to his snout  
And now his problem's sorted out

Welsh Frog  
A Welsh frog with delusions of power  
Leaped higher than the Eiffel Tower  
But when he came down  
He fell splat on his crown

And his named it was Owen Glendower

Cuckoo

A short sighted cuckoo called Gaynor  
Laid her egg in a fat person's trainer  
When he started to race  
He got egg on his face  
And the young cuckoo's fate? A no-brainer!

14. Frost in a Far City

A cadaverous moon  
Hangs over an icy world

A fisherman with a watermelon small  
Pulls on a full net

In far-off Beijing city  
Skyscrapers glisten like marble dominoes

Frost in rutted pavements  
In the rickshaw district  
Gleams like a sequined spittoon

15. Woman Sewing

Watch a woman sewing  
Her wrist soars like a little bird  
Tethered to the cloth

When the stars light in the sky  
and the weary cattle lumber up to the byre  
she sits like a purring cat  
Licked by the fireflame

Only the cry of the baby in its swaddling  
Occasionally breaks the peace

Watch a woman sewing  
Bent like the virgin in a Pieta  
Her face glowing and serious

The needle in her fingers a Cupid's dart

#### 16. The Piano Teacher

I always came late for my lesson,  
Seldom practised my scales and staccato arpeggios

Whilst she scolded and stormed  
I would stare at the trees through the window,  
They were out in the free air, keeping time with the lissom wind

Her tyrannical metronome, a little martinet  
Functioned best in that dingy room of books and papers  
Shoddy genteel, all reeked of age and rage

On rainbowed summer evenings filled with birdsong,  
My reluctant fingers crawled through stunned gavottes

Her lips were thin as piper wire  
Matching the wrinkles on her parchment brow

My father's music rose from his throat in notes  
Clear as the thrush in the woods of nests and leaves  
Nobody cracked his knuckles or froze his pulse

My piano teacher- spinster, tight as a wintry bud,  
Was a stickler for form, for late Victorian manners  
Which was why I was so astonished  
To see her spit in the street  
Just missing the polished boots of a man of substance

Sheena Blackhall

# 19 English Poems From The Wound Man

1. The May Festival: Tune The Dancing in the Kyle

When it's festival time you'll find sessions that chime

With your interests from Science and Art

For the best, far & near have agreed to appear

To enlighten, or warm your heart

Refrain

For there's step dancing, bookbinding, swimming and fencing

With fiddling, face painting as well

You can forage for food in the wilds of a wood

Or try knitting the Broons for a spell

You can join in debates, or pick food for your plates

Study diet, bring farm to fork

Sample physics and light, or in dead of the night

Have Egyptian Adventures by dark

Refrain

There's traditional crafting, there's creative writing

There's Gaelic and Doric to hear

There is music and filming, there's mayhem and cooking

At King's, the highlight of the year

There's hot topics & talks, there's historical walks

Urban myths and the grand chapel choir

On the grass or fine rugs there's bad bugs fighting drugs

Oh there's ever so much to inspire

Refrain

Hark to the Scottish spleen in the tent on the green

Learn of soil soul and society

Attends ceilidhs at night, enjoy Spence, Jamie, White

Just some gems of the literati

Don't be slow, book up fast, for the tickets won't last

For Duffy, Kelman, or Muldoon

If it's science you crave (though the topic is grave)

Dirt death DNA is a boon

Refrain

There's forensics, dramatics, there's comics & critics

Producers and journalists too

And they all make a splash...Don't miss out, come and watch

All the May Festival's ballyhoo!

## 2. Welsh Rap

Cardiff, Swansea. Shirley Bassey  
Eisteddfod, Celtic blood  
Rugby team, mining seam  
Male voice choir, Plaid Cymru's fire  
Caerphilly cheese, Cadfael's bees  
Laverbread, Rhys, Dafydd  
Dragons, leeks, rainy weeks  
Hopkins, Jones. St David's bones □  
Dai & Dylan, Megan, Blodwyn  
Mussels, lamb. Welsh Grand Slam

## Archer

I am handling a tall bow with a yew's heart  
Bracer on my bow arm,  
Thumb ring on my drawing finger  
Feet apart, my shoulder feeling the strain

The quiver rests on a tree stump  
The feathers bright in the sun  
I load an arrow, point the bow to the ground  
The fletches are tense and charged

I draw the string back to my cheek  
Raise the bow a little above the target  
(The tip like a bodkin head  
So eager to pierce the air.)

Zing! I cleave the air with a bowshot  
A great horse chestnut rustles  
A raven croaks into the foliage.

I wet my lips, draw out another shaft  
No Amazon, I lack Diana's grace.  
A dray horse in the Derby of the archers

## Bodelwyddan Castle & Grounds

There is no wonderful dragon, breathing smoke  
A squirrel runs past with two astonished ears  
Pert as an exclamation mark  
The gardens are replete with apples and pears  
Damsons, hazelnuts, plums and Welsh narcissi  
A great estate with woodlands, orchard, aviary

Economy cuts have trimmed the luxuries back  
In the library, the books are mere tromp d'oeil  
Pictures painted on canvas to gull the guests

Yet the Carrera marble mantelpiece looks well  
Silk damask wallpaper still reeks of wealth  
Delft tiles, and a crest of foxes  
Whet the visitors' thirst for knowledge  
Pre-Raphaelite paintings emblazon the sombre gallery  
Silver shines behind a cage of glass

Nothing impresses so much as two stands of pikes  
Tempting the passer by to test their weight  
So light, a woman could wield them!

Marching with musketeers  
Pike drill was done at the drum beat,  
The pike man sweating under his heavy helmet,  
His heavy leather tunic  
His back and breast plates  
His metal gorget protecting his neck from shot

His pike is 18 feet, an ash shaft slim and fair  
Topped with the spear head that can skewer a man  
Topple a horse and stick a cavalry charge

In the dusk of the castle light  
Almost, you smell the belch of cannon firing  
The screams of battle, the sticky smear of blood

## 5. Eclipse

The sky darkened.  
The whole world cooled  
The moon blotted out the sun

Websites crashed as log-ons piled up like timber  
Clogging a bottle-neck

For once there was something greater than TV  
Reminding us that human lives are puny

6. Evening, Glen Muick

The lovely clouds lie stately in the sky  
Violet evening waits behind the Bens  
Deep fir woods act like magnets to the dark  
Birds huddle like black buds in twiggy dens  
A curlew rises keening from the moor  
Springtime- the snow-thaw swither of the glens

7. A Poem from the Titles of Works by Charles Bukowski

Flowers, Fists, and Bestial Wails  
Catch My Heart in their Hands

The Curtains Are Waving  
In Terror Street and Agony Way

Meanwhile, the Days Run Away Like Wild Horses  
There are Cold Dogs in the Courtyard

Horses Don't Bet on People & Neither Do I  
What Matters Most Is  
How Well You Walk through the Fire as Buddha smiles

Slouching Toward Nirvana  
Mockingbird Wish Me Luck

Burning in Water, Drowning in Flame  
You Get So Alone at Times  
That It Just Makes Sense  
To Jump out of an 8th Storey Window  
To escape the screams from the Balcony

Come on In!  
Eat my Septuagenarian Stew  
The Captain Is Out to Lunch  
The Sailors Have Taken Over the Ship

## 8. Boudicca's Bones

At King's Cross when awaiting a train  
As you search the 'Arrivals' in vain  
Think, if Boudicca's here, 'neath the platform, poor dear  
She'll never go travelling again  
que of a Cupcake  
The ratio of icing to cake  
Oozed luxury, smacked of excess

The tokenistic receptacle of the paper cup  
Resembled the Elizabethan ruff of Sir Walter Raleigh  
(Though girly pink, for ritual pigging out)

What was the inspiration behind the cup cake?  
Flattened it was a mandala  
An expression of the ephemera of food

The napkin provided, exotic and Batik  
Spoke of wild Caribbean nights and beating drums

Lemon icing heavily larded the top  
Like Cleopatra lying on her barge

The pastel colour hinted at Larkin's weddings  
Or Sunday congregations in the Transvaal

The chocolate balls, dropped on like psalmist tea leaves  
Were Druidic, possibly used in divination  
The balls themselves had a certain comedic value  
Like gerbils' genitalia, dried up

Disintegrating into a medley of crumbs  
The cup cake was as transient as Life  
All hail, Mount Fuji of cakes  
You calorific Goliath of the gateaux!

The cup cake is Josephine  
Waiting for her Napoleon  
To open his Gallic coat and ravish her



## Bitch Session

There is always non-verbal leakage  
The technology strung on view in the studio room  
Is a cockroach's intestines, black and ugly

It is of course a modern architect's dream  
Letting it all hang out  
Showing the inner workings, nothing concealed  
Like the cauliflower warts on Oliver Cromwell's nose

Tacky as the glitter ball hanging ominous  
As a beheaded Xmas fairy over the audience

You had, as they say, to be there  
Two participants, acting as bulls  
Pawing the polished floor  
In a moo-off, staring and roaring each other  
Into submission

The room is a minefield of personalities  
Could explode in a minute  
But caught in the power and passion of performance  
The cockroach's intestines cease to impinge

It's like stepping off the cliff of imagination  
Out of the here and now, the drab realities

## 11. Badger Banner

The badger has swallowed a street  
Marinated in Scottish nostalgia.  
It has left the spoor of a poem  
From the good folk of Livingston:

When it's spring time in the Model  
In the Model doon the street  
When the fleas begin tae yodel  
An the lodgers cannie sleep

They get up an light their candles  
An wash their clarty feet

When it's spring time in the Model  
In the Model doon the street

resser

Customers nose deep in celebrity magazines  
Chew the cud of scandal, awaiting their crop  
The customer's gowned like a patient  
About to go under the knife  
The hairdresser presses the start  
On her patter button

Pouring the oils of discourse into his ears  
She plies her shears as if shaving an old ram

Grey tufts litter the floor  
There is urgency in the clippers

Two hours at least until her fag and coffee break

#### 14. Mae West's One Liners

I used to be Snow White, but I drifted.  
When I'm good, I'm very good.  
But when I'm bad I'm better.

You only live once  
But if you do it right  
Once is enough

All discarded lovers should be given a second chance  
But with somebody else

I never worry about diets  
The only carrots that interest me  
Are the number you get in a diamond

Too much of a good thing can be wonderful.  
I'll try anything once, twice if I like it, three times to make sure.

□

I generally avoid temptation unless I can't resist it.  
To err is human, but it feels divine.

I'm a woman of very few words, but lots of action.  
I've been in more laps than a napkin.  
Men say pure love is often tinged with sorrow  
A way-ward child is often the dearest loved  
Albatross bird in the nest, so needy, raucous

Loves of Cathal O'Dare  
Mary O'Hara, aged ten  
Fell in love with Cathal O'Dare

She turned to a jellyfish  
When he booted his ball  
Into the netball hoop

Cathal O's Dare had eyes  
Only for Deirdre  
Though on her teeth was a brace  
As big's the equator

When she of the lovely sorrows  
Tossed her hair  
His heart turned wheels  
Like St Catherine in her agony

His smile could illuminate Blackpool  
Whenever they shared a desk

Brother  
I close my eyes, your memory's imminent  
Rising from deep within mind's honeycomb  
A youth, a life, unshared, much joy unspent

I wish a wizard could now reinvent  
Our histories, lift you shining from the loam  
The village knew, but hid, our shared descent

Leaving the glen, no parent's sad lament  
Followed you, love-child, when you crossed the foam  
This I, from ignorance, could not prevent

Until a casual word, a chance event

Dropped like a struck match in a tinder home  
The flame of love crossed oceans, storm sent

For three brief weeks in all, we underwent.  
The weft and weave of kinship. How we'd comb  
The years, our threadbare sib-links to augment

Loved brother, too late found, how I resent  
I never knew of you, missed chromosome  
Un-christened, star, I think that you were sent  
To be the star within the family's firmament

### 17. School Ties

The wall that surrounded my school  
Was ripe with invisible graffiti,  
Like sour fruit flung at a poor show

To reach the top of that wall,  
Required teamwork, playing the game  
Nobody'd climb it alone

The toeholds were slippery with grease  
The grease of genuflection to the values,  
Pretensions, snobbery of its name

Like branded sheep, we were stamped  
With the tint of its rule  
A tainted flock, lambs to the class system

### 18. Birds

Spitfire of the, air the swift  
Cleaved the clouds over the high glen

Dazzled by the window's sudden sun flash  
The dare devil's safety system failed to work

He crashed, land bound,  
His right wing wrenched awry

There is the human parallel of course,  
Involving water and the fiery sun  
As Icarus learned when wax ran down his arms

By glass or wave, birdman or bird  
Both disappeared in a blink

Hen Audience

Five hens are enjoying a Brechtian matinee  
From the ground floor stalls of their pen.  
Sparrows, watch from the Gods

The star of the show  
Goes by the name of Gardener  
She doubles as usherette at the interval  
Dispensing tit-bits to the ladies

Act One involves the moving of Zéphirine Drouhin...  
A rambling rose bred by Bizot  
Deep, pink, hardy, thornless, fragrant  
Plucked from the bosom of her home  
Ejected like a drunk from a knitting circle  
Plonked, resisting, into the unknown...oh the twists of fate!  
The hens are rooting for her  
To escape the Gardener's clutches

Act Two hikes up the tension:  
The death struggle of *Jasminum officinale*, the poet's jasmine.  
An evergreen deciduous shrub  
Her climbing, twining stems with pinnate leaves  
Her star shaped flowers (such heady unwanted fragrant)  
Become the focus of environmental theatre  
Ending in black extinction

The Gardener exerts her authoritarian right  
To rule the roost  
(The hens take this to heart, and secretly shudder)

Act Three is the Eden moment: Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard*  
The gardener plants a pear tree  
Gently spreads its roots and waters well.

This scene bears fruit, the five hens clap their wings

Sheena Blackhall

## 2 Poems Of Childhood

2 Poems of Childhood

Serious Play

My grand-daughters want pets  
They foster snails instead  
Building stone circles to contain them

The snails, being wild  
Have other ideas  
Each morning, the circle's empty

Silver trails stream out  
Like shining bike spokes

Guardians  
Children drop asleep  
Like flowers closing their petals  
Closing up their smiles

The guardians, tartan teddy and pink dinosaur  
Lie in the dark like stones  
The life sucked from them

Wakey-wakey time inflates them  
Childrens' touch builds sails  
To give them motion

Sheena Blackhall

## 2 Prison Poems

The Cat o Nine Tails  
Stretched on a frame in the bathhouse  
Ankles and wrists lashed hard  
Rab the cat was sentenced  
His back to be flayed and scarred  
By 20 ripping lashes  
The cat o nine tails swung  
Its tongues bit deep in his shoulders  
And blood from his back was wrung  
For back in the 1940s  
The birch, noose, cat as well  
Were weighed in the scales of justice  
As punishment's arsenal

Scotland's Gulag: Peterhead Prison 1987  
A riot, a rampage, an explosion of human rage  
Fifty hardened criminals seized D block  
Anarchy loosed from its cage

Determined to leave their mark  
Murderers, rapists, knifery  
Bedding and bed pans wrecked  
Knuckles and skulls bruised black  
Jackie Stuart, officer, snatched  
Fifty six years old, hauled up on the open roof

And then, four days of terror tactics  
The cons, in balaclavas made of rags  
Barricades, booby-traps, flung slates, aerobatics  
The hostage, leashed like a dog  
Paraded before the press. A hood on his head  
A blade at his throat. Cruel torture antics

Fifteen minutes overturned the odds  
Twenty SAS men in fatigues, gas masked  
Flash-bang canisters, with cudgels  
Ladders, ropes and high explosives  
Rescued the warder, the horror passed



The day given back to order,  
The foghorn wail  
The crash of the heaving waves  
Tons of water, pummelling sand and rock

Sheena Blackhall

## 20 English Poems From The Speerit Hoose

### 1. Stolen Behaviours

The grasshopper accelerated  
In angles of legs and light  
A compass trampolining in the sun

In a dingy basement,  
Two spiders open their hinges to make love,  
As a room does, with a door

Over the crystalline burn  
A bridge arches it back  
A bruised stone rainbow, stretching

In the kitchen which had seen domestic violence  
A dishcloth coiled like a snake  
Cuddling its own tail

### 2. Genetic Twist

Stranded genes are fused in chains of kin-links  
The mesh of netting, letting some slip through  
Others throttle in dismal self-destruction

Fault-lines crack and splinter,  
Fractured in the minefields of our lives  
Though some can hop-scotch tragedy,  
Scot- free will o wisps, to skip the bog

Others survive like crippled amputees  
Minds savaged by invisible hurts and scars  
Where woes hang on the wire like stinking crows

A curse upon those crooked, unwished genes  
No splints of love can ever straighten out

er: from the Canopy of the Trees, RGU  
On flows the river. One bird's singing

Eyrie high in the ageing trees  
Nebulous clouds pass, whitely puffing  
Autumn fire's in the ancient eaves  
Red as Siva, black as Kali  
Leaf's in its dying ecstasies

Over the river the water blackens  
There, in the far bank's rotten roots  
All must cross to that swallowing region  
Off-cast Life with its bitter fruits

er  
Here comes the lean wolf, Winter  
That cleaver of old bones  
That howl, rattling the railings of our lives

October- how many more  
Cold moons will this old woman see?

Gathering  
Lifting the hen to steal her oval offspring  
The feather bowl of her belly  
Suddenly blooms like a white peony rose  
Her yokey claws flail me in indignation

Orchard  
Like miniature Chinese lanterns  
Apples glow in the orchard  
Don't fall, little apples I say  
But they always do.

Moss as Witness  
Consider my virtues  
I am a comforter, a breaker of falls  
Soft as a mother's pap

I'm a whisper not a shout  
I'm like a slack old toad,  
With its hamstrings cut

Leaves rest on me,  
I do not blow them away  
I simply let thing be

Storms may whip the oaks to a mighty frenzy  
I am beneath all that

I cling to my backbone of stone  
The wood's upholsterer  
All my dreams are green

#### 8. End of a Love Affair

My body has ceased to love me  
Recently, I'm aware it plans to leave

When I tell them to bend  
My knees flinch and stiffen  
My pancreas is plotting behind my back  
My teeth slacken, tugging at their anchor  
Every nail on my feet  
Has taken to wearing armour

Dream  
All month a memory has been stalking me  
Its hot breath tickles my ears

I hop-scotch back to lascivious young adulthood  
Like an old dry river bed suddenly filled with flood

Handle  
I stand in the middle of a moor  
No walls on either side  
No roof above

I am the handle on a creaking door

Those who approach in an offhand manner  
Twist me left  
Those who approach uninvited  
Turn me right

I open only to the wind  
Letting the little birds of chance  
Perch on my withered handle  
Like a Norse ship's prow.

Trunk  
A fern serves as his roof  
She's gently swaying, a slave girl fanning a caliph  
A spider's cobweb veils his pearly entrance

Tree trunk has ground to a stand still  
Straining gey line in a threadbare tent of wood

Insects breed in him, feed on his rickety core  
Turn rot to riches for their magotty eggs

Holly and wild strawberries are his neighbours  
They keep themselves to themselves  
Thus keeping the peace, those parallel beings  
Trains keeping their tracklines separate

pitude  
Age has hobbled me, like an old nag  
I turn perverse

I want to ring the bell at my childhood home  
And tell the current startled owner  
Did you know my father died  
In the self-same room you've turned into a study?  
And by the way, where are his peony roses!

In my Jungian dream house  
A cow moos, mournfully

Udders bursting with milk

Meanwhile, the years continue their small thefts  
Will my new shoes outwalk me?

-Hard

When Life washes her hands of me  
For once, I should go quietly  
But habits, they say, die hard.

14. In Brantwood's dews

What'll you find in Brantwood's dews?  
Cornflower, and red strawberry  
Solomon's seal and asphodel  
Buttercup, toad flax, sweet daisy

What'll you find in painter's glade?  
Woundwort, birdsong, blue speedwell  
Trefoil clover and campion  
Yarrow, squirrel and pale harebell

What'll you find by Ruskin's pond?  
Cardamine, vetch and herbal rue  
Cat's ear, orchid, monkwood, leaves  
Sighing trees and a scholar's view

What'll you find in Brantwood House?  
The lack of woman's loving touch  
It's often the bird on the barest bough  
That mournful, gives to the world so much

in amangst widlans

The waning year stretches the spilling dark  
We catch the imprints of the Samhuin season  
And trees are shrunken, sackcloth grey and stark

Now the hoarse raven looms above the lark

The deed walk lightly, flit from loam, to reason  
Old ghosts return on Charon's eerie ark

The claws of winter leave their savage mark  
Echo of wolf, deep in the fox's bark

Go now. It is late  
Last chance to know the night  
As owls do or the fish that turn in the lake

Go now. Meet with the trees  
Root yourself in their silence  
Acknowledge the tumbling leaves

Go now. Rejoice in the fire  
(Your childhood magnet)  
Soon it will be your pyre

Go willing or not  
For nothing stays the same  
Only the dark at the back of a dead man's mouth  
Who has no name

Echoes that Words Leave  
Bees in the pear tree  
Badger's in the moon  
Fox is in the pulpit  
Apostle's in the spoon

Sandblasted lapwings  
Egret in the mud  
Blackbird and wolf howl  
Singing's in the blood

Ordination of the Oak  
The oak is seeking refuge  
It seeks refuge in the wisdom of the woods  
It seeks refuge in the brotherhood of the woods  
It has vowed to live a purely oakly life

Rain provides the ultimate shower of blessing

### Endless Road

I've been on the road to Oxenholme  
Where the hills roll up and down  
And the roads turn right  
And the roads turn left  
To any which way but town

I asked a ladybird on a stone  
'have you happened to see a station  
She looked perplexed and a trifle vexed  
Said she travelled by aviation

A Friesian cow was chewing the cud  
In an upsie-downsie way  
Have you heard of a station hereabouts?  
My only concern is hay

I have no sense of direction, dear  
A cloud-headed sheep replied  
But I know that dyke runs up to a trough  
By the hog-hole at its side

I'm still on the road to Oxenholme  
I might as well speak Spanish  
When I ask the folk to point it out  
All landmarks seem to vanish

h  
Though I am old  
In the bushes, young birds sing  
Though I am weary  
Leverets race in the fields  
Though my spheres diminish  
In the pool, frog ripples widen

Francolin



Fiery, the francolin was,  
Feathers of gold on his back  
When he sang the birds of paradise  
To brighten his look, turned black

Noble the francolin was,  
His wives were many and gay  
And lions ran before him  
Scattering fruits in his way

Modest the francolin was  
And fearless, for all was love  
Until man came to the forest  
A knife in his velvet glove

Sheena Blackhall

## 21 Poems In Scots And Gaelic From 'Mr Charon'

Robin (A Scots Owersett o the poem bi John Clare)

Noo the snaa haps the grun, far the wee birdies flee  
Tae the but an the ben for wee crummles tae pree  
Whylst the robin, weel-lued, gyangs far ither birds doot  
(Wi its wings drappin doon an roch feathers splayed oot)

Cams teetle oor windaes, as muckle's tae cry  
'I wid flee throw the door gin I cud fin the wye  
I'm hungeret an wint tae win oot o the cauld  
O makk me a roadie an think me nae bauld'

Och, purr teenie craitur thy veesits reveal  
Complaints sic as thon tae the hairt that can feel  
Nor shall sic complainins be priggitt in vain  
I'll makk ye a hole gin I takk oot a pane

Cam in, an a welcome reception ye'll find  
I keep nae coorse kittlins tae murder yer kind  
—Bit och, teenie robin takk tent that ye shun  
Thon hoose far a ferm lad makks eese o a gun  
For gin ye bit taste o the seed he has strew'd  
Yer life he will takk, as the pyement for food

His aim disna falter, his hairt it is hard  
An yer race, tho sae hermless, he'll niver regard  
Distinction wi him frien, is naethin at aa  
Baith the wren an the robin wi spurgies maun faa  
For his sowel (tho he ootwirdly luiks like a man)  
Is in natur like wolves o the ill-daein clan

Like them, on his prey he will doggedly spy  
Like them he will ett fit he sees in his wye  
Syne ca cannie an shun fit micht bring yer doonfaa  
An flee frae thon men-maskit wolves, hyne awa

Cam inbye ma hoosie an ye shall be free  
Tae cock on ma finger or dowp on ma knee

Ye shall ett o the crummles o breid, takk yer fill  
An hae leisur tae dicht baith yer feathers an bill

Syne cam teenie robin an niver believe  
Sic warm invitations war vrocht tae deceive  
In duty I'm bound tae shaw mercy ye see  
For God disna deny it tae sinners like me

eon's makk-ower  
I thocht some pamperin wad be in order  
A Thai massage, ane o the sodjer's kind  
A fitness guru tae futtle doon his stammache  
A psychotherapist tae soothe his mind

For brakkfast, snailie parritch dished wi croutons  
A smoothie..puddocks' shanks an Athol Brose  
An on the table, fleur de lys frae Paree  
Aside a sprig o Scotia's wee fite rose

Tae heichten Boney's stature as heid bummer  
New buits, wi platform soles baith polished bricht  
A pouerpynt o 'Corsica for traivellers'  
An interview wi TV's 'News the Nicht'

I'd send him for a new-luik-chiel's makkower  
Tae hae his kiss-curl prinkit tae a quiff  
An ban the eese o modern pharmasooticals  
Wi anely snuff for Bonaparte tae sniff

Sea at Nicht  
Aa nicht fin ye are sleepin soun  
The tide rins on unmindin  
An like an iverlaistin clock  
It niver needs rewindin

gues  
Gin it wis anely a question o spikk  
Quo the tattie tae the Romany

Dinna luik noo! skreighed the roosty nail  
Tae the nerra gauge railwye

Hae ye thocht o reducin the dose?  
Speired the ghaist, tae the Hoose o Usher  
Ye've bin here ower aften!  
Gurred the brandy bottle tae the butler

Ony news frae Alec's allotment?  
The sunflooer speired o Autumn

Alki  
Noo...fit wid ye class as an alki?  
A chiel on a bottle a day?  
In estates in the toon an the kintra  
Thon is kent as 'A Scotsman at play'

Sae fit merks a chiel as an alki?  
Is it bowfin up bile melled wi bluid?  
Na..in Scotlan yer anely an alki  
Fin yer liver packs up an yer deid.

Witches of Pendle Forest: 1612  
Oh Pendle Wids are derk an deep  
An there Witch Demdike aince did creep  
Past fower-score years, she raised her kin  
In the Blaik Airts o spell an sin

She had a quine, Lizzy Device  
An grandson Jeems, fa pyed the price  
O witchcraft, fin his sister smaa  
Jennet Device, condemned them aa

Demdike's sworn foe wis Annie Whittle  
Kent as Auld Chattox, quick tae kittle  
Tho blin, she yet could cast a cherm  
An claik a spell tae bring men herm

Anne Redferne wis Auld Chattox' quine  
Fa wirked wi ithers in thon line

(Slee Alice Nutter, Kate Mould Heels  
An ither fower, aa eildritch deils)

They'd makk a dally ooto clay  
Stickit wi preens, tae bring fowk wae  
Cause beasts tae sicken, dwine an dee  
An shipwreck mony a boat at sea

Their trystin place wis Malkin Tower  
Till Nowell an Bannister, wi power  
O law ahin them, held them ticht  
An jyled them ere they aa tuik flicht

Tae Lancaster they gaed at last  
An sentence on their heids wis passed  
Fand guilty, hanged, till they war deid  
Tae fleg aa ithers o their breed

Oh gin ye wauk on Pendle Hill  
Ca-cannie, for nae man can kill  
The speerit o the murderet fowk  
Auld dottlet weemin an a gowk  
Fa in anither age wad hae  
Yer mercy an men's charity

Waa-Gaun o October  
The kye in the park are happit wi pirls o weet  
The lift is dreich as far as the craas can flee  
The sheughs are smored wi leaves, hae tint their virr  
Seggs chitter in the mids o a burn's cauld bree

The waa-gaun o October's a mixer-maxter,  
Merriematanzies, trampolines, staun teem  
Dug waukers stride heids forrit, hoodies dreepin  
A time for the auld tae coddle their banes an dream

Reivin

A Scots Owerset of 'The Stolen Boat', from Wordsworth's Prelude

Ae simmer gloamin (led bi her) I fand  
 A wee bit boatie yoked tae a sauch tree  
 Inbye a steeny cave, its ordnae hame.  
 Straicht aff I lowsed her chyne, an steppin in  
 Pushed frae the shore. It wis an darg o stealth  
 An tribblet pleisur, nor withoot the voice  
 O Ben-spikk-echoes did ma boat meeve on;  
 Leavin ahin her still, on ilkie side,  
 Wee cercles glimmrin latchy neth the meen,  
 Until they melled thegither tae ae track  
 O skinklin licht. Bit noo, like ane fa rowes,  
 Prood o his skill, tae reach a chusen pynt  
 Wi an unswervin line, I fixed ma een  
 Upon the verra tap o a steeny rig,  
 The horizon's benmaist boun; there, hyne abeen  
 Wis naethin bit the starnies an grey lift.  
 She wis an eildritch peak; wi smeddum syne  
 I dipped ma oars inno the seelent loch,  
 An, as I raise abeen the straik, ma boat  
 Gaed breistin ben the watter like a swan;  
 Fin, frae ahin thon steeny knowe, till then  
 The horizon's bound, a muckle Ben, blaik, heich,  
 As if wi voluntary pouer instinct,  
 Raxxed up its heid. I strukk an strukk again,  
 An growin yet in makk thon gurly shape  
 Touered up atween me an the starnies, still,  
 Sae I jeloused, wi a virr o its ain  
 An meisured meevement like a leevin ferlie,  
 Strade efter me. Wi trimmlin oars I turned,  
 An ben the seelent watter rowed awa  
 Back tae the hidie-hole o the sauch tree;  
 There in her moorin-airt I left ma boat, -  
 An eftir, ben the lea I hamewird gaed, in derk  
 An seerious mood; bit efter I had seen  
 Thon stammygaster, for mony days, ma harns  
 Vrocht wi a blearie, mixter-maxter sense  
 O unkent wyas o bein; ower ma thochts  
 There hung a derkness, caa it laneliness  
 Or teem desertion. Nae weel-kent shapes  
 War left, nae pleisunt picturs o trees,  
 O sea or lift, nae colours o green parks;  
 Bit heich an mighty forms, that dinna live

Like leevin men, meeved slawly ben ma the harns  
Bi day, an war a tribble tae ma dreams.

er Retreat, Pluscarden

Wrens flee frae the rose hips  
Turn-takkin on the coconut bird feeders

A teem washin line bellies doon in the jeeled day  
A deer wi twa littlins in tow  
Nudges the girse wi her neb

The air's sae still ye could bottle it  
Nae skalin a single drap  
Foo mervellous, the skeltons o trees,  
Shakkin aff the claddin o the leaves!

The heich mass o the clouds  
Uphauds the cerclin erne  
Like incense roon a cross

I'm hunkered here, sere as the leaves  
Crined aneth ma feet  
A teenie robin soothes ma een  
Like rain on a druchtit park

#### 10. The Haimmer's Lament

I am auld, a haimmer wi bood cleuks  
Vrocht noo frae tooshts o oo

The haimmer that brakks glaiss forges metal  
I hae dane baith in ma time, as ma ainer can confirm

Finiver I saw a nail defyin me  
I haimmered it doon  
(Until the nail was struk, it refused tae believe in the haimmer)

It's a puir wirkman that blames his tools  
Bit fa will wint me noo,

Wi ma shaft split an baith my claas agley?

11. T'anaig long ar Loch Raithneach / A Boatie's Appeared on Loch Rannoch. (in Scots, from Bard Macintyre of Badenoch's poem)

A boatie's appeared on Loch Rannoch,  
A boatie hurtfu an coorse,  
A gangrel boatie, licht an ready,  
Gapin, fearless an ill-faurt.

Thon boatie we spakk o  
Nae Makker vrocht afore;  
It's a warsse tae tell o her winners  
An tae describe her timmers.

Brods o brummil leaves  
Along the pynts o her fair side;  
An likewise the nails  
That jyne her brods are brummil prods.

Stringgles o wizzent seggs,  
Plaids o smeeth flat stakks o girse;  
Oars o reid bracken shavelins,  
Tae thole the cauld an gurly sea.

The mast o stoot seggs,  
Agin a sea bylin an roch;  
Ahin the mast is a fooshtie yaird;  
A dowie crew on her deck

Towes o barley husks  
As she rows foraye on the currents;  
The blaik boatie raxxes a sail o flimflammery,  
While the waves fecht wi a wersh stramash.

The boatie o cyard weemen  
Is the name that aa hae for the ill faurt, fremmit boatie  
The boatie should hae mair bodies,  
Tae hurl her agin the wave.

The weemen, blootert an vauntie,  
Makk orra spikk in her stern;



The brine cams ower their hochs in the boatie;  
Their darg is a sair weird wioot honour.

Thon nyakkit shamefu hoors  
Lie painfu on a bed o thorn;  
The satt sea rins ower their feet in the boatie;  
The gurly win hashes them on.

The sklaikin weemen staun on ilkie side o her  
Upon the boatie's brods  
Cooerin aside the waves;  
The clash o eynless claik

Thon weemen, orra an fey,  
Are abune the lave on thon mast;  
Their hinner-eyns nyakkit tae the wins o the glens,  
Whylst aroon them's the bleeze o a lowe.

Thon aff-takkin weemen  
Aa are on the tapmaist o the fair boatie;  
There is no isle nor rock,  
Bit the ocean kinnlin its roose.

Michty thunner on the muckle sea,  
The braidth o the air is gurly;  
The steeny rocks are angeret;  
The ocean's tides hap the boatie.

Roch shooers wi Merch win;  
Nyaakit rocks cercle the breengin boatie;  
The boorichs o waves are roosed;  
The wind hashes on roon them.

Roch storm wi win an snaa  
Heichtens the waves aroon the weemen;  
Agin a gurly sea she's nae stoot boatie;  
It's a fool ship that hauds them.

Baith haun an fit an heid,  
Thon weemen suffer nae wint o coorse cloors,  
Oot on the ocean's breist  
Storm-gangrels in a strang sea.

In the boatie o MacCailein, roon-eed Duncan,  
There's a Deil 's load for skaith  
For customs, for hue,  
O weemen wi dyed palms.

tainship

Cha tèid nì sam bith san dòrn dùinte.  
Naethin can win inno a steekit neive.

Gabhaidh an connadh fliuch, ach cha ghabh a' chlach.  
Weet fuel nicht kinnle, bit a stane niver will.

Is sleamhainn leac doras an taigh mhòir.  
The chief's hoose has a skyty doorstep.

Chan fhiach cuirm gun a còmhradh.  
A feast is nae eese woot guid claik.  
Far an taine 'n abhainn, 's ann as mò a fuaim.  
Far the burn is shallowest, it makks maist soun.

Ge b'e thig gun chuireadh, suidhidh e gun iarraidh.  
Fa cams unsocht will dowp doon unbidden.  
Cha sgeul-rùin e 's fios aig triùir air.  
It's nae a secret gin three ken it.

an Merriege

Cha robh dithis riamh a' fadadh teine nach do las eatarra.  
Twa niver kinnlit a lowe bit it lit atween them.

Ge milis a' mhill, cò dh'imlicheadh o bhàrr dri i?  
Hinney may be sweet, bit naebody licks it aff a thorn.

Is fheàrr teine beag a gharas na teine mòr a loisgeas.  
The wee lowe that warms is better nur the muckle lowe that burns.

Teine chaoran is gaol ghiullan - cha do mhair iad fada riamh.  
A lowe o brukken peat, an a loon's love, dinna laist.

Is luath fear doimeig air fàire, latha fuar Earraich.  
Faist is the hoor's man ower the knowe, on a dreich day in Spring.

Socraichidh am pòsadh an gaol.  
Mairriage takks the heat ooto love.

Is fad' an oidhche gu latha do dh'fhear na droch mhnatha.  
The nicht is lang for the man wi a coorse wife.

t

Na toilich do mhiann gus am feuch thu do sporan.  
Check yer siller afore ye please yersel.

Is uaisle am breid na toll.  
A patch is better nur a hole.

Ge milis am fìon, tha e searbh ri dhìol.  
The wine is swete, the pyin wersh.

Cha dèan 'Tapadh leis an fhìdhlear' am fìdhlear a phàigheadh.  
A 'thank ye' disna pye the fiddler.

Dùnan math innearach, màthair na ciste-mine.  
A guid midden is mither tae the meal kist.

r Cromwell. (Old Ironsides)

A puggie tuik Oliver Cromwell  
Frae his cot as a span-lang bairn  
An yarked him up tae his gransire's reef  
Wad Oliver cam tae herm?

History tells that the puggie drappt him  
Did he lan dowp doon as a fell?  
I'd sweir twis his heid that struck the grun  
For his harns war as iron's hissel

nce

Florence Nightingale wis a nurse  
Fa ained near 60 cats  
(Nae aa at aince, bit throw her life)  
Fowk thocht that she wis bats

She keepit a hoolet in her pooch  
It flew about her hoose  
Nae wird o Health an Safety  
Wi fleein poo on the loose

ye'll feel nae Rain: Scots Owersett o an Apache Waddin Prayer

Noo ye'll feel nae rain  
For ye'll be a bield tae each ither

Noo ye'll feel nae cauls  
For ye will be warm tae each ither

Noo there is nae laneliness for ye  
Noo there is nae mair loneliness

Noo ye are twa bodies  
Bit there's anely ae life afore ye

Gyang noo tae yer hame  
Tae enter inno yer days thegither

An may yer days be gweed  
An lang on the Eirde

Bull Steps Oot

They heist his sharny tail, sluice oot his dowp  
Dicht doon his baas stap fu o future calves

Baptised wi soapy watter, sudsey cloots  
His curly powe is rinsed a snawy fite

Douce like he stauns, the sire o the herd  
Pedigreed, primped, horns iled  
On a bleached-clean towe, led roon the ring  
Tae cheerin crouds, star o the milky wye

His pitmirk een, aneth the blin fair lashes  
Glowerin aroon at stockmen, wives, an bairns

lanners (owerset in Scots of ohn Clare's 'Clock o Clay')

In the cooslip pips, see me,  
Happit frae the bizzin flee,  
The green girse I lie abeen  
Is pearled wi dyew like fishies' een,  
Leddylanners blythe an gay  
Wytin for the pass o' day.

Fylst the widlans shakks wi grue,  
An the wud win sabs anew,  
My hame showds, near faas unseen,  
On its shank sae heich an green;  
Fin the pammerin rain draves by  
Leddylanners ay bides dry.

Day bi day an nicht bi nicht,  
Aa the wikk I hide frae sicht;  
In the cooslip pips I lie,  
In the rain aye warm an dry;  
Day an nicht I hide my heid,  
Leddylanners, blaik an reid

My hame shakks in win an shooers,  
On my green shank, that's tapped wi flooers,  
Booin at the wud win's braith,  
Till I touch the girse aneth;  
Leddylannners in the girse  
Time ticks by, I watch it pass

e (Scots Owersett of Braggart by John Clare)

Wi cannie step tae keep his balance richt  
He rowes on tentily alang the streets,  
Slivverin at the moo, a hyterin stoop,  
Gibbers...gies angeret glowers tae aa he meets.

Bigsie an vauntie, prood, see him squar up  
An wad be somethin gin he could, eenoo;  
Tae ony chiel aroon he winna boo  
Bit sklaiks o wark, o cuddies an the ploo.

Prood o his glekit spikk, the drams he quaffs,  
He niver heeds the insult lood that lauchs:  
Wi rosy lass he tries tae joke an blaw, -  
She gies the hee-haw tae thon bigsie loon.  
An caas him 'blootert breet' an rins awaa-  
King tae hisselt an gype tae aa aroon.

Breets are Dwinnlin Awa Scots Owerset of The Animals are Passing From Our  
Lives by Philip Levine

It's winnerfu foo I jog  
on fower pared-doon ivory taes  
ma muckle hurdies skytin  
like iled pairts wi ilkie licht step.

I'm for the mart. I can smell  
the soor, grooved block, I can smell  
the blade that lowsers the hole  
an the creashie fite fingers

that shakk oot the intimmers  
like a hankie. In my dwaums  
the snoots slivver on the merble,  
sufferin bairns, sufferin flees,

sufferin the consumers  
fa winna meet their steady een  
for fear they micht see. The laddie  
fa herds me alang believes

that ony meenit I'll faa  
on ma side an drum ma taes  
like a typewriter or skirl  
an keech like a new hoosewife

discoverin TV,  
or that I'll turn like a breet  
sleekit like, tae clook his teeth  
wi ma teeth. Na. Nae this grumphie.

Sheena Blackhall

## 23 Poems In Scots From The Wound Man

r o Scotland

He stude in the mids o Aiberdeen  
Wi his briest like a cushie doo  
Blawin the pipes till his chooks war reid  
Like a bubblyjock wi flu

In haar or sleet, in Biblical weet  
His puddens o shanks on view  
The skreich frae his pipes near gart ye greet  
Nae ilkie note rang true

Bit he swung his kilt wi a vaultie lilt  
As the fowk o the toon wauked ben  
His hair wis reid as a cockerel's caimb  
An he busked wi the virr o ten

Ye hid tae admire his smeddum, whyles  
For the smush frae the world's pooch  
Wikk in, wikk oot, an eident chiel  
He'd rather play nor mooch

The referendum wis barely by  
At his stance...as sure's I'm leevin  
A heeze o saltires an flooers appeared  
I jeloused the toon wis grievin  
The chance tae cut the babbie-towes  
Frae England....bit thocht's deceivin

Syne I heard that the piper'd drappit doon  
A flooer o Scotland deid  
'Ah weel, ' quo a Tory, passin by  
Thon's ae less mou tae feed.'

ait o ma Faither

Ma faither's hair wis blaik's Auld Cloutie's westcoat  
His ee wis a midnight moch on a swatch o fern  
His vyce wis a lintie, lows in its sang at day-brakk  
His smile wis a florin, birlin luck side up



His roose wis a roarin linn gang ram-stam doon  
His nails war hauf meens sunk in a bed o pearls  
His luv wis a moat, a keep, the flag abeen it  
His ribs war the cage that raxxed tae haud me safe  
His hairt wis stoot is a muckle widlan aik

Fin they laired his aisse in the yird, frae yont the mools  
I fancied his braith raise up like Papal rikk  
I sooked it in, his heirskip an his marra  
A mellin o past an present, gyangun forrit

Dreams (Welsh traditional verse,17th C.)

I thocht gin I should mairry  
I'd hae naethin bit daunce an sang  
Fit dae I hae, noo that I'm wad  
Bit showdin the bairn, lee-lang

's Eyn (Welsh traditional verse,17th C)

Wi the nicht, the hoose grows derk  
Wi the nicht comes caunle-flame  
Wi the nicht, play's at an eyn  
Wi the nicht comes Daddy hame

Age (John Morris Jones,1864-1929)

Auld comes nae alane  
It comes wi wae an sorra  
Wi a lang waukin noo  
Wi a lang sleep the morra

a Grave at Trawsfynydd (David Jones of Llangwyfen,18th C.)

I'm eeseless noo  
Gin they cry me hame  
I canna makk repon  
For the blaik cauld clarty mools o Trawsfynydd  
Is happin ma heid

Dearie (Welsh, traditional verse,17th C)

Thon's ma dearie, blythe starnie  
Floer o the pairish o Llangeinwen

Aneth her fit the girse nae mair boos doon  
Than dis a steen unner a birdie's taes

#### 8. At the Swallow Falls

(The Welsh charge £1.50 to pass a turn style to view this modest waterfall)

I've seen mair watter poor frae the tap  
Twa runnles o weet an a drap  
Fit's the Welsh wurd for con?  
Oor gweed Scots Dee and Don  
Are free, withoot ae siller-trap

ett in Scots of 'A Lullaby for Lir's Son'  
from a poem by Eavan Boland

O nurse, fin I wis a bigsy loon  
Forcey Februar wins war rypin gowd  
Ooto the crocii. Thonner in wae  
Fur aa the bonnie skyrie flooers  
I'd skrl 'Stop thief! '  
An ye wad fuser, 'Bairn, lat be, lat be.'

Betimes we'd chaunce upon a halflin tree  
Tae fin the cranreuch cauld suppin its new bluid  
I'd jyne airms roon its wizzent wid  
An greet an ye wad say, 'Noo bairn,  
Its place is in the spirkin hairth, nae in yer bosie.'

An ae foreneen in April, that wis fu  
O matin tunes, a nest o gorblins skaled  
An slippt their flooerin anchor in a gale  
I cupped ane in ma fingers, deid an smaa  
Bit late thon nicht ye cam tae me on tiptoe  
An fusered, 'bairn, bairn, the wins maun blaw'

ett in Scots o an Extract from 'De Puera Balbutiente'  
(on a Child Learning to Talk) by Thomas Bastard 1566–1618  
The alphabet is searched for letters saft  
Tae try a wurd afore it can be vrocht  
An fin it sliders oot, it gyangs as nice

As fin a cheil gaes waukin on the ice.

ett in Scots o a poem bi Mary & Charles Lamb

A bairn's a plaything fur an oor  
Its bonnie ploys we try  
For thon, or for a langer whyle  
Syne wearied, pit it by

Bit I ken ane that bi itsel  
Aa Sizzens cd control  
That wad hae drawn aa grue an wae  
Ooto a dowie sowel

Ye lowerper intae luvn airms  
Young sclimmer upopn knees  
Fin I forget yer thoosan weys  
Syne life itsel will cease

ett in Scots of 'I stepped from Plank to Plank' by Emily Dickinson

I stepped frae brod tae brod  
A slaw an cannie wey  
The starnies roon ma heid I felt  
Sea, at ma feet doonbye

I kent na bit the neist  
Wad be ma hinmaist inch  
Thon gaed tae me thon shoogly gait  
Fowk caa experience

13. The Jinkin Poems

Teetin about...see thon's a poem  
Ahin the nettles, settin yer harns ableeze

Anither's hunkerin doon aneth the lamppost  
Beein peed on bi a gangrel, toothless tyke

Takk tent: there's a bosker  
Drappin ooto a Chinese lassie's pooch  
Lowpin ontae her schule-buik poem in Scots!

14. Poem in ma 67th Year

The birthday caunles o ma life  
Burn yet, in myndin o the deid  
Fa wauked wi me pairt o the wey  
An noo weir gravesteens at their heid

15. The Hoose o the Literary Wumman

The kitchie brod's a cowp o veg an parins,  
A mixer maxter o ashets, ready meals  
An sotter, a kirn o keech.  
The pantry's bare's the scored  
Dowp o a boar, shaved fur the spit

Her littlin's snoot is rinnin  
Wi snotters an bogies  
The fleer's unswypit,  
A hotterel o moosewabs an stoor  
Claes lie clarty an wrinkled on the fleer  
Like prunes trod flat in the dubs

Her auldest loon has a hudderie heid, hame-clippit  
Her dother's weirin pirlid socks neth her waldies

The literary wumman's abeen hoosewifely ferlies  
She bides in a permanent dwaum o Plath an Mahler  
She'd niver takk selfies flashin her hingin titties  
Her carpets hinna bin swypt twa years or mair

m in Dundee (Snippet of Overheard Conversation)

'Japanese collectibles  
Jist doon a wee street in Dundee  
Chrissie'd love that, ' she said.

17. Shaman's Drum

It's gloamin time, as warm's a plate o broth  
The ferm dug's lyin flechin in the strae  
Hauf-lichtit moose-wabs shoogle in the neuks

Abeen a besom, ower the dubby hey

The biggin guffs o sharn, sliced neeps an girse  
Wee winnocks glent like flashin spirks o fire  
Laidders o sun drap frae the lift tae fleer  
There's nocht as haly as a waukrife byre

Squallichin rattens flee as milkers cam  
On horn feet, their piebald hochs like howes  
The was, the staas, welcome their bovine queens  
Dirdin in frae the parks, their horny moos  
An sappy snoots, hauf beeriet in their trochs  
Their raxxin dowps let piddles doon in lochs

Siller hoses snake tae rug an sook  
The sweet fite milk frae ilkie breet's swalled udder  
Chynes clink as teats are dichtit clean o yird  
A kicker's tail is twistit like a rudder

Whylst I haun-milk ma uncle's Jersey pet  
Heid on her hide, her hairt a shaman's drum  
A pleisur tae sit close as braith itsel  
Sic souns as thon, echo the Cosmic thrum

Flicht o Isobel Scudder  
Isobel Scudder harnessed gulls  
An intae the air she flew  
An ower tae the Back o Beyond she gaed  
Far niver God's lilies grew  
An there she has kissed Auld Cloutie's dowp  
An cheenged tae a futterat sleek  
An sookit the bluid frae the briefts o bairns  
An daunced in Hell Fire's reek

They caught an tried her, an her fiers  
An fried her in public sicht  
Bit the gulls brakk free an they dog us yet  
That gaed Isobel Scudder flicht

y Spurgies

Twenty spurgies nestin ae dawn  
Chirpity cheep cried aa  
Set aff tae luik for thiggin tae scraun  
A spurgie's life is braa!

Some catched a cushie, an wi a shears  
Chirpity Cheep cried aa  
Her feathers they cuttit, nae heedin her tears  
A spurgie's life is braa

Some rypit the strae frae a fermer's park  
Chirpity Cheep cried aa  
For a saft duvet fin the world turned dark  
A spurgie's life is braa

Some nippit the oo frae a wyver's loom  
Chirpity Cheep cried aa  
For a birdie's bield maun be saft's the womb  
A spurgie's life is braa

Some wheeched the paper ooto a pyoke  
Chirpity Cheep cried aa  
Tae read the news, like a scholar's cloak  
A spurgie's life is braa

ck Amang the Spurgies  
There's a peacock amang the spurgies  
Her hair's as sheeny's a Rani's silken sari

Her jet een skinkle  
Her fite young teeth are pearlins  
Aside the peelie wallies o her peers  
She luiks like a butter baa o health

Luv smiles fae the buttons o her cardie  
Ironed an clean as the trig pleats o her skirt

'In India, I saw a yellow snake  
Slide on the mud floor of my granny's house'  
She tells the nursery, blithesome.

Aside her a snot-nebbed quine  
Strae hair huddrie, herborin flechs  
Cowps san fae a plastic pail  
In seelence, a peetifu vratch

Twa gems, bit jist ain polished

22.A Scots Owerset o an Extract frae Scunnersome Ferlies (Hateful Things) ,  
screived in the Pillow Buik, a Japanese classic, bi Sei Shonagon (c966-1017) , a  
lady-in-waitin tae the Empress Sadako.

Scunnersome Ferlies  
Yer thrang tae leave,  
Bit yer veesitor winna stop claikin

An ordnar chiel  
Spikks o a rowth o subjecks  
As tho he kent aathin

Tae envy ithers  
An girn aboot yer ain weird

Tae spikk ill aboot fowk  
Tae be ill-faschent aboot smaa maitters

Yer aboot tae hear  
Aboot byordnar news  
Fin a bairn's greetin

A flicht o craas cercle wi lood caas.

A luver sneaks in fur a tryst  
Bit a dug catches sicht o him an bowfs  
Ye feel like killin the breet.

Yer aboot tae gyang tae bed  
Aboot tae drap aff  
Fin a mozzie appears wi its thin skreich  
Ye can feel the win vrocht bi its wings,  
Slicht though it is, it's byordnar scunnersome

Yer richt in the mid's o a tale fin someone butts in

Makkin oot they're the anely fowk in the chaumer  
Sic a body (or bairn) is scunnersome,  
Fa ettles tae shove thirsels forrit

A moose is a scunner..a moose  
That skitters aa ower the place  
Flechs are likewise a scunner  
Dauncin aboot aneth a body's claes  
They seem tae be heistin them up

A chiel yer haein a fling wi  
Reezin oot a wumman he eesed tae ken  
Thon can be vexin ower aa

23. Hae Ye?

Hae ye iver misfittit a nettle?  
Hae ye aince gart an ingin greet?  
Hae ye iver kinoodled a lamp post  
On the cassies ower the street?

Hae ye iver daunced wi a puddock?  
Hae ye iver shot a sorbet?  
Hae ye iver supped wi a fitbaa?  
Crivvens! Mebbe ye hae!

Sheena Blackhall



## 25+ Scots Poems (Death Of A Tadpole)

1. In the Toun

Naebody hears the trees spikk in the toun  
Dae they murn the loss o their branches  
Hacked an aixed tae conform tae regulations?  
Fur aathin maun gie wye tae the will o man  
Naebody hears the cheep o the teenie spurgie  
Abune the Beep-Beep-Beep o angered horns

The Green Man his the pouer tae stop the traffic  
Bit canna stop the scurries in mid flicht

In the toun the lawns are shaved like skin heids  
Fowk spen oors drillin weel-trimmed borders  
Posies o flooers punched in like sodjers' buttons

Slugs an mowdies are sent tae Hecklebirnie  
Pesticides gar mony a gorblie grue

The burnies beeriet langsyne aneth the tarmac  
Hinna enjoyed the sunsheen fur decades

Man biggs a desolation, caas it progress  
Calgacus spakk siclike, an he wis richt

in Shadda

A yowe stauns in its ain shadda  
Midas has transmogrifeed the breem

The sun dunts like a pestle  
On the quern o the world

A bumper in a coat o saffron yalla  
Tae stap its hairy pooches veesits a foxglove,

As aye, I'm drawn tae watter  
Its glents an glisks, its glimmers  
The soun as it gluggers doon the burnie's thrapple

Yestreen's thunnerplump still bedaizzles the ferns

The loch's sae clear ye see its verra reets

A lammie gies its mither the hee-haw  
Blate birdies cheep frae hidden haps o leaves

A ram stauns pechin, plottin in the heat  
Nettle an midgie wyve their nesty nips  
Smaa entry fee fur Eden's growthy glen

3. Five Scots Owersetts of Buddhist Poems Kobayashi Issa (1736-1827) : Frae  
'The Spring o Ma Life'

Veesitin ma Dother's Mools on July 25th, a month eftir her daith bi smaapox  
The reid flooer  
Ye aywis socht tae pu  
Noo this Autumn win

Soin (1604-1682)  
Sattlin, fite dew  
Disnae girn  
Ilkie drap, its hame

'Oor physogs winna laist like jade. Life's mair like cloud' Kuan Hsui (832-912) '

Li Po: Auld Stoor (701-762)  
We live oor lives as gangrels  
Until deid, at the hinnereyn, we cam hame

Ae faist trip atween Heiven an the Yird  
Syne the stoor o a thoosan generations

The meen bawd mells elixirs fur naethin  
The Tree o Lang Life is kinnlin

Deid, oor fite beens lie seelent  
Fin pines raxx forrit tae Spring

Myndin, I sigh; luikin aheid,

I sigh aince mair  
This life is haar. Fit fame? Fit glory?

Tu Fu (712-770) I staun Alane  
A falcon flichters at the eyn o the lift  
Twa scurries waucht slaw up the burn

Easy catched while they ride the win  
They devaul an raxx sae peaceful  
Dyew is wechtyu on the girse aneth  
The wyver's wab is wytin

Heiven's wyes takk in the human  
Amang a thoosan waers, I staun alane

Liu Tsung-Yuan (773-819) : Snawy Burn  
Birdies hae vanished  
Frae a thoosan bens  
On a thoosan trails  
Nae a single human merk

A wee boat  
A bamboo hat an plaidie  
The auld chiel alane  
Fishin the snawy burn

4. ~~V~~esitor  
The anely kent things thonner, gairden flooers  
The fowk war neither kith nor kin nor neebors

Tea wis a barfit wauk ower brukken glaiss  
Like sclimmin Everest in pumps, or swallaein fire

Some things are like childbirth, ye ken they'll pass  
An leavin wis the bit I likit best

5. ~~S~~teens  
Steen eftir steen I flang in burns an puils  
Takkin delicht in garrin them daunce an droon

Bit steens, tho unseen, dinna disappear  
Like ill-vrocht thochts an warks they bigg a cairn

Unner the waves, they wyte tae rise an roar  
The coorsenesses ye thocht ye'd left ahin

6. ~~Ye~~ Readin this Be Ready: Scots owersett of a poem bi William Stafford  
Sertin here, fit dae ye wint tae myne?  
Foo sunlight creeps alang a sheenin fleer?  
Fit guff o a auld wud lingers, fit saftened  
Soun frae ootbye fulls the air?

Will ye iver bring a better giftie tae the world  
Than breathin respeck that ye cairry  
Fariver ye gyang richt noo? Are ye wytin  
Fur time tae shaw ye some better thochts?

Fin ye birl aroon, sertin here, takk this  
New glisk that ye fand; cairry intae the gloamin  
Aa that ye wint frae this day. This fyle ye spent  
Readin or hearin this, keep it foraye-

Fit can onybody gie ye greater than noo,  
Sertin here, richt in this chaumer, fin ye birl roon?

7. ~~The~~ Laneliness O Wee Yetts: June.: Scots owersett o a poem bi Ananda  
(Stephen Parr)

Young beech leaves, wattery ley fogg  
Like friens cryin us frae the neist glen  
Forcey, wikk bi wikk in a deeper voice  
Fu o licht an shadda like a saft  
Myndin o fit's already oors

Yer een unsteeked bi loss  
Hauns raxx oot tae a neebor  
Wee gifties ye micht think them  
Nae wirth a strae  
Bit the cheenge they bring is eynless

## 8. Granmither's Hauns

Her hauns war creashie an strang  
Could kill or gralloch a hen rale gleg an smert  
Defeather it an birl on a saxpence  
Tae gentle a reid chikk or dicht a tear awa

Like her elastic-wymed skirts  
The hauns could wax or wane, be thick or thinner  
Her waddin ring sunk deep doon in the flesh  
Her braw betrothal ring, Victorian hairts in rubies  
Emeralds, diamonds, hauf-happit bi skin

Her fingers flashed like fire ben needlewrik  
Loopin the silken threids in lacey cheerbacks

Thon hauns aince ran a reid-hett poker  
Doon ma taiglet hair, makkin the split eyns hale

Thon hauns dabbed fuskey ontae cotton oo  
Fur teethache. They peeled aipples fur Halloween  
They vrocht braa heirlooms fur her grandothers  
Fa'd hae nae eese fur cheerbacks, hankies, riners

Naeboddy's hauns are multi-complex noo  
Naeboddy darns or warssles ower wyvin  
Some hyne-aff Asian bairnie hunkers in the dark  
Shooin chaip claes fur us tae haive awa

## 9. Rattens

Hae the guff o pish aroon their clammy tails  
Hae sherp gleg een that watch fur the main chaunce  
Hae seelence in their meevements tae keep them safe  
Hae the pouer tae be lued or loathed bi ither craiturs  
Hae wymes like scaffies' bins tae snap up orrals  
Hae fower cauld paas an lugs bit a warm hairt  
Hae teeth that bite throw cables, as thick's yer airm  
An fit dae ye say tae thon, Mr Cheshire Cat?

## 10; Fin Daith Drives Up

Fin Daith drives up an the passenger seat is wytin  
I'll leave ahin baked tatties an poetry  
I'll leave ahin ma flesh an bluid, fledged littlins  
I'll leave the Linn o Muick tae Posterity

I'll leave ahin Art Galleries an Museums  
Thon windaes ontae ither warlds, I lue  
I'll leave ahin ma claes fur a dossers' midden  
I'll wheech awa like rikk gaun up the flue

n Wytes fur the Sun  
Aathin wytes fur the sun  
It briers abeen the steadin  
Floors open their faces tae greet the heat

Hyne aff in a Syrian toun  
A mither pykes ower a raw o bluidy corpses  
Swypes awa the flees  
Luikin fur her bairnie, three days deid

12. Keepsakes frae ma Faither  
He gaed me thyme frae tap o Bheinn a' Bhuird  
He gaed me sunblinks passin ower Glen Gairn  
He gaed me lanely linns an liltin lochans  
He gaed me sing-sang Doric as a bairn

He gart me paiddle barfit in the burns  
He gart me wyle fite heather frae the muir  
He gart me sweem in Cluny's jeelin puils  
He gart me watch the passin o the deer

He tuik me far the ghaists o sheilins maen  
He tuik me far the erne flees heich an braa  
He tuik me far the Finzean salmon lowp  
He tuik me far dog roses bloom an faa

He bides inbye ma heid ahin each thocht  
He lowps inbye ma hairt fin birdies cheep  
He wis each compass pynt in ma bairnhood  
A quaet cheil, still watters than ran deep

13. Rowan, Balquhiddar Glen  
Seed an saplin, win an yird  
Ringed in siller like a gird  
Reet an leaf, sunlicht an lift  
She's a bield far shaddas shift

In June, she's decked in bridal floors  
Spirkit roon wi skinklin shooers  
Autumn sees her berries reid  
As draps o Heilan caterans' bluid

Lucky rowan, haud awa  
Warlocks coorse frae hoose an haa  
Free mishanters frae a herm  
Rowan, wi yer eildritch cherm

14. Lossin Things  
Some fowk are aywis lossin things  
Last Setterday, I tint ma heid  
I think I left it dowpit doon on the bus  
Readin the sklaik in the Metro  
(It's a terrible heid fur sklaik)

Did I cowp it inno the recyclin  
Wi the neep parins?

Is it furlin roon the wash tub  
Wi the wikk's clarty drawers an fooshty hose?

Mebbe it's chitterin at the foun  
O an Asda fridge, amangst the jeeled fish fingers...

Mebbe it's dookin in the Dee wi the troots  
Mebbe it jist forget an left ma corp at wirk

I'm thinkin about haein ma heid screwed on  
Tae jink sic tricky ongauns

15. The Scythe

The win that passes throw the glen  
I canna gar it bide  
Nor can I chuse frae mangst the lave  
The cuttie wren's smaa bride

The larick showds tae its ain lilt  
The shaddas raxx an faa  
Nae haun o mine can steer their weird  
Nor peint the wattergaw

Be't foul or fair, my will means nocht  
Each day maun please itsel  
Nae man can bid Death heist his scythe  
He's nae tae buy nor sell.

#### 16. Three Owersetts in Scots of Poems by Miroslav Holub

##### Casualty

They bring us staived in fingers  
Sain it pheesician  
They bring brunt oot een  
Huntit hoolets o hairts  
They bring us a hunner fite corpses  
A hunner reid corpses  
A hunner blaik bodies  
Sain it pheesician  
On the ashets o ambulances they bring  
The wudness o bluid  
The skirl o flesh  
The seelence o birslin  
Sain it pheesician  
An whyle we're shewin  
Inch efter inch  
Nicht efter nicht  
Nerve tae nerve  
Muscle tae muscle  
Een tae sicht  
They bring in  
Even langer dirks  
Even mair din-raisin bombs  
Even mair winnerfu winnins



## Gypes

### The Yett

Ging an unsteek the yett  
Mebbe ootbye there's  
A tree, or a wid  
Or a gairden  
Or an eildritch toon

Ging an unsteek the yett  
Mebbe a tyke's raikin  
Mebbe ye'll see a physog  
Or an ee  
Or the pictur  
O a pictur  
Ging an unsteek the yett  
Gin there's haar  
It'll clear

Ging an unsteek the yett  
Even tho there's anely  
The teem win  
Even gin  
Naethin is thonner  
Ging an unsteek the yett

At least  
There'll be  
A draught

Napoleon  
Bairns, fan wis  
Napoleon Bonaparte born?  
Speirs the dominie

A thoosan years syne, the bairns repon  
A hunner years syne, the bairns repon  
The hinmaist year the bairns repon  
Naebody kens

Bairns, fit did  
Napoleon Bonaparte dae?  
Speirs the dominie

Won a war, the bairns repon  
Tint a war, the bairns repon  
Naebody kens

Oor butcher hid a dug  
Caad Napoleon  
Sez Frankie  
The butcher eesed tae throwsh him an the dug deed  
O hunger  
A year back

An aa the bairns are hairt sair noo  
Fur Napoleon

#### 17. Satan's Den

Dinna wauk bi Satan's Den, unless yer nerves are strang  
For in the mirk o Satan's Den, the witchy-fowk were thrang

Peely-wallies bide awa...it takks a cheil o fooshian  
Tae wanner by the Peel Bog, an airt o daith an pooshun  
Here ye micht tryst wi deid Macbeth...his ghaist, they say, wauks licht  
Bide awa frae Satan's Den, fin shaddas claim the nicht

#### 18. A Small Aside

Surely thon isnae Sandy, nurse?  
He eesed tae be sae strang  
Five meenits! Dinna weary him!  
He winna be here lang

#### 19. A Heeze o Cheepers

It's braw tae be at the Loch o Strathbeg  
Wi black oxee, horse gowk, scurrie  
Moss drummer, pickternie an rainy bird  
Puir willie, saw neb an chaikie

Wad ye like a list o Scottish birds?

A bitterie, a coldie, a crannie  
A flirty fleer an a kirriemew  
A witchag an Lang Sannie?

D'ye like the names o oor feathered friens?  
A muckle sniperock an a greenie  
A skeelan guiss an a watter erne  
A fusslin dyeuk an a lintie

Dae ye lue tae watch them raxx their wings?  
Black coley-heid, bog gled, corbie  
Willie-weet-feet an pink fittit guiss  
Pickeneyarr, pleep an stiltie

Takk tent o thon dookin an divin birds  
Willie-beeb, willie-buits, an shortie  
San-leverock, tang-whaup, chokit buit  
Boltilairig, gled an peesie

Up in the lift, they skreich an skirl  
The whaup an the yalla yeitie  
The dueller guiss an the ember guiss  
The leverock, the stock dyeuk, the spurgie

The muckle widpecker's bin spied nearhaun  
Wi sanderlins, tits an whoopers  
Bit try as I micht, I cudnae fin  
Scots wirds for thon birdie neebors

## 20. Teemin Granny's Gizunder

It wis a Wednesday. A mince an tatties day,  
the day I discovered I hid the pouer o flicht

Echt year auld I wis rinnin hame frae skweel, doonhill, like a bawd  
Takkin lang lowps, fin o a suddenty  
Ae lowp yarked me heich intae the air  
An I wheeched, like a muckle crescendo,  
A skirp o gossamer, omnipotent's an angel  
A Japanee lantern, a space-man  
Like Pegasus, a Scottish marvel  
The original fleein qune

Fin I duntit doon tae the grun,  
I touched ma shooders. Nae wings as yet war brierin  
Bit this wis a secret ower gran tae keep

Breengin ben the lobby, braithless wi pride,  
Ma news scaled oot, ma winnerfu, mind-blawin secret  
'Ma! I can flee! I can flee! '

Humfed ower the sink parin tatties  
A tabby, smuchterin in the aisse tray  
Ma niver turned a hair.

'Thon's braw, quine.  
Could ye teem yer granny's gazunder? '

21. The Deil an his Prize  
As I cam in bi Bind Close  
An roon bi Whittle Hole  
I sweir I saw Auld Nick hissel  
Ride by, tae catch a soul

He didna stop at Whelp's Rigg  
Flesh Beck or Barbon Fell  
Tae Netherhaa he gaed at last  
Tae claim a corp for Hell

Then up he yarked his sheltie's heid  
Tae Kirby Muir they sped  
Ower Cat's Hole an High Biggin  
An eildritch daunce they led  
The corp wi chitterin teeth cried oot  
Bi Black Bull an Fell Gate  
'Oh Lord hae mercy. Set me free! '  
Bit syne raise up Lang Thwaite

An ower the wastes o Westmorlan  
He skirls yet frae fricht  
The corp the Deevil reived awa  
Frae Netherhaa, thon nicht

22. The Drookit Doocot

Did ye hear o the drookit doocot  
Far the drookit doos perch, dreepin?  
Sic a scunner's a drookit doocot  
Tae be rained on fin yer sleepin!

The doos frae the drookit doocot  
Aa hae arthriticky wings  
An rheumaticky dowps wi sittin  
Far the draughts ben the doocot finggs

23. A Cherm tae Sain the Dowie

Ivy, snaaberry, bluebell, heather  
Shrubs, a bield agin the weather  
Rhododendron, laurel, comfrey  
Celandines...the hale clanjamfrey

Add camellia, peach an ploom  
Fern an meadow girse at noon  
They've a magic o their ain  
Wi magnolia. Beltane's rain  
Azaleas, rasps, a swatch o sauch  
Fig, aik, larick, near eneuch

Bind them aa wi Beltane spell  
Lat them saddle, merk them weel  
Sic neebors, mirled, will cure yer waes  
The sainin pouer o Beltane days

24. Domestic Scene

Crackle an spit, the lowe up the lum  
The maister snores in a cosie seat

Clickey-clack, the mistress wyves  
Her worsit. A dram, an aa's complete.

25. The Last Will & Testament of the Inchbare Kelpie, Potarch

I leave ma mane tae hap the heid

O some puir baldie craitur  
Tae ony feartie, blate-like quine  
I leave ma eildritch natur

I leave ma hooves o guid Scots pearl  
Tae grace some brukken cuddy  
Sae it may kick its heels wi virr  
An growe baith strang an sturdy

I leave ma tailie tae the kirk  
Tae the great Moderator  
Sae he can wyve it at the Deil  
An fleg aff thon man-hater

I leave ma tongue sae eloquent  
Tae the first bard that wints it  
I'd leave ma verra hairt as weel  
Bit losh, langsyne I tint it

I leave ma een, sae derk an broon  
Tae gar a blin man see  
An aa o this, I maun confess  
Sae ma misdeeds sae slee  
Can be owerluikit fin fowk screive  
The history o the Dee

Sheena Blackhall

## 27 English Poems, The Gargoyle Man

Reasons for Writing Free Verse

It's a harmless pastime, she confessed  
And I'm hopeless at baking or knitting

You meet such interesting people in the group  
Fellow spirits, you know and since the divorce....

My psychiatrist says it's better out than in  
And if it's poetry I can call it fiction

I just cut up my prose like chopping veg  
And people like to say, 'My friend, the poet'

ester

Dr Foster went to Gloucester in a shower of rain  
He stood in a puddle right up to his middle  
And never went there again

Harry Potter's film crew went  
To Gloucester for a set  
They turned the cloisters into Hogwarts  
Where small boy wizards leapt

Arboretum Tree Rap Tortworth Court, England  
Blue Atlantic Cedar,  
Chinese Cowtail Pine  
Pagoda tree Japonica,  
Weeping Silver Lime  
Persian Ironwood  
Ohio Buckeye  
Sweetgum Liquid Amber  
Katsusu, Keaki  
California Nutmeg  
Highclere Holly  
Corkscrew Hazel  
Shellback Hickory  
Paperback Maple

Acer Palmatum  
Cucumber Tree  
Henry's Chinese Viburnum

#### 4.A Bristol Lass

Shirley Crystal went to Bristol  
To purchase an uplift bra  
It split on her chest  
Her bristols went west  
Men said, What a flat girl you are!

er

A Cheshire cat in Chester  
Went chasing down Cow Lane  
Past Lightfoot Street and Pepper Street  
Up Love Lane in the rain

By Cherry Road folk cheered it  
Some tossed it chunks of cheese  
Some chattered as it clambered  
Up Paradise's trees

It coveted a chaffinch  
To chew, near Feather's Lane  
But chickened out...from Chester Zoo  
A cheerful cheetah came

The cheetah came to check out  
Old Chester's amphitheatre  
Where Roman soldiers liked to see  
Beasts versus gladiator

The Cheshire cat and cheetah  
Became the choicest chums  
And chose some nice Chorizo  
To chomp on with their gums

nd.

England's incredibly flat



A green and beige square chequered mat  
With manors and hamlets and shires  
And sheep looking sheepish and fat

Edwards Church, Stow on the Wold  
The admixed DNA of Roman, Norman, Saxon  
Lies peppered with yew tree needles  
Stone gargoyles prick their ears for dragons' hiss

The air is buttered with sun, hot on the crumbling stones  
This is the Gate to Middle Earth, and here be demons

The heavy quern of the past grinds bones to dust  
The trunks of the ancient yews, rise from a writhe of roots

Like driftwood, I've washed up in the graveyard  
To rest on the grass. The names and dates  
Of the dead are long forgotten

Rain's tears have driven them into Saturn's soil  
The necessary removals making space  
For the yet to come, Life's treadmill re-inventions

Venice of the Cotswolds/ Bourton on the Water, Gloucestershire  
The River Windrush is a pygmy stream  
Criss-crossed by toy-town bridges  
Hobbit sized and quaint, Venice it ain't

Elegant as an orchid, a Japanese toddler  
Strokes the water smiling  
As if she was petting a cat

The gondolas are ducks with feathered hulls  
Of Marks and Spencer's beige and camel colour  
Six fluff ball ducklings dip down dappled water

Mother duck herds her tourist- dodging brood  
With quacks of alarm and annoyance  
'You all go back to Mamma now, d'you hear? '

Comes a Kentucky drawl  
Hobbit sized and quaint, Venice it ain't

in your Throat?  
Is your uvula writhing with pains?  
Has your larynx just gone up in flames?  
Frog spittle's the best for that cold in your chest  
Sluicing phlegm from your two nasal drains

10.A Cure for Constipation  
If you are a martyr to bowels  
Do not strain till you're red in the jowls  
Saltpeter will blast  
The most stubborn impasse  
Till your motion the ceiling befouls

Pump Room Bath, 2014  
A glass of blood orange Bellini, £5.75  
(An Italian classic with a citrus twist  
A blend of blood orange puree  
And chilled Prosecco

A glass of pump room sunrise, £3.50  
A refreshing drink of light sparkling  
Botanically brewed mandarin  
Seville orange with grenadine  
Mango and passion fruit juice

A glass of greenhouse martini £6.50  
A mix of gin, orchard pig  
Cloudy apple and elderflower juice  
With fresh mint and cucumber

Seen consumed three streets away behind a car park:  
One bottle of Buckfast  
Possibly half-inched from a nearby store

Aftermath

Honey-mellow yellow bath  
survived the Roman aftermath  
Where legions walked on sandaled feet,  
in socks (and sandals) tourists bleat

ice Fire

I fed a sheep's jaw bone  
To a Solstice Fire  
How quick the flames rose up  
And died away!

The jaw bone was hulled and prowed  
Like a Viking longship  
It went to its own Valhalla  
Its little cremation  
Wrapt in crimson shawls

I sit in my life's cold clothes  
Their colours fading

e Song for Jessica aged 3

I'm working at my laptop in the morning  
Quick moving as a cat she's there behind me,  
Our household blessing

She laughs and taps my shoulders  
Stretches and bends like a willow  
How she loves to stretch!  
Three years old with skin like liquid gold

Nana she says  
Her voice, a tinkling bell.  
I'm putty in her hands

There's a tiger in me  
That's arrived since she's been born  
If others chase or chide her  
Huge invisible claws break through my fingers  
My rage roars up within, a bush inferno

I'd walk on broken glass to keep her safe

My son's first born  
Our joy, our little grasshopper  
Our household blessing

Queen of the Frost  
The queen of the frost  
Kept her heart tight on a choke-chain  
Froze her feelings against thieves or knaves

The queen of the frost  
Kept a lock on her vagina  
Her eyes were barbs, her sorrows, open graves

The queen of the frost  
Was born in a land of icebergs  
Her mansion, built of Bibles, black and gold  
'Women born of Eve are made to suffer'  
That was etched on her lintel, cruel and bold

The queen of the frost  
Was dutiful, righteous, cold

Biological Man  
I knew a man who called himself  
A biological weapon  
Said he'd pointed, aimed  
But having misfired once  
No longer breech-loaded with shot

't Leave Before you Leave  
Don't leave before you leave  
The moon on your skin is here  
Is now, is real  
Quicksilver, soak it in

Don't leave before you leave  
Is the wind not to your taste?

The ladybird, Otter and leaf  
All breathe it in,  
Inhale and exhale its zest

Too soon, the minutes drop and fall away  
Behind, like a tenuous line of rusty railing  
Time's ghostly gate on a hinge  
And that gate failing

s  
An ecstasy of swifts  
Delirious in flight  
Wheel and re-wheel the lawn  
Neighbours all,  
Not pausing to gossip once

The larch stirs only  
The utmost tips of her fingers

On a half blown rose  
A butterfly alights  
Clapping its powdery wings  
A white applause

A spider's flimsy shawl  
Snags a passing fly  
In its poisonous silks

Mountains rise like a wall  
That the sky peeps over, wan.

The sun's still-born today  
Has forgotten it seems to live

Like clockwork out of control  
In a trance, the swifts wheel on

Commonwealth of Fairies  
Every seven years they say  
On the longest day of all

The Commonwealth of Fairies meet  
For a bite to eat and a ball

Where the air is frisky and clear they meet  
By Callander's secret bens  
They carry the Fairy flag on high  
The fees from far flung glens

The trowies on backs of selkies come  
From the windy Northern Isles  
And Thomas the Rhymer gallops up  
With the Elf Queen wreathed in smiles

Brownies dine with chattersome trolls  
Kelpies whinny and neigh  
The Gaelic banshees keening howl  
Keeps human folk at bay

Every seven years they say  
On the longest day of the year,  
The King of the Cats on magic paws  
Approves the Commonwealth's Lear and laws  
And after a supper of hips and haws  
The strange Host disappears.

I know of a gate which opens  
Into the country of air

No passport is needed  
All customs must stay behind

Pass through to that country  
That strange republic of air  
Of the nothing, the  
The pail mist rising

Enter and leave no tread  
By metamorphosing

Toad in the Lane  
He squats there, amber,  
Ancient, gnarled and knotted  
An antique knob of timber  
Wearing a grin at the froth  
Of fireflies, flitting

The toad at the lane's end  
A sylvan sage, just sitting

to Brazil  
'I'm going to Brazil, ' my brother said  
'For good, and I won't be back.'

Mother sat at the table, polishing cutlery  
Her lips were crimson red,  
The cherry choice

She'd removed her engagement, wedding, eternity rings  
Not wishing to spoil them, cleaning  
Her eyes hardened. The lips pursed in a line

His announcement froze the moment  
Ice cracked the family surface

Under the table, piranhas circled and snapped  
The cup she was drinking from held a red smudge  
Like the kiss she wasn't going to give him as goodbye

the Man  
Pity the man who has sold his field into bondage  
For he has traded birdsong and meadowsweet  
Corn gold and moth flight, for tarmac and brick  
And a boy scrawling paint from a tin  
On the side of a wall

I never met my grandfather alive

A Master Mason, high in that chosen cult

Drunk, he wrote songs and sang them  
Made thirteen children, enemies and friends  
Sober, he ran a croft and haulage business

I meet him I think in the dark. We pass as shades  
Cuttings from the same rough, peaty roots

Shake us, the clay from the Highland line  
Will not dislodge

His funeral was Masonic, dug in by the Brotherhood  
Word, handshake, nod, and the churchyard fit to burst  
With bare-head mourners

Men said that when he sang  
The wheeze of asthma left him.  
The stars forgot to turn  
Wives forgot their wedding vows and wished.

You Drew the Short Straw?  
So you drew the short straw?  
What'll you do with it?

Mend a hole in a boot  
Carry a spark from the fire  
Use it to package fruit  
Feed the cow in the byre?

Add to a mouse's nest  
Bolster a beggar's bed  
Cushion a fowl's rest  
Plump out a scarecrow head?

Everything has its use  
Make of it what you can  
Everything has its use  
Can you think of a better plan?



## 26. Let Go

Let go of the clutter, the paraphernalia  
The dusty detritus of days  
They have lost their lustre, their worth  
Their power to get under your skin

Let go of the world's opinions  
Let in the huge word empty

Breathe in,  
Breathe out  
Breathe in

## 27. Après Retreat

I leave behind the veggie meals  
Our pudding, main, and starter  
The midges that are everywhere  
It's in the midges `charter  
To bite all visitors to bits  
Wherever skin is bared  
I leave behind the tofu  
God! No matter how prepared  
It lies upon the plate  
And it pretends that it is chicken  
Or pork, or fish, or anything  
But it's still jellied knitting  
I leave behind the loch, the birds  
For those I'll truly ache  
But as for the cuisine? Bring on  
The drizzled salmon steak

Sheena Blackhall

## 28 Scots Poems: Likeable Ordeal

tae Makk a Poem

I micht be Nelson, turning a blin ee  
tae the day's semaphore,  
sennin the touch paper tae cut-glaiss dawns

The poem micht be a crannog  
A hinneycaimb o wattles I warp an weave  
Squeezin the warld aroon me oot like moss

The mind sherpens its blade on a whetstane  
Weeted wi rain an sorra

The best poem lies in the hairt o the broon bog  
I sink doon intae, leechin frae its veins  
Wird hoards that wolves hae warmed thirsels against.

Thorn Buss

The Brus lies in Dunfermline kirk  
Rowed in a claith o gowd  
Lord Elgin's merble at his heid  
A King frae tap tae shroud.

Ootby, a wizzened thorn buss  
Leans ower an unmerked grave  
The lass that bore the Wall ace  
Lies forgotten wi the lave.

The breist-milk o the mither wolf  
Gaed Rome its virr an pouer  
The seedbed o Scots liberty  
Lies hummle in thon stoor

The Brus lies in Dunfermline kirk  
Braw kist wi braiss plate tapped  
The thorn buss stauns ower Freedom's dam  
Her heid's wi green girse happed

### 3. Sin Eater

Fit is the taste o sin?  
Satty, like the sea?  
Is murder soor or sweet?

Hoochmagandie... is't savoury?  
Is leein wersh or bland?

Dis the sin consume the consumer?  
Dis it slawly ett the self  
Like a cancer tumour?  
Is't a dish best etten hett, or suppit cauld?

Kent a meenister  
Fa said maist fowk wis damned  
Fa said sex wis the wark o the Deil  
Fa said weemin war born pure evil

I'd like to makk him ett his wirds  
IIkie dot, slash, letter an comma till he chokit  
I'd like to makk him ett up ilkie sin  
He fabricatit

Craw cheil. Fa'd think  
Ae heid held sae much hate?  
Losh be here, maun be somethin he ett  
Salome maun hae brocht it on a plate.

e Tae Donside: Tune: Wha Saw the 42nd

Some o us war auld an fooshty  
Some war young an swack an strang  
Some war wabbit, aa war cantie  
Faith the Ballad Bus wis thrang!

Fa saw the Braes o Coldstane  
Reid rowans glentin sma?  
Fa saw Glenbuchat's Castle  
Stinch o yett an strang o waa?

Fa sang o Lang John More  
An fa sang o Rhynie's knowe  
Hurlin aroon Glenkindie  
Skelpin on fur Alford's howe?  
Hens marchin tae the midden  
Wasps bizzin roon yer heid  
£80,000 pun o statue  
Man yon's fairly best 0 breed!

Fa felt the wins o Cluny  
By Monymusk wheech ben?  
Fa sang o dule an murder  
In a dowie Donside glen?

Fa saw the braes o Kemnay  
Dirdin roon nerra neuks?  
Gweedsakes, here's Inverurie  
Watter rinnin doon its sheughs!

Faith, noo the journey's ower!  
Balgownie's mighty waa  
Bids adieu tae Don an ballad  
Swallaed bi the ocean's mawe!

## 5. Swami

I like tae sprauchle  
Tae dauchle aboot in bauchles in the hoose  
Efter the trauchles o day  
Like a dug splayed oot in strae in the stoory byre

I like tae sprauchle afore a roarin fire  
I canna abide a seat, perjink an neat  
I'd rather be horizontal, warm an dwaumy  
Wi a levitatin mind like an Eastern Swami  
Wi Chopin, mebbe, or Bach upon the pianie

An that's fit's wrang wi wirk... cause there ye cannae  
Sprauchle like ancient Romans at a feed  
Like Buddha fin he steeked his een an deed.

## 6. Sunset Sang

99.7% 0 Mumbai's fite-backed vultures hae deed oot.  
Pyson, entered the food chyne.  
I am a Doric spikker.90% 0 ma days  
Gyang by in seelence, forbyes the antrin phone call  
Tryin tae sell me windaes, a Geordie lilt.

Ma bairns grew up wi TV, English buiks  
Their lugs attuned tae different frequencies  
Hale wikks rowe by like oceans ower ma heid  
Afore anither whale remairks 'Fit like'

On Friday, doon at the library, I felt Doric.  
It wis a Doric day. Nae bad y'unnerstaun,  
Sunny, nae ootricht birsslin. A Muslim quine  
Aside me surfed the net. We smiled, speechless.  
A Somalian student's moose gaed click-clack-click

I gaed hame nursin ma spikk like it wis nae weel  
Wauked ben the park far bubbles burst in a puil.  
A plastic puddock raise as fowk applauded.  
'Look at the frog' the littlins daunced an skirled  
I winneret, hid thon puddock heard 0 Sunset Sang?

## 7. The Spik 0 the Lan

The clash o the kintra claik  
Rins aft ma lug, as rain  
Teems ower the glaissy gape  
o the windae pane.

The chap o the preacher's wurd  
Be it wise as Solomon  
It fooners on iron yird  
Brakks upon barren grun

Bit the lowe o a beast new born  
The grieve at his wirk  
The blyter o brierin corn  
The bicker o birk  
The haly hush o the hill

Things kent an at haun  
I'd harken tae that wi a will  
The spik o the lan.

hed

As I stude in a Scottish street  
An breathed the Scottish air  
A Scottish spurgie in a tree  
Come jinkin frae its lair

It flew ootower the Scottish hames  
The hooses, schule an kirk  
It flew abune the Scottish lawns  
The wids o aik an birk

It flew abune the Scottish bus  
That I wis set tae catch  
Aside a queue o ither Scots  
A mixer maxter swatch  
o ither Scots fowk like masel  
Three Chinese engineers  
A Polish driver, Sikh GP  
Five Suffolk mountaineers

Aa stude disjaskit bi the waa  
The rain drapped dreich an thick  
The doonpish tuik nae tent ava  
Tae makk, belief, or spikk.

9. Fit's Life?

Scots owersett o a quote frae Crowfoot, a Blackfoot Indian elder, Canada

Fit's life?  
It's the glimmer o a fireflaucht in the nicht  
It's the braith o a buffalo in the deid thraa o Yule  
It's the wee shadda that rins along the girse  
An losses itsel in the gloamin

## 10. The Lesser Spottit Taed

I am the lesser spottit taed  
Naebody is spottit less aften than me  
Naebody screives odes tae me  
I hinna starred in a tale bi the Brithers Grimm  
I am nae an essential ingredient  
In wart removal spell nummer 203  
I am the lesser spottit taed  
Dae ye peety or envy me?

## Attila the Hun

It's nae ony fun bein Attila the Hun  
Biological warfare(the slicin aff o heids)  
Is a scunner on washin days

I turn the coo on the spit  
Fur oors, while he's aft giein it laldy  
Repetitive strain injury  
Is aa the thanks I get  
Fur keeping his denner hett

He gied me a bear's fur three year's back  
Peety the bear wis in it  
Tuik me a month an a day  
Tae cure an skin it

He's heavy on the bevy  
(Leadin a heeze o Vandals, Goths an Franks  
Gies personal satisfaction  
Bit smaa thanks)  
Still, as I says tae cousin Ina in Asia Minor  
Nae mony hubbies rule  
Frae the Rhine tae China.

## riars Bobby

Purchase a moose, a pig, a moggy  
Bit dinna buy a Greyfriars' Bobby

He'll weir ye doon. For wauks he'll bark  
Tae tryst wi muggers in the park.

Ye try tae jet awa tae Spain  
He's haudin on aneth the plane  
Forget about a bidie-in  
He'll teir her tights. He'll bowf an rin  
Awa wi her new bras an pants  
An beery them aneth yer plants.  
Ye'll hae dug hairs in soup an pudden  
Mair fur than flew in fechts at Flodden  
Sae buy a statue fur yer lobby  
An nae a real-life Greyfriars' Bobby  
Luv didna keep him near grave-stanes  
Na. Dugs are unca fond o banes!

### 13. At the Festival

Here tae grip the nettle. Here tae be bumbazed,  
Dumfounert, affrontit, edifeed, scunnered  
Enthralled, transmogrified, caad aff the proverbial stot  
A polyglot o towrists swall the clanjamfrey  
O buskers, boskers, friskers, jugglers, dauncers  
Pipers, ranters, chauncers

Festival stars or gypes? The hype's aywis the same  
They're aa the jazziest, razzmatazziest, latest  
Maist bobbiedazzlin act ye've ever seen or heard  
Embro's annual Fringe... A stammygaster o drollery  
o bombast, aghast, hauf mast mingin or Real Ming quality

Steppin aft this merriematanzie o festival flim-flammery  
Ma heid's fair birlin. The North bound train is fillin  
Wi littlins fechtin an tcyauvin. Wi drifters an rifiers  
Weemin giein it laldy inno their mobiles' lugs  
Bankers haein wee snifters.... Elbucks inno ma neb  
Three oors like a canned troot, in the pursuit o fun.

Hamewirds: the North Sea glents like a tummlit halo,  
Seelence an cauldribe clouds wauchtin abeen  
The yowedendrift o Heiven, shot wi sun.



#### 14. Futterat

A furled drainpipe,  
I am liquid aff the leash,  
a guff o wabbit hinney.  
My een are twa cracked spunks,  
my moo's a bane trap.

I dine on ferlies reeshlin ben the trees.  
My credo is bluid, bluid, bluid,  
a stounin Trinity.

I unsteek arteries like sluice yetts.  
In my bed, the wid's necropolis,  
my prey maun daunce the ultimate strip-tease.

#### 15. Cat Calypso

On the green carpet,  
the cat skails geans an wine  
dauncin its hett calypso.

Cleuk-yark mowser,  
yer deep-doon-thrapple purrs  
are strummin my rig-bane.

Prodigal ane, I gie a pomegranate  
tae yer Persephone natur.  
Yer sixth sense keeks at me,  
yer ither five are stane.

Yer drum-whump paws  
play on my need tae connect  
like a xylophone.  
Cat, I could transmogriffee ye,  
intae a zither, a Russian balalaika,  
pit zing in yer soorpuss meows.

## 16. Strukken

Star-strukken, the keekin gless  
Is etched in pentagrams  
The strukken bell haunts the spire  
A singin gibbet

A strukken oor in the wyme's  
The new born's bleat

The strukken spunk  
Is weirin its reid toorie

A strukken lochan clings  
tae ilkiewave it meets  
The strukken win whummles  
the dry whins tae castanets

Unnertakker's Utopia  
Fu hospital  
reamin wards  
Aa the staff aff sick

Hughes, the Cat

Ilkie cat in the barn  
Regardless if male or female  
Is caaed Ted Hughes

Wi a deefenin glower  
ae contermaschious Yorkshire feline  
poors hersel oot like booze  
teemed ower the sofa...

Ted Hughes nummer ten  
She smuchters and gurrs.  
Her teeth are as clean as Zen  
The Deil gae wi her!  
A moody breet  
that aabody wints tae tame

Gaun frae ane tae the ither  
Fickle, shameless.

Truly Ted Hughes,  
In ilkie thing plus name.

### 18. The Sestina Poem

They hae telt me tae write a sestina!  
I wid raither drink rancid retsina!  
Fornicate wi a goat  
stap a yowe doon ma throat  
or daunce wi a reid-neb hyena.

hes frae a Fremmit Airt

The colour o dreichness on the back o a postage stamp  
Sna faain on bens in a kintra o the mind

A pit bull dug, the sun on its snoot like lard,  
An auld aik table gnarled bi gollach an pen

A screiver's photie shares a reflectit tree  
A drain pipe strainin watter inno the troch

The transmogrification o parritch ooto aits  
A tattiebogle's heid that birls like a hoolet

Stoory brickwirk sclimming rungs o air  
Reefs on a Pennine brae, its grey slates dreepin

Signs o Samhuin

Conkers rowe like een that hae tint their sockets  
The hurcheon coories inno its coat o stobs  
The rotten yird cracks at the neep's foun  
A blaikie's yalla tongue is steeped in dule

in

The jeelin yird cracks at the neep's side  
Noo firelicht zips its reid hood up its face

The cauld canal has swallaed its ain tail  
Beech trees are fickle murners, sune forget  
Their leaves fan knowe taps chitter in snaadrift

Yird's thoosan keyholes turn tae steek life in.  
The clocks rin widdershins, withoot, wi'in...

Haar sypes up frae the bleary knowe's blin side  
Here, thristledoon meets rock like time's spindrifft  
In Heptonstall, weeds warssle tae re-face  
Gravestanes wi ilkie tae-haud they can get.

The blackie's sang is gagged... a mummer's tale.  
The skreichin hoolet spreids her killjoy tail  
A daithly fan. Some aik tree is her inn  
Tae raise the stakes... a race o beaks beget.

When daffie bulbs lie featureless aside  
The rouge dry elm leaf uses tae efface  
Its corpse's fiteness, aince it's cut adrift  
There is a time tae anchor, time tae drift

Each Sizen's ritual shrivin maun entail  
A lettin gyang, the better tae ootface  
The cloor o strippin back tae hanel in  
Win like a scythe that pairts the reeds ootside  
Far fitpad tod hunts aa that she can get  
Foo quickly tummlit aipple fruits forget  
Their seedtime, bridlepath, their blossom drift

Winter's a hag wi peat-bree on her face  
The deein wabs unraivel. Frosts deface  
The bricht collage o leaves. They dinna get  
An artist's retrospective, gaitherin in  
Sooked wyme-back tae the world's derk inside.

Forget the lowes o Autumn! I wid drift

Inno the side of Winter, lossin face  
Inbye the fyauchie seggs.... A moose's tail  
Vanishin in the storms o smirr an hail

## 22. The Ee o Ra

I'm a fish! A fish!  
Hett stuff! I'll burn yer ee oot!  
I'll dervish yer Catamarans!  
I'll birl like a base-baa cheer-quine in Chicago!

Fowks o the Upper Warld,  
my sights are on ye.  
I'll crack yer Niger egg.  
Napoleon, I will skewer ye like kebab.

## 23. Brukken Shell

This shell has kent the sooch o satty tides,  
the fite fury o storm in its inner lug.  
It is Primavera, haudin her riven wyme  
in merble hauns.

Deserts hae helter-skeltered ben its sides.  
It hooses neither pearls nur affirmations.  
It is an echo's widdendreme, a reefless labyrinth,  
a shattered conch no monk-cry thunners through.  
It tastes o semen sieved throwe coral fangs.

Auld moons hae traded pouer on this Rialto.  
This Marie Antoinette o snaggit lace,  
less than the wecht o a cup, has dined wi oceans  
this nochtie whorl,  
this eeless, heidless, channel,  
this Sheila-na-gig that mithers seas an deeps

## 25. Wickerman

Kent a loon aince cut the een frae a fish

Gaed it back tae the sea, twa blin gills an a swish

Burn wickerman burn, turn the sky tae a rose  
The savage sleeps lichter than ye micht suppose

Kent a quine aince cut the bairn fae her wame  
Naebody wins in the love cheatin game

Burn wickerman burn, turn the sky tae a rose  
The savage sleeps Iichter than ye micht suppose

Kent a chiel aince pued the wings frae a flee  
Lauched as he watched it cowp ower tae dee

Burn wickerman burn, turn the sky tae a rose  
The savage sleeps Iichter than ye micht suppose

Kent a war aince tuik the youth frae a lan  
A hale generation, a storm in the san

Burn wickerman burn, turn the sky tae a rose  
The savage sleeps lichter than ye micht suppose

26. King Canute Tune: Oh Soldier Soldier will you marry me?

Oh King Canute wis a Nordic galoot  
Fa tried tae command the sea  
He thocht his croon an his ermine gown  
Wad boo tae the monarchy

The tide cam in wi the howlin win  
An aabody cried, 'Are ye feel as weel as blin  
An aabody cried 'Are ye feel as weel as blin  
Ye invite calamity! '

Noo Bush an Blair wad hae ye think they care  
That the polar ice will melt  
As Tsunamis brakk like sticks on Asia's back  
World peace fur ile is selt

The tide cam in wi the howlin win

An aabody cried, 'Are ye feel as weel as blin  
An aabody cried 'Are ye feel as weel as blin  
It's plain fit haun 's bin dealt!

There's acid rain, an Chernobyl's pain  
There is BSE an Sars  
Green forests faa tae the detriment o aa  
Mids the stoor o holy wars

The tide cam in wi the howlin win  
An aabody cried, 'Are ye feel as weel as blin  
An aabody cried 'Are ye feel as weel as blin  
Earth carina thole mair scars!

In a Bangkok street ilkie secunt sowel ye meet  
Weirs a mask tae puriffee  
The wee sup air that is ciculatin there  
Car emissions putriffee

The tide cam in wi the howlin win  
An aabody cried, 'Are ye feel as weel as blin  
An aabody cried 'Are ye feel as weel as blin  
Fit price is democracy?

Oh the tide has turned wi pollution it is churned  
We maun save oor beach or dee  
Unlike Canute or there's very little doot  
We'll hae nae posterity

The tide cam in wi the howlin win  
All aabody cried, ~re ye feel as weel as blin  
An aabody cried 'Are ye feel as weel as blin  
It's plain fit the end will be! '

## 27.A Pairty fur Ane Tune: Bonnie George Campbell

Chasin the dragon ower mony ye see  
Mansion an high-rise, suburbia tee  
Laddies oot chorin an quines on the game  
Aa tae buy gear fur a pairty o ane

Hard bi the cash pynt they beg on the street  
'Gies some cheenge missus' tae aabody they meet  
Ony auld story... the eynd's ay the same  
Heich upon smack at a pairty fur ane

Far is thon paradise druggies gyang tae?  
Fit is the entry price fate gars them pay?  
Dealers fur profit sell pyson an shame  
Tae a young Scottish junkie, at pairty fur ane

Chasin the dragon, ower many ye see  
Mansion an high rise, suburbia tee  
Suner or later they're ash in his flame  
Daith hauds the door at the pairty fur ane

## 28. Setterday Nicht

Fergus stude in an airport luikin hashed  
Atwixt an atween twa continents, striddlin the Yird  
Strang an fite like a caunle warm at the core  
A dram o fusky mellow at his thrapple

Connie watched show efter show on the flickerin screen  
Deid tae the world. Cauld flesh an starin een  
Connor gaed tae the circus.  
The biggest clown in the tent.

Dougal roared up the road on his motor bike  
Eager tae lowse his hett quine frae her frock

On fifty thoosan hooses ahin the knowe  
The rain poored doon a hale wikk's cauld libation  
A glancin wheel played fit-baa wi a brock

Sheena Blackhall



## 32 English Poems From The Cloud Collector

### 1. Loch Villanelle

Across the loch two curlew keen and wheel  
One ripple breeds another....endless link  
A moment's mist....what's real becomes unreal

I hear the fledglings chirping as I steal  
Down, where deer at gloaming stoop to drink  
There shadows show the swish of a dark eel

Upon a stone, a robin with her meal  
Of worms, alights. Two ducklings preen and prink  
Here footsore hares creep down, to rest and heal

A brown moth's open wings....you almost feel  
The sun warm on its back. There, at the brink  
Of leaves which part, a rainbow to reveal

For memory's an ever-filling creel  
Treasure your time. It's later than you think  
Death's not the sort to compromise or deal

When Darkness brings its shadows to conceal  
The loch, seen only by the moon's thin chink  
Of light, the fox will pounce on a small squeal  
The midnight hours. Owls dance the Devil's reel.

### 2. Desire

Be careful what you wish for, the Chinese say  
A vain & trendy teenage Mary Quant  
I desired thigh-high suede boots  
Russet-coloured as randy vibrant foxes

They stained my feet in the rain  
A red stigmata. The dye took weeks to shift

### 3. A Descendent of Bruce's Spider

A descendent of Bruce's spider has ambitions

She dreams of a web, strong as prehensile steel  
In an oak wood, on the rim of myth and fable

Small, slight, Machiavellian in mind-set  
She has a courtier's duplicity, a perfect political animal  
She tilts her queer dark face towards her victim  
Smiles, withdraws, then pounces  
Nothing stands in her way

#### 4. Ambivalence

The last seat in the theatre, in the Gods  
Pot plants parked in a day centre  
Ambivalence  
A cut price hand of bananas  
Ambivalence  
A locked door  
Ambivalence  
All dentists great and small  
Ambivalence  
Free Range Ostrich farming  
Ambivalence

on a summer's Day (200 steps)  
The larch dangles its knots of nut-brown seeds  
In slatted tangles of green...an Elf King's dreadlocks

Small jade fly, an exquisite winged jewel  
Tiptoes on a poppy's blousy petals  
A soup of nettles simmers in the heat

A streamlet gurgles down its own bright throat  
Flanked by ferns from Nature's Book of Kells

A carillon of bluebells melts like cones  
The arch above a shepherd's flowery cromack

New birches huddle...girls at their first dance  
Not bold enough to step out from the shadows

Over the back-drop of a mud-brown puddle

Butterflies flirt outrageously together  
White actors in a Japanese Noh play

An invisible droning plane above the glen  
Creates a mackerel sky of poisoned white  
Beyond the ken of buttercup or trout

Sun's the golden halo of an angel  
Spreading his fallen feathers on the loch

Mothers  
At the children's roll call of the mothers  
Sarah's mum was a brain-box  
All the smarties were there  
Even the blue ones  
Her daddy shot himself

Daisy's mum kept gin in the bread bin  
Stank of Gauloise and garlic  
Caught 'the bad trouble' on holiday  
From a Spanish waiter  
The divorce was protracted and messy

'We don't like the look of YOURS'  
They said to me,  
As if their mums were perfect

Dead Martian's Last Recorded Message  
Crepuscular bubbles flattered  
In the interpentecostalisms of the moon

We were hydrosyphilitic from angsters  
As we zingzonked and splotterboomed  
Past a crinklesag of comets

Kangaloozing off the asterphiliostes  
We kerflumped into the slimplump  
Where our fuhrerschpeeler dismetrolled  
Our wigglwwiffles

By now I was hyperphilactic with brittles  
How I yearnared for my kissplodger!

I hykeryanked my oxterfluffs to makkerlift  
Ah: a quaffle of zunkides with a spunklit of aspertoys!

Our vittlebloomph was plummetaring  
No battsquirts to oompher

I blinkercommed the unirhocerous  
Zoybiddens! I skelloched.  
Noddlezink! Widderzunk! Clickertins!

My clunk and Vimpter syxsie  
Dispopulated the cruxxies!

My crannikoots snapperated-  
My timmerwirms unpixillated  
Eurunka! Finnikins! Wump!

Inspired by a Gaelic Topography of Balquhidder Parish  
Field of the land producing thatch  
Shieling of grinding wheat  
Burn beside the dun coloured dell  
Burn of the mournful bleat

Burn of the black waterfall  
Burn of the windy space  
Burn of the rock where MacRenish lived  
A robber of that place

Burn of the hawthorn tree  
Trough of the grey hound's peak  
Burn of the house of the ravine  
Knoll of the men of peace

Pass of the dell of arrows  
The dell of hides and skins  
The hamlet of the hollow  
Hill of the moaning winds

The coffer of the hand mill  
The stone of the slender grass  
Pass of the little bramble bush  
Brae where the corpses pass

The glen suited for cattle  
The hollow of the bog  
The clachan of the stepping stones  
Of Linn and fallen log

The fairy knoll of battles  
The mountains of the mine  
The black peak of the badgers  
The ben of the creeping pine

#### Cod's Nightmare

In dreams in the depths of the ocean  
Come whispers from cod of the past  
'We were lifted aloft in a trawler  
Our tail-fins were nailed to the mast.

We shudder to think of our loved ones  
All battered and slapped in a tub  
Then flung in the fires of a fryer  
And clapped on a paper, as grub

Little codlings, when nude Aphrodite  
Rises up in her shell from the sea  
With the hairs on her legs full of bubbles  
And her breasts jiggling so merrily

It isn't your scales she's admiring  
Your fins, or your blubbery lips  
She's imagining you on a platter  
With vinegar, sauce, and some chips

#### 10. Rain Bombs

The bees are under cover.  
Rain drops bomb them so fiercely  
They could easily drown or be damaged

Outside, their landlady is concocting bee treats  
Fragrant flowers, to lessen their travel times

To produce a pound of honey,  
They may travel 55,000 miles  
They may visit over two million flowers

To produce an ounce of honey,  
Bees may travel 1600 round trips  
Of 6 miles per trip

A spokesman bee for the rare black British type  
(Thought to have been wiped out by Spanish flu in 1919)  
Said, from her hive in Northumberland

BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ

A swarm of bees in May  
Is worth a load of hay;

BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ

A swarm of bees in June  
Is worth a silver spoon;

BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ

A swarm of bees in July  
Is not worth a fly

BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ□

Before buzzing off  
To complete her busy work schedule

Cloud Collector: For Jessica, aged 4

She whirls like a dervish,  
Arms raised to embrace the sun

She brings me an invisible cloud  
Staggering under the pretend  
Weight of Nothingness

Four years old, she lives in  
The Land of Childhood

The gap between Real and Imagined

The cloud is precious.  
I must not let it drop

Footfalls

Looking through Memory's portal,  
La Bocca della Verita, the Mouth of Truth,  
Slips through my Orphic fingers.  
Nothing remains but dust and dying footfalls

Crossing the threshold from night to dawn  
I am greeted by lilac,  
As out of the blue a house martin wheels a welcome

13.Incubus

There is a wildness inside me, a sort of creature  
Nothing can kill this incubus  
Though days may drag me off to their necessary happenings

The incubus sits in its niche, an honoured resident  
Its amber eyes beyond the strobe of censure

Under the hood, beneath the radar  
Its little hooves are drumming away merrily  
It is going to kick up Hell

When darkness comes, its wild eyes are shining  
One day it may revolt, push Reason,  
And me with it, down the river.

Penguin

The penguin is a silly bird  
Its wings it cannot use  
It shuffles here, it shuffles there  
On its wrong-fitting shoes

Its belly lies upon its feet  
It always looks so glum

And so would you  
If all your life you had a frozen bum

Dreams

A sheep is like a pillow  
That stuffs itself with grass  
It cannot count itself to sleep  
'Cause it can't count, alas!

Poem Waiting on Platform 3

It may be begin with silence  
Or not  
It may be about adversity  
Or not  
It may be circular in form  
With gaps and line breaks  
Allowing thoughts to breathe and let in light  
Or not

Passengers may enter the verses  
They may adhere to social norms  
Obey life's rules  
Or not

It has just been announced  
That the poem arriving on platform 3  
Is aboard the Flying Scotsman.  
The onward journey may take 10 minutes  
Or not

Passengers step on:  
Here is a man, struggling with a clarsach  
A black cat has just sneaked in,  
Fleeing from a rhododendron bush in the siding

Words are what burned his mistress  
Many kittenish moons ago

The poem is beginning to enjoy itself  
It does not get many excursions



A terrorist steps on  
And an advert for Keillor's marmalade

The poem perks up its ears like a dog.  
It wags its tail  
Or not

#### 18. A Jar of Mixed Metaphors

My grandfather's frown was a dark ribbon of bitumen  
At such times nobody coveted his company  
He was delightful as a squashed mouse.

His charity was workhouse porridge  
Scraped from the pot's bottom  
His mood was yellow  
Sour as ageing toenails

But when he smiled (which was rarely)  
The sky was a blue table of feathers  
His eyes lit up, two John Clare cornflowers

Hallelujah! he sang, perfectly in tune  
A tall black streak of holy liquorice

#### Temple Cat

The temple cat, stick thin,  
Lifts up the begging bowl of his meow  
He is seeking the alms of love  
Tipping an ear to the side for a soft stroke

His rib bones are a toast rack  
His paw steps rickety and wheezy

Mindful of moving  
He has perfected the art of Ageing

er Bee Poem  
At a hotel in Edinbro

That's stinting with its honey  
But lavish with its prices  
All to squeeze its patrons' money

The toast was spread so thinly  
That a punter sighed to me  
'We must commend the manager  
I see he keeps a bee'.

as Warthog  
A grunting warthog, bristle backed, alert  
I stand with my tail twitching  
Primed to root out truffles  
Of words, the succulence of poetry

hood: Gingerbread & Honey  
The fizz of gingerbread on thirsty lips  
Days entered my heart like drips of honey  
Gean trees dangled luscious crimson earrings

Old trees whispered secrets, ached for rain  
Unfettered birds spread wings wide to the clouds

A hare's ears twisted sideways into the wind  
A boulder rose from a pool like a great altar  
My bare footprints melted into mud  
Ringed by an anklet of forget-me-nots

The tin tack eye of a salmon, held my stare  
Skies crackled electric storms on high

Above the silver mine two falcons wheeled  
The village clock clanged out the tinny hours  
Two doors away a living corpse lay dying

Tourists hopped like magpies seeking trinkets  
I was a trout, a hare, a hatching toad  
I emptied myself from house to the high hills

The moon did not exist beyond the village

On a hot pony's sides the black flies sizzled  
At night my mouse ears listened to the owl

Threadbare mists wove wreaths of widow's weeds  
A Glastonbury of minnows thronged the shallows  
This was my wall-less roof-less summer home

A seethe of midges danced amongst the trees  
I lay on springy heather counting clouds  
And chipped my name into a crag's sharp,  
In this, each summer's loved, Elysian place

Alzheimer Man  
My words are like children  
They sometimes go out to play.  
I expect they'll come back  
When they're ready,  
The Alzheimer man said.

ation No 3  
Silence settled, soothing as a bee-murmurs  
Yellow candles glimmered in the stillness  
The scent of honeysuckle filled the shrine

Above the roof, a Catherine wheel of swifts  
The loch was shimmering with a shoal of waves  
Continents of clouds merged in the sky

Like debutantes, out for a single season  
The beech tree's leaves were dressed in silken green

ng the Gap  
An oak held out its arms to me  
Today, in a woody welcome

It's neighbour of 50 years  
Lay felled in last winter's storm.

For a while to please it,  
I was a stand-in tree  
Filling the gap that lets the wind in, now

Granite City

Out of Rubislaw Quarry came  
Statues, pavements, plinths and setts  
Fountains and Sarcophagi  
Drinking troughs for horse or pets

Bank, museum, pubs and kerbs  
Facings, floorings, columns too  
Angels, shops, a bridge to cross  
The mighty Thames at Waterloo

Roads and gravel, tenement flats  
Drum and Crathes, castles sweet  
Parliament in London Town  
Lighthouse, prison, Union Street

Docks and quays both far and near  
Statues, flashing granite's fire  
Citadel and gallery  
Marischal College, soaring spire

Caryatids and anchors fouled  
Celtic crosses, Georgian homes  
Theatre and Infirmary  
Fashioned, all by granite stone

Church and general, king and kirk  
Cowdray lion to mark the war  
Avenues and Terraces  
Memorial stones wreathed round with haar  
Hammer, chisel, grit and pick  
Long years of retirement lost  
Hard the work for wages won  
Quarryman's lung, the human cost

27.A Poem from the Quotes of Oscar Wilde  
Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.  
Always forgive your enemies;  
Nothing annoys them so much.

To live is the rarest thing in the world.

Most people exist, that is all.  
We are all in the gutter,  
But some of us are looking at the stars.  
With freedom, books, flowers, and the moon,  
Who could not be happy?  
Who, being loved, is poor?

Most people are other people.  
Their thoughts are someone else's opinions,  
Their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation.  
Nowadays people know the price of everything  
And the value of nothing.

I am not young enough to know everything.  
Experience is merely the name men gave to their mistakes.  
Youth is wasted on the young  
Children begin by loving their parents;  
As they grow older they judge them;  
Sometimes they forgive them

Death must be so beautiful.  
To lie in the soft brown earth, with the grasses waving above one's head,  
And listen to silence. To have no yesterday, and no tomorrow.  
To forget time, to forgive life, to be at peace.

Yet each man kills the thing he loves  
By each let this be heard  
Some do it with a bitter look  
Some with a flattering word  
The coward does it with a kiss  
The brave man with a sword

George Reresby Sitwell (1860-1943)  
Sir George R. Sitwell wrote one year, *The History of the Fork*,  
Along with *Lepers' Squints* and many another curious work

His white cows all were painted, with Chinese Willow scenes  
A bovine gallery on the hoof, embodying his dreams

He made a curious toothbrush, that when used played Annie Laurie  
And just for killing wasps, a pistol, honed to blast its quarry

From condensed milk he fashioned knives, (another of his capers)  
And paid his offspring's Eton fees in piglets and potatoes

He lived upon roast chicken, for his diet it was novel  
He always dressed for dinner, even in the poorest hovel

A psychic pig stayed in his house, (his wife's beloved friend)  
And a piece of hangman's rope was dangled from the lord's bed-end

29. Francis Galton (1822-1911)

Galton, an infant prodigy,  
Mastered the alphabet by two  
Conquered Latin at four years old,  
The man with the supersized IQ

He shaved his patients' heads in blood  
Designed himself a cooling hat  
That rose, when he squeezed a rubber bulb  
Lifting the lid like a magic mat

He shot giraffes in Africa  
He caught the clap from rumpy-pumpy  
Fashioned floats from antelope skin  
Chewed lime & treacle to stave off scurvy

He made himself submarine specs to read  
But water turned each page to pap  
And several books he wrote were such  
Best used for blocking a draughty gap

He penned Arithmetic by Smell  
Tried brewing tea by calculation  
Claimed that Aberdonians were  
The ugliest women throughout the nation  
(And this, he averred, was a proven fact  
Based upon measured observation! ! !)

He carried a large clay brick each day  
So he could peer above any crowd  
But he did discover fingerprints  
And so such foibles must be allowed.

end William Buckland (1784-1856)

Buckland was a vicar's son  
His taste in food was queer  
He dined upon stray guinea pigs  
And ghastly things as drear  
He polished off a crocodile  
A hedgehog, mole, a bear  
A puppy and a bluebottle  
Rhinoceros, and hare

Roast ostrich, mice on buttered toast  
Were found upon his table  
(And it was made of fossils' poo  
Hewn from a Stone Age cradle)

He ate the Sun King's embalmed heart  
(So Grim t'would fright the Gorgon)  
But still averred that monkey  
Far surpassed the Royal organ

His offspring Frank ate Jumbo's trunk.  
Grilled panther from the zoo  
A roasted parrot, leporine  
And a boiled kangaroo

So when you hear of rarities  
In some outré food bar  
Refer them to Bill Buckland's tastes  
The oddest fare by far

speare

He wrote his sonnets when plague stopped his plays  
From being acted out as thousands died  
The bard of Stratford, famed in Raleigh's days  
When teenage, married with an older bride

After his death, the great man's will was read  
(Posterity received each word and thought)  
He left his widow Ann his next best bed  
That was the top and tail of all she got

On Google now, two million pages tell  
Of Shakespeare's life, his looks and acting troop  
Two plays in Klingon have translated well  
From his collected works, illustrious book

He wins the starring role as wit and sage  
Through countless decades on the World's stage

ese Survivor  
Kimtang village is off the beaten track  
In this pure land where people are dirt poor

The country is achingly beautiful  
Mists drift from sheer-drop waterfalls  
Buddhist prayer wheels spin in the crystal air

The Himalayan Mountains are dragons' teeth  
White fangs rooted in green  
Fields climb like steps up their steep amphitheatre

The earthquake shook Nepal to its foundation  
Toppling homes like toys in a temper tantrum

Now, temples like concertinas creak at crazy angles  
Homes are strewn like straw across the roads

Mouth-masked helpers dish out tents and rice packs  
The stench of death crawls up from funeral pyres

Where will the poor ones live?  
What will become of them when the press move on,  
With the monsoon rains so near and corpses leaking?

The rhododendron bushes continue to bloom  
The tourists jet away to their safe horizons

In the midst of this sits Mr Funchu Tamang  
One hundred and one years old,  
Born when the Ghurkhas marched to the poppy war  
Twenty three when slaves were banned in his country



Six kings have come and gone  
Like ghosts of Sherpas, under his frugal watch

Dressed in a Western T-shirt, bone-tired-weary  
He sits in his life's ruins, facing foreign cameras,  
Whilst Western coffers empty their loose change.

Sheena Blackhall

## 35 English Poems From Death Of A Tadpole

Summer: Balquhiddar  
Summer sets out her usual sensual feast  
The minuet of flowers, the leaves' gavotte  
The orchestra of birds, the timpani  
Of pattering raindrops on the tarn's pot

Forget me not and ragged robin gleam  
Small points of paint from Nature's pristine palette  
The air is full of songs and whirring wings  
And nothing here to fear, or hurt the wallet

For all's true wealth, a boon that's freely given  
After the shower, a fleet of snails raise sails  
Slither across the lawn on silver feet  
The passing rain clouds are Salomé's veils

num Mars Superflous (Fictional Writer)  
Platinum Mars Superfluous  
Writes odes to hard-boiled eggs  
His outlook is gregarious  
His clothes are off the pegs

He sends his tales to Playboy  
For gentlemen to read  
In toilets with their trousers down  
He's very rude indeed

Platinum Mars Superfluous  
Has two inflated egos  
As big as twin powered Zeppelins  
He's stunning in his speedos

Platinum Mars Superfluous  
Would never plagiarise  
But sadly, as with vegan dough  
His standards seldom rise

Platinum Mars Superfluous  
Got sozzled on retsina

After that writing course in Crete  
When told 'make a sestina'

Platinum Mars Superfluous  
Has fluttered many a breast  
By scribing torrid love poems  
(Byron, in shoe-string vest)

Platinum Mars Superfluous  
As a child was never hit  
And probably he should have been  
He's grown up to be a shit

ation A  
Meditation A  
Fly's footfall on a lily  
The silence of clouds

ation B  
Did I dream that voice?  
A daisy chain of grace notes  
Singing in the wild

ts of the World  
Some use fields and railway lines  
Kuna Indians walk a plank  
L'urinettes in Montreal  
Are the ultimate in swank  
Madame Pipi, Klofrau, Cludgie  
Multicoloured like a budgie  
Thunderboxes, Toilette Turque  
Pissijns and chains that irk  
Worst of all, Australian dunny  
Though the outback may be sunny  
Spiders may ensure, so fast  
That visit to the bog's your last!

n to me

Why don't you eavesdrop on the world?  
Imagine you're a spider, stalking her prey  
Adopt a fictional character's identity  
Be your own Agony Aunt?

Before you walk away  
Ransack the personal things from a dead star's life  
Consider what makes your cat sneeze  
Dive with Moby Dick to the deep ocean  
Imagination: the intelligent way to play

edents

A musical freemason  
A farming kirk precentor  
A harassed harridan  
A fenced in intellect  
A precious hoard of words  
A solitary lover of the wild  
Twisted strands of a gene-chain  
I tug behind me

8.I was Unprepared  
I was unprepared  
For the vice-like hinge of the burn  
Snapping above my head  
A frozen lid  
Nor the depth-  
The sudden drop from play to terror

Then nuzzling my thigh  
The kelpie whinnied  
Horse bubbles galloping up to the air  
The hair at the fork of my legs  
Was midnight lichen  
The creature laid hidden eggs within its nest

So this is what conception's like, I thought

of a Tadpole: for Winnie, aged three

She claimed and named it Minnie, her first pet  
Watched in wonder as it flicked its tail  
Tadpole and little girl, both learning life

I changed its water. The out-slop hit the bush  
I heard the gasp. Her eyes were brimming tears  
Minnie, meanwhile was safe in a holding jar

When they were reunited her small face cleared  
Her cheeks with wet still smeared  
A small rehearsal for Life's bigger losses  
The hardest ones, laid beneath urns and crosses

I thought it was time to finish when  
The monk jumped over the lazy fox  
Twenty cranberries turned pale  
I'd walked ten miles in another's socks  
A record was made by a singing quail

Oh why are Mondays allowed to thrive  
Cracking the whip on another week  
Where do pot plants go where they die?  
Where is the womb of Dolly the sheep?

Oh test tube world with genetic knots  
Acid rain and global change  
Have you seen the debris orbiting round  
The world we use, like a rifle range?

had a disturbed night  
The falling dream, over and over  
On the threshold between reality and dreaming  
Her mind was a swing on Fragonard's painted garden  
Arching from shade to light  
The sundial wheeling wildly, a broken clock  
The falling dream, over and over  
But where? Not the gallery  
Where people only go to admire the Art  
A cliff or a high rise, a bridge  
Like Icarus, tumbling out of a cloudless sky  
While a ploughman's horse flicks a fly from its delicate ears

An unwatched tragedy

The dawn broke like new baked bread  
To the cry of the cuckoo bird  
That interloper in the lives of others  
Its ego swelling, smothering its host  
The falling dream, over and over

phone Speaks

My heart is Summer and Winter  
If you sliced it open, you'd find a stone at its core  
My blood is mercury, poisonous and silver  
It thrills to nightingales and owls  
My breath is cloud-spit and air-tangle  
Whistling through the pan pipes of my lungs

A blackbird sings in my breast  
Hopping from rib to rib

My teeth are worn down like Winter  
An old wolf loping into the chilly woods of December

13The Artist

'Draw what is there, not what you think is there.'  
My drawing master was a gaunt, flamboyant man  
Who'd worked in France, a Miro copy-cat

I put my blood, bones breath into my Art  
The boy of genius on the neighbouring easel  
Declared for Art he didn't give a fart  
He'd bunk off class, lay women and get pissed,  
Pluck apples from the lucky tree I'd missed

An early lesson on the wiles of Fate  
Better to learn it early, than too late

Dark Secrets

My dark secrets stay in a locked chamber  
Three misshapen Furies live in its black recesses

A Sybil is guarding the entrance  
With a cleft lip, muttering riddles  
Her belly's a sack of guts, bulging and rancid  
She might spill the beans if ever she opened up

A perfectly formed devil with polished hooves  
Eyes like infernos, all guns blazing, has me in his sights  
He lives in my womb. It's arid's the hot Sahara

At night, my Furies rustle their crackling wings  
They are sharpening their scissors to snip my fraying thread

### Jelly Poem

Aunt Beldie's raspberry jelly  
with evaporated milk, was good  
Sticky mouths and hands,  
wasp traps of childhood

Nebulous floating jellyfish  
Look like balloons, trailing tentacles of pain  
An alien head, with swaying nerve-ends  
Sizzling like electric cables, shorting in a drain

Jellies that teenagers use to hallucinate  
Jelly that blows off limbs of soldiers,  
All in the name of some sadistic state

The cellulite jelly folds of the gluttonous feeder  
The jelly of many colours the new-born wears,  
Slippery and inchoate  
The cow eats that, retaking what was hers

### e Winnie

Her cheek is soft as a peach  
A crackerjack  
A whirligig  
A snapdragon  
A mischievous grasshopper

Winnie. Little grand daughter

With almond eyes and teeth like seeded pearls  
Child of the lotus and thistle

Boo! Watch out! She's caught you!

City of my Life

The city of my life has places I never visit  
Dark alleys, roamed only by vermin  
There, broken dreams and promises hum with flies

I refresh myself by entering the glassed-in gardens  
Here, flowers riot harmlessly  
And a small stream tinkles,  
Wet and alive with frog-lets  
The ceiling is sonorous with the songs of tiny birds

I rest from the furnace of the city  
Marigolds drip sweat in ochre pots  
A chink in the glass lets in the shaft of a memory.

Once, I stood on the edge of a precipice  
Unsteady. The drop was deadly  
An inner word arose, the sound of the universe  
It reined me back, that word, that incantation

The secret to walking on water  
Is simply to welcome drowning

Like a sick shark,  
Fate will refuse you, over and over

Step onto the nebulous cloud that crosses chasms  
The cloud that lives in the cloud beyond the cloud

Swimming

Wild swimming. Everyone did it  
Was there any other kind?  
Waves were framed in pools of liquid ice  
So cold you gasped when plunging into the pot



Midges, tics, clegs, nettles  
Ant-hills, cramp, the childish dread of kelpies  
We were like minnows swimming free  
On the threshold of puberty,  
The last splashes of innocence

No strategy, pure undiluted joy  
And water tipping in sprays, in fans, in torrents  
In sheer, untamed, unbridled ecstasy

Was A Young Lady From Troon  
There was a young lady from Troon  
Who hit a golf ball to the moon  
But the golf ball bounced back  
Hit her face with a thwack  
Now she looks like a pink macaroon.

ts  
Marmots are like marmite  
Some like them, some do not  
They bred the cruel bubonic plague  
Killed more folk than Pol Pot

Their cough spreads germs around them  
Mongolian hunters say  
Their armpits carry warrior's souls  
They're nasty. Stay away

If their cough doesn't kill you  
Their fat will cure the ague  
I'd rather thole rheumatics  
Than drop dead of the plague

rs for Buddha  
Next to the Buddha's flowers at our front door  
He came, full grown, a rickety adult fox,  
An old one, tawny-grey not rusty red

He sniffed, surveyed the flowers, the Buddha, the door  
Then loped away, racing towards the river

The most important guest to arrive in years  
And no one there to bow and bid him enter

Day: Aberdeen 2016  
Outside the temporary temple,  
Western children whoop it up in a playground

There's a high rise, parking lots and concrete flags  
The road is trashed with chewing gum and fags

Within, Thai, Malay, Burmese sit in silence  
And meditate in pony tails and jeans

British Buddhists squat in Harem pants,  
The men wear topknots like the Sumarai  
While saffron robed, Thai monks chant ancient Pali

We each approach the shrine, with flower or candle  
And dribble water down the Buddha's face  
Briefly united out of time and place  
Om muni muni mahamuni shakymuniye svaha

ahua  
The smallest dog in the world,  
(not Danka Korak of Slovakia)  
Was dwarfed like a Chinese bonsai  
And kept in a thimble of raffia

24 The Bee Poem  
Chirrup pipe toot chirrup pipe toot  
Quark pipe toot quark pipe toot

Their antennae are for ears  
To waggle, dance,  
To guide the way to nectar

Quark pipe toot quark pipe toot  
Chirrup pipe toot chirrup pipe toot

In the sweet darkness o the hive

25. *Urtica Diocia: The Stinging Nettle*

'Tender handed stroke the nettle, and it stings you for your pains  
Grasp it like a man of mettle, and it soft as silk remains' Aaron Hill: (1750)

Green stingers, leg biters, plant torturers  
Nettles lurk in wasteland, round football pitches,  
In woods and ruined buildings, in railway lines and ditches

Battalions of nettles, hone their jagged leaves  
The nettle's the cunning wife of the byways  
Maker of sackcloth and beer, throat gargle and teas

Weaver of uniform, blanket, sailcloth  
Bower for ladybirds, brewer of shampoo and broth  
Jade lady, your element's fire, like the scratch of barbed wire  
Beloved of tortoiseshell butterfly and moth

26. *The Pessimist Reflects*

Roofers fall, seamen drown  
Aircraft pilots tumble down  
Lumberjacks are often felled  
Police get shot, soldiers killed  
Drivers crash, doctors expire  
Firemen die in others' fire

27. *First Day, Married Quarters*

I could have been a scrag end of meat  
A lump of discarded masonry  
In the zone of the married quarters  
Like haricot beans zipped up in their secret pods  
The streets, slated and bricked like clones

Three hundred miles from home  
I didn't expect a ticker-tape 4th of July  
I didn't expect ten chariots of fire  
It felt like I walked on burning coals  
Past anonymous windows, expecting an ambush

Somewhere, with squaddie comrades

My spleet new husband celebrated my coming  
With beers and jokes, his wedded sex on tap

Turning the key in the lock, I entered the silent house  
Everything signed for present and correct  
Down to the canteen of cutlery,  
The cooker, the mangle, the boiler

In the foggy garden, an apple tree  
Held up its melancholy arms to the damp air

I set my case down in the unheated room  
And waited, still and clammy as a mushroom

#### 28. In-Gathering

Beneath the magnolia tree  
Narcissi and primrose bloom  
The chimes of the chapel clock  
Echo in every room

Friends chatter like cooing pigeons  
The sound creeps up the stairs  
And the house feels warmed and lovely  
Enjoying them being there

For a house is more than walls  
Roof, or window, or door  
Its fabric retains the imprint  
Of all that has gone before

And night when it comes falls softly  
As moonlight silvers the dew  
And the owl through the trees in silence  
Feathered, goes floating through

#### 29. In the Curate's Garden

I walk in the footsteps of ghosts in the curate's garden  
Trample a willow leaf in a crunch of gravel

Each day, the thrush as phoenix sings a new psalm

Its notes are sent first class, upwards to St Peter

Two oaks, long resident, are faithful retainers  
Tenants process through from font to grave

Nothing here is set on the straight and narrow  
A labyrinth of nooks, of peaks and drops  
As if a monk had dipped his impish quill  
Fashioning whorls of stone and stream,  
Letting his pen run riot around the back of a mole

tic Kitty

A real live cat was acoustic Kitty  
Antenna in her tail, for spyin in the city  
A radio transmitter underneath her skin  
She was al; I wired up from her booty to her chgin  
This cat was a feline 007  
Till a taxi driver sent her up to Geaven  
It wasn't technology overload  
Nobody taught her the Highway Code

dils

I like my poems sonorous, like great cathedral bells  
To write them isn't onerous, for words have hidden spells  
Come, trailing clouds of glory as the poet Wordsworth said  
Whose daffies are still dancing long after William's dead

32. Cowan Bridge: 2016

'Cosy, comfortable, Grade II listed stone cottage, in the beautiful Lune Valley  
Nestling between the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales National Park.'

Once, to stay here was a death sentence  
'Suffer the Little Children'  
Typhoid, TB, cholera, malnutrition  
The cruelty of religion at its worst

Today it rains, the weather wears teeth of ice  
The wordless windows have locked their past away  
Between despair and now, a child peers out

Trapped in the throttling mesh of Calvin's terrors

Bedwetting, homesickness, cold, build moral fibre  
Reducing the physical to a brittle shell

Ghosts, they say, revisit forgotten agonies  
From the cosy, comfortable, grade II listed cottage  
Behind the bleary panes of the peeling windows  
Look! Are haunted eyes still fixed on the passing clouds?

Sheena Blackhall

## 4 English Poems From Thursdays

### 1. Museum of Failed Products: A List Poem

The Japanese call it, mono no aware, the pathos of things. The sadness of life's impermanence.

Fortune Snookies, (fortune cookies for dogs)  
Jell-o for Salads  
Ben-Gay Aspirin  
Toaster Eggs  
Bic Disposable pantyhose  
For Oily Hair Only  
Multi-coloured Ketchup  
Funky Fries, (Kool Blue)  
Gerber for singles (Adult pureed Baby Food)  
Bald Guyz Head Wipes  
Garlic Flavoured Cake

### 2. Wish-bone

Wishbone, bequeathed from childhood  
Dried to a fragile arch in the family stove  
Snap- a clean snap

Once I romanticised dead bones  
Mouldering into dust like Ozymandios

Have you seen death's horrid face?  
Bloating, putrefying  
The painted livid face in the grip of rot?

Snap- a clean break  
The pyre is clean's a whistle  
Breath becoming smoke

### 3. Rant

Media's the king of Balderdash  
Bombast, brainwashing, claptrap  
Overhype, vapid  
Adverts, their jargon hoodwink

Scummed with veneer of verbiage

Big bosses jump on the bandwagon  
Jiggery-pokery junkets, kick backs  
Rake-offs, skulduggery  
Employees must kow-tow to lacklustre elitism

The God of Celebrity's worshipped  
Ephemera's lionized. The fatuous world of gimmick  
Of poseurs, of pseudos  
And their underwhelming shenanigans  
Facebooked, snapchatted, froth

4. Savon de Marseille (Extrapure Mediterranee)

Pure Liquid Soap from Provence

Containing:

Hydroxyethyl cellulose

Potassium

Cocoate

Parfum

Glycerine

Cocos

Nucifera

Tetra sodium EDT

BHT benzyl salicylate

Pure Liquid Soap from Provence

Sheena Blackhall



## 4 Poems By John Clare, Owersett Into Scots

### 1: Moosie's Nest

Amang the hey, I fand girse in a baa  
An powked it as I passed an gaed awa;  
An fin I luiked I jealoused somethin steered,  
An turned again an hoped tae catch the bird —  
Fin syne an auld moose breenged oot frae the aets  
Wi aa her littlins hingin at her teats;  
She luiked sae fey, sae eildtrich like tae me,  
I ran an wannert fit the thing cud be,  
An pushed the thrissle-weed back far I stude;  
Syne the moose hashed ayont the skreichin brood.  
The young anes squalloched, as I gaed awa  
Amang the hey, she fand her girssy baa.  
The watter ower the pebbles scarce cud rin  
An braid auld cesspuils glimmered in the sun.

### 2: Emmonsail's Muir in Yuletide

I lue tae see the auld muir's wizenet brake  
Mellin its crinin leaves wi breem an ling,  
While the auld heron frae the lanely loch  
Sterts slaw an flaps its lang, disjaskit wing,  
An antrin craa in idle meevment swing  
On the hauf-rottit aisse-tree's tapmost twig,  
Aside fas trunk the gangrel makks his bed.  
Up flees the breengin widcock frae the brig  
Far the blaik bog gaes trimmlin neath the tread;  
The mavis wheeples in the fusslin thorn  
An fur the hawe roon parks it quickly flees,  
An blate juffits, near twinty in a heeze,  
Flit doon the hedgeraas in the cauldriife plain  
An hing on teenie twigs an stert again.

### 3: The Crofter

Leal as the kirk clock haun the oor pursues  
He dads aboot his darg an reads the news,  
An at the smiddy door an oor will staun  
Tae spikk o 'Lunnon' as a fremmit lan.  
Frae yont his craftie door in peace or strife  
He ne'er gaed fifty miles in aa his life.

His kennin wi auld notions is still jyned  
Is twinty years ahin the merch o mind.  
He views new lear wi a suspicious ee  
An thinks tae be sae wyce is blasphemy  
On steam's almichty tales he winnerin luiks  
As Blaik Airt taen frae auld blaikletter buiks.  
Life gied him comfort bit denied him wealth,  
He warks in quaet an enjoys his health,  
He smokes a pipe at nicht an sups his beer  
Rins up nae tabs on tavern boords tae clear.  
He gaes tae merket aa the year about  
An bides an oor an bides nae langer oot.  
Even at St. Thomas tide auld Rover's bark  
Hails Dapple's trot an hour afore it's derk.  
He is a simple-spukken plain auld man  
Fas gweed intents takk mistakks in their plan.  
Aft sentimental an wi waesome vein  
He luiks on trifles an bemaens their pain  
An thinks the angler wud, an loodly storms  
Wi virr o spikkin ower murdered wirms.  
An hunters coorse, he prigs wi speeches sad  
Peety's petition fur the tod an bawd,  
Yet feels self-satisfaction in his waes  
Fur war's deid thoosans o his butchered faes.  
He's leal tae notions closest tae his breist  
An entire swallaes mistakks in the neist.  
He thinks it sin tae sing, yet nae tae say  
A sang...a michty difference in his wye.  
An mony a meevin tale in auncient rhymes  
He his fur Yuletide an sic blythesome times,  
Fin 'Otterburn, ' his maisterpiece o sang,  
Is said sae earnest nane can think it lang.  
Twis the auld preacher's wye fa sud be richt,  
Fur the deid preacher wis his hairt's delicht,  
An while at kirk he aften shakks his heid  
Tae think fit sermons the auld preacher made,  
Doonricht an orthodox that aa the lan  
Fa hid their lugs tae hear micht unnerstan,  
Bit noo sic michty larnin he his heard  
He thinks it Greek or Latin, fremmit wird,  
Yet ilkie Sabbath tae the kirk rich t braa  
In rain or snaa he niver bides awaa.

Aa wirts o reverence can still steer his frame  
 Laigh boos his heid fin he hears Jesus' name,  
 An still he thinks it blasphemy as weel  
 Sic names woot a capital tae spell.  
 In an auld neukit press aside the waa  
 His buiks are laid, tho gweed, in nummer smaa,  
 His Bible first in place; frae wirth an age  
 Fas grandsire's name taps aff the title page,  
 An blank leaves aince, noo stappt wi kindred claims,  
 Shawin a warld's epitome o names.  
 Parents an bairnies an granbairns aa  
 Myndin's affections in the lists recaa.  
 An prayer-buik neist, weelwor n tho strangly bun,  
 Pruves him a kirkman orthodox an soun.  
 The 'Pilgrim's Progress' an the 'Daith o Abel'  
 Are seldom missin frae his Sabbath table,  
 An prime auld Tusser in his hamely trim,  
 The first o bards in aa the warld wi him,  
 An anely poet which his leisur kens;  
 Verse deals in fancy, prose he thinks mair plain  
 Thon are the buiks he reads an reads again  
 An wikkly hunts the almanacks fur rain.  
 Here an nae farrer larnin's channels ran;  
 Still, neebors prize him as a clivver man.  
 His biggin is a hummle place o rest  
 Wi ae smaa room tae welcome ilkie guest,  
 An thon heich poplar pyntin up abune  
 His ain haun plantit fin an idle loon,  
 It shades his lum e'en while the singin win  
 Thrums sangs o shelter tae his blythesome mind.  
 Inbye his hoose the greatest ears o corn  
 He iver fand, his pictur frames adorn:  
 Bauld Granby's heid, De Grosse's gran defeat;  
 He rubs his hauns an shaws foo Rodney beat.  
 An frae the rafters upon towes, entwine  
 Beanstakks wechtit wi pods frae eyn tae eyn,  
 Fas nummers woot coontin micht be seen  
 Screived on the almanack ahin the screen.  
 Aroon the neuk up upon worsit strung  
 Snail shells in wreaths abune the press wir hung.  
 Myndins o nochtie ongauns noo awakks  
 An thinner keeps them fur his bairnies' sakes,

Fa fin as loons raiked ilkie weety lane,  
Tracked ilkie wid a chittered claes again,  
Roamin about on rapture's easy wing  
Tae hunt thon verra snail shells in the spring.  
An syne he lives, ower blythesome tae be puir  
While strife ne'er dauchles at sae bare a door.  
Laigh in the sheltered glen ye'll fin his bield,  
He hears storm ower the Bens an disna yield;  
Winter an spring, afore it's derk, darg stops,  
Rests wi the lammie, wi the leverock's up,  
Content tae turn his haun tae each day's ploy  
An care ne'er cams tae rype a single joy.  
Time, scarcely noticed, turns his hair tae grey,  
Yet leaves him blythesome as a bairn at play.

#### 4. Sklaik

She hashes oot an scarcely preens her claes  
Tae hear the news an tell the news she gaes;  
She spikks o slorachs, merks each ragged gown,  
Hersel the foolest jaad in aa the toun.  
She stauns wi eager virr at gossip's tale,  
An doons the news as boozers doon their ale.  
Excuse is ready at the biggest lee  
She anely heard it, spreids it liberally.  
The verra cat luiks up, kens her physog  
An breenges tae the chair that it'll hog;  
Fin aince sat doon she niver gaes awa,  
Till tales are dane an spikk, nae mair tae craa.  
She gaes frae hoose tae hoose the clachan ower,  
Her sklaikin reaches ilkie body's door.

Sheena Blackhall

## 7 Limericks In Scots

Auld Wife Fae Carnoustie

There wis an auld wife fae Carnoustie  
Her drawers war bumshayvelt an fooshtie  
The dottled auld feel, bocht a pair made o steel  
Noo her drawers dinna guff bit they're roosty

Kirk in Dunoon

There aince wis a kirk in Dunoon  
Fas membership dwinnlit richt doon  
Noo wi twice wikkly Bingo, it's doubled, by jingo  
Wi a pie an a pynt served at noon

Banchory Salmon

A Banchory salmon wi speed  
Lowped a linn an crashed doon on its heid  
A fisher nearby tuik it hame for a fry  
Though it wisna his catch it wis deid.

Tamintoul stag

There aince wis a frichtfu mishanter  
Fin a Tamintoul stag wi an antler  
Caused a skier tae lowp fin it powkit his dowp  
An he cleared the neist brae like a panther

Cauld Kail Hett again

A quinie fae auld Aiberdeen  
For her holidays gaed tae the meen  
There wis nocht tae be seen bit a rickle o steen  
'I can see thon at hame, ' quo the deem

Embro Festival Goer

An Embro Festival Goer  
Fin the traffic got slower an slower  
In the quest for mair speed, found the wye tae succeed

Wis tae gyang on a motorised mower

Glesga Art Lover

A Glesga Art Lover stood still

Like a heron poised ower its kill

Bit his jynts they aa froze as he studied a pose

Till he luiked like a biro refill

Sheena Blackhall

# 7 Poems Inspired By The Paintings Of Jodie Le Bigre

7PoemsInspired by Jodi Le Bigre paintings

Communion of the Geese (1)

Each goose is bellied like the Ark of the Covenant  
Rattling with corn dispensed by the priestly goose-wife  
All joined together in a strange communion

Each turbulent throat is raucous as the tower of Babel  
Each voice honks out like the horns in a jam of cars

The goose wife's head square's pointed like a beak  
Her wrinkled stockings concertina down  
Like a snake's skin,shed and crumpling

Everything's the colour of farmyard muck  
The colour of khaki, Flanders-soft and sticky

A Lonesome Place (2)

A thrush stands, beaked like a plague doctor  
Observing the tight-rope walk from Life and Death

A woman in the first grip of sickness  
Bares a leg, to cool the fever that burns

Behind her, stands a line of seven corpses blue and empty  
As that of a crab's cast off carapace

Four trees like a sylvan firing squad  
Look down on the voiceless dead

Two ghouls green with putrescence  
Sink into the graveyards juices

The thrush's breast has spills  
Like those from an old man's spoon  
Tsc-Tsc- Tis sick she is, he chirrup  
The fever victim's hair flows upwards like a flame

Feathers (3)

A hotterel o spurgies stoor dookin  
Feathered baas o broon  
Wenchin an chirpin, a clanjamfrey o clishmaclavers

Like berries on the byle  
Hotchin fur houghmagandie

They hae drapt frae the oxters o clouds  
Wee flee-ups, pynty nebbit, on birrin wings  
Newsin, sklaikin, fechtin  
Argybargyincarnapcious towe-rags  
Stappin their beaks wi wirms  
Hornygollachs an flechs  
An vauntie's ony lass wi a keekin glaiss

Common as pee-the-beds, spurgies  
Bit couthie, couthie an braw

The Citadel, Aberdeen (4)

The Citadel's fur the saved, the gweed, the godly  
The merket cross could turn tae a merrimatanzie  
Far life birls roon, a hotterin broth o sowels

The harbour, the coort, the howfs  
Skail oot their fowk tae jyne the mirled melee

Seagulls are reined tae a coach load  
Aimed at the lift, tae the cloudy mansions o Heiven

Ablow, the damned, the tint  
The chauncers, the orrals, the coorse are birsslin in hell

The scunnersome pit o sulphur  
Kent bi Hieronymous Bosch  
Hauds Auld Nick's forkie-tailed deevilocks

On Setterdays, snod wee quinies  
Wi ballet buns an tutus  
Lowp like glegs in the Citadel



An volunteers in the café raise siller fur causes  
The seagulls wyte fur the deid  
Fa've dane least ill  
Tae flee in their feathery easy-jet tae Kingdom com

Up frae the crackit cassies  
The stank o sulphur whyles wauchts ben the wynds

Lizzie's Dother (5)

(She wis Mindit on aa the Ither Quines at she'd held the same wye)

The howdie hauds a sonsie quine  
Baloo baloo ma dearie  
The howdie's braid in airm an girth  
Oh ilkie new born's bonnie

Sae mony bairns she's ruggit oot  
Baloo baloo ma dearie  
As tunes upon a piper's flute  
Oh ilkie new born's bonnie

The howdie's humfy-backit kind  
Baloo baloo ma dearie  
Nae sensual tae a suiter's mind  
Oh ilkie new born's bonnie

Bit mithers in their agony  
Baloo baloo ma dearie  
Are gled the howdie's skill tae pree  
Oh ilkie new born's bonnie

An as she showds the newest quine  
Baloo baloo ma dearie  
Betimes her een drap tears o brine  
Oh ilkie new born's bonnie

She's ne'er bin coortit neth the meen  
Baloo baloo ma dearie  
Ay suppit frae the spinster's speen  
Oh ilkie new born's bonnie

Tho first tae hear each babby's greet  
Baloo baloo ma dearie  
Her briests wi milk wir niver weet  
Oh ilkie new born's bonnie

She ay maun haun the babby back  
Baloo baloo ma dearie  
The mither's gains the howdie's lack  
Oh ilkie new born's bonnie

La Rencontre (6)  
Picturs in the peat rikk  
Castles in the flame  
Viaducts an factories  
A warlock's ghaistie hame

Did trowies gaither kinnlin  
Tae pit the magic there?  
The rikk gaes furlin up the lum  
Some like Rapunzel's hair

Granny lat me see them  
The dauncers bricht an reid  
Bit the magic left the ingle  
Fin the auld wife deid

Skeleton Faimly (7)  
Rick -ma-tick clack the skeletons' banes  
A faimly ye can see throw at a glisk  
The bairn is wyvin up at the meen  
A vratch, a nickum, a scaffold o fite

Nae intimmers tae wye them doon  
Nae wyme, nae puddens, nae hairt nae een  
Nae need tae keech, cowk, pee or pyocher

The skeleton faimly's pure as Norseman's runes  
Makkin their ain percussion  
They daunce tae their ain tunes



## 7 Scots Callander Haiku

blaik-faced yowie  
Sclimmin Ben Vorlich's corries  
Cannie an tentie

Rob Roy's Cave  
I skytit on glaury dubs  
A stoonin dooncam

Loch Voil's seggs  
Winter skreichs like a banshee  
Teirin her claes aff

erne birls ben the lift.  
Neth Kilmahog's bricht saplins  
A bawd sits chitterin

lin, splootrin waves  
The River Teith rins bauldly  
Boskie, ower the steens

-tuck-kecklin hens  
Scrattin ahin the buikshop  
Layin eggs for bards

7.A lintie wheeples  
Brichtenin Balquhidder's crannies  
Flaffin ben the road

Sheena Blackhall

## 7 Scots Owersetts Of Nepalese Poems

icharan Shreshtha (b.1912)

No Smoke From The Chimneys (Dhuvam Niskandaina)

Nae Rikk frae the Lums  
I dinna hae time,  
Daith, dinna caa for me,  
I dinna hae time tae dicht  
the bluid frae a brukken heid.

Leddy, dinna hinner my waa-gaun  
I hinna time for yer ploys.  
The fowk o ma kintra  
hae nae mair maet,  
an are tcyauvin sairly: luik!  
Nae rikk comes frae their lums.  
(c.1948; from S. Shreshtha [1964] 1978)

□

□

r has Not Come Home (Ba Aunu Bhaeko Chaina)  
Faither hisna cam Hame  
The rain is teemin, the win is blawin,  
Time weirs on,  
the lichts are kinnelt, denner is served.

A wumman is makkin maen:  
'Faither hisna cam hame.'  
Times hae cheenged,  
the days o the Ranas are gaen,  
they say oor chynes are brukken,  
bit freedom, progress, democracy,  
nane o thon hae cam.

A wumman is makkin maen,  
'Faither hisna cam hame.'  
The slings o oor thocht,  
the thunnerskelp o oor dreams,  
hae blootered the skull o derkness,  
bit a new daybrakk, a new age, a new day,

nane o thon has dawned.

A wumman is makkin maen,  
'Faither hisna cam hame.'

(1952; from S. Shreshtha [1964] 1978)

ge and Town (Sahar Ra Gaum)

Clachan an Toun  
Gin the toun thrives  
the kintra thrives,  
say the chiels o the toun.

Gin it rains this year  
the clachan will thrive,  
say the chiels o the clachan

A cheil frae the toun  
stops his car on the wey  
an speirs, 'Foo are the craps  
in the clachan this year? '

A fairmer steps forrit tae repon:  
'The fairmin gyangs weel eneuch  
bit can the swyte o oor darg  
fill yer motor car's stammach? '  
(no date; from Samsamayik Sajha Kavita 1983)

ren Going to School (Pathshala Jana Lageka Naniharu)

Bairns gaun tae Schule  
Dinna speir at thon littlins  
comin tae ye in a line,  
Dinna speir at them far they're gaun.  
They hae their ain roadies tae traivel,  
their ain tools for makkin

They hae feet ye canna see,

Dinna speir about fin an far  
Thon littlins hae their ain braid lift  
They makk their ain wings

They spikk in their ain leid,  
ken different things tae yersel  
Gin they're noisy, it disna matter

Dinna ettle tae jelouse fit they say.  
they're the buiks o the morn's Nepal.

(no date; from Samsamayik Sajha Kavita 1983)

miprasad Devkota (1909-1959) :

Sleeping Porter: Nidrit Bhariva  
His back hauds a fifty-pun wecht,  
his rig bane's booed twa-fauld,  
sax miles sheer in the winter snaas;  
nyaakit banes;  
wi twa rupees o life in his body  
tae warssle agin the Ben.

He weirs a claith bunnet, blaik an swyty,  
a raggety shaal;  
yirdy, flech-heezin claes are teetle his skin,  
his harns are fooshionless.  
It's like sulphur, bit foo gran  
this human body!

The birdie o his hairt cheeps an pechs;  
swyte an braith;  
in his sheilin on the Ben-side, bairnies chitter:  
hungeret waes.  
His wife like a flooer  
haiks throw the wids for nettles an berries.

Aneth this great hero's snaa heicht,  
the conqueror o Natur is wealthy  
wi pearls o swyte on his broo.

Abeen, there is anely the lid o nicht,  
studded wi starnies,  
an in this nicht he is rich wi sleep.  
(1958; from Devkota 1976)

Man 'Vyathit' (b.1914)

Ants (Kamila)

Emerteens

Comin frae a derk hole,  
a comet in the nicht lift,  
singin, ettlin for draps o watter,  
in a strae-fulled yaird o drooth:  
a line o emerteens, dumfounert, bumbazed,  
rinnin throw the gairden.

Like chiels, they think they traivel  
the path that heids tae vertue,  
shargeret, they gyang doon tae a pit o sin,  
haudin their sairs, an a traiveller's wints:  
a line o emerteens, dumfounert, bumbazed,  
rinnin throw the gairden.

Ower an ower they coorie aneth strae,  
feart o the stangs o Daith,  
fa pits on a show o lichtnin  
on the pathie that gyangs back hame:  
a line o emerteens, dumfounert, bumbazed,  
rinnin throw the gairden

Wee bodies, muckle drooth,  
een stappit wi derkness on an eynless road,  
they rin wi the swither o the clouds,  
takkin their puckle gear wi them:  
a line o emerteens, dumfounert, bumbazed,  
rinnin throw the gairden

As they sclimm up a booed auld tree,  
it's like the world's defined  
in the scrattit leid o their line,



the barderie o termites:

a line o emerteens, dumfounert, bumbazed,  
rinnin throw the gairden

(1954; from Vyathit [1958] 1968; also included in Sajha Kavita 1967 and  
Adhunik Nepali Kavita 1971)

### 7.A Glimpse (Ek Jhalko)

The Glisk

Flichty as a burnie o the Ben,  
warm-haired as the yird,  
bonnie like ripened craps,  
blate like booin strae,  
a quine wi a creel  
sclimms up the braeside.

A young cheil slidders doon the Ben's pathie,  
keekin at her wi the braw een  
o a young bull,  
keekin at her an lauchin,  
as blythe as a bouquet.

O a suddenty, twa pairs of een  
meet bi chance on the pathie,  
they look doon at the grun  
as if dumfounert or affrontit,  
an eftir a meenit they pairt,  
like the weys o a crossroad.

The burnie that blythely doon  
sez tae the young cheil, 'I'll jyne wi the river,  
an traivel the deserts, singin  
the sang o yer douce tryst.'  
Bit the young cheil ploos his luv  
inno the parks o his hairt,  
an his een are a channel  
tae watter luve's hairst.

He gies a lang sough an coonts  
the rigs vrocht bi the ploo.  
(1954; from Sajha Kavita 1967)

Sheena Blackhall

## 8 English Poems (Comings & Goings)

1. A Visit to the Theatre, 1942

My husband has treated us to a box seat  
Directly overlooking the stage.  
I shall of course, still be using  
My opera glasses. A woman in my position  
Must maintain standards  
There is no point in having wealth,  
If you cannot display it.  
We are neither furtive people  
Nor are we by nature, hoarders

The three bastions of the city:  
Education, Salvation, and Damnation  
The statue of William Wallace points the way

Our Clarence has settled nicely into Gordons  
(such a decent set of pupils, those of his class)  
And Edward and I have our own pew  
Right at the front of St Nicholas church itself

We just HAD to come to enjoy the Noel Coward season  
Blithe Spirit, (though Edward says that séances are tosh...)  
And then there was that dreadful stagehand business  
Decapitated, we're told by a stage hoist.  
They say he walks, that he's been seen to glide.  
Myself, I think it's a trick to pull folk in.

Still, with the war on, one must do one's bit  
By supporting our entertainers. It is our civic duty, after all.

Edward, poor dear was dreadfully cut up  
When he was deemed as being unfit to serve  
Flat feet are such a burden for him to bear

2. Aberdeen Comb Works, Hutcheon Street  
At its peak, the largest in the world,  
The comb works fashioned goods from horn and hoof,  
From patterned tortoiseshell and modern plastics

From whalebone, ivory, to groom men's beards  
And turn out cups, scoops, combs of every style  
And paper cutters, shoehorns and the like  
From buffalo horns, shipped in from round the world

Not catering for coxcombs, fops, or dandies  
But Aberdonians, weeding out the lice  
Or parting shades to keep their locks in check  
Sliding through brillcream, dandruff, tangles, knots

### Song Birds

Stolen from the nest with skill  
Blinded. Pain unspeakable  
All to sweeten each bird's trill  
Singing from a heart on fire

No wind strokes each feathery quill  
No cloud-bound flight, o'er tree or rill  
No mate, no hope of life tranquil  
All, all to bend to man's desire

Imprisoned by a wicker grille  
Caged close: a fate insufferable  
Trained and bent to owner's will  
Can such enforced art inspire

Never as free's the whip-o-will  
A prison's gloom, a captive bill  
Never to see the dawn-light spill  
Over the trees of town and shire

Delicate, timid oh how chill  
A world of dark. Lamentable  
Day upon dreary day to fill  
Never to join the woodland choir

Sweet songster, I would not fulfil  
My jailor's orders. Rather, kill  
The music on a funeral pyre  
And dying, burn the cursed lyre

abilia: Aberdeen

In this city, skulls and bones  
Curses, witchcraft, storma and sailors  
Granite, cobbles, tunnels, oil  
Ghosts of gallows, ghost of jailors

Guilds and unicorns of stone  
Markets. Universities  
Fitty, Torry, Don & Dee  
Whey-faced beggars cough and wheeze

Pocra Quey, Houdini's antics  
Docks and fogs, seafaring city  
North Sea gales, the Devil's Hole  
Skate's nose, Abercrombie's jetty

Ferries, trawlers, cruisers, vessels  
Rubislaw quarry: lover's leap  
Holding deep the drowned detritus  
Stolen car, abandoned jeep

The Seven Trades. The Flesher's Window  
Mason's old mysterious walls  
Face of Hate at Provost Skene's  
Glowers at glassy shopping malls

Scotland

Arbuthnott, Gleneagles, Crieff Hydro, Glencoe  
Little Sparta, and Samy Ling, Troon, Linlithgow

The Kelpies, the Quiraing, Glen Affric, The Spey  
Pluscarden, Rothiemurchas, Iona, Orkney

Dumfries, Puck's Glen, Campbeltown, Dyce, Inverness  
Ben Nevis, Loch Lomond, Glen Etive, Stromness

Stac Polly, The Summer Isles, Old Man of Storr  
The Trossachs, the Pentland Firth where storm roar

Stonehave, Skye, Knoidart, Glen Lyon & Crathes

The Eildon Hills, Barra, The Lairig Ghru's passes

The Canongate, Forth Road Bridge, Pennan, Rosehearty  
Dunnington, Gardenstown, Rosslyn, Cromarty

Colonsay, Kelvingrove, Callander, Harris  
Argyll, Lewis, Stirling, Skara Brae and the Barras

Aberdeen, Inverness, Cults and Buccleugh  
All jewels in our country, come, visit and view

lerius

Carlini, Italian sculptor, settled in England  
Is known for church monuments,  
Paintings in oils and such  
And for making a cast  
Of the flayed corpses of a smuggler  
Posed as a Roman statue, 'The Dying Gaul'  
An unusual commission by any artistic standards

Thomas Henmen, fresh-hung tea smuggler,  
Murderer of a poor customs officer  
Upon the Deptford turnpike  
Provided, post mortem, the necessary corpse  
For the furtherance of medical students' knowledge  
His body, separated from the gallows  
Prior rigor mortis, was arranged and posed  
Dried out overnight. (The Murder Act had given surgeons rights  
To dissect six hanged corpses, year on year)

Now Henmen's viewed by fine art connoisseurs  
A copy of his musculature,  
In Edinburgh's fine College of Art  
Is a source for decades of young artists' sketches

William Hunter, famed anatomist,  
Physician, leading obstetrician  
South Lanarkshire man by birth  
Travelled to London, worked until he dropped

Physician of Queen Charlotte

He studied the anatomical work of Da Vinci  
(His home in Glasgow, now the Hunterian Museum)

He it was who acquired the smuggler's body  
Had him flayed and reproduced in bronze  
Affording the subject a kind of immortality  
Willing or not, a felon's gift to science  
American Proverbs  
Life is simpler when you plough around the stump.  
Words that soak into your ears are whispered.  
Meanness doesn't happen overnight.  
Forgive your enemies; it messes up their heads.  
It don't take a very big person to carry a grudge.  
Don't judge folk by their relatives.

-Born

You drink love in like dew  
From a pure snowdrop

Your mind is cloudless  
We tilt our faces over you like trees  
Hungry to shelter and greet you

Sheena Blackhall

## 8 Limericks In Scots

dreich drookin nicht near Dundee  
A poacher raise up for a pee  
A tod bi the burn tuik his tadge fur a wirm  
Noo he's cheenged frae a he tae a she

2.A glekit galumph frae Glen Tilt  
Gallivantit roon Ghent wi a kilt  
Bit he girned like a gowk, fan the glegs fand his dowp  
Ower late tae complain ower skailed milk

3.A carnuptious an crabbit auld cuddy  
Nippt the hurdies o mony a puir body  
Till her ploys were clean connached  
A chiel frae Glen Dronach  
Stuck her teeth wi a divot o chuddy

4.A braw brosie lassie ae day  
Brummil pickin on Bennachie brae  
Pit her fit on an adder, it breenged up tae jab her  
Her fit noo's as hett's Santa Fé

5.A ferfochan wee forkie frae Fife  
Tuik a fantoosh wee flech fur a wife  
Fin she flew, he'd jist dauner, the gollach tuik scunner  
An hacked aff his fork wi a knife

e-bogle wi virr in his bluid  
Flegged hoodies wi smeddum an speed  
Till a bull tuik a Maddie, cowped it heelstergowdie  
Noo dockens growe through its neep heid

-wally parten, luikin fur a piece  
Plowtered in a plashy puil, aff the coast o Nice  
A radgie shark cam passin, gied his shell a punch  
An snappit up the partan, crunch, crunch crunch

8. A towrist fa flew tae the meen



Far nane o his family had been  
Said 'Keep Tenerife, an the Great Barrier Reef  
The meen's braw an I'm comin again

Sheena Blackhall

# 9 Wee Poems

## 9 Wee Poems

### 's Wellies

Whenever I pass a fig tree fruit  
I think of God in his birthday suit  
Out in his wellies, (green, to boot)  
God with his hoe in his birthday suit

### ish toupees

Scottish toupées, ginger, red  
Made to fit the Scottish head

Sullan Voe to Glasgow Green  
Every balding Braveheart's dream

When you pop them in the drier  
Scottish toupéeswhirl like fire

### Winston's underpants

Mary Winston's underpants  
Cater for four days of wants

Mondays to the front they face  
Tuesdays, backwards is their place

Inside out, two days they flit  
Four days recycling stains of s...

Everytime you do a wee  
Think of its many uses  
Romans cleaned their teeth with pee  
That handiest of juices

## Poetry Bird

The humming bird flies backwards  
It can go in reverse  
Which proves it's a poetic bird  
Because it made this verse

fe

The giraffe has a tongue that's black and long  
To clean its ears with zeal  
It wipes the bubbles from its nose  
Before the snots congeal

a the Friesian

Frieda the Friesian has stomachs  
All 7 for chewing the cud  
And when the cud's finished digesting  
Plip-plop it's excreted like mud

How would you like to be a snail?  
It can sleep for three hours or more  
Imagine if you were married to one  
And all it did was snore!

man's Nappy

A Maximum Absorption Garment's  
What a spaceman wears  
When he's off doing moonwalks  
And gets caught short unawares



# A Beard's For Life, Not Only For Movember

Beard-oil and anti-itch beard wash  
Buy your beard-care here! Earthy, woody, piney  
It's national beard month, Movember!

Three cheers for the straggly, the ropey, the natty, the ratty  
Soften it! Wax it! Style it! Trim it!  
Which beardie's your favourite Icon?  
Santa, Genghis Khan, Rasputin, or Abe Lincoln?  
Jesus, Hemingway, Karl Marx, Poseidon?  
Van Gogh, Thor, John Knox, Charles Darwin?  
Do you favour prosthetic synthetic fibre?  
Mohair, human hair, straight, curly or swirly?  
Fu Manchu, Victorian, pirate-braided, Amish?  
Wizard, goatee, glue-on, elastic-banded, bushy?

Go on. Grow one. You know you want to  
A beezer of a bird's nest one. It'll tickle your lover's fancy  
Women will kill to run their fingers through it

Sheena Blackhall

## A Boorich O Breets (26 Scots Poems)

### 'S LOVE POEM TAE THE RAM

Yer een are like the hardest neep  
Yer powe's as fair's a dyke  
I love wi virr yer sharny sheen  
Yer wallydraigle's fyke.

Tho fyles I ken upon the Ben  
Ye are a forcey lover  
I pray this day that come fit may  
Ye'll niver be a wether.

### ON KNOWES

Yowes on knowes an girssy howes,  
Ging wallop in back an fore,  
As sune's the year gars aathing brier,  
Ayont the barn door.

Fin aathin growes on braes an boughs,  
Yowes lowp like kangaroos,  
Synne woolly mas, wi bleats an baas,  
Sit doon tae hae a news.

### Y

Seen frae a car windae,  
Staunin, dreich an dubby,  
Jaws gaun back an forrit, back an forrit,  
A yowe ootside Kirkcaldy.

Seen throwe a schule windae,  
Ootside a heidie's study,  
Jaws gaun back an forrit, back an forrit,  
Three lassies chawin chuddy.

Beasts o the tree, the burn, the lea,  
Takk reet in my humanity  
Fae evenin's derk an dusky mooth  
The blackie 's tune's a mead fur drooth

Come, wheeple on yer pipes, wud Pan  
An raise the hooded snake in Man  
Remind him, as returns tae glaur  
Fin, fur an wing, oor brithers are.

, NEW DEER

Geese in Vs flee ower the trees,  
they dinna like ohs an ahs

They scrat their Vs  
on the slate-gray breeze  
The skitter o dots are craas!

NS

I passed a dragon in the girse,  
Its een o jade grat siller tears,  
Bow-hoched it hirpled ben the sheuch,  
Some-like a boor-tree boosed wi years.  
Each drap that fell fae its great een,  
Showed holocausts as yet unseen.

I drew a grey lance fae its side  
An watched its mou fill up wi fire,  
A thoosan craiturs o the nicht,  
That bedd inbye it did conspire  
Tae poor fae its wide mawe, coorse seed,  
The shakkins o its tainted bluid.

An yet I cudna raise a sword,  
Tae hairm it, nur wi bitter wird  
Condemn the dragon o the wid

Nur tell the hunter far it hid.

It wis anither fa betrayed  
The dragon wi the een o jade.

## UNICORN

Eence there wis a unicorn, prancin roon a tree  
Rinnin fae a herd o mares that nummered thirty-three.

A student cam an fetched him  
Tae the university.

'Tell me Mr Unicorn, fit will yer study be?

'Oh I will takk a doctorate in animal husbandry.'

## 8. SCREECHING GULL (1)

The myav is skirlin  
His beak's a yalla v  
A wedge o raw sea-soun

The myav is skirlin  
King o the fish-gut kingdom  
Challengin sea, wave, quay  
The myav is skirlin

A boat wi twa bricht oars  
Breachin the stormy lift

## CHIN GULL (2)

The diva o the dulse  
Winnerfu myaav  
Singin its paeon o joy

## GLESGA HEN



Wee Glesga Hen  
Sunbathin in ra buff.  
Belly bared, legs thegither  
Swytin pirls o fat, 'n that.

Wee Glesga hen, turn up the heat.  
Bit o wine. Bit o patter.  
Yours, on a platter.

Wee Glesga hen, Ken?  
Wine fur starters.  
Turn up ra heat.

Wee Glesga hen fur efters.

IN

I hid a bowfin puppy dug  
It piddlit on the mat.

An sae ma mither kicked it oot  
An noo we hae a cat.

INNYMALINKIE CENTIPEDE

Skinnymalinkie centipede hid affa shoogly legs  
Like a traicle-streak o liquorice on elasticated pegs  
Bit noo she's swack's a puddock, she can lowp an rax an rin  
Since Skinnymalinkie centipede's bin veesitin the gym

OOM BOGLE

Doon at the foon o oor fite bath,  
Dowpit on echt black legs,  
A wyver sits wi a smirk on his moo,  
Wytin tae gie fowk flegs.

Turn on the tap! Sweel him awa!

Belly, oxters an lugs!  
Ae black wyver on echt black legs  
Vanishin doon the plug!

## BI THE DEE

There's a bawd in the park aside the Dee,  
Far the Tulloch wid's hing broon,  
Fin the birk trees shakk, his lugs preen back,  
Gainst the win he's hunkered doon.

Tho my tales be telt, an my heirskip selt  
The Dee is an on-gaun story  
The bawd in the wid wi his fur hauf hid  
An the beech in its copper glory

My fowk an their spikk hae fled like rikk,  
Nane here noo share my bluid,  
Yet this snaafake airt ay claims my hairt  
I am my faither's seed.

Fur an feather an hoof an horn  
Are fashions that dinna change,  
An the mighty stag on the muckle crag,  
Is tap o designer range.

Tho monarchs crummle an empires cowp,  
Like wauchts o winnlestrae,  
The flash o finn ower the tummlin linn  
Will be there till the eyn o day.

Commuter chiels bi the Tulloch puils,  
Will be stoor an aisse an smush,  
Bit the troot, the erne, an the wyvin fern  
Will be here wi the hurlygush.

Fin the ile rins oot, an the gushers sproot  
On Galaxy X or Mars,  
The bawd'll be bi the dimplin Dee  
Wi his preen-prick friens, the stars.

## 15.FIELD MOOSE

Bi a mervel, I catch him.  
Somebody's dippit the moosie's wyme in cream.  
His hairt's gaun like the clappers,  
Fit tae breenge fae his briest.

Hauf a hanfu, this wud wee moose o the park  
Is weirin his best broon fur.

Daylicht glisters like watter throwe his lugs,  
Sae thin they'd teir like gauze.  
His wrunklit snoot gars silky mowser trimmle.

Fin I dowp him doon on the yird,  
Oot o the dizzy element o air,  
His nyaakit tail wheechs faist,  
Streaks ben corn that pairts an sweys wi a swish.

Field moose is a train  
On skirps o fleein feet, fower winners o engineerin,  
Grease-lichtenin taes  
Mair mervellous than Japan microchips.

## 16.WILLIE WIRM

Willie wirm is tied in knots  
Because he disna ken  
If wummlin tap or wummlin tail  
Is heid or hinneren.

## ISH

Nae aa cats are a hive o sedition...  
Ane can spikk aboot nuclear fission!  
If ye treated him richt, he wad bide up aa nicht  
An skaik aboot Chaucer an Titian.

This Hamish is shameless an purry

Will expose genitalia furry  
Wi a flick o his tail, he can discourse on Hale  
An quote fae James Joyce an Charles Murray.

#### CK AT CULLERLIE

On ma passport's stampit 'Clarence', bit ma real name's Gunga Din,  
I'm an incomer fa cheenged his name attemptin tae fit in,  
Fur the ethnic composition roon Cullerlie's maistly Scots,  
There's a cockerel fae Rhyne....there's a bantam fae Loch Potts,  
There's a goose fae Little Egypt in the pairish o Cromar,  
Sae the closest tae a pyramid it's bin is Lochnagar.

I hae pickit up the lingo. I've a lug fur ither leids.  
I fyles news tae Prince the stallion aboot fa's won best o breeds  
I stravaig aboot the midden wi ma tail spread like a fan,  
I'm the anely Doric spikkin peacock here fae Hindustan.

Fyles I weary fur the jungle an the Orient sae braw  
Bit finiver I growe hameseek, a gweed doonpish cures it aa,  
Fur a monsoon at Cullerlie gied me aa the weet I crave,  
Fin a dyeuk gaed sweemin ower a dyke atap a muckle wave!

I'm the jewel o the kailyaird, I'm the Sultan o the dubs  
I'm awa tae clear ma throat oot. Haud ootower or haud yer lugs!

#### IES

Shoogle-tailie bandy, skytin ben the reeds  
Ye hae drag yer shadda in the lang loch weeds

Sheetin like a squib ben the lobbie o yer hoosie  
Shoogle-tailie bandy fit's aa yer stooshie?

#### 20.KIM HIPPOPOTAMUS

Kim Hippopotamus stappit her moo,  
wi chocolate an chips an cheese.  
She raxxed her jaws an she fullt her wyme,

wi puddens an cakes an peas.

She fried her tatties, she fried her breid,  
in a pan o gruesome grease,  
An efter a year or twa o thon,  
her belly it reached her knees.

She cudna daunce an she cudna sweem,  
she jist grew fat an fatter,  
Fin Kim Hippopotamus lowped in a puil,  
There wis nae room left fur watter.

She grew as roon as a gray balloon  
till she ett her last meringue...  
Wi a tearsome soon fae her taes tae her croon  
She blew up wi a bang!

LAIRD O THE AIR Falconer's Peregrine, Fyvie

Sleek as a Pope's, yer skull cap.  
A jabot o cream reams ower yer elegant thrapple  
Ye splay yer wings like a priest in a Haly Chapel  
Priggin his congregation tae boo their heids in prayer.

Wee laird o the air  
Teirin yer leather tethers, hooded an belled on yer perch,  
Sune ye'll be taen tae the ring, pit throw yer paces.  
On yer allotted flicht, rage doon at the upturned faces  
Fur aathin Man encoonters, he maun cage or snare or control,  
Fae currency, trade an darg, tae a livin soul.  
Fowk tae, are taen tae the ring, pit throwe their paces

22. THE FUTTERAT POEM After the 'Mouse' poem by Stephen Parr (The Buddhist poet Ananda)

Fair fa yer honest futterat  
Ower mony futterats spyle the broth  
Some enchanted futterat  
Aroon the World in echty futterats  
O my luv is like a reid, reid futterat

Irn Bru. Made in Scotland fae futterats  
Ae futterat in the haun's wirth twa in the buss  
God save oor gracious futterat  
Little Miss Muffet sat on a futterat  
Ilkie good turn deserves a futterat

### 23. INVOCATION TO THE EGYPTIAN SUN-GOD RA FROM AN AIBERDEEN COONCIL BAKKIE

'Ra! S'caul!  
Ra! S'caul!  
A wee auld wifie skirls atween the wheelies  
It isna caul ava.  
It's hett's a pysn't plonk  
O a suddenty, oot fae a hotterel o nettles  
A tortoiseshell eunuch hirples.  
Rascal, the bakkie voyeur, creepin hame.

### IDER'S WEB: CORNHILL BUS STOP

Dingle-dangle spider kickin up a stooshie  
The dird o passin laries is duntin at yer hoosie  
Thrummle wyver, thrummle wyver  
Gin yer shawl sud teir  
Fa wid hing the dyewdraps  
The mornin likes tae weir?

### ID STAG'S SANG

Pairt o the flutterin widlan's pulse,  
I wis a shuttle in the mist,  
A throb o fur on cloven hooves,  
Blae wraith wi een o amethyst.

Fower fitted gypsy o the muir,  
The paths I reenged war roch an fyew,  
Strung wi fine strands o wyver's lace,  
Glitterin wi pearlin beads o dyew.

Winnerfu as a hatchin egg  
Spleet new, I bore my kindred's seeds  
The glamourie o auncient lines,  
O royal sires ran in my bluid.

The shiftin contours o my hame,  
War showdin canopies o fir.  
Shaddas o larick happed my heid,  
Far hoolets hunted throw the smirr.

My hooves war wings, quicksilver bricht,  
Breengin ootower the forest fleer,  
Like meltin steel ahin my back  
Mist, rippled greyly ower the muir.

Mortality my thrapple gript,  
It caught an felled me like a log.  
My jaw been's thrang wi moss an steen  
Smush, in the seepage o the bog.

## 26.A SABRE TOOTH TIGER REFLECTS

Eence aa's said an deen, leid cairries culture, new an fremmit,  
tho Pipers jam jazz and fiddlers square reel circles.

Heedrum hodrum's hip hip hooray in the New Millennium.  
Nor East balladeers sing sangs wi wolves, wi whales.

Scots chiels maun jibber cheek bi jowl  
At the same brod's Clan Clanjamfray.

The oots an ins are cheengin  
Naebody kens the horseman's wurd.

E-mails wheech ben the lobby.  
In the New Millennium,  
Newmachar commutes.  
St Machar claws his powe.

Staunin steens maun shift their auncient goal posts.  
Widen their circle.

In the New Millennium  
Tifty's Annie bides wi the trumpeter.

Unkent hauns rax forrit  
The Bishop maun takk an shakk them.  
Elphinstane's cromack steers the alchemist's brew.

Sheena Blackhall



# A Brueghel Winter

Winter winds are biting,  
Etching the woods in shadows.

The paw prints of hunting dogs  
Are black stars in the snow

Beyond the icy poles of denuded trees  
Even the hawks have frozen  
Hanging, still, in the bleak chill of day.

The hill is a perilous stair  
Here and there, in isolated pools  
Fish blink up through glassy windows of water  
The year turns on its axis  
Underground, numb snowdrops shiver and wait.

Sheena Blackhall

# A Case For Cigarettes

A Case for Cigarettes

Favoured by the Mafia

Fabergé created them for the family of the Tsar

They did not stop the murderous hail of bullets in that cold country

Cartier's cases came in gold, gem studded

For Hollywood Royalty, the kings and queens of the screen

Roués, double agents, snapped them open

Right at the critical moment

Elegant caskets, holding cancer sticks

Sheena Blackhall

# A Cautionary Tale

Younaughty girl Red Riding Hood  
To wander in the undergrowth  
When knowing that you really should  
Not stray but keep the path that's good  
Granny and you, two sillies both

Why ever did you choose to wear  
That scarlet hood, yes, it's to blame  
To snap you up, so plump, so fair  
And now he's dead, which is a shame

A woodsman happened on the way  
Garrotted wolf, popped in a sack  
Of hessian, blood-stained and gray  
He rescued you and gran. Hooray!  
Red letter in the almanac

A dreadful tale I'll not deny  
But little girls who leap the fence  
Must learn to look out sharp or die  
(for snares are ticklish to untie)  
Each action has its consequence

Sheena Blackhall

# A Dip In The Pool

There is no luxury like water,  
Blue as the Hope Diamond.

Land rules cease to apply,  
Are firmly marooned on shore.

The peace dove's dropped its feathers Just for me.  
The pool receives me kindly Asks no questions  
Makes no assumptions Demands no entry fee.

It washes away the heat, the dust, the noise  
Of the crowded day.  
Succour, solitude, silence.  
Oh the silence, the silence  
Sweeter than larks' tongues  
Or honey from amber bees!

I kick my heels like a fish,  
Chasing the wobbling coracles of light.  
Creature of fluid boundaries, I watch day drown, knowing,  
Like Noah, new lands will rise like growling whales.

Sheena Blackhall

# A Hairst O Thorns (23 Scots Poems)

ter Brig

Aneth the brig I skim a skiffin steen.  
This cauld, calm bield these antrin wurdies vrocht.  
Fitfaas abeen stert saft...mid ben, growe strang  
Hyne ower they dwinnle doon tae soonless nocht.

Fa cud be dowie bi this bonnie brig?  
Gleg bandies glide, a wattery Strathspey,  
Far preen-prick midgies link and jink an jig  
An craikin dyeuks their simmer biggins thigg  
An burns cam treetlin doon tae plink an play.

The geans hing thick far the stinch Sabbath bell  
Cries fowk tae book an prayer inbye the kirk,  
As roon Craig Coillich's shooders, clouds drift snell,  
Like ermine tips on green an pleisunt birk.

'Cheepity cheep', a bobbin dipper cries.  
The cheery notes frae his wee throat doonfaa  
'The Glen is riggit in her Sunday best  
The leverick's pibroch's ringin oot oweraa'

Aff flees the dipper on his wee quick wings.  
His mapamound's a smaaer span than mine  
'The Glen's spread oot its yearly feast o joy.  
Simmer is short. Sit doon an drink its wine. '

k

Sae complex, larick's mony fronds,  
Green taigles like man's mirlin thocht.  
A mighty tree, sun canna pierce,  
Sic derks frae ae smaa seedlin vrocht.

Alane it stans until a flame  
O straikit reid flees up the bark.  
A fiery squirrel like a lowe

O love or anger, sclimms its sark.

An syne aa's steer. The larick seems  
Tae haud yon anger on its reist  
That bides inbye its wechty boughs,  
The smuchterin squirrel at its breist.

The dreepin, dowie draps o rain  
Luik like the larick's greetin. Dreich  
The win that rochles frae the loch  
An shrouds it, lamentation's wheech.

An gin the furlin mist faas doon,  
Ye canna see the tree ava.  
A ghaist withoot a sowl or harns,  
Tint inbye dissolution's mawe.

Eenoo the larick's quate, at peace.  
Nae weet, nae win, nae flichterin bird  
Brakks the perfection o the hale.  
The larick screives the hinmaist wird.

### 3.A Nor East Villanelle

We're dour an thrawn the kinsmen o my race  
Tho fin we spikk oor winds strikk hard an true  
Fit makks us sae mim-moued, is it the place?

We hide oor thochts ahin a steeny face  
Oor feelins micht be yalla, black or blue  
Pandora's box is lockit, jist in case.

The weather's coorse in this win-scartit space  
The verra trees are wrunkled an askew  
Tho gulls an gannets threid the storms wi grace

Should Eros prick oor hurdies tae gie chase  
A Nor East Scot ay keeps his plaudits few  
Tho langins rage, they're tholed wioot a trace.

It disna suit us, lavender an lace

We are a tweed an leather kinno crew  
An stinch an siccar is oor ploddin pace

Noo suburbs, roads an factories replace  
Sea-satty parks an braes o heather dew  
The wins o cheenge fae Sunderland tae Thrace  
Sweep oot the auld an hickle in the new

n the Beads o Mornin, Balquidder

Cauldly, cauldly lifts the mist,  
Fae the chitterin taps o fir  
Dreichly, dreichly hings the frost  
Blae wi smacherie o smirr

Hyne awa the brukken baa  
O the yowes that reenge the glen  
Brakk the seelence o the warld  
Birds an gangrel bodies ken.

Gurly grey as dragon's braith  
Like a ghaistie fae the grun  
Cauldly, cauldly lifts the mist  
Tellin Winter has begun.

ers

`Quack' gaed a happy drake  
Expeckin dauds o breid  
A quinie heistit up a steen  
An bashed it aff his heid.

Aa this cam fae assumin  
That quines are aywis nice  
Dyeuks, mind on Adam's Eden  
An fa invented vice!

ody New: A Christenin Spikk fur Scottish Bairns

Somebody new's arrived at hame  
Somebody needin a spleet new name  
Somebody wee that's bigged fae love  
Warm an safl as a lassie's glove

Somebody greets an fowk aa lowp  
Tae stap a moo or tae dicht a dowp  
Names are a faimly's 'hist ye in'  
Tae the youngest body that's their bluid-kin

Noo ye'r named, let's say it wi pride  
A bobbydazzler has cam tae bide!

### Giftie

This'll be yours, an yours alane  
Bairn: the gift that we gie's yer name  
Weir it proodly an weir it weel  
This'll be yours fin ye stert the schule  
It'll be yours fin yer auld an gray  
At wark, at study, wi friens at play.

An fin ye lie in yer timmer sark  
Yer name'll follae ye tae the Dark  
The gift that laists fin ithers hae gaen  
Bairn, the gift that we gie's yer name.

### o a Pet

Ane o the breets o the world has left its fitprents ahin  
Tho it spak nae human wurd  
Tho it thocht nae human thocht  
Tho it gaed its luv fur meat  
It kent nocht o deceit

Ye raxx tae stroke teem air.  
The hoose aches fur its lack  
It has gaen tae Cuchulain's lair,  
sair tho ye wish it back.



## Beelin Thoomb

A yoke in yer oxter, a yark in yer queats  
A physog like a soor-dook ploomb  
Are fachious tae thole, bit a blicht on the soul  
Is the dirt o a beelin thoomb

Hae ye plooks on yer dowp or a dreepin neb  
Or a hoast tae teem a room?  
It's fairly a soo wi a different grunt  
Fin yer haun begins tae stoon  
An ye lose yer grip... yer a rudderless ship  
Fin yer steered bi a beelin thoomb

Yer thinkin o daein some D.I.Y.  
In Ballater or Khartoum?  
Fa'll caa the saa? ..Nae gumption ava  
Fin ye wark wi a beelin thoomb!  
Ye may smcher awa like a haimmer's claw  
Yon smirk will be turned tae gloom '  
Fin the throb, throb, throb, begins tae stob  
The stangs o a bellin thoomb!

Gin ye gowf or knit it'll gar ye spit  
Like the deid at the Crack o Doom,  
Ye can say taa taa tae yer prayers anaa  
If yer deaved wi a beelin thoomb.

Did ye heard o the mummy, fae heid tae fit  
Rowed up in a Pharoah's tomb?  
Cut the bandage in hauf, fit cerriet him aff  
Wis the curse o a beelin thoomb.

## ast: A Waddin Poem

Somethin auld: the years afore  
Somethin new: the morn's door  
Somethin borraed: kirk, or haa  
Somethin blue: sky clear o snaa  
As bricht as ony wattergaw

A cloudless future spent as twa.

-list: A Waddin Poem

May the moose in yer hame  
Hae a weel stappit wame  
May yer nest be as warm as the wren's

May yer sorras be fyew  
As the stars in the dew  
An yer luv in laist lang as the Bens.

ie

Snapper o a bird wi a fish-bowl belly  
Draps his jaas like a comic on the telly  
His een gae pop fin skytin doon the shute  
O his muckle yalla beak gaes a daud o fruit.

t o Thorns

In the rain's on-ding, a paper faas apairt  
Ower their hairst o thorns, the beggars hunker doon  
Three stories up a High Rise  
Twa weemin grummle about the price o fish

In the cafe, the skiffie's wame  
Is three months stappt wi bairn  
Her left haun's ringless, neives are hackit reid  
Ootbye, bi the herbour waves  
Rocks rise fae the fooshty bree  
Dulse clapped abeen their lugs like baldy seamen

In the Nursin Hame auld tears faa  
Brakkfasts o cornflakes  
Myndin on wine an roses

In Drap in Centres urns begin tae byle  
Chauffeured aff tae schule  
An ileman's dother mynes her Ps an Qs

The scurries skirl reveille  
Laavies flushed  
Dishes washed  
Buses boarded  
Like it or no, the days  
Maun ay rin forrit.

n in at Khan's

Nae salt on ma fries, please, Khan  
I'm watchin ma carbs, ye ken?

Michelle... fit like ma frien?  
Maun be pye day...korma on yer cod.

Ma heid's fu o mince.  
It's tatties ower the side wi me an Dan  
He wis a neep,  
Wintin tae hae his cake an eat it.  
Cauld kail hett again.

He wis ay an affa man fur porky pies  
See his fancy-piece? Face like a torn scone!  
A pasty-faced wee pudden.  
Fowk'll caa him a sugar daddy.

I kent there wis somethin fishy aboot her  
She's got a bun in the oven,  
A hale bakery's.

She's ae slice short o a picnic,  
Nae exactly an egg-heid  
Him an his hauf-biled schemes!

He's a rinner bean in his lycras  
Nat meat n' twa veg doon his breeks  
Mair-like spaghetti bols.

It's a rum doo as roon...  
Bit I'm nae greetin ower spilled milk

I winna touch ither fowk's leavins.

It's bin fine chawin the fat  
Watch yersel gaun hame  
It's a real pea-souper, oot.

### 15.A Wee Kirk Prayer Gyangs Up

Lord,  
Please cud ye arrange tae gie  
Some meat, a bield, lang life an a blythe dreel?  
Cud ye sen me a faithfu mate  
Fur bearin bairns, hame-biggin,  
A significant ither tae replicate ma genes?  
Tae thole oor weird thegither, share ma dreams?

Gin ye cud, I'll worship ye foriver.  
I'll be that guid I'll pit Saint Luke tae shame.  
Already I'm fairly a fixture in yer hoose  
I sup yer breid an wine on a regular basis...  
(Fur speeitual sustenance naturally)

Yer obedient servant  
Kirk Moose

### g Cleanin

Dicht wi the duster, my wee man,  
Ma's in the kitchie, scoorin a pan.  
Da's in the livin room hooverin the fleer,  
The kittlin is hidin aneth the airm-cheer,  
For it thinks that the hoover's a muckle black breet  
That snaps kittlins up for a dennertime treat!

The paper is scrapit hauf aff o the waa  
For Spring Cleanin fever has grippit us aa.  
The slates on the reef, an the lum up abeen,  
Are the anely things left that the fowk canna clean!

Bit the windaes are skinklin, the curtains teen doon,

The lavvie is scrubbit, the yett's peintit broon,  
The washin machine is as clean's a new preen,  
An the bairn's bin soaped till her verra lugs gleam!

If you're a bit caddis, or a pucklie o flooer,  
Watch oot, for a war's bin declared agin stoor!  
We're chasin the orra, the clarty, the fooshty,  
And onything glaury or yirdy or roosty!  
If ye are a wyver, a moch, or a moose,  
I'd advise ye tae flit frae this Spring-Cleanin hoose!

the Piper Alpha Memorial, Queen Mother Rose Garden

Their monument is far frae storms  
An thunnerin waves o weet  
Three token figures rise like rigs  
Frae roses, sherp an sweet

Adams, Anderson, Barclay, Borg  
Campbell, Connor, Cowie  
Far simmer wauchts her winsome yoam  
A roll-call dreich an dowie

Duncan, Findlay, Fowler, Frew  
Gallacher, Gibson, Gill  
Aa wyled the blaik hairst fae the sea  
Blawn chaff in Sorra's mill

Goodwin, Houston, Kelly, Knox  
Lawrie, Longstaffe, Mearns  
Gowd names on a steen monument  
That aince war mithers' bairns

Morris, Murray, Noble, Quinn  
Pyman, Raeburn, Reid  
Foo quick they trinkle frae the tongue  
Fowk that the fire preed!

Sangster, Seaton, Skinner, Short  
Taylor, Wakefield, Wiser  
And names unvrocht...their lives sair bocht

Fit means thon word survivor?

's Laidder

Jacob's ither-wardly stair...  
Moosewabs biggit ilkie rung  
Aa maun climm't fm tales are telt,  
Roads are eyndit, sangs are sung

Tawny angels haud the yetts.  
Ilkie nation enters in  
Fin the mortal cloots weir dane.  
Fin the threids o life weir thin

Daith is bit a spirk o rain  
drapped intae the lochan's mawe  
See the Heivens efter storm!  
See the shinin wattergaw!

o Kincorth

Ceann wis the auld Celt wird fur heid.  
Tap o the toun, stauns Kincorth Hill  
William the Lion gied this lan  
Tae monks, sae yowes nicht graze their fill.

Jamie the Saxth, he claimed it back  
The hill stude quaet, the years wun roon,  
Until the Covenanter's cam  
Ae dowie nicht in mids o June

In saxteen hunner thirty nine  
Montrose's airmy deaved, the toun  
His battle at the Brig o Dee  
Gart cannons roar an bairnies flee.

The hill's bin used bi mony fowk  
Tae wauk fur pleisur. Whyles, tae pray.  
Far luvers coort, gleg birdies sport  
An flash-tailed rubbets lowp an play.

Granite wis howkit fae its sides  
An shipped fae Tony hyne awa  
Noo far the quarry wirkins war  
Wild girse an whins blaw ower aa

May Kincorth Hill be iver free  
May Aiberdonians iver prize  
This bield fur bird, breet, plant an tree  
This place, gien ower tae natur's wyes!

Roe: fur the littlins

It's my hoose yer waukin through..  
Rikki Roe's ma name  
Dinna drap yer rubbish here!  
Ye widna deet at hame.

Rubbits, beetles, slaters, slugs, birds an millipedes  
We hae faimlies jist like you, wi a family's needs.

Yalla yeities, tits an wrens, birdies on the wing...  
If ye burn oor hoosies doon far wad we ging tae sing?

rty Lil  
Lipperty Lil, she bedd in a puil,  
Wi a bluebell bunnet that suited her weel  
The taed, the puddock, the wee broon bat  
Cried lipperty Lii we like yer hat.  
Fin the sun gaes in an the rain dings doon  
Yer bluebell bunnet it haps yer croon,  
Frae dreepins an drookins an draps o weet  
Bit far's yer beets fur yer twa bare feet?

Harriet the Hoolet  
Harriet the hoolet  
She disna gie a hoot  
She hodes roon the hedegrows  
She footers roon about

She'll polish aff a puckle mice  
While toyin wi an ant  
Harriet the Hoolet  
The hoolet debutante.

Hamish MacSporran  
Hamish Mac Sporran gaed oot in the snaa,  
The win wis sae strang that his scarf blew awaa,

He bedd oot sae lang he grew stiff as cud be,  
He froze tae the grun like a wee Xmas tree.

Syne a cheerie reid robin  
Drappt doon on his haun, `  
Sic a fine perch, ' quo she,  
`Fur a robin tae staun.'

#### a Halflin's Suicide

Gowden-tapped like a settin sun  
A sinsheen smile fae the daylight's pairtit  
White limbs happt in the clarty grun  
A life is ower that barely sterted.

Passed through schule on invisible feet  
Gang-lands nae fur the tender hairted  
A wauk ben thorns tae the douce, the sweet  
A life is ower that barely sterted□

Teachers canna recaa his face  
Ane that wisna wi malice mertit  
Kept his coonsel an kent his place  
A life is ower that barely sterted

Ae step forrit an twa steps back  
Future's cauldribe fin hopes desertit  
Easy tae jink the warld wi smack  
A life is ower that barely sterted

Smack takks geniis ooto the box



Reason's rocky in seas unchertit  
Deevilicks lowp through the stinchest locks  
A life is ower that barely sterted

Gaen in a glisk like a wattergaw  
Fest as a fawn tae the shaddas dertit  
Peace, staun guaird ower his nerra staa  
A life is ower that barelty sterted

Grace an youth war his anely jewels  
Dreich's the wecht fm the kist that's cairtit  
Cairries a laddie inno the mools  
A life is ower that barely sterted.

### 23. Ritual

It gies yer hairt a lift, like a kittly wirm gaun roon it,  
The bairn, takkin its name, the meenister's haun abune it.

It pits a lump in the throat, the bride in her waddin gown,  
The groom in his plaid an kilt, kirk fu fae tap tae foun.

It brings a greet tae the ee, tae staun wi the lave,  
As the stoor strikks the timmer. The auld wirds ower the grave.

The rituals that fowk live bi, in temple, mosque or kirk,  
Tend tae the rites o passage, sma lichts throw the pit mirk.

Sheena Blackhall

# A Horse Is An Honest Species

Horse is not deodorised or sanitised  
It does not ache to fling its fetlock over a centrefold  
It is immune to adverts

It'll crunch its clover  
Without one foody fad  
If it wants to stare all day at a tree, it will.  
Its travels are not ticketed or docketed  
No horse watches another on CCTV

This moving barrel of grass on hairy legs  
This horse, this muncher of meadows  
This creature of wood and plain  
Is remarkable sane  
Accepting with equanimity  
Sun and rain  
A horse is an honest species.

Sheena Blackhall

# A Jesus Sandwich

Coffee and cream,  
Straight stocking seam,  
Two old gossips finger wag, belly sag,  
Eyebrows raise. Seen better days.  
Lordy, Lordy,  
A special view of relativity!

This country, she go to the dogs!  
Gravity roots them to their seats,  
Infinity rattles the atoms in their bones.  
They've bagged a Bible apiece

Lordy Lordy  
A Jesus sandwich.

Sheena Blackhall

# A Junkie's Mother Goes Walking Into Darkness

He died to joy when the needle entered his vein□  
Ashes of truth, an ever ending war  
She wants a funeral held for her son's lost childhood  
She wants the past to open, a swinging door

The teacher who heard him play the violin  
The cousins who swam and played with him before  
The golden times of laughter, strength and promise  
Memories smashed like prayer beads dropped to the floor

Ever diminished by heroin's poisoned kisses  
His friends are vermin she'll shrink from and abhor  
Humanity peers out yet, from his sunken face  
She shells out half her wages to help him score

Wit and music combined with abundant charm  
When did it sicken and wither at his core?  
A junkie's mother goes walking into darkness  
His dealer debts she works to pay out for

He died to joy when the needle entered his vein□  
Ashes of truth, an ever ending war  
She wants a funeral held for her son's lost childhood  
She wants the past to open, a swinging door

Sheena Blackhall

# A Kenspeckle Creel (24 Scots Poems)

r

I lue Glen Gairn at the skreich o day  
Fin the dyew lies weet on the fen  
An the mochy haar ower the broon peat glaur  
Cooers oorrie on brae an ben

The mist is mizzlin doon the howes  
An eildrich's the larick's airm  
As leirichie-larichie reeshlin saft  
It fuspers a warlock's chairm.

I lue Glen Gairn in a snell foreneen  
Fin the clouds are a cattie's hair  
An the lift itsel is a salmon's back  
Wi the sun-spirks hingin there  
An a humphy-backit driver cloud  
Comes caain the win alang  
A drumly, gurly, growly win  
A lowrin win, a soughin win  
A furly, birly, snarly win  
That's forcy, brashy, strang...

A reivin win, a nyitterie win  
A nizzen win, an Easter  
A howderin blinterin brak-neck win  
That spears ye sair's a leister.

I lue Glen Gairn at the mids o day  
Fin the sun is a din-skinnt cyard  
A wattergaw, tween twa roch shoers  
That birsles the peat-hags hard

Fin it's close an malmy an plottin hett  
An ye swyte like a road new tarred  
Oh, braw tae dowp on a grouse's seat  
Fin the yoam frae the Glen's baith sherp an swete  
An the world an his wife's weel-faured.

I lue Glen Gairn in an efterneen  
In the smirr o a growin shooer  
Wi a wattergaw, far the hoodies blaw  
A bow raxxed ower the stoor

I lue Glen Gairn at the gloamin time  
Fin the thunner an lichtenin cracks  
A splyter o weet, that's gey near sleet  
Dings doon, fin the on-ding braks  
Frae a spirk tae a spate, the lift's nae blate  
Tae drook us wioot devaul  
Tho it's coorse n' caul, the swackin swall  
Is the linns an the burnies' maet.

I lue Glen Gairn in the pit-mirk nicht  
Fin a pluffert o snaw doon-draps  
A blatter o hailsteens, lowsed abune  
The pine, dreeps doon in plaps

Tho it's stervin caul in the fite-oot smore  
It's wersh ahin, blin-drift afore  
An the meen is rikkin wi wintry hoar  
Muir's saft, as mither's paps.

I lue Glen Gairn in the Teuchit storm  
as weel as the Gab o Mey  
Fin the Gowk Storm's dane, the simmer's gear  
Trysts me far the larick's swey

I lue Glen Gairn at the Lammas tide,  
at the hinneren an aa -  
Be't wild an weet, be't saft an sweet,  
be't snaw, or wattergaw!

Gulls

Three gulls, dowpit on a lum  
Luikit affa glum, luikin fur a crumb.  
Three gulls, dowpit on a lum  
On a caul an frosty mornin

The first gull rugged a plastic pyock in twa  
Efter things tae chaw  
Tore the pyock in twa  
The first gull rugged a plastic pyock in twa  
On a caul an frosty mornin

The secunt gull stuck his bill inside a tin  
Michty fit a din! Wisnae yon a sin?  
The secunt gull stuck his bill inside a tin  
On a caul an frosty mornin

The third gull cut his flipper on a glaiss  
Michty, fit a mess! Bluid as ower the place!  
The third gull cut his flipper on a glaiss  
On a caul an frosty mornin

s o May

Birks toss their silken boughs like lowse-tailed lammies  
Lean ferns, like Celtic monks, screive fronds o scrolls  
A thistle raxxes, straucht's a Lonach pikeman  
A sma blue saltire, speedwell's flag, unfurls.

Salmony-pink slabs slidder neth the watter  
A wavelet lowps, a liquid wing o tan  
Doon in the deep pot's foun, the eels are steerin  
The lang blaik puil, slides unner the Fite brig's span.

A fisher laddie plays a plappin trootie  
The lift's adrift wi pearly doo-grey clouds  
Fir, aik, an pine staun close... a merle's clachan  
The win, a lullin mither, larick showds.

The creepie-crawlies in the girse hike hamewird  
Ants treetle ben their heathery, hudderie gait  
A wechtit bee, hip-pooches swalled wi eerins  
Bizzes an braks the simmer gloamin's quate.

Gin my hairt war a quaich, I'd full't richt reamin  
A Heilan scowf, frae Mar, tae Kinker's lee  
Teem oot the cassies' stoor, the stank o city,

Takk aff a dram instead, o caller Dee.

#### 4. Highland Cataract: Linn o Dee

Watter an stane: it's the music they makk thegither  
Jinglin crystal stringles o ice-bree dreeps  
Treetlin ower the mirled face o a crag drap,  
Jibblin doon tae the green linn's dimplin deeps.

Glisks o a shaddawy salmon, slawly steerin  
Skelpin its muckle tail in the foun o a puil  
Lirks o sunshine flashin abeen its ceilin  
Brinkin bubbles link in the burnie's sweel

Lochans, licht, an linns, mell heich i the heather  
A winsome waddin, yieldin the Dee as bairn  
A rowany gypsy road the river raivels  
Furled roon bappity braes o fir an cairn

Carved an cuttit, scoored an smeethed bi Winter  
Black broos hackit an clawed bi Beltane's thaw  
The crags o the Linn rise up, foriver sindered  
Glower at each ither, ower a wattergaw

Sprintime's gift tae the glen is the green-gouned larick  
Raxxin its tooshts o needles ben the air  
Sap in the birk, an the greet frae a whaup's bill scalin  
Trystin the reid-lugged squirrel frae its lair.

Tan and tawny, bronze an copper an pearl  
A smush o roundit steenies spirked wi pink  
Stipple the bank far the wash o the tummlin wafter  
Cowps, a tuilzie o spray frae a boulder's brink.

Polar cauld is the wechtit wave's doonfaain  
Glaiss-green bree wi the antrin snawy fleck  
Caain the rikk tae rise frae the linn's blaick cauldron  
Breengin on, like a rinawa shelt, brakk-neck.

Yon's the place tae be in the blearie gloamin!  
A hinneycaimb o cliff an thunnerin spray



Wi the saft curmurrin croo o the cooshie dronin  
A pibroch as its ain, tae the deein day.

-Granary

My thochts dwell on Glen Gairn  
Warm as a cushie doo her littlins happen  
Welcome's a frien's neive at the door chap-chappin  
Saft as the oo that kittlins takk an teaze  
Faist as an arra lowsed frae a bow-string flees  
Hidden's a brock fa's treisur's beeriet deep  
Secret's an erne's lair on the come steep  
Deep, as a mowdie cooryin in the yird  
Lang as the raxxin pine showdin the cloudy bird  
Pleisunt's the hinney-ale, hairsters drink tae the lees  
Lichtsomes the bolt o sun, piercin the reeshlin trees  
Sweet as the dew that draps frae the harebell's heid  
Wad that my ilkie thocht brocht sic remeid!

## 6. The Monarch o the Glen

I'm the stag that posed for Landseer's famous pictur  
Glued on tap o bottles, shortbreid, cake an toffee  
In a hunner cafes frae Sky tae Embro toun  
I'm the culture that they hing abune yer coffee

I'm the monarch o the glen... an institution  
Like 'The Broons' or 'Jimmy Shand' or 'Burns's Sonnets'  
I sprout sae mony pynts upon ma antlers  
As a hatstand I cud haud a score o bonnets.

Here I staun, an OAP amang the heather  
Wi the midgies an the tourists heezin roon  
I'm negotiatin wi the Daily Record  
Ower the rights tae sell my memoirs o John Broon

There's bin a cheenge or twa since Queen Victoria  
Glesga hillwalkers wi hairy oxters bowfin  
Drappin tins an tabbie dowpends like confetti  
An I sweir tae God their heids are fairly lowpin.

My jynts are stiff wi posin in the peathags  
Wi liniment they're cryin fur a grease  
Oh it's nae an easy darg tae be a model  
Gin ye wint tae be a famous masterpiece!

Noo the Frenchmen brag o Degas, Braque an Rousseau  
An in Spain they've Dali... yon artistic Titan  
Bit they canna haud a licht tae Landseer's peintin  
I'm nae sae much a pictur... I'm an icon.

## 7. Auld Cailleach Frae Louis Aragon's poem 'Old Woman'

Yon auld cailleach  
Fa traivels humfin a pyock o unspikkable trock  
Draps a shadda like a ricktickle shelt.

Puir cuddy,  
Her heid hings bi a wire.  
Auncient philosophers tcyauved wi the notion  
O whether sic craiteurs ained an ayebydan sowel  
Or nae sowel ava,  
(Wi scarce a sowel thirsels, educatit chiels  
Po-faced, clawed their croons about thon)

Mealie-moued deils, nooadays  
Wi fine-soundin wirds  
Wad caa ye their sister.

Auld cailleach,  
Ye dinna ken o their cosie lee  
Its umpteen thoosan miles  
Frae yer swalled, wechty fitpreints  
Trampit inno the dubs.  
The truth plaps aneth yer stride  
in yer sy-pin shadda rikkin o pish  
Ye canna be saved.

Conseeder yon.  
Three score year an ten  
It's ower late.

Sax hunner year o thralldom ahin ye-  
It's ower sune.

cailzie

Oh the Deil fur fun, tuik the pepper frae a gun  
An the claws frae a hoot-hoot-hootie  
The neb frae a doo, syne he gart them stew  
Rowed up in a dumplin clootie  
Feech! Oot frae the pan, flew the auld widsman  
Fa's kent as the capercailzie!  
He wis soor as sin, wi a beard upon his chin  
He wis nippy as a forkietailie!

His heid wis as sma, as a billiard baa  
It wis stapt wi blitz an blethers  
This cock o the North, gaed stridin forth  
In a sark o spit an feathers.  
Frae the China sea tae Killimanjee  
Ye'd nae fin a waur ill natur  
In a far flung airt, that wis fand in the hairt  
O this contermaschious craitur.

Deep in the mids o the oorie wids  
He stravaiged like a ram-stam bantam  
Like a bubblyjock, wi a fan fur a dock  
Wi his birse fair up, he'd be rantin.  
He'd rage an he'd ban, this Napoleon  
O the pines, wi his reid een flashin  
Wi the Spring in his bluid, there'd be nocht in his heid  
Bit his hens an the virr o his passion.

Like a hurlygush, he wad caa tae smush  
Ony gowk in his road criss-crossin  
'Tik up, tik up' he wad skreitch an hup  
Wi his lugs, like the North Sea tossin.  
He dined on pines wi his feathery quines  
Fowk said he'd be far frae tasty  
He wis rosy as peat an a teuch's a buit  
An as coorse as a hedgehog pasty!

Ochone, ochree, come a dirdum dree  
An American tourist sheeter  
Gaed oot on a dive, far the midgies thrive  
Wi a dram an a pirn-taed beater...  
Syne oot frae the muir, in a cloud o stoor  
In a rooze flew the capercailzie  
Like a pyock o seed, he wis fullid wi leid  
An the quills blawn aff his tailie.  
They cairriet him doon, tae the fir trees foun  
An the erne an the ptarmigan grat  
His beak an his claws, war bequeathed tae the craws  
An his breist-been chawed bi the cat

el Sleepin After the painting: The Sleeping Gypsy by Henri Rousseau,

Her animus or guairdian?  
Fa's tae ken?  
Lion an leddy baith are twinned foreay  
Gad-about breet / gangrel Bohemiënne.

Sic quate! Sic blessed peacefu quate!  
The gangrel gypsy dwaums, her traivels deen.  
Aneth a roon hairst meen  
Glimmerin abeen a desert teem o steer,  
Dunes rax intae the nicht

Saft, saft as clouds o oo,  
Hyne frae the clash o world's hashed mineer.  
Her frock's a wattergaw  
A linn o colours.  
Skyrie strippit brows.  
Aside her heid, a mandolin  
(Yon sweet sang's wame)  
It's secret music hides  
Its harmonies. They're doverin like the quine.

A mild win blaws.  
Aside her bowster  
Gap-moued as a wallie  
Catchin the meenshine  
There's a wide-hoched pot o wine

Nae tracks lead  
Tae the sleeper's sanny bed.  
The milky meen hings still  
Mysterie an Meenlicht meets in the peintit lift.  
A lion, ripple-maned  
Owerluiks the Gypsy lass  
Much as a thrissle ower a violet teets  
Twa Fauves, bi an artistic fancy tamed.

er-Tongue

The prentit leid (cut frae its navel-towe, the tongue)  
Is deed.  
Is hauf-a-tale. Cauld kail.  
A horse, wintin a cairt  
Fin spikk frae spikker's ruggit hyne apairt  
The twa pink shells that war my bairn-lugs  
Caught an keepit the saftsome Doric 'wheesh'  
It rippled ben them like a soughin sea  
'Wheesht my wee sodjer... steek yer eenies ticht' `  
Wheesht wis, IS and it will foriver be  
Beardie an bosie. Turnin doon the licht  
A closin curtain an a da's delicht.  
A purrin, strokit cat  
His guid-nicht `wheesht caimed aa day's taigles, flat.

I learned tae raxx his leid. Savour't alang my mou  
Wye ilkie thocht. His wards, war deep an fyew  
Inglis wis ten-a-penny. A chaip-John spikk that ony spurgie cheept  
A quick claik, clippit close as a sheared yowe  
An jist as eeseless 'gin the winter's snaws  
That roon the Doric wirds, sae leal, sae richt, war there.

Inglis, wis Sabbath brows. Mither's pretensions  
Cut glaiss in the mou and hypertensions  
A tyrant leid, o bulldozer dimensions

Takk `Dreich' I howk it frae the yird  
O my first dreel. It rises blaik an bauld  
A cauld steen o a wird.

` Dreich's' a car-haik hame, by dreepin birks  
Braith rinnin doon the driver's windae pane  
` Dreich' my da wid say. The soun hung fire  
A littlin, wearie-eed, I'd luik ootbye.  
The lift wis blae The coos war huddlit,  
craws war drookit, wae.  
'Dreich' gars me chitter yet.  
First shark tae sweem, inno my memory's net.

This much I ken.  
That ` Dreich' is nae the same tae us  
As tis tae ither men.  
Fur we hae lived it, tholed it, sooked it in  
Leid's nae a secunt skin  
Raither a wye o thocht that bides wi'in  
Wards arnae claes tae weir, tae shift, tae cheenge,  
They're reeted. Screived in bluid  
My ain, my kinsmen An my faither's leid

## 11. The Feel

` The time has come' the feel jeloused  
` Tae spikk o mony things -  
O mower-mugs an galluses  
O barley bigged in bings  
O snochrie geets an tatty reets  
An scones on girdle rings.

` Those maun be aa' (I heard him craw)  
` A Doric Fiddle's strings.'  
` Her bards maun screive' (he threepit on)  
` O smachrie an sma beer  
The Greeks may hae their shelt o Troy  
For we hae shanks's meer  
It's tacket buits... nae winged queats  
A Doric muse maun weir.'  
` Nae Henryson, bit strouds on Don  
Nae Will Dunbar... bit Udney  
Sing o a soo... the antrin coo...  
O chaulmer, tcyauve, or chunty  
Sir David Lyndsey penned fur kings

We eulogeeze a grunty.'  
`Sud Gavin Douglas rise again  
He'd hae oor harns bamboozled! '  
Quo he, syne gied his powe a dunt  
Fur his wee thochts war toozled  
An frae his heid, there drapt doon deid  
A notion, malygruized.

A snell win pinged the jester's bells  
His lugs, it whussled ben  
Fur there wis nocht tae haud it there  
As teem's a guttit hen  
A pitcher fu o styte an stew  
As aa fa meet him ken.  
Tho kail is canty, brose is braw  
Sud Scots bide in the byre?  
Be banned frae kirk, frae schule, frae wirk  
Furl in a shrinkin gyre?  
Be keepit in the stirkie's stag  
It's mapamound entire?

The feel, sez 'Ay.' Gin HE'D his wye  
(Eclectic as a stirk)  
Oor Scots was schauchle, spinnle-shanked  
Inno Nihil's pit-mirk!

12. Tarland Inspired by the painting 'Me and my Village' by the Russo-Jewish artist visionary Marc Chagall.

Tarlan. The roon hairst meen  
Sens doon its siller rays fur it aleen.  
Its weird Pict circle, kirk, its Bonspeil green.

The warld stops at the burn, the mairket stance,  
Cyards' Raw, the gowf coorse, a broon tattie dreel...  
Dounside's reid kye ayont the littlins' squeel...  
Banchory micht be as hyne awa as France!

The young fowk tryst an tuilzie  
At village discos, show, or marquee daunce

Auld fowk swap claik at shoppies, ower a waa  
Or staas o veggies in the village haa.

The crook o circlin knowes  
(Blae Morven, Press n'Dye an Ledlilick  
Mulloch an Mortlich) vrocht yon misty rikk  
That reams ower barn an brae an hedderie muir  
They shepherd in a flock o sun-spirked clouds  
Loud wi craws skreichin steer.

Deeside's grain granary's the sheepfauld o Cromar  
Simmer nichts draw sweethairts tae the burn  
The kirkyaird's sleepers, laired hard by the howff  
Gently becam the yird they eesed tae turn.

Far randies gallivant, a gallus loon  
Cowps up a whisky glaisse  
Offers tae skelp a heid, kitties a kecklin quine  
Syne quatened doon  
He hyters on lowse shanks, unsteidy, hame...

A puckle lace screens switch... lang nebs powk roon.  
A late-nicht ceilidh crummles inno aisse  
A fiddler's mettled rant  
Gaes sweetly soundin  
Far broon pheasants gant.

The Sabbath briers wi wirkin claes rugged on  
Fresh ironed sack lies toastin ower a cheer  
A duntin heid is cleared wi tarry tea  
A pechin collie sprauchles ower a fleer  
On fifty fairms the nowt are sortit,  
Rich rigs ring wi sang  
'Roch tykes o Tarlan' sae the stories gyang

They're richt. The men hae virr, thir weemin, spunky blether  
Dog rose an brummil, wedded weel thegither  
Tarlan... fur sturdy lads an bonnie quines are thrang  
An fell unchancy weather!

### 13. Anither Breed Anither Age



We are the same... bit nae the same  
They're fremmit. Bairns, o a fey mither  
Naethin we share... tae them, ae daud  
O grun's as guid as ony ither.

We are the same... bit nae the same  
A ring o elfin green tae me  
Brings tales o Wee Fowk steerin back  
Tae them, yon's haiverin idiocy.

We are the same... bit nae the same  
The Beltane dyew granminnie'd sain  
I hauf-think yet's a magic cherm  
Watter, tae them, is acid rain

We are the same... bit nae the same  
I feel 1000 aeons auld  
King o their world is the machine  
Clivver as clockwirk, an as cauld

We are the same... bit nae the same  
Anither breed. Anither age  
Gloamin tae me is glamourie  
Life wioot mystery's, a cage!

#### 14. The Gudeman's Craftie

The Gudeman's Craftie wis a bield  
Grown oxter-deep wi nettle bings  
A muir-moch's reest... an aيدر's boouer  
A hame fur ootlined, oorrie things.

Auld Clottie's neuk, noo delled an ploeed  
Yields a wersh crap o nerra meisur  
The Gudeman keepit open hoose...  
We steek the yett on Natur's treisur  
The wild an winsome weir awa  
An wi them, muckle pith an pleisur.

15. A Meen Rune (Traditional Gaelic, here set inno Scots)

Fin I teet at the New Meen  
It behoves me tae heist ma ee  
It behoves me tae ben ma knee  
It behoves me tae boo ma heid

I reeze oot yer praises,  
Meen o Wyceness  
Sin I've gIen ye anither gley  
Sin I've seen ye, New Meen

Bonnie Heich-Yin abeen the wye,  
Mony hae left the world  
In the time atween the twa meens  
Tho I ay enjoy the yird  
Ye Meen o Meens an o Blessins.

16. Daunce o the Genes

She wyled her guidman. Sax fit twa  
He wyled his wummin. Fair, an sma  
Syne chuse a hame tae keep his bride  
A car. A hinneymeen Stateside  
Opted tae plan their progeny  
Plenished their hoose maist eidently.  
Culled the decor frac 'Vogue, ' wi thocht  
Their likins stamped on aa they bocht  
Decidin efter five years grace  
They'd like a bairn aboot the place.

Nine month they wyted. On the nail  
The bairn wis born. Hairty, hale  
A pertrick in the barley patch  
It grew intae a nesty vratch  
Waesuck... the scrapins o the pot  
A muckle, coorse, genetic blot.

Ye chuse yer trock... bit nae yer kin  
Gowd pendles, whyles, drap tooshts o tin  
Is it yer weird... or callous chance

That heids the generations daunce?

### 17. Daunce o the Years

Anery twaery spins the twine  
Ooto the cradle lowps the quine  
Fiddlum faddlum swack's a swaw  
Swippert's a puddock an saft's the snaw

Thethery blethery meenlicht's pale  
She's as curved as an aيدر's trail  
Aremy faremy spinnly silk  
Breist's as fate as a yowie's milk

Zinty tintv divverry: lover  
Grown as grait as a stirk in clover  
Stoorum stibblum thirty saxt  
The sonsie may is jizzen raxxed.

Eenertv, feenerty, gristly grist  
Doon the brae an inno the kist  
Furly birly rins the gird  
Stoor gaen back tae Mithir Yird!

### 18. The Birlin Years Jan 1995

In jizzen-bed, life's kinnelt like a spunk  
Spirkit wi bluid as reid's a cockerel's caimb  
A skirlin skirp o virr's a mannikie  
Cast, weety frae the pit-mirk o the wame.  
A littlin's bit a bank o new-faan snaw  
A drift the world will set its fitmerks ower  
As the derk loch's the starnies' keekin glaiss  
His een takk in baith lauch, an angeret glower

Bairnhood sud be a kittlin's kecklin purr  
A thrapple fu o thrums  
Sweet meadow far the bummer haiks an hums  
Whyles, it's a hungeret tcyauve, in clarty slums.

A halflin is a tousie cloud o rikk  
Caad tapsalteerie bi the win o chaunce  
A time o sex an swither Masquerade.  
Gaun widdershins, wrang-fittin ilkie daunce.

Manhood's a meen afore the quarter's wane  
A creamy kebbuck moosies circle roon  
A mill wheel birlin ben the biggin years  
The lovely, lang-shanked floerin o a loon.

Auld Eild's a doonhill sled gaun heigh-ma-nannie  
Rigwiddie... a cauld, dottled, pyock o beens  
The verra craws takk scunner tae flap ower  
Stringle o watter, on a bedd o steens.

#### 19. Elly Broon

Elly bides far the toun's kirk steeples soar  
Her neebors? The Northern Lichts an a pirn-taed doo  
Skyscrapers rise like gravesteens aside her door  
Mair tidemerks roon her bath than the QE2

Gaps in her teeth-as mony's a bandstaun railin  
The gas in the flat is aff. There's a Polar breeze  
Elly bides wi her gran far the planes gyang sailin  
Alane wi her sookin-cloot an a kink-hoast wheeze.

The leein box in the neuk shows hames wi plenty  
A da, a ma, twa bairns an a gairden neat,  
Wi a catty, roon's a barrel, fite an deintie;  
In Elly's kitchie the moosies sit an greet.

Monday mornin. Brakfast's a broken bikky  
Doon in the lift that peintit like a Sioux  
Scaunin the bins fur pieces, back o the chippy  
Far Billy McGinty's da lies rot-gut fu.

Aff tae the skweel, far Miss McBain is wytin  
(Miss McBain wi her nails aa buffed an reid)  
'Elly-yer late. Nae homewirk dane. Yer writin  
Luiks like a raw o spiders lyin deid.'

Ben 'Dictation', Elly's heid is noddin  
Hard bi the radiator's cosy guff  
Dwaums o a TV cat, in its furry cleddin  
Its bowlie fu, a spyled baa o fluff.

Twinty hoasts an the bell, brakk throw her dwaumin.  
'Hae ye nae hame tae ging tae Elly Broon? '  
Ootbye, a doonpish sets the litter sweemin -  
The skweel is scalin the classies ben the toun.

Mebbe granny'll win the pot at bingo!  
Mebbe her da's come back, tae takk her hame!  
Elly opens the door... excitement risin...  
Tea's on the table. Breid n' jam again.

## 20. The Gollach Gang

Ca cannie in the jungly girse - there, creepy crawlies heeze  
Doon far the horny-gollachs bide, the slaters tak their ease  
The muggers o the gairden, midgies, mob in coorse profusion  
They lurk ahin the weeds, tae smash'n grab a bluid transfusion

The wyver biggs its scaffoldin - a multi-storey lair  
She plavvers in cadavers, like ony Burke 'n Hare  
A forkietail gaes clankin by, a tank frae ooter space  
Antennae far his lugs sud be - an fur his heid, a mace.

Wasps in their strippit semmits sikk tae stab ye in the queats  
A minnie-mony-feet rins aff - a monster, mang the breets  
The flees are doon-'n-oots, ye find them, powkin roon the midden  
The phantom o the docken leaf, the wee clock-bee is hidden.

The leddylanners, reid as rouge, are peintit tae the nines  
The butterflee's a buddin ghaist - a flappin shroud fa dwines  
The ettercaps are smugglers in the heather-hinny sector  
A bummer is a hijacker - a reiver, in the nectar.

The Daddylanglegs wauchts aboot - a fankle i his legs  
He's spinnly, he's treelipy - a bogle-fu o flegs  
Ca cannie in the jungly girse - there's mair nor sooricks there  
The hale jing bang - the Gollach Gang - micht catch ye unaware!

## 21. The Cat's Pyjamas

Ma's awa tae a hen nicht...

A cluck o quinions clakin  
Will she win back hame,  
wi a beak an camb  
Efter her meenlicht raikin?

Da's awa tae a stag nicht  
Will he staun in the street an roar?  
If he jynes the breed wi horns on its heid  
Will we let him back ower the door?

Da says I ett like a grumphy  
Ma says I've the sense o a flee  
Gran says I'm the cat's pyjamas  
Bit I say I'm jist me!

Reid Flannel Sark owersett of a poem by C Shiang-hua  
Takkin her man's swyty reid flannel sark,  
Cannily, a wife scoors it clean,  
Hings it aneth the windae tae dry.  
The saftness o the cloot,  
The fineness o the wyve  
Its hue o crammosie wine  
Its glimmer o amber quaichs  
An the trim she wis in fin she bocht it fur him  
A day, a month, a year,  
Aa owercam's her.

The saftness, roched, roched,  
The ticht wyve, raxxed.  
The fineness, cheenged  
Tae nyittery repetition  
An the heidy delicht  
O crammosie wine an amber quaichs  
Fermented inno budgets,  
Hame computers, eerins,  
Peels - the scunnerin, obleegatory deceesions.

The reid flannel sark hingin oot in the foreneen air  
Efter anely a fyew oors  
Is aathegither dry  
Leavin nae dreeps on the grun.

A cheil an his wife  
Are like watter, evaporatin inno the win  
A thirled twasome, melled  
Tae dree the weird  
O their lang lives,  
Thegither.

23. Hairst owersett o the poem Harvest by the Greek poet Dionysis Serras,

Lugs boo  
In the foremaist win  
reeshlin gow

the sun steepes  
larik yowies  
braisse

the meen in the bog  
an aisse-blaik lizard  
cheenged tae siller

bricht watter  
fite wings  
lie mirrored

a stane sinks  
kerfuffed cloud

crammosie gloamin  
draps licht  
onno fite floers

chittered leaf  
a nyaakit snailie dovers

pine needles

wyver  
full meen  
siller cleddin

an almond  
tree twig in a teem glaiss  
ye speir about spring?

Snaw-fite trees  
in the knots  
simmer faulds

#### 24. This is the Hoose Jack Biggit

This is the hoose Jack biggit  
This is the chiel  
That bedd in the hose Jack biggit  
This is the chiel  
That merriet a wife  
That bore a bairn  
That bedd in the hoose Jack biggit

This is the hoose Jack biggit  
This is the chiel  
That gaed tae wark  
Tae keep the wife  
That bore him a bairn  
That bedd in the hoose Jack biggit

This is the hoose Jack biggit  
This is the chiel  
That needit a dram  
Tae thole his life  
Wi his lovin wife  
That bore him a bairn  
That bedd in the hoose Jack biggit

This is the hoose Jack biggit  
This is the chiel  
That thrashed the bairn  
(the innocent bairn that did nae hairm)



That bedd in the hoose Jack biggit

This is the hoose Jack biggit

This is the bairn

That grew tae a man

That tuik him a wife

Tae share his life

That bore him a bairn

(an innocent bairn that did nae hairm)

That he'd thash an thraw

Jist like his da

That bedd in the hoose Jack biggit.

This is the hoose Jack biggit....

Sheena Blackhall

# A Mercedes Hubcap

Cistern and sieve emerge like changelings  
In the disenfranchised wastes of rubbishdom

A Mercedes hubcap shelters from the rain  
A tyre curls up with a toilet seat

Here, is a holding bay of rejects  
Lacking legitimate purpose  
Lacking status,  
Of no fixed abode.

A red umbrella rests on a greasy mattress  
A mildewed orange splits its tangy sides  
Two bike wheels lie divorced, their assets stripped.

Sheena Blackhall

# A Mother Worries

It's Saturday, near midnight  
You've been a month in Norway,  
A country eaten by fjords with wolfine teeth.

Have you found a decent room?  
Is there a laundrette near?  
You'll enter a bar alone  
They'll think you're Georgian.  
Beer there costs an arm and a leg

Winter's long and dark as a bear's mouth.  
You'll order a gin and tonic  
You'll try English, Scots, a smattering of Thai.  
The bar tender will reply in Bokmal or Nyorsk.

You've crossed the sea like a bird  
To King Harald's kingdom of fish, forests and oil  
This is your feeding ground now.

Their currency's the krone. It won't stretch far.  
Never forget that these are a Viking people.

Who are their heroes? Ibsen, Edvard Munch,  
Visionaries of illness, madness and death  
Always making a saga out of a sigh

Though you will not be troubled by vampires,  
Elk and deer may commandeer the highway  
Regardless of traffic signs

Elk are active during a full moon,  
And after a heavy snow fall.  
If you upset an elk, you should contact  
A Sami shaman, who will sing a joik  
To sooth the ruffled feelings of the animal.

Hardanger fiddles are topped  
With the carved heads of beasts.  
Their music is heavily polyphonic

Will you dance to their tune?  
What will they change in you? A mother worries.

Sheena Blackhall

# A Picnic In The Cemetery

As you spread your sandwiches out on the table stone,  
Why not read the lichened inscription beneath your lunch?

In life I was eaten up by pride, ambition, envy  
Rest on my resting place. Be thankful for birdsong.  
I have no heart left to be stirred by it

My name is a half way pause between moss and ivy  
Not worth a glance or a thought, a second look

Be thankful for today, the warm sun on your head  
Resting light as thistle down on the nettles

When you walk off over the grass  
Reflect on the breath that enters and leaves your body

It is slight as air, it is nothing, it is everything  
It is the most valuable thing you'll ever possess

Sheena Blackhall

# A Poem For The Ace Of Clubs At 3am

Moon snags on branches,  
Stars are snow seeds  
Blown across the black-bull hide of night;  
Earth catches paw-prints  
Thudded down by the hare  
Where frost has touched his  
Furry pads with fire  
The ace of clubs, inked in four times

By freeze-black 3am.  
There is nothing to do  
But follow the hands of the watch  
On their creeping course.

The world is inside out,  
The not-there river  
Flows in its sodden trench.

Nothing to do  
But stew in the mind's juice,  
Leaving the eyes ajar  
For Sleep to enter.

He is not far off,  
Shuffling, clearing his throat,  
Adjusting his tie,  
Wiping his feet at the door.

An owl hoots,  
Closes his tawny wings;  
His sooty feathers rustle  
Into the oak.

Sheena Blackhall

# A Polomint Dreams

The polomint dreams of being an Olympic circle  
The polomint dreams of becoming a Mars Bar halo  
The polmint dreams of saving a fly from drowning  
The polomint dreams of becoming a thin girl's corset  
The polomint dreams of transcending into a smoke ring  
The polomint dreams of orbiting planet Saturn  
The polomint is a polomint of ambition

Sheena Blackhall

# A Postcard From April

Up in the trees' turrets,  
Steeplejack squirrels pour off bending boughs  
Like plumps of rain

Spider's trampoline boings between two twigs  
Ivy clings like Mars to Aphrodite.

Pressed to the forest floor by Winter's boot  
Beech leaves suffer the dominatrix session

Brown warts poke from the field's green face  
The busy molehills bursting up like acne

A vole is sucked down the quicksand  
Of hawk's red throat.

A bumblebee like a cake crumb  
Buzzes off in search of honey  
A bread and butter moment in the spring.

Sheena Blackhall



# A Postcard From England

They do very nice trees in England.  
I can recommend the yews  
As places to moulder under,  
To distil the Eternal Dews.

Their rivers are nothing special  
A bit too bland for me  
But England's a cautious country,  
Milk first, before the tea.

I'd award four stars for history —  
There's a wonderful sense of rot;  
And tomorrow's Tesco garage  
Is yesterday's Norman plot.

Nobody loses their temper.  
It's 'Please' and 'After you'  
(And that's just the backyard moggies  
Here, even the seagulls queue)

They've given us Morris dancing,  
Roast beef and the bowler hat,  
And they never complain when it starts to rain  
And what's more British than that!

Sheena Blackhall

# A Quiet Place

Trees live simple and quiet under the changing sky  
Of their ancient Gods

They are not weighted down with superfluous worries.  
When the burn burbles over stones  
And the leaf-span droops its shadow  
None of them agonise over  
Perfidious bankers, political allegiances  
Social media and its egocentric concerns

The trees sprout buds and leaves  
Trunks run with resin  
Only the call of a blackbird breaks the silence

Enter the door of the forest, the quiet place  
Friends are waiting to greet you

Sheena Blackhall

# A Roman Soldier Reflects

Not the Picts with their painted torsos  
Not the head hunting Celts, either  
Who wants to conquer a land  
Where every bog breeds midges?

On Hadrian's Wall it has rained for 20 days  
Everything's clammy and cold  
The cough in my chest rattles

A wolf entered the consul's villa last night  
Drusilla is one child less  
Nine months and her labour wasted

I am an important man, Marcus, the son of Gaius  
Even you must have heard of me!  
A thousand soldiers march when I give the word

At night I dream of olive groves and sun  
But wake to the bleary mists  
Of the Hell that is Caledonia

One day, my head may sit  
On a Druid's spike  
A dripping gourd, sticky  
With blood and flies

Sheena Blackhall

# A Royal Nightingale

Born as her sire prepared to die  
Shipped to the shores of Catholic France  
Wed and widowed by eighteen years  
Mary, fashioned for love and dance.

Claimed her throne in a cold country  
Velvet dress and a cross of gold  
Faced John Knox and his bigotry  
Papist heretic he would scold

Darnley married her, sired a king.  
Profligate pup, by plot and knife  
Spilled her favourite's blood, and paid  
For perfidy with his own sour life.

Went to a masque, like a crimson flame  
Wooed by the man that killed her Lord  
Three short months and she was his wife  
Till the ties were severed by flight and sword

High white ruff, hooped farthingale  
Crossed the Solway, her need laid bare  
Caught and caged like a nightingale  
In barren Elizabeth's silken snare.

Twenty years as a prisoner  
Closely watched in a living tomb  
'In manus tuas, Domini  
Confide spiritum meum. '

Laid her graceful neck on the block  
Thoughts on more than a kingdom, winning  
Dressed in her martyr's robes of red  
In her end, was her beginning.

Sheena Blackhall

# A Sequence Of Micro-Fictions

1. It's a mystery, even now.

A plough, a field,  
Three black crows, wheeling.

2. Everything had changed.

Everything was the same.  
He wiped her face  
From the cold plate of his memory.

3. When Dermott spoke on the phone

People shook their heads  
His talk not worth the price  
Of an old potato.

4. On the darkest evening,

When a saxophone blows subversively in Old Manhattan,  
A gun rocks in its cradle  
A gangster's lullaby  
Like an earwig curled in candyfloss

5. Far out at sea, the Mayor's wife

Creamed the make-up from her cheeks  
The ocean turned in its bed  
As the Heavens opened the floodgates

s the table

There are unexpected intrusions, admissions  
'I forgive her,' he said  
Folding his hands on his lap  
Like pristine napkins

must have its turn

Glued wings come unstuck  
Regrets clump like tea leaves  
Round the rim of the cup

villainous cat

Plays cricket with a bird  
The letterbox rains enticements

Mrs Buchanan shuffles to the window.

9.I whittle time like a clothes-peg  
Cloudy days flap on the line  
Rain falls inside me in No-man's land.

d the doors of the locked ward  
Patients suspect everyone  
Leapfrog from reason to mania  
Tangled narratives.  
Memories etched with acid

kept his foot in the door  
Of trout and salmon  
His fingers played on their scales  
Weighing them for the black drapes of the air

left without paying the bill  
For a strange bed,  
Like a shy beast nudging its way  
Through unknown pasture

r spreads its wares  
Like a salesman chasing a deadline  
Oil clings to the steering wheel  
Like a bumblebee on a scythe.

Sheena Blackhall

# A Small Welsh Hill

A small Welsh hill  
Which has never been mentioned  
In any Eisteddfod  
Has eaten a farmhouse whole...  
Walls, chimney, lintel  
It has washed the masonry down  
With one week's pitiless rain  
And an outsize leek  
Which won first prize  
At a Cardiff garden show.

For afters, it's eyeing up a plump black ram.  
A fissure's already opening near the peak.

Sheena Blackhall

# A Talk With A Tree

Through your bald branches  
I see an open skylight

Have you ever decided to shut up shop?  
To fly to Chile, Siberia, or Leamington Spa?  
Be a tree of a different leaf?

What does morning sound like, to a tree?  
All those chattering birds,  
Those moaning winds  
Lovesick foxes and grunting grumpy badgers

Will a house inherit your roots?  
Like a goldfish trapped in a bowl  
You're chained to your birth spot

Walkers in hobnailed boots  
Trample your porch  
Lovers etch names in your sides

Scallywag hares for neighbours  
Mushrooms for tenants

It's April. Soon you'll be dressed  
In your elfin negligee

What's that? No comment?  
In summer you'll flaunt your skirts  
Like the flare of flamenco  
I applaud you tree,  
Olé

Sheena Blackhall



# A View Of Edinburgh Castle

Locked in these stones, three thousand years of history  
Romans, warlords, kings, princesses, knights  
Rising and falling like the waters of Leith

Pluck the airy castle off its perch  
Sheer off the streets, flick off the people  
What remains is the heart of the place  
The child of a dead volcano, grooved by ice

Aneirin the bard spoke well of it  
Din Eidyn, the stronghold of Eidyn  
Named by the Angles Edinburgh  
In this 'Castle of the Maidens',  
Queen Margaret died, her husband and son  
Both fallen, fighting Normans

Centuries flew, like a pack of shuffled cards  
The castle changing hands in the haer of uncertain times

Loved by the Royal Stewarts, fortress and residence  
Arsenal, archive, House of the Honours of Scotland  
The Crown, the Sceptre and the Sword of State  
Its stout walls welcomed Mary and Earl Bothwell  
In his brief lustful journey to the grave

The sounds are multi-layered. Clatter of footsteps  
Clash and skirl of bagpipes, drums and bugles  
The chatter of freckled pupils, the calls of birds  
The babel of languages from the wider world

Mons Meg, the stone of destiny, the military tattoo  
Each of them spawning trails of myth and story  
The Bruce and Wallace flank the ancient drawbridge  
Icons built to kindle Scottish pride

There's ghosts a-plenty, if you seek them out  
Lady Glamis, one of 300 witches  
Burned at the stake out-with this castle's walls  
For witchcraft, on the orders of the King

Twisting against Auld Reekie's skies like herring  
Smoked to a turn.21 pirates of the Caribbean,  
Who swopped this rugged prison for the gallows  
Even the elephant mascot of the 78th  
Trundles on ponderous feet in the war museum

Deep in the tunnels under the castle walls  
A ghostly bagpiper plays on. At dawn and dusk,  
A headless drummer boy flits round,  
A black hound glides unearthly, out of vision  
French prisoners, too, put in the odd appearance  
And long ago a dragon curled its scaly coils  
On David's Tower, a wraith of awe and fear

Boom! The one o'clock gun breaks bold and loud  
Across the city's bows, the castle rising from mist  
Like a great galleon on a sea of clouds

Sheena Blackhall

# A Visit To Planet Auschwitz (5 Poems In Scots)

Owersett in Scots of 'Pigtail' by Tadeusz Rozewicz

Fin as the weemen in the transport  
had their heids shaved  
fower wirkmen wi breems vrocht o birk twigs  
swypt up an gaithered up the hair

Ahin clean glaiss the stiff hair lies  
o thon smored in gas chaumers  
there are preens an side caimbs in this hair  
The hair isnae skinklin wi licht,  
isnae pairted bi the win  
isnae touched bi ony haun or rain or lips  
In muckle kists clouds o dry hair  
o fowk smored  
an a faded plait  
a pigtail wi a ribbon  
pued at schule  
bi ill-trickit loons.

An owersett in Scots o quotes from Night by Elie Wiesel

Niver shall I forget thon nicht.  
The first nicht in camp.  
I pinched ma chooks, wis I leevin?  
Wis I waukened? I wis neb tae neb  
wi the angel o daith

Chiels tae the left! Weemen tae the richt!  
Eicht wirds spukken quaet,  
Nae carin, hairtless  
A prisoner cam up tae us:

'Puir deevils, ' quo he, 'Yer gaun tae the killin hoose  
Thon's yer grave ower there. Hae ye jeloused it yet? '  
Flames war lowpin frae a sheugh  
They war birsslin somethin...wee bairnies.  
Babbies! ...littlins in the flames

Foo could it be happenin...  
An for the ward tae keep quaet?  
Frae the founs o the keekin glaiss  
A corp glowered back at me.

3. Auschwitz Evacuation, Jan.1945. a poem based on an actual account by Zofia Stepien-Bator, recorded in 1970

A lang fite road that raxxes oot afore us  
The heich blaik waas o the wids on ilkie side  
The soun o skreichin snaa aneth oor clogs  
The foonert braith o prisoners warsslin forrit

Gunfire rivin the snawy nicht-time seelence  
Weemen duntin intae the sheugh tae dee  
A quinie, fair ferfochan, as her lanesome  
Hytered an fell. I helped her tae her feet

` Pit doon yer pyoke...yer ower wee tae humf it'  
` I've breid in it...I'm feart I'll sterve tae daith'

She wis an orphan lass. I said I'd save her  
I shared ma crusts, telt her tae takk ma haun  
The lee-lang nicht I cairriet her alang  
Till, swyty wi the trauchle, waesome- wabbit  
I cried for help, I could nae langer staun

We baith fell in the sna. Anther prisoner,  
Yarkit ma airm. `Ye'll be a corp yersel  
Gin ye bide here. Rise up an leave the littlin.'  
We left her in the winter wid alane  
A meenit later, aa her tribbles eyndit.  
A shot rang oot. It rings yet, in ma heid.  
There, far the sna faas yet ahin ma een  
Deep in my lugs I hear the daithless deid

s o the Rescued An owersett in Scots of an extract from 'The Chorus of the Rescued' by Nelly Sachs

We, the rescued,

Fae oor hollow banes daith had sterted tae futtle his flutes,  
An on oor girssle he'd already straiked his bow  
Oor bodies are yet lamentin  
Wi their bladdit music.  
Oorglaisses still fu wi oor dreepin bluid.

We, the rescued,  
The wirms o fear still chaw on us.  
Oor constellation is beeriet in stoor.

We, the rescued,  
Prig ye:  
Show us yer sun, bit cannily  
Lead us frae starnie tae starnie, bittie bi bittie.  
Be douce fan ye teach us tae live again.  
Lest the sang o a birdie,  
Or a pail being fulled at the wallie,  
Let oor ill-steekit pain skail oot again  
An cairry us awa

We prig ye:  
Dinna show us ony angeret tyke, nae yet—  
It micht be, it micht be  
That we'll crummle inno stoor—  
Crummle inno stoor afore yer een.  
Fur fit wips oor makk thegither?  
We, fas braith left us,  
Fas sowel fled tae Him oot o thon midnight?  
Lang afore oor bodies war rescued  
Inno the arc o the meenit.

We, the rescued,  
We press yer haun  
We luik lino yer ee—bit aa that rowes us thegither noo is leave-takkin.  
The leave-takkin in the stoor  
Rowes us thegither wi ye.

5. View wi a Nippick o San: A Scots Owerset o View with a grain of sand -  
Wisława Szymborska

We caa it a nippick o sand,

Bit it caas itsel neither nippick nor san.  
It does jist dandy wioot a name,  
Whether general, partic'lar,  
Aybydan, short-laistin, wrang, or richt,  
Oor glower, or touch mean naethin tae it.

It disna feel itsel seen an touched.  
An that it drapt on the windae-sill  
Is anely oor kennin, nae its.

For it, it's nae differ frae faain on onythin ither  
Wi nae assurance that it has feenished faain  
Or that it's faain yet.

The windae has a winnerfu view o a loch,  
Bit the view disnae view itsel.  
It exists in this Eirde  
Peely-wally, without makk,  
Sounless, guffless, an skaithless.

The loch's fleer teems fleerlessly,  
An its shore teems shorelessly.  
Its watter feels itsel neither weet nor dry  
And its waves tae thirsels are neither ane nor mony  
They splairge deaf tae their ain sown  
On stanes neither muckle nor wee.

An aa this aneth a lift bi natur liftless  
In which the sun sets withoot settin at aa  
And hides withoot hidin ahin an unheedin cloud.  
The wind scooshles it, its anely rizzen bein  
That it blows.

A secunt shifts.  
A secunt secunt.  
A third.  
Bit they're three secunts anely fur us.  
Time has gaen like a postie wi news o import.  
Bit thon's jist oor Simile.  
The character's inventit, his hash is makkie-on,  
His news nae human.



# A Visit To Rome

When I go down to Rome  
It's stimulating, of course,  
A change from gathering olives  
Or walking behind the hairy arse of the mule

When the spear goes into the breast of a gladiatrix  
I miss it, fiddling about with a sandal strap.  
'Gaius, you're such a stick in the mud'  
My cousin Flavius says.

It's true. Digging me out of my certainties  
Is just like dislodging grit from a stone wall.  
The lions' roar's exciting, I must allow  
But I prefer an evening walk through olives  
Leaves' whisper, and a sky studded with stars.

The powerful Senate's too much like the sun  
Drawing ambitious moths into its flame  
My land is too far off for scrutiny  
My ploughshare cuts across no Caesar's veins

Sheena Blackhall



# A Walk In The Woods

A buzz saw crumbles sawdust  
Heard not seen

Three brown alder leaves,  
Dangle out of season

Water falls thin and weak's  
An old man's pee

In the oak tree's hollow  
Tiny whorls and cracked bark  
Holding hidden tenants

Tits swerve round a feeder  
Replete with seeds

The mandala at the shrine room's  
A wooden moon  
Orbited by galaxies of insects

The grass cutter's spared  
The forget-me-nots  
Six resting flies breathe thanks

Ten single raindrops on a shining leaf  
Like little pearly spinsters

Between place of spirit and air  
The bee, the buzzard, circling

Stripped of swaddlings and trappings  
Into the pond of the mind  
Dropped scenes form ripples  
A purple butterfly  
Opened it's wings  
It's face, a violet's heart

Yields up her scent  
Gifts her seeds for thought

Sheena Blackhall

# A Walk On The Face Of Gravestones

Children walk to school  
On the face of gravestones in Europe  
The letters they walk on are Jewish  
A hard lesson, fading with each new tread

Where are they now, the families who cherished the stones  
Brother, sister, parents, grandparents old in wisdom?

Yesterday's smoke, the stuff of empty hangers  
Their dishes stolen by strangers.  
Their shoes ran off with soldiers and their wives

Their mirrors are black as pitch.  
Their Tree of Life is shorn

These paving stones of gravestones-  
Little morsels...crumbs that led  
To the busy, wicked ovens

The rain runs into the Hebrew script  
Like tears on the face of a statue

Sheena Blackhall

# A Wedding Toast

Be as the swans that shimmer on the lake  
Wedded for life, until Death does them part  
Be as the turtle doves, that life-long court  
Their lovers, with a sweet and tender heart

Be as the eagles, fierce but ever loyal  
Far ranging, yet with a returning wing  
Be as the barn owls, cuddling in the loft  
Inside their nest, for comfort see them cling

As river seeks the sea, as trees seek air  
The marriage of a man and wife should be  
As merry's blossom in the aspen's hair  
As joyful as the rowan on the lea

It marks the start o sharing life's long road  
When two lie down to taste life's sweets together  
So let the bells ring out, the whisky pour  
Let all good wishes bless this pair forever

Sheena Blackhall

## Abbotsford (Scots Poem)

Great Abbotsford wis Scott's Conundrum Castle  
A happenstance o mortar, lime an stane  
Biggt in the lea o eildritch Eildon Hills  
On Clarty hole, founs o the Baron's hame

### The Entrance

The grate belonged tae puir Archbishop Sharp  
Murdered bi Covenanters. On the waa  
Gaol yetts, scauld's bridle, gargoyles, Heilan dirks  
Cast o the Bruce's skull in this fine haa

Cast up yer ee, ye'll see a wumman's skull  
Ane o the hunners massacred in Eigg  
Bi the MacLeods in vengeance for a slicht  
Agin their chief. Nae mercy could they prig

Mebbe ye'll see Scott's blythsome grandother  
Charlotte, gaun skippin by, his whuppity stoorie  
Or myndins o his lued great granfaither  
The contermaschious body kent as Beardie

A suit o armour, taen frae Boswell field  
The coats o arms o Scott's ancestral kin  
Napoleonic shield. Auld Tolbooth keys  
Ferlies tae gar ye lowp oot o yer skin

### Armoury

Suits o armour, corselets, helmets, caps  
Sherp poniards, daggers, battle aixie and mace  
Montrose's sword, Rob Roy's gun, dirk an sporran  
And Claverhouse's pistol....warlock race

Here's Scott's ain weapons, pistol, blunderbuss  
An Spanish flintlock, fired roon Abbotsford  
(Scott helped raise Embro's volunteer dragoons  
For fears o French invasion were abroad)

### Drawin Room

The drawin room, haun-peintit Chinese paper

Wi lychee, aipple, citron, pumpkin, pear  
Peonie. puggie, mappie an magnolia  
An parrot, spurgie, bairnies o the air  
Nae flirtin neuk inbye this library  
A muckle peintin o a young Hussar  
\*Don Whiskerandos, facin ower the Tweed      \*Scott's son  
The ghaist o a greymalkin in the haar

Sophia Scott wad play the harp an sing  
The Wordsworths lued tae hear thon auncient lays  
The portrait up abune the fireplace hings  
Peintit bi Raeburn. on a huntin day

### Study

The study hauds a gallery o buiks  
An airt the maister caad 'a speak-a-bit'  
Pepper an Satt, his dugs aince lowped about  
As Scott screived on, the chaumer, gaslicht lit

The wid that taps his screivin cabinet  
Taen frae a galleon, in some derk oor  
Wracked in the great Armada, set abune  
\*'Afflavit Deus et dissapantur'      \*God blew and they were scattered

The brithers Grimm sent Scott their fairy tales  
Here's chapbuiks, poetry, law buiks, history  
Ballads frae minstrelsie o Scottish border  
Witchery, chivalry, folklore, geography

Seeven incunables, rare as leopard's eggs  
Papers on alchemy an poltergeists  
Scatological satires, gallow's tales  
Cartoons o trials an grim grave-robbin heists

Clausus tutu ero (Closed in I'll be safe)  
(Plates on the buik spines) . The braw bosses vrocht  
Are eftir Roslyn Chapel, Melrose Abbey  
The fire place, Italian merble bocht  
Yer ee micht licht on a great siller urn  
Sent bi Lord Byron, fu o banes an stoor  
Ryped frae an auncient sepulchre in Greece  
A conversation piece tae wyle an oor

A daud o aitcake frae Culloden moor  
Flora MacDonald keepsake, antrin things  
Mary Queen o Scots ain crucifix  
Sic relics gied lame Scott poetic wings

Jeanie Deans, Meg Dods, an Dumbledikes  
Lord Glenallen, Edie Ochiltree  
Madge Wildfire, Dandie Dinmont, Evan Dhu  
Open his screivins, lat his stories flee

The Bride o Lammermoor, & Wandrin Willie  
The Antiquary, Auld Mortality  
The Lady o the Lake an Marmion  
The Field o Waterloo an Waverley

The Lay o the Last Minstrel, Quentin Durward  
The Talisman, Redgauntlet, & The Abbot  
Heart of Midlothian, & Kenilworth  
His harns devised, bumbazin theme an plot

They rigged a bed up for him doon the stair  
Crippled bi strokes, frae traivellin, hame tae dee  
He socht his pen, his fingers tint their grip  
An seelent tears cam trinklin frae his ee

A quaet, warm, Autumn efterneen  
Eneuch tae soothe this son o Border reivers  
The soun o Tweed, his family roon his bed  
Wae-gaun o ane o Scotia's finest screivers

Sheena Blackhall

# About Death

Birth is a finite pain  
A labour of love that ends with a beginning

Bereavement's a darker labour  
That starts with a mortal ending

And there are no answers, no warnings  
From God, from Google, from Grief  
No reddening of the leaves before the Fall

All that is left are ashes  
And smoke from the funeral pall

Sheena Blackhall



## Absences: (30 Scots Poems)

in the Deid

In 2007 archaeologists in Oseberg, southern Norway dug up a Viking queen,  
thought to be called Asa, after 1,200 years

In peetiless rain, in Oseberg, suddron Norwye  
Fower chiels heist a queen frae the weet yird  
Her daith-ship, a Vikin langboat, gaen afore here  
Recaad frae Valhalla, berthed in a museum

Nae ethical objections war upgien  
Nae spik o sacrilege, o desecration  
Nae leevin body could pruve a kin-connection  
They hae rived her like elk meat  
Frae the ice wyme o her seelence, reivin a stane  
Frae a cairn o anither age, a thing taboo.

A queen fa's warriors' weapons rikkit bluid  
They will be closer tae thon Queen than her ain man  
Their eident knives will scratt her royal breist  
Unshakkable, they'll ding doon her defences  
Ettlin to heist the lid o the Past's kist.

o Balqownie, Autumn

The saftsom simmer meenits tick awa  
Unseen, a crooshie croodles in the wid  
Nearhaun's the rocher craikin o a craa

The sycamore sproots wings, its seedlins faa  
Abune the brig, the sun's bi rainclouds hid  
Day's caunle smuchters fin nicht breezes blaa

The sleekit rabbit, gairdener's carrots chaa  
A kittlin steeks its ee like a closed lid  
Blae Autumn's breathin frost-haar frae its mawe

Chaumer, Callander: for Sally & Ian King

Some hames are biggt wi studios combined  
Ithers boast patios fur the refined  
A coo-chaumer's in ane. I wis non-plussed

Tae see its boundaries bonnily aligned  
Wi the back yett, an nae tae be consigned  
Tae derk, had a coo-windae (comfort, sussed)

Mornin, the bovine guest stepped oot tae find  
Its path tae lea-lan, bricht cooslips entwined  
A tasty diet, as wis richt an just

Nae stinkin byre. In chynes, niver confined  
Nae fooshty neeps, on sweet hill girse she dined  
In human hospitality her craitur- trust

Wisnae unfounded. Hame at nicht she'd wind  
Fan clachan hoosebodies puued doon each blind  
Intae her chaumer, saft strae bed untrussed.

Ilk hoose should hae sic chaumers, tae remind  
The ainer o an age much less defined  
Bi categories o care, fan corn and flooer  
War ae short braith awa frae human stoor.

4.A Lea wi Flooers Owersett in Scots o pairt o a letter frae Van Gogh tae Theo,  
his brither,12/5/1888

A lea fu o bricht yalla buttercups  
A sheugh fu o irises...green leaves an purple flooers  
Hyne awa...the toun, twa sauchs  
Straik o blue in the lift...a Japan dwaum

andt: The first Heretic in Art Owersett in Scots o a poem by Andries Perls in  
1681

Fin Rembrandt socht tae peint a nyakkit quine  
Nae Grecian Venus wis his model syne  
A skiffie, or peat-tramper frae a shed

His gangrel fit set aff far Natur led

An aa the lave, vain gee-gaws. Hingin paps  
Hauns wrunklit, even the merk o corset's wraps  
Aroon the stammach, garters roon the shanks  
Aa maun be richt, or Natur gaed nae thanks.

6. It Niver Rains: for Catriona Low □

Sez the man tae his wife fin she bladdit the quiche  
As she drappit her porcelain dishes  
'It's a peety oor guests maun ett tattles an pynt  
Faith it niver rains bit it pishes.'

A Hollywid starlet in satin an silk  
Daunced on stage in a fleerish o swishes  
Ping gaed her elastic, an plunk gaed the zip  
Faith it niver rains bit it pishes.

Sez the cauf tae the coo wi mastitis an hives  
As their herdsman he hubbers an hishes  
Them intae the killin hoose, staunin afore  
'Faith it niver rains bit it pishes!'

's cancelled After the painting 'The Feast of St. Nicholas', by Jan Steen.

Stop yer greetin Peter! I've telt ye...haud yer wheesht!  
St Nicholas leaves naethin fur coorse loons at his feast!

See yer sister Anna? Niver gies a myowt!  
Noo, she'll get a dallie. Aa ye'll get's a plowt!

Dinna gies yer ginnin! Uncle Hans is cauld  
Since ye cad his hat aff in the auld canal!

Fa tuik grunny's worsit an tied her tae her cheer?  
Are ye getting somethin? Peter, dinna speir!

8. The Ne'er dae weels After the painting 'The Merry Family', by Jan Steen 'As

the old sing, so pipe the young'... Dutch proverb

The faither's fu on port an beer  
Littlins sook on the can  
The uncle's rikkin a baccy pipe  
Frae the bairnie grows the man

The ma's a slorrach, the table's fool  
The denner's cowped on the grun  
The littlin's breid's in its clorty neive  
Aa eyns as it's first begun

A burglar teets in the chaumer mids  
The scunnerin soss tae see  
There's unpyed bills on the waa ahin  
An a windae left ajee

The littlin cowks ower his yirdy claes  
That naebody stops tae dicht  
Fur there's nane sae blin as canna see  
Fit the feckless need's Mair Licht!

e Diaspora

There aince wis a tattie sae cakit  
That naeb'dy in Buchan wad bake it  
Twis sair needin a wash  
An ower wizzent tae mash  
An twis statit thon tattie wis glekit.

Fin fowk cheenged their meat tae chapatti  
Wi beef an a fine mug o latte  
He flew ower the sea,  
Noo he's happy's can be  
An he's learnin tae spikk Gujarati.

10. The Dauncin Cat After the painting 'The Dancing Lesson', by Jan Steen

Did ye hear o the loons wi the dauncin cat?  
Haudin her front paas up in the air?

Wi a dug nearhaun that she'd like tae scrat  
Barin its teeth on the kitchie flair?

Sleep licht, laddies, the cat'll mynd  
Coorse like ploys that ye played the nicht  
Sleep licht, laddies, the meen nicht bring  
A cat wi cleuks that'll grip ye ticht!

Reid Stocking After the painting 'Woman at her Toilet' by Jan Steen(1626-1679)  
To wear the red stocking was the mark of a whore

Her chunty is hauf-fu, like lemon tea  
The tyke's rowed on her bowster like a feather  
She peels aff ae reid stockin, like a skin  
Her safties kicked aff, teem, o moleskin leather

The day she's hid eneuch o needy cheils  
Skippers an porters drap their anchor here  
It clears the bills. Nae frills, nae pots o peint  
Jist swyty sheets, tae pye her rent, her beer.

n' Spice

Gable eyns o blaik an cream gyang by  
The Kalopeira's hull is fu o leaves  
Flichterin in like starnies, yalla, broon  
Doon frae the canopy o archin trees

Aathin's fur sale. A faimily see the sights  
UnDutchables leer at sex shoppie sleaze  
Their dother's steppit frae a Vermeer scene  
As halesome's aipple pie an Edam cheese.

13.In Praise o Offal

In Greece smaa intestines are roastit  
In Turkey, they're brunt on a spit  
Macedonians hotter their tripe in a soup  
The haggis in Scotia's a hit.

Goat's udder an hams are twa Pakistan treats  
In Sic'ly, they sandwich a spleen  
Brazilians ett gizzards an chaw cuddies' tails  
In Cheena, pig-bluid bree is taen.

The Japanee gollup a fish ee or twa  
Grilled intestines, Korea delichts  
In England, it's faggots, soo's trotters and brawn  
Tongue, kidney, hairt, liver an lichts

Sae here's tae the offal o fish, fowl an breet  
Goat's baas an blaik pudden weel bled  
The puir man's comestibles, wirkin cheil's meat  
Bi sic offal is poverty fed.

ey in the Faa: Tune: Muckle Friday Fair

September is a cheengefu month, fin birdies shakk their wings  
The ivy turns frae jade tae wine, aroon the waas o King's  
The rodden berries crine an faa like draps o Simmer's bluid  
The Jenny Wren is nippt wi frost as growth returns tae seed

The Feuch cowps ower aneth the brig as fite's a winter bride  
An brave the salmon lowps the linn tae climm the watter's side  
Its jizzen birthplace reels it in, the bed far it wis born  
This is the sizzen o the craa, the dooncut o the corn

Heich Clochnaben an Cairn o Mount hae tint their purple sheen  
The flooers aroon the Clatterin Brig are wizzent, blawn an dane  
At Fettercairn the birks doonby the kirk are tipped wi gowd  
Ae hauf o Heiven's saft an blue, the tither weirs a shroud

Abune Drumtochty's castle waa, the buzzard wheels an soars  
The congregation o the kirk's the blaik grouse at its doors  
At Auchenblae the tractor leads the scurries skreichin band  
Its plooshare scoors the clorty clay o Burns's faitherland

Arbuthnott's parks are ryped o grain, the barley rigs are bare  
The anely fitfa on the lea's the antrin yowe or hare  
The hairst is by, the aipple's preed, the hinney's in the jar

The turnin wheel can rest awhile along wi park an glaur

September is a cheengefu month, fin birdies shakk their wings  
The ivy turns frae jade tae wine, aroon the waas o King's  
The rodden berries crine an faa like draps o Simmer's bluid  
The leverick's breast is nippt wi frost as growth returns tae seed

Skatin Meenister After the painting 'The Rev Robert Walker' painted by Sir Henry Raeburn

Like a yak steppin ower a heich Mongolian pass  
The Rev Robert Walker takks winter cannie  
Transported tae puritanical ecstasies  
Bi frozen watter.

He is upright an unsupportit  
Hauf wye atween a heron an a flech  
Hauf wye atween the kirk an Duddingston Loch

The trick's in luikin forrit Birlin aroon thin ice  
This handseller o hairses, fonts an rings  
Dichts Isaiah's chapters frae his mind  
Expressin jubilation throwe his skates

16. The Ballad of Earl John Middleton Tune: as I walked out on a May mornin

In saxteen twinty there wis born, near the toun o Fettercairn,  
Tae a bonnet laird an his gentle wife a black-haired sodjer bairn

Chorus

Oh the gangrel Earl wis a fechtin carl  
The gangrel Earl wis a general o,  
the gangrel Earl

A halflin loon he served in France as a pikeman mercenary  
Syne hame, tae sign the covenant, an fecht at the Brig o Dee

At the early age o twintyfower, a Colonel he becam  
In the airmy o the Ironsides, young John wis a Cromwell man

At Philiphaugh he trounced Montrose, fa'd brunt his faither's haa  
An fur the murder o his sire, he chased him far awa

John pit his castle tae the flame, and at Angus broke his band  
Tae this Major-General, Montrose bood doon  
An swore he'd leave the land

Bit fin King Charles the First wis grippt, as a prisoner like tae dee  
Wi mony's anither Scot, John turned, an he focht for the monarchy

At Preston, John wis catched an jyled, He escaped frae his captors aa  
Bit Charles wis led tae the scaffold's side An they wheeched his heid awa

In Embro toun, the monarch's heir, at the mercat cross wis hailed  
Syne Montrose returned, bit he wis betrayed  
Bi Macleod, an his fate wis sealed

This lord wis led bi Major Weir, doon Embro's Royal Mile  
An the Tolbooth spike fur mony's a day, it wore Montrose's smile

The young King Charles claimed his throne, His luck it sune wis spent  
At the Battle o Worcestor John was taen, Tae the Tower o Lunnon sent

An aik tree saved the royal neck, he prued he wis ill tae catch  
An the Tower o Lunnon's yetts they failed,  
John Middleton slippt their latch

In saxteen fifty-three the King sent this general tae Scotland  
Tae heid a risin in the North, bit the ploy wis undermanned

An as a regal recompense, he raised John tae an Earl  
It's ye scrat my back I'll scrat yours is the wye o the hale wide world

At the Restoration, neist step up, Lord High Commissioner  
Tae Holyrood Palace he led his wife,  
Wi his bairns an his new got gear

Bit sune in Embro toun he spied a face he'd hae raither missed  
The great Montrose's grisly pairts war gaithered in a muckle kist

It wis kent as the Drunken Pairliament, ower free tae bribe an kill



Bit a sodjer's wye's nae a statesman's wye,  
Men boo tae a musket's will

There's jist sae much that a King'll thole, his favour's like the win  
Ae day it blaws tae fill yer sails, the neist tae gar ye spin

Sae John wis sent frae fair Scotian as governor o Tangier  
In a distant lan in the desert san he drooned hisel in beer

If ye gang doon tae Fettercairn, his name's on the mercat cross  
An some fowk say he wis great an gay,  
An ithers he wis nae great loss

### Traffic Jam

Fit's adee? Fit's adee?  
This bus hisnae moved since hauf past three!  
There's a taxi o quines in ballet frocks  
There's a steer o fishermen up fae the docks  
There's a pipe band marchin, twenty loons  
Wi a drummer in leopard skins duntin the tunes  
There's seagulls skreichin ower the melee  
Far is the haud up? Fit's adee?

### 18.A Tale o Twa Touns

Aiberdeen is bus an larry, tootin horns an traffic jams  
Amsterdam is bikes an scooters, metro, shanks's meer an trams

Amsterdam is sair-heid city...towrists rise in efterneen  
Aff tae trawl the bars an nichtclubs. Michty! Far's the siller gien?

Aiberdeen is fish an roses, wi a herbor bi the sea  
Amsterdam has tulips, diamonds, it his cherm...bit sae hae we!

### y Brig

Twa sisters bi the Amstel socht tae veesit wi each ither  
Ae sister bedd on ae side, the tither ower the river

Sae they baith decided that they wad need tae bigg  
(Because they baith war skinnymalinks) the Amstel Skinny Brig

in September

The cauld o Moray sypes intae yer banes  
The derkness gaithers inno the mids o firs  
The alchemy o ferns cheenge green tae braisse  
Ooto the rattlin heath, the broon grouse whirrs

Hyne in the wast the gloamin trysts wi nicht  
The slow yowes staun an bleat or dauchle tae chaa  
The brummils are nearly by, the lift's piebald  
A tattiebogle wags tae a hoodie craa

Knap-darlichs hing frae hairy dowps o nowt  
The parks are sypin, dreich wi dubs an weet  
The tractor wheels hae pleated divots broon  
A puckle roe deer creep frae the wids tae teet

The whins on the brae hae tint their yalla gowd  
The birks hae pence o copper, sune tae spend  
The ram-stam train gaes judderin doon the track  
Like life itsel, roon mony's a dowie bend

The yalla ragwirt thrives far rowans faa  
The drookit barley hings its beardie heid  
Noo is the time the warld, like me, grows auld  
Noo is the time the rose-hip wyme swalls reid

y from the Train

The pylons cairry the national grid  
ower the muir an alang the wid  
Bit pylons hinna een like me,  
Or thochts tae think, or daiths tae dee.

The coorsest thing that iver I saw  
Frae a Huntly train wis a hoodie craa

Hung frae a wire wi its een awa.

ing the dice

I heard a Friesian coo say  
Moo As I gaed past: I'll tell ye true  
I am a dice cast on the brae  
I ken that I'll be beef some day  
Fit'll ye leave tae the warld fin you  
Turn up yer hooves, like a Friesian coo?

Warlock o Gordonstoun

Five miles north o Elgin, stauns the Haa o Gordonstoun  
French Chateaux, keep, an policies, as notes o that same tune.  
The roon square o its steadins, an amphitheatre makk  
An in the Hoose's dowie foun, lie dungeons an hertbrakk

For Gordonstoun hid hidey-holes, a secret stairs an cell  
A jyle fa's risin watters, spelt mony the chiel's death-knell  
An here Sir Robert Gordon, keepit the gallows swack  
Even his lady left him wi curses on his back.

He wis a skeelie smuggler..frae ships on Covesea's waves  
His contraband wis flittit, bi tunnel, dark, an cave.  
The faither o this smuggler, a coorse, ill-likit chiel  
The elder Robert Gordon wis far ben wi the Deil

In Italy he'd traivelled, the Black Airt studied hard  
Tae Pepys, he wis a scientist, tae Moray, a fey cyard  
A fearie necromancer, he fulled his hoose wi buiks  
A man without a shadda, fa wauked in midnicht's neuks.

His furnace burnt for seeven years, dark spells he could recount  
A fire imp for a servent...a blaik horse for a mount.  
An fin Sir Robert sickened, an daith come creepin near,  
A fiend arrived tae claim him. The warlock jinkit clear!

His frien, a Haly meenister, leed tae the Deevil's man  
An swore the laird hid vanished, by sleekit spell or plan

The Deevilick galloped wildly, twa gurly hounds ahin  
Bit lees come back tae haunt ye..the fiend rode like the win  
Returnin wi Sir Robert, deid, upon the horse's back  
The fiend quo tae the meenister, 'Ye'll be the neist I'll takk'

Neist nicht the deevilick caughted him...  
He lowsed his frichtfu hounds  
The meenister lay deein, torn bi a hunner wounds.  
They say the deid sleep lichtly. He disna sleep ava  
The Warlock Laird o Gordonstoun. Watch oot fur his fitfaa!

nt o Moray

The Ian that lies in Moray atween Elgin an the sea  
Has witnessed mony's the eildritch tale o wars an sorcery  
Langsyne the sea lapt at the fit o Spynie's Palace girth  
Safe harbour, far the fisher fowk could sail ootower the Firth

The waters o the sea ran ben tae Duffus castle's side  
Till risin san an shingle cut a lochan frae the tide  
An sic a loch wis Spynie! Fringed wi star-girse, seggs an trees  
The broon-sailed ferry boats sailed ower't,  
Swans bobbit ben the breeze

Bit fermers drained the bonnie loch, noo cars an railroads rin  
Ben fields that aince were skinklin waves far trooties flashed a fin  
Noo, Spynie castle's ruined waas are dumb...  
Had they the pouer tae tell  
Ye'd hear queer tales o Covesea an Kinnedar itsel

An Irish priest, Gernadius, bedd in a cave nearhaun  
On gurly nichts his kinnelt torch, lichtit the rocky stran  
The lantern o the North shone oot tae keep sea-farers snod  
As bricht's the great cathedral ower at Elgin, raised fur God.

The Spynie Bishop Bur, bedd safe...his castle wis sae stoot  
It stopped the Wolf o Badenoch, fa socht tae turn him oot  
Neist, David's Tower, a muckle keep, bi Bishop Stewart wis raised  
Fa drave Earl Huntly frae the kirk an braved the Gordon's rage  
They held the power o life an daith ower a braid territory  
The Lords o Spynie, by their loch, as far as hawks could flee

The coorsest Bishop wooed the Deil. On Halloween t'wis said  
That Patrick Hepburn through the skies, a pack o warlocks led  
An aince, fin he wis grievous ill, a black cat crossed his door  
An cheenged intae a Lady fair, fa wirked a fairy cure  
Kings David, Robert, James, an Mary, ScotIan's bonnie Queyn  
Tae Spynie wi their retinues aa traivelled in their time

Agin the flames o Ceevil War by Covenanters fanned  
Stude Bishop Guthrie, till Munro, his castle force unmanned  
Syne Huntly's son, Lord Lewis cam, tae test the castle tower  
Bit Grant o Ballindalloch held it safe till war wis ower.

Its Bishops gaen, the Spynie keep, sune levelled tae the grun  
Like hoodie craas fowk pyked its banes. It's hinmaist race wis run.  
The wins that whistle ower thon shell, the sooch o winter's blast  
Haud echoes o the warrior priests in Moray's stormy past.

Ferryman: for Lvs Wvness.(The Aberdeenshire Canal operated from 1805-1854)

Fae Aiberdeen tae Kitty, fae Steenywid tae Dyce  
Pitmedden tae Kinaldie, fowk didna mind the price  
Kintore up tae Port Elphinstane the boaties eesed tae gyang  
The muckle shelts that pud them war siccar breets an strang

The barges cairriet cargo, coal, tattles, floor an wine  
Dung, steens an bricks an iron, wheat, oats, an beens an lime  
Girse seeds an cheese an butter, satt, kye an yowes sae neat  
Hides, bark an tiles an speerits..gweed malt, gweed bere, gweed meat

This Venice o the coonty, shipped guano fae Peru  
An bairnies' claes fae guano sacks, ferm mithers eesed tae shew  
Alang the banks the weemin steepit blankets in the suds  
An heistit petticoats tae tramp the washin in the tubs  
Whiles in the darker shaddas, a littlin born unsocht  
Wi wechtit brick wis drappit, sma voyage come tae nocht

Whiles, drunken limmers strippit fowk's linen, quick's a wink  
Fae aff the banks, an pawned it, tae keep thirsels in drink  
An toozie, nesty, vratches, fa orra capers please  
Risked seeven year transportation ayont the muckle seas

Tae takk the rise o Kelly, fa manned Mounthooly lock  
Cowped rubbish in the watter, an brakk his gear an stock

Wauk licht bi Canal Terrace, fur there stude Hangman's Hoose  
Far bedd the burgh hangie, fa tichen't mony's the noose  
A short wauk tae the Castlegate...Justice, ye unnerstaun...  
A knot, a nudge, anither sowel, sent tae the ferryman.

## 26.A Birse Fermer: For Neil McConnach,1945- 2006

Nae a coorse bane in his body. Murned  
Even bi the beasts in the staa  
In the mart, at the games, in the village  
Likit bi ane an bi aa

Mony's the neebor he helpit  
Couthie- he niver wis sweir, tae  
Catch life's wee spurgies fae faain  
Onytime that misfortune drew near

Niver a greet nor a grummil, gaed  
Neil. Gweed wis bred in his bluid  
Ay..Spring's drapt the best o its blossoms.  
May bluebells chime saft ower his heid

## Ladies

Towrists fae China, Toronto, Peru,  
Grove fite as a gull wi a dose o the flu  
Fin veesitin castles like Crathes or Fyvie,  
Fin green ladies step frae the turrets o ivy

They float ower the fleers wi a toss o their hair  
They wheech ower the landins, they skyte up the stair  
An fin starnies glent on the stanes in the kirk  
Green ladies are seen tae stravaig ben the mirk

Neist time yer admirin the cannon an flooers  
If ye feel a wee breeze on historical tours  
It's nae jist a draught, or a drap in the heatin

Green ladies roon statues an pictures are teetin

Poppy Field After a painting The Poppyfield by Monet,1873

Waukin throw wauchts o poppies  
A mither an bairn  
Bricht sun, the yoam o Simmer

Droonin in rat-fu dubs  
A hale generation  
Blae lift, the skirl o Terror

Jewish Proverbs

A chiel's nae auld til regrets takk the place o dreams.  
Gin ye hae anely twa options, choose the third.  
Tae a worm in a neep, the hale world is neep  
Gin ye wint yer dreams tae come true, dinna sleep.

Set in Scots frae the poem bi Primo Levi,

Ye fa bide safe  
In yer warm hooses  
Fa gyang hame at nicht  
Tae hett supper an frienly faces

Conseeder: is thon a man  
Fa tyauves in the dubs  
Fa kens nae peace  
Fa fechts fur a toosht o breid  
Fa dees at an 'Ay' or a `Na'

Conseeder: is thon a wummin  
Withoot hair or a name  
Wi nae mair virr tae mynd  
Een teem, wyme cauld  
As a puddock in Yule

Conseeder that thon has been:

Mynd these wirts I gie  
Cut them inno yer hairts

Fin ye are in yer hoose  
Fin ye wauk on yer wye  
Fin ye gyang tae bed  
Fin ye rise  
Repeat them tae yer bairns  
Or yer hoose may crumple  
Hurt, ding doon yer pouer  
Yer littlins turn their faces frae yer ain.

Sheena Blackhall



# Agent Orange, Agent Blue

Birth defects, the human cost  
Generations killed, or lost  
Tainted crops...a poisoned brew  
Agent Orange. Agent Blue.

Mango forests, deadly skies  
Napalm in a woman's eyes  
Mined, apocalyptic scene  
Lit by jellied gasoline

Tanks for real, not movie props  
Tiger cages. Chemo drops  
They bring horror, pat on cue  
Agent Orange. Agent Blue.

Sheena Blackhall

## Alexander Iii

In Roxburghshire a king wis born  
Granson o the Great Lion's bluid  
Crowned as a littlin ower at Scone  
Beannachd Dé Rìgh Alba, God speed

An twice a year twa jusiciars  
Traivelled wi him oot throw his lan  
Ane at the Sizzen o the girse  
Ane fin twis Yule, wi storms at haun

A sheriff chusen for each shire  
Held coort at ilkie forty days  
Tae keep the law for rich an puir  
An keep aa men tae honest wyes

This Alexander ruled richt weel  
Spennin his time in equal pairt  
In ilkie quarter o his realm  
Tae show nae favour swyed his hairt.

The Scottish toons grew fat wi trade  
Her merchants thrived. Sailed hyne awa  
Dried fish an satt they selt abroad  
An bocht fine cloth an spices braw

Ochone! Daith comes tae carl an King  
His English queen lay in the clay  
An their three bairns, his richtfu heirs  
Aa deid, a time o dule an wae

Ten years a widower, this king  
A verra lusty man, it's said  
Wi vergins, nuns an matrons aa  
Wis niver laith tae share his bed

His secunt waddin bore a curse  
Holinshed telt, frae oot a yew  
An orra monster at the kirk  
Follaed the bride, Yolande de Dreux

His threid o life dwined tae a stran  
In Merch, a nicht o derk an storm  
At Embro castle, he arise  
Vowed tae lie wi his queen ere dawn

Tae Queensferry he rade richt fest  
'Tis gyte tae cross the Forth this nicht'  
The boatmen warned. The king lauched lang  
'Ye'll set her course bi the meenlicht'

The strang North win near cowped the boat  
In pitmirk rain, at Inverkeithin  
The Maister o the king's satt wirks  
Quo 'Sire, bide here, we'll gie safe ludgin'

Bit nae a wurd o sense he heard  
Ordered twa guides tae lead the wye  
Tae Kinghorn, syne he galloped on  
Like ane possessed bi deevilry

He tint the guides, an in the derk  
Gaed tapsalteerie ower the rock  
His ain neck brukk his faa. Daith cams  
Tae fowk fa glower at Fate an mock

Dunfermlin's far they laid him doon  
A heidstrang king, bit fair an stinch  
Fa warred agin a storm an lost  
For love o a young Norman wench

Sheena Blackhall

# All This And More

Madelina's more than two sharp eyes,  
The shadows set in the cheek bones  
Her hair's like seaweed  
Swept by the tides of life  
what's an average person?  
Fading photos pinned against a wall?

This lady in her time's  
Been cunning as a southern snake,  
Striking off the innocuous necks of chickens  
Her alligator skin shrugs off the  
Withers of ageing.

She might have been anything,  
But for her womb, her womanhood

Success was an illusion, the jerky cries of lovers  
Ephemera, incidents between a domestic chair and the bed

She could have been the stuff of magazines  
What of it? she seems to challenge  
Life near the end's worth less than a hill of beans

Sheena Blackhall

## Alternative Proverbs

Better buttered toast than empty bridges  
A fridge in nine saves tyres  
Too many Frisbees spoil the moth  
It's a poor giraffe that eats midges  
If you fly with the pigs you'll sleep with gout  
Misery makes pandrops chortle  
There's no crab without a poker  
See a jumbo pick it up all the day you'll have a hernia  
If sponges were shovels eels wouls elope  
An empty jam jar loves a green umbrella

Sheena Blackhall

# Alternative Views Of Windermere

The Arctic char complain that Windermere's shrinking  
Since twenty millions of gallons of lake are drunk  
On a daily basis by the folk of Manchester

At Fell Foot and Stott Park Mill  
A ghostly horse has been seen  
Gallop over the waves, neighing of danger

A curmudgeonly pike recalls the halcyon days  
When Colonel Ridehaigh, master of the hounds  
Aboard his steamer, conveyed his pack to meet

The wraith of John Bolton, Liverpool slave trader  
Laments the fact his hall is now a hotel

Mrs Tiggy Winkle has been spotted, wearing her best pinnie  
Lurking by Ferry Nab, signing autographs for ecstatic Japanese fans

Police continue to look for Martha (or Mary)  
One of the Ullock sisters who has disappeared  
Anyone sighting this missing chestnut tree  
Will be rewarded by media interviews and many tweets

Lampreys are plotting against a roost of cormorants  
Who have annexed, without permission, a chantry chapel

Bats over Blelham Tarn and round Pull Wyke  
Report a spectral legion marching down Crinkle Craggs  
Asking each passer by the way to Rome

A Hardwick sheep has lost the art of 'heafing'  
It has quit the fells and is currently windsurfing

Sheena Blackhall

# American Military Cemetery, Madingley

A million dreams ago this American patrol,  
Anchors aweigh, one by one  
Took boom-shot to body and soul

No flying home to the gals in Kalamazoo  
From high on this windy hill  
This conversation piece is the cradle song of cowboys  
From Brooklyn to beautiful Ohio

A hand of stars, blue orchids,  
Float on the graveyard water  
Nobody here'll dance the Bear Barrel Polka  
Getting some shut-eye, dreaming of old Missouri

They've got the farewell blues, Mister Meadowlark  
Falling leaves, lying in honoured state  
Those lost tomorrows. Are you rusty, hometown gate?

Sheena Blackhall

# An American In Phnomh Penh (2010)

A GI's helmet, bangs down on the bar.  
'I wear it just to wind the locals up.  
You're Scots, I think?  
You guys all freed Megrahi  
You bleeding hearts insult those folks he killed

No politics. I know. I get the picture.  
I only passed three accidents today  
Two were fatalities. I didn't stop  
Too much to do. But heh...  
These geeks are Buddhists, they'll be coming back.

It's dog eat dog. You can't save everyone  
My uncle fought in 'Nam. His whole platoon  
Crashed through the VC tunnels with our tanks.

Odd thing about you foreign folk I meet  
Nobody ever seems to like the Yanks.'

Sheena Blackhall



# An Ode Of Plant Names

Sally-my-handsome, Blue-eyed Mary  
Black-Eyed-Susan and Bouncing Bett  
Creeping Jenny, Rosemary, Bryony  
Goldilock's Aster, Mignonette

Grace of Parnassus, Enchanter's nightshade  
Henbane, Monkshood and Travellers' Joy  
Houndstongue, pignut, trailing snapdragon  
Star of Bethlehem, pheasant's eye

Goatsbird, beggarticks, ploughman's spikenard  
Somerset-skull cap, quince, thorn-apple  
Nightshade, wood-sage, eelgrass, Timothy  
Devil's bit scabious and stinging nettle

Common fiddleneck, Venus looking glass  
Ox-eyed daisy, hornbeam, teasel  
Love-lies- bleeding and gold of pleasure  
Adderstongue, larkspur, sneezewort, chervil

Mousetail, goosefoot, gingerbread sedge  
Touch-me-not balsam, thrift and hogweed  
Honesty, purslane, moon carrot, toad-flax  
Pyramidal bugle, speedwell, bladder-seed

Ragged robin, hemlock, buttercup  
Portland splurge, fennel, Virgin's bower  
Love-in-mist and bastard agrimony  
Monk's rhubarb, Canterbury bells, Pasque flower

Jacob's ladder, snowdrop, greater periwinkle  
Snakeshead ivy and camomile  
Eyebright, starfruit, lily of the valley  
Cloudberry, lamb's ear and bright trefoil

Sheena Blackhall

# An Old Woman Reflects

I am old now. Forgive me  
For loving some too much, or not at all

I am old now. My past creeps up to wrack me  
For things that I've done ill, both great and small

I am old now. Attend me  
Is it too late to heal the hurts I gave?

I am old now. Absolve me  
My guilts, that stand like Harpies round my grave

I am old now. Forget me  
Keep open house to life, to sun and rain

I am old now. Those gone before expect me  
Would I repeat it all? No. Not again

Sheena Blackhall

## And How Am I To Love The World Again?

He had a mind inquisitive and quick  
And he could sing the mavis off her perch  
With his bravura swagger, cock of the walk  
His flashing eye, oh he could charm the women  
Into his bed like bees to the honeypot, and no mistake  
He dressed in style, though often short of cash□  
And drew folk to him, legend of the streets

And how am I to love the world again now he's not in it  
My fiery son, he of the roving eye and voice of a linnet?

Sheena Blackhall

# And The Washing Still Out Drying

the day got up with a hang-over  
birds played hide and seek  
with a boy's flung stones

behind a window, a pentagram's scrawled on a wall  
in red but it's saying nothing

Saturday's whores grow ripe with sweat and sin  
On the cobbles at gap-toothed windows

a mongrel scratches its balls  
whines for a wished-for bone

from under the pub door cigarette smoke seeps out  
the smell of whisky and spit flows over the evening

Jeannie Froubister didn't throw herself off a bridge  
or swallow a bottle of bleach

she met a murderer in an Edinburgh street  
such a nice man too, with perfect hands and manners

and salaried, you can't trust anybody  
strangled, and the washing still out drying

Sheena Blackhall

# And Then The Weather Broke

The weather broke. Beyond the window pane  
Drops scattered like a thousand tiny paws  
Of field mice seeking shelter from the rain

The water glittered down like polished grain  
The deluge, like a brook in springtime's thaws  
Beating the rhythm of a wild refrain

New rivulets went rippling down each lane  
And byway, without let, hindrance or pause  
The shaggy fir shook lochans from its mane

And when the hallowed sun appeared again  
(For after storm, comes peace in nature's laws)  
It seemed the flowers were cleansed of every stain

Birds sang. An ancient cat unsheathed its claws  
And farting, drew a fishbone from its jaws

Sheena Blackhall

# Andrew Carnegie

This weaver's son from Fife  
Aged 13 was a little bobbin boy  
Changing spools of thread in a Pittsburgh mill  
A pocket dynamo, he flashed through coloured skeins  
Of rainbow threads, a lightning hummingbird

The hummingbird likes certain curious flowers  
The bouncing bet, the jewel weed amongst them  
But this particular bird liked books as well  
This rags to riches lad o' pairts loved learning.  
A constant borrower from libraries  
He sipped the nectar of knowledge on the wing

From weaver's hut in Fife, to Caisteal Sgiobail  
Gaelic for Fairyland, the world of myth  
The King of Steel migrated back and fore  
Across the ocean, bearing the fruits of his labour

The Aztecs valued hummingbirds as talismen  
Emblem of vigour, energy and work. This sturdy  
Fife-born speciman, his earthly travails over,  
Roosts now beneath a simple Celtic cross

Rockefeller, Astor, lie nearby him,  
Washington Irving, Chrysler, all now grass  
Even tycoons, like summer storms, soon pass.

Sheena Blackhall

# Anorexic

Like the skin of a bodhran  
Her heart is only  
a drum beat off from silence

Sheena Blackhall

# Another Scottish Holiday

Here are the Mackintosh family  
Wearing their gloves and wellies  
Enjoying a seasonal break  
A large fat salmon cloud,  
Lies on a plate grey sky  
Exuding rain

They are joined by their Scottish terrier  
Wearing his tartan collar  
Rolling his Rs as he barks

The sea has come to join them  
It brings offerings of boat planks,  
Twine, three plastic cartons

They will send picture postcards  
To all their friends  
Having a lovely time  
They will say. They will post them  
Into the sad mouth of a letterbox

The large fat salmon cloud  
Will become a whale

Sheena Blackhall



# April Showers

There's no smoke in the lark's house  
Stones never kindle a fire  
April showers are sweet and cool  
As honey on the briar

The whitest blossom on the dyke  
Is highest up the wall  
For it's the nearest place to Heaven  
When April showers fall

Sheena Blackhall

# Are You Planning A Funeral?

Are you Planning a Funeral?  
Are you planning a funeral?  
What will the mourners eat  
At the wake, at the breaking of bread?

Are you planning a funeral?  
Where will the dead one lie  
On show like a precious exhibit?

Are you planning a funeral?  
Will you have roses and orchids  
Cash in a box for Heroes  
For Cancer, Stroke, or Pox?

Are you planning a funeral?  
Forget the fashionistas  
Send instead for the shaman, the priest for pity's sake  
With the words to address the unthinkable  
Let there be tears or laughter  
Memories shared or hidden at the wake

Are you planning a funeral?  
Not one pence of the money spent  
Will raise the deceased like Lazarus up from the tomb

Oh hard, so much the harder to bear  
If the body there in the coffin's the fruit of your womb

Sheena Blackhall

# Around The World In Terza Rima

Scotland's for climbers, where the air is pure  
The sanctuary of tartan and oatcakes  
Salmon and whisky for the epicure

Across the border, England hosts the lakes  
The Dales, the Fells, Tennyson's Isle of Wight  
And Longleat, with its lions and jackanapes

The Welsh have daffies, poets and anthracite  
Dragons and druids, leeks, the Eisteddfod  
Across the Irish Sea the locals bite

Into their soda bread. No need to prod  
Them into blarney. Celtic eloquence  
Is in the Irish DNA and blood

In France, there's haute cuisine and haute couture  
The Seine, for boating suppers and amour

In Germany, there's Berlin beer an bars  
Black forest gateaux, sausages and Handel  
Marlene Dietrich, stage and movie stars

Athens! What modern town can hold a candle  
To the Greek Parthenon, Athena's home  
The democratic birthplace and its cradle?

On the Grand Tour, the greatest pull was Rome  
The Colosseum, Forum, Vatican  
Tourists admire each papal spire and dome

Romania's where Bram Stoker's bogymen  
Count Dracula draws foreign fans in droves  
And Roma families rove by caravan

Holland and Belgium, tulips and windmills  
Cycles and barges, total dearth of hills

Switzerland zings with skiers on each slope

Each native, it's believed's, a chocaholic  
In Zurich, stash your cash for greatest scope

Poland, the landscape's pleasant and bucolic  
But World War 2 left landmarks dark and deep  
Camp Auschwitz, rears up grimly melancholic

Spain and Portugal, here fun is cheap  
Sun seekers, hedonists, flock here to sport  
They stretch out beach to beach like stranded sheep

Mother Russia, deathbed of the Tsars  
Crosses nine time zones in its vast expanse  
The Volga, vodka, ghosts of the boyars

Norway, Sweden, Finland, stark, severe  
The Sami people herding their reindeer

Japan has bamboo, cherries, Mount Fuji  
Hiroshima, Honda, the Samurai  
Nintendo, Judo, Saki and sushi

Vietnam. Go visit Saigon or Hanoi  
Rice paddies by the mighty Mekong's side  
Spirit homes. Jade pools with flashing Koi

Thailand's a Buddhist haven. Have you tried  
Bangkok's cuisine? Or flown to famed Phuket?  
By beach and palms, enjoy a jumbo ride

India, Sri Lanka, don't forget  
Ayurvedic Massage, meditation  
Look out for Taj, for tiger, minaret

China's Beijing, the Yangtze, and Confucius  
The Great Wall, Asia's jewel and powerhouse

Australia's aborigines, koala bears  
The Barrier Reef, black widow, platypus  
Sydney. Perth, the great red rock at Ayres

New Zealand. Maoris' haka may nonplus

Lord of the Rings, world rugby and Dunedin,  
Octopus, Kiwi, beasts most curious

Canada's tribal folk, the Algonquin  
Tell tales of wolf and bear and caribou  
Where maples rustle, skunks dart out and in

Greenland's renowned for kayak and igloo  
Glaciers, polar bears, and glaciers  
Iceland, for hot springs, elves and thick lamb stew

America's Chicago, jazz, fast food  
Harlem, Los Angeles and Hollywood

New York, the Bronx, New England in the fall  
Washington, Luther King, white Southern villas  
Alaska, Honolulu, basketball

Mexico's corn and cane, flat flour tortillas  
Chillies, mosquitoes, salsa, orange groves  
Burritos, The destitute. Fiery tequilas

Cuba is cha cha, sunshine and dance moves  
John Lennon, Rolling stones, the Caribbean  
Mamba, rum, Castro and sandy coves

The water here is warm and cerulean  
Where pirate scenes are filmed. Once Carib slaves  
Were ferried here, most, African-Ghanaian

For limbo dancing: Trinidad, Tobago.  
Once launching point for ships to El Dorado

Jamaica's reggae, Bob Marley and ganja  
Bananas, hurricanes, Blue Mountain scene  
Kingston and dreadlocks, sugarcane and Rasta

Fiji, ex-cannibals, each beach pristine  
Coconut, sperm whale teeth, a sunlit sky  
Snorkelling, diving, waters blue and clean

Africa's Bushmen, Zulu and Maasai

Lion and zebra, viper, porcupine  
Where Serengeti's wildebeest multiply

Israel, where in kibbutz and Palestine  
Survivors thrived beyond the Holocaust  
Here orthodox on kosher McDonald's dine

Syria, Iran, Iraq, hawks in the sky  
Turkey. The Middle East. All tinder dry

And all the tiny specks: Cyprus and Jersey  
The Philippines, Bahamas, and St Kitts  
The Falkland isles, Crete, The Maldives and Guernsey

Galapagos, where Darwin's finch still flits  
Our world has many seas, stormy and tame  
Aegean, Ionian, scholars' favourites

And bays, those strand bites worthy of the name  
The Hudson, Baffin, Bengal and Biscay  
And Gulfs, where storms play a waiting game

Rivers: the Ganges, where the Hindus pray  
The Amazon, the Seine, the Rhine, the Rhone  
The Danube, Tigris, Nile, on the Pharaohs' way

Travel's for those who set aside the book  
Step off the page, plunge in life, and look

Sheena Blackhall

## Article 301

Perhaps you're a scholar, writing of Turkish Kurds  
Perhaps you insulted Ataturk  
Perhaps you sided with conscientious objectors

Maybe you publicly humiliated the authority of the courts  
Maybe you published books on controversial subjects

Journalist, reporter, presenter,  
You've been described as a virus  
To be de-clawed like a bear  
To be caged, a toothless tiger sucking on silence  
Denied the right to question, contradict, explore

Writer with invisible ink in your pen,  
You are a cloud person  
A nothing, blown away by the winds of power  
Like dust in a desert storm.

You are also the grit in the world's eye  
That will not be wiped away.

Sheena Blackhall

# Asian Dog

Wearing its insides out like a bag of grapes  
Wearing its heart on its sleeve like a pork chop  
A flea-bitten dog is trotting along the road

A waistband of flies is circling its slit pelt  
Better to keep busy till it drops.

Sheena Blackhall



# Assessment Ward

It started with coffee, a bed, a ginger biscuit  
They said it might put things into perspective  
Does water change a stone with a tiny drop?

No one seemed to care that I was shaking  
Like Jericho's walls before they tumbled down

I hugged my terrors like a nest of spiders  
Skated on thin ice each night  
Looked in the mirror, someone strange looked back

I escaped for a while into a sunflower picture  
'But this won't do, ' they said. 'This will not do at all'

Like a porcupine's back, I bristled  
Little black shudders ran me through and through  
Razor-clawed, mind tore and picked at memories  
Till they bled

Sheena Blackhall

# At King's College Chapel, Cambridge

A Negress with a knotted, tasselled scarf,  
Power-shouldered jacket, buckskin moccasins  
Cromwellian warts on cheek and nose and chin  
Fingers the ancient carvings, clucks in awe

A girl with matted hair, grown long and blonde  
Like Boudicca with nits, looks nonchalant  
Faced with a raging dragon and a hound

A skull-faced skulker wearing a baseball cap  
His wrists tattooed with devils and swastikas  
Looks dumb-struck at the chapel's soaring roof

In fourteen forty one, the sainted King  
Henry the Sixth, laid down the founding stone  
Great walls of buff and cream grew up and up  
To vaults like fans of Spanish filigree

The dark oak screen with gilded organ pipes  
Gifted by Henry eighth and Anne Boleyn  
Workmen in overalls chatter on cell phones  
Move ladders here and there, tape up seat rows  
A girl with thunder-thighs bangs on a pew  
Chews gum and sulks beneath a teacher's glower

Rubens' Adoration of the Magi  
Becomes the backdropp of the tourist snaps  
Rupert Brooke's name, cut into the stone  
Reveal he died in war, lost generation

On Easter Sunday, TV cameras rolled  
No ladder, workmen, tourist queues in view  
Only the candlelight's kind, smudging glow  
The mystery of naked flame in darkness  
As holy as the voices of small boys  
Soaring up from their throats like linnets' prayers

Sheena Blackhall

## At Knock Basilica: Place Of The Vision

'A day written off' a thick jowled tourist growled  
'Even the pubs are shut. This place is one long bore.'  
From a biker's earphones a song seeps out  
Guns and Roses, 'Knocking on Heaven's door.'

One side of the street sells cots and religious gee-gaws  
The other sells cards and gold-inscribed headstones  
I bought myself a bargain, a black marble beauty  
The Irish know how to commemorate dead bones

In the WC of this most sacred center  
'Ladies watch your handbags' a notice warns.  
Even here there's a sinner?  
'When God made Time, Himself made plenty of it, ' a nun sighs  
Kneading a rosary, her mind on dinner

Scarfed and booted against the bitter wind  
Jacket collars up, coddling our cheeks  
We shuffle from shrine to chapel  
A wheelchair slows and creaks

Some light candles, touch the holy relic  
Of a stone, coins wink in bowls  
Prayers ascend to Heaven like Chinese lanterns  
Masses are muttered for the repose of souls  
I fill two plastic bottles with healing water  
A Buddhist, hedging my bets  
Think of the chosen believers  
Trotting along, God's pets

Others donate 3 euros and write a name  
That will be said at mass  
The promise of all religions...Paradise, first class

Paying someone to whisper in Caesar's ear  
If I wish hard enough, will my guilts disappear?  
Like singeing the hair from a hen, before the pot  
Lucifer watches. How long has anyone got?



# At Stratford On Avon

Centuries melt like winter snow in April  
A phalanx of determined shoppers  
Shoe horned into a queue,  
Jibber and jostle past The Falcon, Scholar's Lane  
Sup ale at the Black Swan, the thespians' Dirty Duck.

Stop up your ears, block out the here and now  
Can you hear the jingle of horse?  
The clop of hooves, as soldiers march  
To blood-let in Civil War

Down Burial Lane, the Plague pits  
Fill with dead, topped up with quicklime  
Turfed and unnamed villagers  
Tossed aside like rotten apples  
Softening in an orchard

Sheena Blackhall

# At The Conference For Scottish Inventions

At the Conference of Scottish inventions  
Dolly the sheep arrived, with hair new permed, blue rinsed

Ten Adhesive stamps were licking the boots  
Of every EU funder

Bovril and the cloud chamber  
Had no mates. They only turned up for the freebies

Lime cordial and marmalade were the main speakers  
Their event was fully booked.  
The take up of their tasters was phenomenal

A paddle steamer, a lorry and a piano  
Couldn't enrol due to lack of parking spaces

Ten raincoats and 16 cans of Irn Bru  
Were mobbed by friends and admirers

No-one could get enough of them  
Until the sun came out,  
And the coffee waiter arrived.

Sheena Blackhall

# At The Edge

Police diverted the traffic. Sirens blared,  
Little girls being driven to dancing classes  
In plumes and tutus, fumed

Why doesn't he bloody well do it? the taxi driver complained  
I call it selfish, holding everyone up, white van man growled  
Maybe he thinks he's an angel, joked the boy, filming the towerblock  
It's a sign of dysfunctional society, the sociologist said  
The Lord have mercy, prayed the minister  
What's the betting they cut his giro? moaned the beggar  
Will there be much mess? pondered the ghoul  
If he jumps now, he'll hit the evening headlines, cried the TV team

And then, like a newsprint aeroplane, he leapt.  
And the traffic moved off again  
The day patched up the ripped out page of disruption

Sheena Blackhall

## At The Graves (1914-1918)

And so we come, well-heeled, well-fed  
Suitably somber and composed  
Talking above the graves of the numbered dead

The sleepers are deaf and dumb  
And who would wish to rouse them  
Out of the numb bliss of amnesia?

A battlefield's a living charnel house  
But here they can be again  
The baker, the tailor, the clerk, the scholar, the rake  
Oh let them lie unstirred, for pity's sake

Sheena Blackhall



# At The Menin Gate, August 2014

Age has withered us, the decayed dregs of a degenerate century  
We look back through the cracked, soiled lens of history,  
Post war boomers, liberty bodiced and cod liver oiled through infancy  
Hippy geriatrics, always looking  
Over our shoulders half expecting a bomb

We have lived through Cold Wars, brinkmanship, Aids  
And the insidious occupation by stealth of religious hate

Towers and tyrants have toppled. Politicians continue to lie  
Nothing, it seems, has changed in a hundred years

During the silence  
Two small boys play swordfights with wooden crosses

A dignitary, preening her dress, is fiddling with her phone  
A grandfather's chest groans with a rack of medals  
Gnarled hands lean hard upon sticks

An ice cream wobbles down a child's hand, sticky as blood.  
The flag at half mast, pauses like a train at a station

Dare we forget?  
The seeds of war blew round the world yet

Sheena Blackhall

# At The National Museum Of Scotland

Blast off! Space Travel! Astronomic energy  
A steam engine by Watt that powered a brewery  
Sculpture, Art, Scots place in industry  
Chinese tomb figure, the Tang dynasty  
A glass roofed atrium, Victorian light  
A Blue John vase in banded fluorite  
The jaw bone of a whale from the woodlark  
Where sailors cut scrimshaw to make their mark  
Photograph of the zoo panda, Ching Ching  
The grim carved head of a dead Benin king  
An astrolabe and astronomical tools  
Acasta gneiss from Canada, gold, jewels  
Mercedes-benz coffin from the Ga of Ghana  
Suspended canoes- Japanese No drama  
nson's Samoan fan  
Haniwa horse tomb figure from Japan  
Mexican opal, malachite, Siberia  
Kingfisher head dress representing China  
A Hindu painting of the Goddess Ganga,  
Freize tiles inscribed in Arabic from Persia  
Samurai warrior, netsuke, glass and jewellery  
Porcelain storage jar, Joseon dynasty  
Limestone carving of an Assyrian king  
A prayer wheel house from monks of Samyé Ling  
Thunderbird transformation mask and outfit  
Amethyst geodes, fossils, Kenyan garnet  
A Grecian amphora of Hercules  
The Wolfson gallery, great sharks and trees  
Coconut fibre armour, Kiribati  
Portrait of Sirdar Iqbal Singh of Butley  
The Darian chest, a relic of that scheme  
Bonnie Prince Charlie's travelling canteen  
Flags, drums, Morse code, satellite navigation  
Shaping our world with new communication  
Maiolica dishes-the Calini family  
Porcelain lion, Messen, Germany  
Sir James Black's famous find..the beta blocker  
Panorama of tundra and Hugh Miller  
Skeleton fossil of an ancient deer

The Monarch of the glen... Edwin Landseer  
The Lewis chessmen, walrus ivory  
Dunlop, Baird, bike tyre and the TV  
Hunterston brooch. Carved Neolithic balls  
Queen Mary's clarsach harp, once in royal halls  
A loving cup produced by Edward Spencer  
Two boys. A double coffin from Luxor  
Monymusk reliquary, a house-shaped shrine  
The Bute mazer- for shared communal wine  
Windows on the world- the restless earth  
Patterns of life- insights on Scotland's birth  
Statue of James Watt, the famed engineer  
Petrified wood donated by John Muir  
Feast bowl from Atiu, the South Pacific  
The sometsuke tradition of ceramic  
Dounreay nuclear reactor, uranium glass  
Lady Ivy Wu - a man's court dress,  
Lulu, Ewan McGregor, Ian Rankin  
Frock, screenplay, manuscript, all handed in  
Sir Alexander Fleming's penicillin  
Tyrannosaurus Rex, a fearsome villain  
Connecting the world by Scottish inspiration  
Imagine -Adventure Planet -next generation  
Piper Laidlaw's medal won at Loos  
Discovery zones- events- so much to choose  
Torcs from the Iron Age -a printing press  
So much to educate and to impress  
Timorous beasties. The millennium clock  
The silver silk suit of the grand Duke Lennox  
A lighthouse lens- a cast iron drinking fountain  
A 15th century crozier of St Fillan  
Statue of Arensnuphis, Nubian guard  
Shaman rattle, oyster catcher bird  
The Buddha Amida. A whale hunt hat  
Double- spout bottle with a spotted cat  
Charles Rennie Mackintosh's copper lamp  
Telephone kiosk with the royal stamp  
Tibetan armour- iron lamellae  
A wildlife panorama in the sky  
A Karnak mummy of a senior priest  
The Pembridge helm..a warrior's head piece  
Soaring column -spreading balustrade

Blaschka models, miniscule, glass made  
Dodo, a tiger, a svelte Burmese python  
St George embroidered, destroying the dragon  
A Scottish hydrographer, A. Dalrymple  
A reliquary cask- electric fiddle  
Travelling service, dining, toilette, sewing  
Jean Jenkins, records of performers singing  
Dolly the sheep -a simulated drive  
A most eclectic, wonderful archive  
A Cham dance skeleton, a feather collar  
Sir Walter Scott the writer's hour glass timer  
Napoleon's tea service of gilded silver  
Mask and wig of a preaching covenanter  
SS Nerbudda, model cargo ship  
A book plate showing parliament in session  
Where Scots democracy first found expression  
Newcomen engine, Caprington colliery  
Computer circuit board and tapestry  
Lioness devouring man -a Roman sculpture  
A silver hoard, St Ninian's island treasure  
Lid of a grand piano, Phoebe Traquair  
Furniture textiles rare and domestic ware  
Four storeys- a cast-iron, glass, timber keep  
Stupendous, brave in its wide ranging sweep

Sheena Blackhall

# At The Nubian Village

Goats are the first to meet us:  
Bleating, grey, brown, pied,  
Cropping the thorn bushes beside the river.

A one- humped dromedary  
Slumped on its folded legs  
Like a very occasional table  
Looks down its snooty nose;  
Rises, swings its arse and strides away  
Long legged as a cat-walk model.

A dhow draws in and anchors.  
A waterbuffalo tramples through the reeds.  
Senor amigo, the urchins cry  
Firing out smatterings of French and Dutch  
Lovely jubbly you buy my calendars?  
Aiming for the right linguistic bullseye.

We are led into the shade of a village hut  
And are served with hibiscus, mint tea,  
Small, sweet cakes.

A plump, veiled, chewing girl  
Enters with henna, offers to paint our legs  
Outside, a kingfisher flashes its brilliant wings  
A free display of flight and native dance.

Sheena Blackhall

# At The Scott Monument, Edinburgh

For Scott read Scot writ large  
This general of the masterstroke  
If born today would have been  
Master of the Blockbusters  
Would have out-Pottered Potter  
Would have had a global franchise  
On media, films and merchandise

He sits in the facsimile of an Apollo Rocket  
In marble splendour facing Princes Street  
Like Captain Kirk, waiting to blast off boldly

Trams glide like silent submarines  
Menacing and stealthy  
Carrying cosmopolitan passengers

A hotch-potch of pigeons hobble and burble  
Like a D-day Armada of birds on cobbling seas

David Livingstone, soldier of the Lord  
Holds up his Bible, not stemming  
The surge of indifferent unbelievers  
Giving him the Haw-Haw

The Saltire over Jenners, droops  
Like a deflated parachute in the windless air  
An ex-squaddie, shell shocked,  
Rattles a hopeful tin. Small change  
Clatters like bullets  
A piper plays a militant marching tune

A tourist extends a trident  
Holding a camera at arm's length  
Like a square of toast,  
For the all-pervasive selfie of today

Sheena Blackhall

# At The Shrine Of St Cuthbert & The Venerable Bede

Imagine the Lucernarium, the blessing of the light  
When the shadows of flickering candles  
Played over griffins, unicorns, sea serpents, wyverns and pillars  
The bowed heads of the monks  
An ancient, evening rite

Today, tourists shuffle along like guests  
Attending a buffet. What to stay and sample?  
The Galilee Chapel holds the bones of the Venerable Bede  
HIC SUNT IN FOSSA BEDAE VENERABILIS OSSA  
Children tug at their parents, anxious to leave  
Not enough zing to hold the attention of youth

St Cutbert's shrine on the other hand, is colourful.  
Once pilgrims came in thousands to kneel beside it  
Before King Henry stripped the monasteries,  
The base was of green marble, richly gilded  
Four seats were there where the lame and sick could kneel  
Shrine, covered by a cloth with tinkling bells

Children, unbridled, dance around the steps  
Like little pagan budding Morris Dancers  
Their parents trawl the shop for small mementoes  
The only relics now that are for sale

Imagine, if you will,  
It is Maundy Thursday  
Imagine incense burning,  
Carrying prayers to the rafters and beyond  
Imagine the Prior's ritual;  
the washing of the feet of 12 poor men brought into the cloister  
where each had his feet washed, dried and kissed by the prior,  
where each of the monks did the same for one of a group of  
The poor then given a meal, served by the prior and monks  
three loaves, seven red herrings, wafer-cakes and thirty pence

Imagine the lighting of the Paschal Candle:  
a candelabra of 7 candlesticks,  
the central candlestick near reached the roof

And after: The ceremony of the Judas Cup  
Of double gilt silver, the prior distributing wine

The cloisters are not silent nowadays:

'Part of Harry Potter was filmed here! '

'Could you direct me to the public toilets? '

'They say the coffee shop is nice and cheap'

'At least it's free. But we can buy a postcard.'

So Time completes the work begun by Henry.

Sheena Blackhall



# At The Shrine Room Gate

A khaki spotted fly  
Walks over the word observe  
Etched into the wood of a Buddhist panel

Eight prayer flags, white, green, red  
Tug on their moorings  
Torn between a wooden fence and a birch tree

Crane fly flows off the path  
Over the iris pool

A white moth zig zags  
Through the gate's dark slats

Sheena Blackhall

## Auld Reekie's Ghaists (Scots)

At nicht Auld Reekie's taen ower bi the deid,  
Hauf-hingit Maggie wauks the wynds again.  
Mary King's Close, plague rears its ugsome heid

Damnation Alley..lichts glent green an reid,  
The ghaists o Burke an Hare bring daith an pain  
George McKenzie, judge, stauns drooked in bluid.

Deacon Brodie flichters, derk in deed  
The verra flagsteens, fleggit bi his name.  
The Sooth Brig vaults a-steer, here bogles breed

Is Major Weir about? Coorse wis his creed  
Aneth the castle, bagpiper's refrain:  
Doon in the derk wi nane tae hark or heed

The meen stauns cauld, stars licht the ghaisties'speed.  
Neth the lang shades the Nor Loch fulls again.  
Monks, beggars, ootlinns tell their rosary beads.

In Queensberry Hoose aince mair, the guid Scots leid  
Is spukken, as in close, street, wynd an lane  
Young Robert Fergusson strides oot, braw poet indeed  
The past takks ower the cassies, ghaists are freed

Sheena Blackhall

# Baby Boomers (2 Poems) 2015

## Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers, Mods and rockers  
Space hoppers, Chart toppers  
Condoms carried, slip-ups, married  
Doc Marten's boots, White jump suits  
Tower blocks, Soho shops  
Mini dress, Beehives impress  
Beatles' discs, hedonists  
Twiggy, gaunt: Mary Quant  
Ring pull can, Space age man  
Sliced bread, Potato head  
Yoko's bed, Vietnam's dead  
Andy Warhol, Georgy girl  
Poor Cow, Avengers now  
Flower Power, Zero hour  
Chubby Checker, tape recorder  
Mick Jagger, hippy swagger

Bald comb overs, thick pullovers  
Veins in knots, causing clots  
Making wills, Zimmers, spills  
Bingo wings, forgetting things  
Pills and potions, wrinkle lotions  
Teeth in glass, heart bypass  
Comfort shoes, bunion blues  
Prostrate woes, horn-nailed toes  
Rools of fat, arhes, flat  
Flower Power gone, Future, wan

## The Liverpool Resurgence Statue

When Cynthia dated John Lennon  
They met under the nude statue's dick  
When it rained, dripping down from his dangle  
The water dropped down double quick

Here lovers have met down the decades

Window cleaners hang pails from the prick  
Then it's off to 'The Rat and the Parrot'  
To cheer, with a swallow, their 'click'

Sheena Blackhall

# Back O Bennachie (48 Scots Poems)

o Bennachie

The peesie pipes her cloudy tune  
Aroon the back o Bennachie  
Far dockens dover, yeities cheep  
Aa's growth, an wyvin greenery

A leprechaun his cast his quilt  
Alang the dwaumin, Gordon howe  
He's happit aa in elfin green  
Frae sheugh, tae fairm-toun, tae knowe

A hippit yowie hirples by  
A dauncin gleg nips at her dowp  
The ootraxed fingers o an aik  
Drap shaddas, far the rabbits lowp

The sharny kye ayont the dyke  
Like claikin gossips, boorich roon  
Hoch-heich in clover. Wabbit wives  
They're plottit, birsslin hett, at noon.

A forest plaid o bronze fir-preens  
Furls saftsome ben a futterat's trail  
Abune green-luggit blaeberries, teet  
Twa lums, the hornies o a snail.

Tap seelie braes, the rowans bide  
Their waddin blossom's fite's the snaw  
An reeshlin ben ilk leafy bride  
The bonnie, birlin, breezes blaw.

The drouthy breem drinks doon the sun —  
Hett bummers heeze tae pree its gowd  
Like butteret wings, smaa hauns in prayer,  
Breem flooers, like yalla muirmochs showd

The peesie pipes her cloudy tune  
Aroon the back o Bennachie

Far dockens dover, yeities cheep  
Aa's growth, an wyvin greenery.

### Claire de la Lune

The halflin meen's a unicorn  
Wha's creamy flank't an strang  
An aa the starnies ben the nicht's  
The seed frae oot his whang.

### Brig o Dee

The muckle stanes aneth the brig  
Are carved as smeeth's a marble font  
Nae sculptor's haun his chiselled ocht  
Since time began, the waves ayont  
Yon bowdie brig hae hackt an vrocht  
A hunner crannies, howes an neuks  
Far roddens reidden, wild Scots rose  
Protects its bairns wi scratty cleuks.

Aneth the brig, auld birks, twa fauld  
Hap carl doddies ben the banks  
Abune the lave, the pine trees raxx  
Their rosit, roosty-coloured shanks

Blaeberry, thrissle, heather, peat  
Thegither wyve a bonnie plaid  
The air, wi thyme's as scentit sweet's  
The posie o a Heilan maid

A tryst fur burns o aa the airts  
Sheep-fauld o watters, yon's the Dee  
Waves clash thegither...foo they furl  
Like flags o a great company

A cricket pipes her teenie tune  
A curlew keens abune the gean  
A puddock craiks at rowan's foun  
A yeitie yatters in the breem

Wechtit wi hinney frae the hill  
A bummer flees wi weariet wing  
His hairy hurdies loadit doon  
Pugglit wi hairstin in the ling

The herdsman, Dee, wheeps ben the muir  
Gars salmon rise brak-neck, an faa  
Booed like a bow ootower the steer  
The brig bides stinch abune them aa.

#### 4. The Whigmaleerie

The whigmaleerie's coorse an slee  
Wi een like bleezin peat  
He weirs a thorn buss fur hair  
A bawd's hin-legs fur feet

His lugs are wirmy puddock-steels  
His neb's a grumphy's snoot  
His belly is a fryin pan  
His aims are lang an stoot

His cleuks are jobby as a craws  
A besom is his tail  
An fin he blaws his tooteroo  
He fussles up a gale.

The whigmaleerie wauks the nicht  
Wi warlocks, ghaists, an ghoul  
Plays ring-a-rosies roon the meen  
Syne bedds doon in the mools

#### 5. Lament on the Mither Tongue

As I gaed doon the granite toun  
The schule bell hished the bairns tae Lear  
Bit weel I kent that feint the wird  
O Scots, their Scottish lugs wad hear

The tongue o Barbour, Ross, Dunbar  
Micht weel be Zulu. It's nae tholed  
In classroom claik. Sae much the waur  
Fin aa maun haud the Inglis mould

Aince-year the moosewabs faa frae Burns  
Dominies dicht the hallowed buik  
Syne stap it back... the anely bard  
O Scotia that they daurna jouk

O Hugh MacDiarmid, Soutar, Bruce,  
Mackie & Rorie feint a straw  
Frae Scottish culture, bairns are weaned  
The Inglis rose blaws oweraa

Ye deils fa set the bairns darg  
Pit this in yer computer's dowp  
Gie's back wir sangsters, playwrights, bards  
Ye arena ower heich tae cowp.

Dilemma

Buddha said, 'Respeck aa leevin breets'  
An sae I dae... wee collies, spurgies, troots  
Bit fin a forkie treetles up ma queats  
I'm nae sae keen on Natur's crawly geets.  
I'll pooshunt... ding its barns oot wi ma buits

I luv aa beasts... bar ane. It gars me cowk  
The gollach wi its horns upon its dowp.

## 7. North East Nineties Rap

Tweedledee telt Tweedledum  
Nae room for Scots in the curriculum  
Shakespeare, Milton, a Rodin sculpture,  
Great.. bit gies a smachrie o the Scottish culture  
Computin? Newton? Yer root-toot-tootin  
At wird-processin we're high-falutin



Home Economics? It's a rave  
We're aa hum-dingers wi a microwave

Dance an Drama.. here we go  
Reelin in a Doric video  
Shell-suit, trainers, T-shirt, kickers  
Sports bag clartit up wi trendy stickers

Chinos, Levis, Pepes, Lees  
Project folders on the Pyrenees

Hubble, bubble, the ile brings double  
The price o fish an wi half the trouble  
Crisps, coke, Wimpy, we like faist food  
Consumin aa the action in the neighbourhood

Fae Banchory, tae Buckie, tae San Franciso  
We like tae pairty wi a roller-disco  
Nineties, pine trees, deid wi acid rain  
Waste-disposal dreepin doon the drain  
We are the friens o the Green revolution  
We're the generation stoppin the pollution

Play fair auldies..leave some spare  
Save us a daud o the ozone layer.

## 8. Incomers

Me? Glowerin at the new neebours?  
Since fan's it bin a crime tae dicht the windaes?  
Onywye, it's ye I'm fashed about  
Yer fuschias, an the girse ye sawed yestreen  
A sausage dug's gaen bowfin up the green.  
I's sweir I'll gar it claw far it's nae yoky  
If it as much as piddles on the rock'ry...

Faith, fit a curriewurrin o a wife...  
An orra, strushle breet  
A mowser on her mou, an bauchled feet  
She'd better takk her shot tae shiel the snaw  
Or else she'll hae hett tongue and hetter lugs

Lord, did ye SEE yon fooshty, chittered rugs?  
We'll hae tae fumigate fur fear o bugs.  
It's surely minks we're gettin, ower the waa  
Ye'll hae tae chyne the door wi'in the haa

God save's, a chunty!  
I hinna seen the like since Willy's Aunty  
Wis laid up fur a month wi clottit veins...

Wi filth as thick as thon, they'll choke the drains  
The mannie's sark tail's hingin oot an plappin  
He's wyvin up an doon like Charlie Chaplin  
He's fu's a puggie. Dinna smirk like yon!  
Ye needna think ye'll try HIS capers on  
Or else ye'll takk up ludgins in the street

Noo, here's the bairns... a sorry tribe o geets  
Wi nae hale pair o breeks atween the lot  
An ilkie ane, a pecher-fu o snot

Glory be. He's giein me the fingers, little deevil  
An yon's the thanks I hae, fur keepin ceevil!

## 9. Aiberdonian Recipe

Takk seeds o Nor East stock (twa)  
Plunk them thegither  
Simmer fur awhile.  
Dinna byle (it tends tae spyle the flavour)  
Add ae spirk o ile  
A shakk o satty sea  
A suppie cauld snaw bree  
A guid Scots tongue tae gie it virr an birr  
A toosht o barley  
Fang o granite chukkies  
A Finnan haddie  
Fur nine month, let it staun...  
Syne, wheek it up,  
Skelp its dock  
Rowe't in a cloot

Cowp it frae the pan  
An there ye'll hae't  
A fire-new Aiberdonian!

#### 10. Fin I wis Fower an Twenty

Fin I wis fower an twenty  
Ma luv he wis the cream  
An I the purrin bawdrons  
That supped the saucer clean

Fin I wis fower an forty  
The cream hid soored tae bile  
The guff wad kill a grumphy  
At half a hunner mile!

#### 11. The Gull Spikks Oot

I'm here tae tell  
That I'm an Aiberdonian, same's yersel  
There's nocht sae queer as fowk. I see them  
Gulp their Chinee doon, syne cowk  
Near ilkie Setterday on Union Street

We gulls are cannie far we pit wir feet  
Ye'll note, WE dinna argue wi wir meat  
An ye've the neck tae tell us that we skirl  
Yer soun at closin time makks ma beak dirl  
Wi stoun o stottin humans, wavin cans  
That bobbies hae tae cairt awa in vans..

'Clear aff', sez ye, 'An dine on North Sea fish'  
We micht, bit they're a gey suspicious dish  
Fur ilkie time ye pull yer lavvie chyne  
Far dae ye think it's destined? Tae the brine!  
An tides that wash the beach, cairry awa  
Yer duggies doins tae the fishies mawe

We're blamed fur powkin in the human midden  
Weel, buy a wheelie bin an keep it hidden

The ither day, I met a refugee  
A hoodie frae the t'ither side o Huntly

He sez yer pesticides gaed him sair bellies  
Fin powkin in remains, he'd tae weir wellies  
Fur fear o gettin kill't wi Chemistry  
Mixi, or ither hellish human bree

I telt him, processed meat is as I ett  
It's safer, an I like ma denners hett  
Sae dinna rage, an cowp me aff yer lurn  
A gull maun hae a place tae park its bum

We'd aince clean air, sea... girsse insteid o steen  
We're sennin a petition tae the Queen  
Fur humans tae be banned frae reproducin'  
The anely answer tae the toun's pollution!

## 12. The Keepsake

Fin I wis wee, wi leaward lug  
Ma faither's Scots wis branch an bouer  
An ower ma bairnhood, like an aik  
His thochts an wirds war leaf an flouer.

Far ither's een turned soor an blear  
On dubby park or dreepin Ben  
Settin their sights on gowd, or gear  
Priceless, he caad the Tullich glen.

Fowk's mortal reets rin strang an deep  
Sae at the hinmaist o his span  
I laid him in his last, lang sleep  
Near far his wardly ploys began.

Beeriet the bane, bit nae the virr  
Langsyne it fand anither reest  
Gin I draw nigh tae Lochanagar  
A deid man's hairt lowps in ma breist.

### 13. Hannah the Herd

'Hish an hup'.. The kye cam hirplin up the brae  
The roch-staned, humphy brae,  
Splay-fittit. Sharny shanks  
Cakit wi dubs an antrin wisps o strae  
Prop up their tail-wheeped dowps.  
Their muckle girths  
Swey like a puckle ships, wi rowth o cargo.

Ilkie wechty udder reams wi milk  
Spirk-spirkin doon like pearls  
Stottin pirls o cream at ilkie stride  
They wide on, hefty, nippit  
Atween whin an wild rose buss  
Ower graivel smush  
That hauds the flint o ice,  
The glint o snaw  
At its cauld, treacherous hairt  
Skyty wi weety glaur.

Hannah the herd cries 'hup'  
The wurd hings frozen  
Caught in wintry haar  
The braiths o the great quate breets  
She hishes uphill cannie  
Steam like singin kettles on the hob  
A dreep sypes frae the  
Hinner en o her snoot  
Her skin's a leathered cloot  
Roch, broon an runkled as a wizzened taed

The nyaakit rodden, raxxes oot teem airms  
Scratty's a futterat's cleuks..  
Birdless. A nettle-stob's the air  
That brings a lowe tae the lug  
Hannah, tichtens her jaiket  
Straichtens the hose in her wallies  
Gies a rug tae the bunnet  
Plunkit skweejee ower  
Her touslie, raivelled hair.

She's sharger-thin an bitter bites the win  
Waur nur the pulpit lash on soor Sabbaths  
Her eens' twa brambles, floatin in a tarn  
That since wis passin fair

Her teeth are strang an yalla as a meer's  
Blythe she is, a hardy, spunky gurr  
Wi wits as quick's a maister wyver's shears.  
She hishes aa her charges tae the byre  
Syne frae a hackit mou  
Ringed roon wi stounin sairs  
She wheeples tae them, sweet as ony lyre.

#### 14. THE CHAIRMAN O THE CHILD PROTECTION PANEL

I hae tae say, o aa the chiels  
Wha act the lay judiciary  
I'm far the best at reddin up  
The dregs o crass humanity

I've rowth o siller at ma back  
Ma boatie's ay rowed weel  
I've niver kent the bite o lack  
Warm cled, frae heid tae heel..

Ma mither wis a mortal saint  
By Gad, she worshipped me!  
Aa weemin sud be vrocht like her  
Oedipus? Fa wis she?

As this is nae a coort o law I  
'll spikk ma mind richt plain  
There's nane can garr ME haud ma tongue  
I gie ma thochts fu rein

Nae lawyer tae cry, 'Bigot, wheesht'  
I prosecute an judge  
I crack the maister's wheep betimes  
An niver bear a grudge!

I like tae carve a pun o flesh

An tae apportion blame  
As I've the richt tae dae,  
Because o my untarnished name.

In wird an declamation  
I am VERRA dignifeed  
Jist speir at aa the errant sowls  
The fowk I've crucifeed...  
I'm aywis ceevil fin I poor  
Contempt upon their heid.

Ye maun be sensitive, ye see  
Tae haunle this poseetion  
An sae I am. I niver roar  
Fin makkin my summation.  
I tell them straicht  
'A mither? Ye? I doot ye cudna learn  
Tae rear a grumphy's littlins  
Let alane a tricky bairn!

It's aa yer wyte yer bairn's gaen wrang  
Yer a patheetic sample;  
Gin ye wad climm perfection's spire,  
TAKK ME AS YER EXAMPLE! '

#### 15. I am a Doric Stereotype

I am a Doric stereotype  
I sup ma meal an ale  
Syne wash it doon wi yirned milk  
An muckle dauds o kale

I am a Doric stereotype  
I weir ma knicky tams  
Tae keep ma legs frae faain doon  
Wi jeelipfus o drams

I am a Doric stereotype  
The horseman's wird I glean  
I've thrissles growin frae ma lugs  
An sooricks in atween.

I am a Doric stereotype  
I keckle like a hen  
Wi horny hauns an sharny buits  
An yaavins but an ben

I am a Doric stereotype  
Abune ma brose I rift  
I skirl an birl at echtsome reels  
An darn ma hose fur thrift.

I am a Doric stereotype  
That thing ye'll niver meet  
I whyles chant Buddhist mantras  
An read Rene Magritte.

#### 16. The Fish Gutter's Sang

Haud the fishie bi the gills  
Rug the knife alang its belly  
Banes are staunin up like quills  
Haud yer nose.. it's awfa smelly  
Dauds o fite, o green, o yalla  
Yon's the guts the scurries swalla  
Slivvery blobs like dauds o jeely  
Aa come oot the fishie's belly

Hack its heid aff, an its tail  
Guttin on throw snaw an hail  
Cuts an cracks makk fingers reid  
Satty cloodies sype wi blind  
Fa wad be a fisher quine  
Guttin herrin frae the brine?

#### 17. Let the Records Show

Born fin they'd selt the pram  
Intae a clan comprisin o ae dug  
A father, mither, granny, an a brither  
Fad hae raither hid a metronome instead



'I wish they'd pit her back again, ' he said.

At five I failed the IQ test fur High  
Wis sweir tae tell the wifie, the pig bedd in the sty  
An wadna coont ma nummers up tae ten  
Convinced she maun be glekit nae tae ken.

'How many legs has horsie? ' she speired neist  
I steekt ma mou, rebellion in ma breist  
'No academic bent' wis her summation  
Sae Mile-End Schule gied me an education  
I liked it yonder, fin it poored wi rain  
The lavvies floodit an the class wun hame.

On Sabbath days we traivalled tae a fairm  
Wir kinfolk ained. I powkit in the barn  
Flegged kittlins, howkit hoosies in the strae  
Dinged doon the stooks, caad clockers aff the lay  
An ilkie holiday, wir hale jing bang set furth  
Fur Byron kintra, an a Heilan hearth.

Reared a Scot,  
I learned a leid an wyes the lave forgot.  
A halflin, aged eleeven, gey bumshayvelt  
Tae yon first fantoosh place o lear I traivalled  
Fur five lang years o weary, dreichsome trauchle  
Its genteel teachers tuik me fur a bauchle

Lowshed at saxteen, tae Art schule, rank an roch  
I skippit aff, tae be the neist Van Gogh  
Failed ilkie dam't exam, an wi a grue  
Tuik T.C. trainin syne, tae jink the Broo

Ochone..yon darg wis waur nur Passchendaele  
I'd raither stap ma heid aneth a flail  
Tae thole, day in, day oot, young limmers' jaw  
S'like haein aa yer hams, sliced wi a saw

An sae I merriet. Reared a faimily  
Thinkin twid be the verra dab fur me  
We'll let yon flee stick, wummlin tae the waa  
There's faats aa roon at ony biggin's faa

I wield ma pen. It's sootherin, yon's a fack  
A verse or story niver answers back.

### 18. The Hinmaist Wird

Fin they lower the towes frae day tae the dowie dark  
An the warldly claes I hae, is a timmer sack  
Oh dinna be sweir tae cowp the clay ower me  
Fur its anely a pucklie banes tae the mools ye'll gie!

The braith o' me'll wheeple up far the peesies cry  
Frae the cauld, clean braes o Coull, tae the salmon sky  
An the sicht o' me'll feast richt full on the lang linn's faa  
Far the showders o Lochnagar rise tap o' aa.

Oh dinna be laith tae bid me the last fareweel  
Frae a warld far the weird I dreed wis a cankered dreel  
Fur I'll be the preen-prick frost, that floers in the snaw  
The sang in the uplan burn, in the April thaw.

Tint in the fir-wid's gloamin, there I'll be  
In the mornin dyew that glimmers frae tree tae tree  
An laich far the barley reeshles her gowden gown  
I'll be the glint in the girse at the lang rig's foun.

Daith anely frichtens fowk wi gear tae ain  
Bit I hae naethin tae loss, an aa tae gain.

### 19. Original Sin

Aa ower ae aipple  
The serpent maun crawl in the stoor  
An Eve, the original hoor  
Maun thole the stouns o Hell  
In bearin a bairn

Adam, the puir, glekit body  
Fur haein a haun in the hale concern  
Wis pitten oot o his gairden  
Awa frae his bonnie floers

An luikin doon, wis affrontit  
Tae fin he wis nyaakit  
Sae happit his dockum frae sicht.

Aa richt.

We ken that Eve ettin the aipple  
Caused the hale misfittin affair.  
There's iist the ae thing that I'm winnerin  
FA PIT THE DAMNT THING THERE?

## 20. The Hallierackit Heilander

The hallierackit Heilander is scraggy as a been  
Wi oxterfus o tartan plaid, steekt wi a siller preen  
His tam o shanter faces north, his sporran faces sooth  
He cowps a caber ilkie day... he's dane it frae his youth

He feeds his bagpipes usqueba, they gowp it doon richt weel  
An yon's the wye ye NIVER see a straicht-furred eichtsme reel  
He rins aroon the rugged rucks, a-chasin haggis bags

He's shot a thoosan midgies deid bit och, he niver brags  
He cracks his spunks upon his teeth, he cleans his sheen wi peat  
Caul kail, an oats, an dauds o deer's his daily howp o meat.

Far dis the muirlan mist cam frae?  
The rikk frae aff his pipe! An fin it snaws, ye nicht be sure  
He's dichtin doon his dyke.  
The styew flees here, the styew flees there frae Birse tae Aiberdeen  
There's drifts on ilkie Ben, until his winter cleanin's deen.

## 21. Rain-Cycle

Beltane. The sappy rain  
Is sonsie's buds o leaf  
It plaps like plashy puddocks  
Draps umbrellas o dreeps  
That hett-fit lowp an daunce abune the reef.

Lammas. A thunner-crack

Zig-zags as bricht's a meen  
An aidders back o lichtnin licks the lan  
The droothy yird unsteeks its mou tae sup  
Rain teems doon, reams doon man an muir, ram-stam.  
Lums an winnock-panes are drookt bi the  
Cowpit cup o watter frae abune  
That swalls the taps o toon, the troch o tup.

Mairtinmas. The wechty lift  
Grues sair wi nip-neb wins  
The flooers hing deid  
An birdies sikk tae shift

Yulettime. The Sizzens birl  
Furls rain tae sleet, syne snaw  
The world's grown siller an fite, in the deid-thraa  
Feather, fur an flesh as cleekit in ae vice  
The steeny hairt o rain, that's jeeled tae ice.  
□

## 22. The Lion Rampant

'Oh the lion is aff the flag again  
An reengin the countryside'...  
Bit fin he wun ower the Muckle Mounth  
He didna sikk lang tae bide!  
Fur aabody Furth o the Doric North  
Wis a bitticky antiqueerian  
Wi a Phd. in a Lallans key  
As modern as Shakespearean

Hid he bin a literary breet  
He'd bin shipped tae cauld Siberia  
Gin he'd roared oot 'fa' instead o 'Wha'  
The purists wad hae hysteria

Oh the academe, wi its bee-bunnet theme  
(Weel awa frae the butts an bens)  
Howk wards lang deid, tae stap in a screed  
Nae ane in a thoosan kens.

'Ochone, ' cries the lion, 'Fit a mineer

Ye've nane o ye cheenged a bit  
Wi yer wee cliques there, an yer wee cliques here  
Yer aa sae thrawn, an yer aa sae sweir  
That nane o ye see fur aa yer steer  
Scots is a spikk, nae Haly Writ.'

'The Bible's read on the Sabbath day  
(Or a twa, three times a year)  
Maist ay bi a priest or a dominie  
Fa's steepit his hams in lear

Fin I wis young, man, the guid Scots tongue  
Roon Buchan, an Mar an Mearns  
Wis alive in the mou (Nae a screive fur a few  
A museum piece fur bairns)

Ye'll nae unite, gin ye fleer an flyte  
Ower the verra banes o the spikk  
Faith, ilkie clan hid its ain tartan  
An focht fur its ain peat rikk!

Like Chaiman Mao, maun we AA kow-tow  
In yer cultural reevolution?  
Maun we aa sup brose in the same size dose  
An takk lessons in elocution?

Maun we AA weir broon, an a Lallans goun  
Maun we AA learn Scots frae a buikie?  
If yon's the plan, fur the new Scotsman  
He can steek it up his bihoochie!

Maun AA Scots boo tae the Embro ploo?  
Can a spurgie cheep like a teuchit?  
It's the same auld meen, tho ye spell it mune  
Ye're a wee thing weet..We're drookit.

Gin ye canna agree tae differ' (quo he)  
'It's back tae ma flag I'm gaun.'  
An he lowpit awa, mane, virr, an claw  
Wi a guid corn-kister sang!

## 23. Yule

Yule.0 a suddenty,  
A robin blossoms like a poppy floer  
A rodden wags its airms  
(A timmer daddylanglegs, tiltin at the haar)  
Sun's wizzened ee glowers doon  
Deid parks haud taiglet sheep  
Dreich, dour an soor  
Birks staun Bach-broon in glaur.

Far deil the birdies threep,  
A burnie tummles, thirled noo tae Winter  
Its ilkie drap, a linn.

A deein rattle is the chitterin whin  
Time skreichs, a brukken winmill, hingin bi a threid  
Day rochles in the thrapple, jeels the bluid.

The sabbin ocean reels an rives aneth the lift's fite mawe.  
Waves strive like sodjers, in the battle-thraw.

Yuletide, a carlin-wife, is  
Wirkin her witcherie, ower ane an aa.

## 24. Tomnaveries (Bronze Age Circle, Coull)

Ilkie fit is reeted in the yird  
Ilkie heid's a scaffold tae a cloud  
Yon circle bides unbrukken  
Bi thunner, drucht,  
Or weety, sleety rain.  
Ilkie steen luiks inwird  
Nae chink in the ayebydan, clinkit chyne  
Far sabbin wins makk eerie, fearie mane.  
Auncient an eildritch as a widda's dirge  
The circle croons the knowe;  
Weird as a warlock's forge

It stauns alane.  
A wummlin wirm, the mist wyves ben its weft

The faither-steen yokes noontime pouer o sun  
The mither, milky bi meenlicht,  
Is o aa warmth bereft.  
Thon twa, the muckle flankers  
Haive their lang shaddas far the corbies cooer  
Dream their derk widdendremes

There is nae yett inbye...nae yett ootower  
The littlins' spirk o life  
Wis forged ower a flint altar  
Weirin the wechty halter  
O eternity.  
A birthin bed they cudna jink nur flee  
Preened tae bitter air  
That fussles winter-blawn  
Throw their unhaly lair

The circle rears its ghaistly hull o been  
A tomb... or temple cast in Druid steen.

ncy

Skailed satt..  
A thoombfu flang in Auld Nick's ee  
Ower the left showder, dispatched swippertly  
Will some mishanter stop  
Cheengin the weird yell dree

Dinna weir claes o green  
Or sure's a cat's a hairy breet  
Ye'll rig in murnin blaik Afore they're deen.

At the new meen  
Niver glower ben glaiss  
Lest aa yer fortunes soor  
An turn tae aisse.

At Halloween,  
Wauk softly,  
Fur the fooshty graveyaird kists  
Are staunin teem.

Mind, speerits canna cross a rinnin bum  
Efter a fearty quine, a fleggit gurin.  
Be cannie, fur yon watter weel nicht haud  
The eildritch meer that bides aneth the flood  
Wha tries tae tryst doomed watchers frae the shore.  
Takk tent, an plant a rodden bi the door.

Fin midnight brings the New year tae the Auld  
Let nae fair-heidit first-fit ower the fauld  
Or twal-month o ill-favour ye nicht win  
An niver bring inbye the floerin whin  
Fur yalla breem's the feys accursed floer  
Twill pyson the guidluck in ony boer.

Dyod lass, ye're ugsome. First o May, rin oot  
An dicht the dyew o mornin ower yer snoot  
Tae gie yer ill-faurt face a bonnie sheen  
Or better still...gin a fite horse ye've seen  
Wish fur a fire-new physog aatgegither  
An buy yersel a kist-fu o fite heather

## 26. Ma Saul an I gaed Waukin

Ma saul an I gaed waukin  
The burnie flowed alang  
We gaithered rowth o ikons  
Tae steek intae a dwaum

Ma saul an I stude newsin  
'Oh haud the meen fur me  
An lowse the tows that tie the tides  
Tae her cauld tyranny'

Ma saul tuik wing an left me  
The wheels o wirk birred roon  
A rose wis bit a ferlie  
Fin as the dwaums dinged doon

The rose swalled tae a sunrise  
An ben a sunbeam's crack  
Alang the howes o fancy



Ma saul cam dauncin back

27. A Drap o Bluid Faas in the Wine

The bairnie at its mither's breist  
Bides in a bield it sune maun tyne  
A gorblie, cowpit frae its reest  
A drap o blind faas in the wine

The halflin cairries at his core  
The mortal guff will gar him dwine  
A ratten chitters at his door  
A drap o bluid faas in the wine

A lass pits on a gowden ring  
A may, becam a merriet quire  
A lintie clippit i' the wing  
A drap o bluid faas in the wine

Sae suddent, as a glimsk o sun  
That teets atween the derksome pine  
Life's feenished e'r its scarce begun  
A drap o bluid faas in the wine

28. Linn o Quoich

The Linn o Quoich comes rinkin doon  
Far chieftains pledged their bluid in wine  
Tae raise the clans, baith laird an loon  
Fur princelins o the Stewart line.  
An in yon lanely, curlew's airt  
The deidly pact concludit, syne.

Aft in ma bairnhood in yon glen  
The bonnie burnie teemed a gill  
Aroon ma watters played  
A tackie game, as littlins will.

The waves war saft. They skelped an skirped  
An skailed, as loud I skirled in glee

Wi shared delicht, we lowped like troots  
Raisin a stooshie eidently.

It's forty year an mair sinsyne  
It caught me in its glimmrin net  
Tho noo I hirple, hippit, crine,  
The Linn's as swack's a littlin yet.

## 29. Hinna Gotta

Hinna gotta bairnie  
Hinna gotta lass  
Hinna gotta hope 'n' Hell o  
Gettin ony brass

Nae wirk fur young fowk  
Wytin in the queue  
Staunin wi the lay-affs  
Hingin roon the Broo

Sez tae the cooncil  
'Hae ye a hoose fur me? '  
'Come back fin yer ninety  
Ye'll hae priority..

If ye'd a timmer leg  
Or a babby in a pram  
Ye micht staun a chance son  
Gang hame tae yer mam.'

Main disna wint me  
It's fecht, fecht, fecht  
Mebbe she wis young hersel  
In echten-echty echt

Dog-pish, hashish  
Aa I wint's a hame  
Jist grant me ae wish  
A place tae caa ma ain  
Ony kindo cubbyhole  
A place tae coorie doon

Then ye widna hae tae thole  
Me dossin roon the toon.

Birds hae their nesties  
Biggit in a tree  
Gerron mister Cooncil man  
Bigg a hoose fur me!

30. Scots Owersetts frae the Elek Buik o Oriental Verse...

KOREAN YUN SON-DO (1587-1671)

SANG O THE FIVE FIERS

Foo mony fiers hae I?  
Coont them...  
Watter & stane,  
Bamboo an pine sae braw  
The risin meen on the eastern Ben  
Weel-lued, a frien anna. We niver strive  
Nae need say I  
Tae hae mair fiers nor five.

MALAY TWA TRADITIONAL MALAY PANTUNS

They weir bangles on their airms  
I weir bangles roon ma queats.  
They say, 'Dinna dae yon, ye tyke.'  
I dae fit I damnt weel like! □

Aaeach! Jobbit ma fit  
On a stob in the bog.  
Aaeach! Hurtit ma een  
Watchin her briests stot  
Unner her sark.

TAMIL KIN (ORERURAVANAR)

Like a deer, caught in a tinchel  
On the braid fite, satty shore

Flayed hide turned outside in

Ye may rin,  
Taste freedom sweet...  
Bidin wi kinsmen  
Anely chynes the feet.

## TAGALOG (PHILLIPINES)

### Hoose-Warmin Sang

Auld caimb, auld caimb,  
Untaigle the raivelled thochts  
O them wi'in, tae guid frae wirse  
As ye've whyles caimbed ma hair  
Fan yirdit wi dubs an girse,  
May they fa cross this yett  
Be pure in thocht  
May they niver differ in ocht  
Be smeeth's deep-rinnin watter  
Calm's a nicht May-vrocht  
Watter in the coggie  
Be cweel's a widlan spring  
Be still's an auncient Ben  
Be saft's the eastern win  
In the Simmer sizzen  
That they aneth this reef  
Be ayewis couthie an kind,  
An open-lugged tae rizzen

Sweel oot the orra mou  
Keep harns free o teint  
Sae claik, daybrak tae gloam  
Bring quate content.

Bleeze brichtly, licht  
Hansel this hoose  
Fleg shaddas awa  
That derk thochts may takk flicht  
Nae deave the fowk inby  
Sikkin a bield ahin this waa

Licht the chikks, broos, heids  
O the fowk that bide herein  
Keep them an their bairnies' bairns  
Free o stramash an din.

#### CHINESE 8 LINE SONNET

HAN YU (768-824) (LATE TANG)

#### A WIZZENT TREE

Nae twig, nae leaf on the auld tree  
Ayont the hairm o cranreuch or o win  
A chiel cud wanner ben the hole in its teem wame  
Ettercaps wummle aneth its beilin bark  
Its anely ludger's a taedsteel that dees in a morn  
Birds veesit, nae langer, at gloamin  
Still yon timmer can ay fire kinnlin...  
Nae sikkin, as yet, tae be anely the gap at its hairt

TANG YIN (1470-1523)

#### SCREIVED FUR A PICTUR

Yestreen, the gean  
Tint its floers amang draps o rain  
The faa o petals, sae slicht, sae easy-bladdit  
Wis bonnie ayont aa wirds

Ma dearie, waukenin early,  
Quit her bedroom  
Haudin a keekin-glaiss  
Tae admire her peintit chikks.

She speirs, 'Fit think ye's bonnier?  
The petals' luiks or mine? '  
An I repon, 'They win bi innocence.'

At yon, her birse is up  
The quine winna allow  
Deid floers surpass a leevin wummin

Teirin a neivefu o blossom  
Tae haive at ma heid -  
'The nicht, ma jo, ' roars she,  
'Sleep wi the flooers! '

31. OWERSETTINS FRAE 'LIGHT OF LIGHTS', AN ANTHOLOGY OF  
SPIRITUAL POETRY FROM THE ASHRAM OF SRI AUROBINDO,  
PONDICHERRY, INDIA

'Let the wee trauchled life-god inby  
Rive his cloots frae the still sowel  
His tiger-strips o guidness an coorseness  
His stramash & glamourie, his thole & wae'.

Sri Aurobindo... 'Musa Spritus'

'Knowe efter knowe we dimmed an noo  
We spied the hinmaist muckle broo  
The towerin crag that nane hae trod  
Ae stride, an aa is lift, an God.'

Sri Aurobindo: 'One Day the Little More'.

32. OWERSET IN SCOTS FRAE EXTRACTS IN 'PRAYER HANDBOOK 1988-  
ENCOUNTERS'

'Enjoy the yird doucely  
Enjoy the yird doucely  
Fur gin the yird be bladdit  
It canna be made hale  
Enjoy the yird doucely'□  
(from a West African Yoruba poem)

'The Ian is oor mither  
The bluid o oor bein  
Oor speerit- guide, oor kin-makk  
Tae us, the Ian is leevin.

We are a part o Ian  
An Ian is pairt o us.'□  
(Australian Aborigine)

#### JAPANESE BARDS

LADY ONO NO KOMACHI (834-880)

Mindin on him,  
I sleepit, anely tae see him  
Rise up afore me sae lythely  
Hid I kent it wis anely a dream  
I'd niver hae waukened sae blythely

.  
Floors crine, their hues dwinnle awa  
Ochone, life is hummlin  
I dree ma weird in the warld  
Wi the lang rain hunmlin

ANONYMOUS (PRE 905)

If anely, fin ye war telt  
Auld Age wis at haun  
Ye cud sneck the door wi a dyst  
Cry 'Nae at hame'  
Sae daein, jink the tryst!

#### ZEN DEATH POEM

Fower an fifty years  
I've strung the lift wi starns  
Noo I lowp throw,  
Aa's caad tae crockanation!  
Dogen

JAPANESE HAIKU Owersett frae Inglis translations

Strivin... Ma clachan;  
Kirk bell, Dragonflees  
Winter win. Dane, fite waas.  
Kito Buson

Reeshlin thegither —Auld puil.  
Heids o barley, Dwp-splyter!  
Butterflee. A puddock!  
... Lady Kana-Jo Buson

Steadin's brunt doon. Bens o Yoshino...  
Noo, Drappin petals,  
I can see the meen! Quaffin doon the lift.  
Masahide Buson

### 33. OWERSET IN SCOTS, FRAE EXTRACTS IN 'PRAYER HANDBOOK 1988 – ENCOUNTERS'

'I wis angeret fur I hid nae sheen.  
Syne, I met a chiel fa hid nae feet.' □  
(Chinese Saying)

'A caunle-licht is a protest at midnight.  
It is a Wee Free.  
It says tae the derkness,  
'Wi ye, I'll argy-bargy' □  
Samuel Rayan, India

### 34. THE LEDDIE SHE RIDES JIMP N' SMA

\*The leddie she rides jimp n' sma  
Jimp n' sma, imp n' sma  
The leddie she rides jimp n' sma  
Bit the gentleman he rides  
Creels n' aa creels n' aa creels n' aa\*

The sheltie he rides weel on snaw  
Weel on snaw, weel on snaw  
The sheltie he rides weel on snaw  
Bit ower the dykes he disna!



The shire he rides heich an braw,  
Heich an braw, heich an braw  
The shire he rides heich an braw  
A shilpit steed he isna!

The cuddy he roared oot hee-haw  
Oot hee-haw, oot hee-haw  
The cuddy he roared oot hee-haw  
A clivvir breet he wisna!

### 35. THE HINDU & THE PANDA

'Ye wint mair savoir-faire, Jamal', they said  
An gied the job tae Willy Bloggs instead  
A peely-wally eejit, bit I gaiter  
The chiel fa did the hirin kent his father.

'Jamal', I speired, 'Dis it nae weir ye doon  
Bein short-cheenged because yer colour's broon?  
Foo div YE view the natives o this place? '  
Lauchin, quo he 'We're aa ae human race  
Tho some's as couthie as an anaconda.  
A British wifie looks fell like a panda  
Tae me, fin rain his blootered her mascara.  
Whether yer name be Smith or Macnamara  
If ye be under par, or deaved wi ills  
Ye turn as green's a puddock roon the gills  
Wi hair like biled tripe, or limp spaghetti  
As sexually invitin as a yeti...  
An gin yer blate, ye blush tomatae-reid  
Gyang grey as wattered parridge fin yer deid.  
Leavin aside yer spikk, claes, incidentals  
Ye luik the same tae me, ye occidentals.  
Bit fit's the odds? Gin Hindus gar ye cowk  
Scrat in aneth the skin, we're anely fowk  
Sae dinna peety me. My trials are mony  
Bit I've mair lives tae come... ye, hinna ony

IE

\*There wis a little moosie  
An it left its little hoosie  
An it sneakit up, an creepit up  
Intil the baimie's bosie\*

It powked its pynted nosie  
In the bosie warm n' cosie.  
An it curled up an kittled up  
Wi taesies reid n' rosy.

The bairn let oot a skirl  
Gart the moosie's luggies dirl  
The moose did faa. It ran awa  
Bit thanked him fur the hurl!

### 36. STINKIE

•Chin-chinnie, mou merry  
Ee winkie, broo brinkie  
An ower the hillies An awa tae stinkie\*

The stinkie is a fearsome place  
The hippens hap frae sicht  
An whyles, the bairnie skirls tae say  
The stinkie needs a dicht

### BITIN GAME

\*Knock on the doorie,  
Teetie in  
Lift the sneckie  
Dicht the feeties  
An walkie in\*

A bairn's mou  
Is stappit fu  
Wi nesty raws o teeth  
An gin it nips yer fingers  
Ye'll be heard at Monyfeith!

### 38. A THISTLE LUIKS AT A DRUNK MAN

A thistle luiks upon a chiel deid-drunk  
Aa pish an blethers... fu o fusky-spunk  
'His wife will bairn nae Wallace wi yon randy  
Faith aa he's fit tae play is cock-a-bendy  
The Flooers o the Forest's wede awa  
Scot's patriotism's peed agin the waa'  
The thistle murned.  
'The maist o men's aa mou  
Teem-tabards, T.V. tots, or ram-stam-fu.'

### 39. THE PUNK

Ye throwither sumph. Fur aa yer wirth  
Ye sud hae bin drooned in a pail at birth!  
Ay.. turn yer back on's.. powk yer plonks  
Yer heid sud be doon in yer science buiks

Spikkin o heids.... ye needna glower  
Ye'd hae gotten a snodder clip wi a mower  
Isn't it cauld, tae be scrapit bare  
O aa bit the stibble o fit wis hair?

It's nae. It's the fashion. A croon like a neep?  
Fa'd hae thocht I'd hae bred a sheep?  
The neebours speired if the tirrorivee  
Wis the stereo stoonin, or world war 3;  
The din is threatenin tae raise the reef  
It's a peety yer thrawn, as weel as deaf.

Bide ooto yer room? Stap tee yer door?  
Sez you, fa's rikkin frae ilkie pore  
O fags, like a squib or steamin sharn  
Puffin awa like a bleezin barn

I've declared yer room a disaster zone.  
While I'm about it, leave the phone  
On the hook. The wires maun gey near melt  
Bi the time yer tales hiv aa bin telt.

I ken that laddies pyocher an spit  
Bit dinna dae it far fowk maun sit!  
An fit's yon pictur abune yer ludo..  
O fowk, bare-nyaakit, attemptin judo?  
Biology is it? Lord be here,  
It's a winner they dinna faa throw the fleet!  
Ye cud grow tatties aneth yon nails  
Is ONYTHING waur nur teenage males?  
Ye didna sikk tae be born, ye say?  
I'd hae raither hid jaunice onyday  
If ye'd bin on trial fae a mairket staa  
I'd hae taen ye hame fur a wikk or twa  
Taen yer measure an pit ye back  
Fur a tabby cat, an a Tarot pack  
An a crystal baa, that I nicht jink  
Bein sib tae the likes o a teenage mink

N' MOU

Gritty, nutty, sheltie-broon  
A guff o coffee lowps the yett  
A furly, birly snake o rikk  
Twines frae the kitchie, birsslin hett

Wersh in the mou, yon seerip, soor  
Jeelip o potion fur a hoast  
As nippy's ony crocodile  
That slidders aff the Afrik coast

Draigit wi daisies, droggt wi dyew  
A tapsalteerie bout o hye  
The cuttit girse cowpt ower the park  
Yoams in the sunlight doon the ley

A classroom thrang wi strang an swyte  
Its brods are choked wi chacky stoor  
Wi fooshty hose an clarty claes  
The air catched in yon staa, is soor

Leather. A lick o linseed ile

Tae swacken hide an soople threid  
Sae rich an roon the whiff o tan  
On sheen an satchel, squirrel-reid

Fuskey's a thummelfu o flame  
Kitties the queats an fires the face  
Peat broon, or clear's a muirlan burn  
That jibbles doon, like leddy's lace

Dulse is a stank o orra trock  
Sea-midden slivers in a broth  
O satt. Rank codgut sweels inby  
A bree o putrefeein froth

Yird yarkit open bi the pleu  
Yields up a yoam tae skirlin gulls  
O Winter's daith, an Simmer's growth  
Far breem reets mell like shipwrecked hulls

An gin I steek ma neb mang thyme  
(Dried nippick o a mountain's braith)  
The reef abune me dwines tae mist  
The carpet, blooms wi fern, aneth.

#### 40. OF PHARAOHS AND SARDINES

Tut-ankh-amen, heid-yin o the dunes  
Cairriet a veritable Tesco's  
O wine, fruit, guid fite breid  
Doon tae the fooshtie dwellin o the deid.  
(Fur iver an ay yon wizzened runkled prune  
Embalmed loon, maun watch an enless matinee  
O hieroglyphics. Same show ilkie day)

Tinned like a sprat, A deity hapt in gowd  
(Neither at hame in the world  
Nur yet in heevin.)  
In pit-mirk limbo, happit in hippens  
Clartit wi peintit symbols o the leevin  
Nailed doon wioot an opener in his shroud.

I've kent langtime nae pooches line a kist  
Nae mochie mausoleum bigg fur me  
Na. I'll be grist tae the mill  
Pickle sardines an Pharaohs gin ye will  
I'll gie ma braith tae cloud  
Ma flesh tae glaur  
Gang far ben wi the yird  
Nae Lazarus-lowps I'll makk... ye hae ma wurd  
I'll nae flegg fearty bairns wi orra duddies  
Waggin been shanks wi mort-claiths teem o hurdies.

#### 41. THE GOWFER For Charles King

There's some say 'Lowp'  
An t'ithers, "Foo far? "  
In poleetical maitters ye maun shakk a leg  
Tae satisfee cooncil, constituent craitors  
Feenancial dictators, ye hae tae be gleg.

Publishin poetry, or heistin a bard  
Is as fashious an fyky as drawin the teeth  
Frae an ill-naturet futterat  
A Sisyphus darg  
That's muckle ill-thankit, frae Lewis tae Leith

Gowf's the remeid. Ae guid skelp at the baa  
Doon the girse tae the green, till it's pottit an hame  
Fair sherpens the smeddum that's nocht tae succeed  
In ceevic affairs far the aim is the same  
Tae win yer objectives an Laurels, ye maun  
Gyang wallop straicht furrit, ay jinkin the san.

#### 42. THE SHELT

Wis there IVER a bairn tae heed fit it's telt?  
Fur the 99th time, YER NAE GETTIN A SHELT  
Tae prance like a laird roon a show or gymkhana  
I'd raither ye speired fur a snake, or pirhana.

I bocht ye a rubbit. An fa redds it oot

Picks the flechs frae its lugs an the dubs frae its snoot?  
Far war ye fin Thumper lowped ooto his pen  
Chased the Morrison's cat roon the lamppost an then  
Wi the wyle o Houdini slid unner their gate  
An ett their chrysanthemums doon at the rate  
O a combine in hairst, takkin aathin clean in  
Veggies, flooers an girse, wioot dichtin his chin?

Ye roared fur a gerbil. Finiver it come  
It tuik aff like a rocket, an shot up the lum  
Fin we raikit it oot wi a poker, its tail  
An its fuskers war blaik as the coal in the pail  
It wis cairtit awa wi a terrible hoast  
As stiff, broon, an mochie's Methuselum's toast.

Neist, ye MAUN hae a hamster.  
A whyle, ye war quate  
I deared oot its piddles.  
It cockit in state  
Ye bosied an clapt it the bigsy wee moose  
Syne ye drapt it. It chawed aa the wires in the hoose  
It connached the TV.. clean blootered the screen  
An drooned in the rinse o the washin machine.

The goldfish ye grat fur cud lowp like a Rusky  
Especially efter ye dosed it wi fusky  
It lowpit sae heich tapsalteerie it fell  
An efter yon dunt, it wis niver itsel  
It lay an it chittered.. a wee, nervous beastie  
A shakk in its tail an a fleg in its briestie.

Twa days wi the guinea-pigs aa ye'd agree  
Noo it skirls aa its lane, like a stikkit banshee  
It's wyes lavatories minky at maist  
Staunin up tae its oxters, in recyded waste.

Bit ye maun hae a shelt.  
Oh, ye MAUN hae a shelt  
An the lave o the pets can ging flee, or be selt

Sae, far wid it bide? In the greenhouse? The lobby?  
Gin YE hid yer wye, lady, I'd be the cuddy!

### 43. THE DINOSAUR

A dinosaur! A dinosaur!  
We niver saw the like afore  
The beastie makks the bairnies roar  
Frae Sumburgh tae Singapore!

A dinosaur! His muckle moo  
Has teeth as lang as knives,  
An fin he roars the tabby  
Losses as its seeven lives!

A dinosaur! His ilkie snore  
Caas continents ajee,  
An fin he piddles lochs arise  
As braid's the Irish sea!

A dinosaur! Fit dis he ett? A herd o coos fur tea!  
He sweels it doon wi a lagoon,  
O vats o barley bree!

A dinosaur! His head's amang  
The aeroplanes an stars  
His legs are pylons... tail's as lang's  
A traffic jam o cars!

A dinosaur's a fearsome breet  
Fin it lies doon tae claw...  
Bit fin it daunces... hae a care  
Skyscrapers stert tae faa!

### 44. TAKK THE BUCKLES FRAE YER SHEEN (Traditional verse, sung to Kelvin Grove)

Tak the buckles frae yer sheen, bonnie lassie-oh  
For yer dauncin days are deen, bonnie lassie-oh  
Tho they say yer feet are flat  
Ye are nane the waur o that  
Takk the buckles frae yer sheen, bonnie lassie-oh



#### 45. THE TATTIEBOGLE

The tattiebogle wags his heid  
Derk shadda ower the yird  
He's hingin sterk an crucifeed  
The dreid o ilkie bird

His jaiket pooch, a moosie hauds  
His kyte's a kirn o strae  
An ben the air his fooshty duds  
Gyang wallop, nicht an day

The sentry o the dubby park  
Preened tae a timmer post  
Ye mind, fin Winter made its merk  
I sweir I heard him hoast!

#### 46. BALLAD

Oh cauld's the doonrush o a burn  
In Winter's iron thraa  
Bit caulder still's a merriege bed  
Fin luv his stowen awa

Far niver gowden sun luiks doon  
Sae derk's the gairden boorer  
Bit derker yet's the hairt o man  
Far skaith an sorra coorer.

Oh deep's a dreich an dowie loch  
Far salmon niver sweems  
Bit deeper still's the cruel mire  
That smores a bairn's dreams

Oh I wad don the gown sae green  
Wi lilies hap ma heid  
An like Tam Lin, the elfin knicht  
Step ower the burn o bluid

That rins atween this eirdly world  
An kingdom o the fey  
Far niver mortal feet may gyang  
Nor mortal thochts bring wae.

47. Daybrak.

The storm beeriet  
In the snaw  
: frae Shiro (1742-1813)

In a doon-pish in June  
The reef is dreepin  
As I gyang tae the wattery:  
frae Kanro

Ontae the cauld san'  
Waves cam breengin  
Ooto pit-mirk  
: frae Aro (1879-1951)

Petals skitter an faa  
Frae the boughs  
Ben the meen's physog:  
frae Mokkoku

Tae the sun-rise abune the sea  
A cock craws  
Its braith, rikkin  
: frae Takeo (1908-)

A drap o dyew  
Gaed the ant  
A stammygaster  
: frae Boshu (1900-)

Snaw in the gloamin  
Taps at the yett  
The soun is saft:  
frae Joyo

Ower the stanes  
Traivels the sang  
O the winter burn  
frae Ito

Waukin forrit wi a new-cut flouer  
Intae the foreneen sun  
Barfit  
: frae Masao

ER

Near Mairtimas.. the lowerin lift  
Is blae's the breistie o a doo  
That rochles in the shargeret wid  
Far thrissledown wauchts by like oo

Crammosie, yalla, tod-reid-broon  
The lowsin leaves yark aff the bough  
Takk flicht an flee, like chitterin birds  
That brak frae birk taps, roon the howe.

The burns rin swack, like rowth o troot  
Cauld, lowpin waves atween the trees  
October wi its burnin brand  
Has touched an kinnelt tae a bleeze

An ilkie breet maun theek its reef  
An hap its heid afore the win  
That scythes the bracken on the brae  
Tummles the strae, an shakks the whin.

There's lear ye dinna larn in buiks  
Nae leevin thing can thole blin smore  
Coorse Winter fuspers frae the neuks  
'The world is deein. Snib yer door.'

Sheena Blackhall

# Backdrop

The sun has painted a square on the bedroom wall  
Her small hand touches the surface  
Her eyes widen as the finger ghosts

She has just noticed the follower.  
The strange distorted follower  
That is shadow.  
'Shadow, ' I say.  
'Shadow.'

Turning, she toddles over to her cushion  
Unzips it, pulls out fistfuls of white fluff  
'Cloud, ' she says, 'cloud.'  
Her small mouth curves like a melon slice  
Showing the white seeds of her teeth

Sheena Blackhall

# Bannockburn 1314

Stirlin Castle lay in Inglis hauns  
Beseiged bi Scots, a biggin strang an stoot  
Edward, the Bruce's brither, ringed it roon  
Ettled tae sterve the furreign sodjers oot.

The Englishman, King Edward traivelled North.  
Wi wechty cavalry, Welsh bowmen, infantry  
Weapons, siege engines, buglers, meat an wines,  
Wi Knichts an Barons, prood clanjamphrey

Aa marched tae Stirlin, takkin the Roman road.  
The Bruce placed men wi widlan at their back  
He chuse his grun fu weel. A nerra gap  
Atween the trees, should ony challenge, brakk

He set his pikemen heich on Gillies Hill,  
Close whaur the the road fords ower the Bannock Burn.  
Inbye the wids he blockit paths wi boughs,  
Leavin the Inglis little room tae turn

Tae cowp the Inglis shelties should they charge  
He howked pits, an happit them wi sticks,  
An syne, he wyted, wi his waa o spears.  
As stinch a waa as ony vrocht wi bricks

Fecht in brukk oot, the Scottish pikemen held  
The beast o War, sherpened its teeth an cleuks  
Like ninepins Inglis cavalry wis felled  
Men crawled tae dee wi fiers, in bluidy neuks

The Inglis forces crossed the Bannock Burn  
Henry De Bohun, a young Inglis knight  
Spied a lane horseman on the Scottish front  
Weirin a croon, the Scots King in plain sicht

Forrit De Bohun rade wi deidly lance  
As Robert raised his battle-aixe alaft  
Stude in his stirrups, jinked the comin cloor  
An split the foe-man's skull-bane fore an aft

Thon nicht the English camped, Bruce planned ahead.  
Ower fu o deep consarns tae brakk breid  
The hinmaist fecht wad be upon the morn  
The verra day the Baptist, John, wis born.

Bi day-brakk, aa the Scots war in position.  
King Edward, saw the Scotmen kneel in prayer

An leuch, nae kennin they socht Heiven's blessin  
Thinkin they prigged for mercy, ooto fear

Straicht ooto Revelations, aa in reid  
Horseman o War breenged oot on fiery steed

The Bruce's pikemen, stinch as porcupine  
Cowped Inglis shelts at ilkie gory meetin  
The Scotsmen focht wi steel doon ilkie spine  
Welsh bowmen skewered their Inglis fiers retreatin.

The bonnie Bannock burn wis smored wi deid  
An ran for mony days wi sodjers' bluid  
Edward tuik ship fur hame, a beaten cur  
Fecht in for freedom gies the weakest, virr  
An smeddum, tae rise up an takk a staun  
Strivin fur liberty an native lan.

Sheena Blackhall

# Bannockburn Crow

We crows saw the deadly shower of arrows  
The soup of brains and sweat  
The gralloched spearmen  
Turning the moss sour.

Terrified horses churned the buttercups  
Into a golden pulp amongst the lardy flesh of the dead  
Rich pickings for us crows  
There was a clamour of rooks  
On the back of a Welsh archer  
A screech of gulls on the spilled  
Bellies of pack horses

At night a stare of owls  
Watched moonlit women  
Stripping the field of trophies

Later, in our parliament of crows  
We talked of this, how men  
Tear open men, providing  
A feast for the winged ones and the worms.

Sheena Blackhall

# Barbi

Her fingers are merged, this plaything, woman-doll  
She requires help to stand on her tiny feet.

A permanent virgin, she wears neither nipple nor navel  
No plastic surgeon has humanised her frame

Oh wasp-waisted slinky Miss,  
Sheathed in a long cascade of peroxide hair  
How blue your eyes!  
How terribly chic your accessories!  
How like a Hollywood totem pole on legs!

Her breasts are indestructible  
This Kali of the nursery  
Her form, her face, will never age one jot  
A plastic babe whose lipstick smile won't smudge

Yes, Barbie won her place in the USA time capsule  
One day, exhumed, she'll puzzle archeologists

A mummy? Votive offering? Fertility piece?  
Latter-day Maenad?  
An all American female clothes horse dummy  
No sweat. No worries. Every hair in place

Sheena Blackhall



# Barley

As a child, I loved the sacks of seed  
That slumbered in the barn like slack-mouthed toads.

I'd plunge small wrists for pleasure in the amber pellets,  
Squander fistfuls from a ten-foot drop  
Onto a dirt-caked yard, for hens to peck.

At ploughing time, I'd watch the broken sod  
Topple before the blade, wide to the frosty skies;  
Eye-slits of soil, overshot by screaming gulls.

At sowing time, the land closed in, grew secret,  
Corn suckled sustenance within that great, black, pod.

On lark-swung days,  
When webs were bead-strung dew,  
My eyes would glisten at the sight  
Of mists of just-new green,  
The field, a beetle splitting wings in flight.

Daily the ranks crept up, banners unfurling —  
Delicate tips of grains, with nails of polished pearl,  
Thin beards, uncurling  
Under a bronze sun; braided crowns, tossed haughty,  
Top-heavy tribal knots, stood mustering,  
Clustering, whispering reedy tales to one another.

Most musical, they sang all sweetly-humming summer...  
At night, each was a lamplighter, pale as murmuring ghost.

Then came the harvest, turning wheel of the cart.  
The field, alive with farmhands, whistling, cursing,  
Grey rats scuttling; combine clacking, cutting,  
Chewing the barley up and into store, a golden pour  
Of grain, raining through shafts of sun.  
Children capering, women bringing tea in flasks  
With baskets of buttered scones.  
A trampling, gleaning, getting... the final transaction  
Of the farming year.

And I a part of it,  
Shouting, hurrahing, leaping from dyke to dyke  
With snapping, racing, dogs  
The world gone drunk with the joy of it,  
That was the way of it.

Then the others left. The hush was haunting.  
Alone on the dusty stage, the players packed and stacked,  
Oh, it was daunting  
That empty silence, there, on the plundered hill,  
The harvest won, and lost.

The still field seemed forsaken,  
Lamenting its children, taken.  
I wanted to kneel and thank it -  
The land from which we fed -  
But lacked the knowledge; touched it  
With a reverent hand instead;  
The torn stubble scratched me  
And I bled.

Sheena Blackhall

# Basket Weaver Of Ludlow

The basket weaver of Ludlow  
Is tanned as a twist of tobacco

He sits on a small stool,  
His willows around him,  
Spokes and strands and stakes  
Shoots and knife and bodkin  
Like a mediaeval magpie  
A maker of nests and straw

Here, amongst houses of timber and wattle  
He is absorbed in his work  
Like a mother French-pleating  
A much loved daughter's hair.

Buildings of concrete and glass  
Could be aeons away  
And yesterday, a side-step into light

Sheena Blackhall

# Bat

A bat flew into my room... and I recoiled,  
My arms shielding my head instinctively.  
Blind, winged, blundering, mole,  
It clung by a sliver of claw to a far corner.  
Vile stain of a grave umbrella!  
Repulsive! A gibbet-rag — inert, inert and ugly;  
A sack of foulness. Sudden, a searching moonbeam  
Picked it out. Two leaden flames its ears,  
Perfectly formed. The furry beat of its heart,  
A feather on a pagoda, pattering soft as rain.

Poor pipistrelle, in your pauper's membrane,  
Wafer-thin as gauze... the huddled wings  
Coiffing the small collapse of your  
Smokey, ash-bud face...  
Lean monk in perpetual Lent,  
Your brothers are swooping, fat,  
In moon-milk lappings of flight!  
Hermit, your dim, round eyes  
Are begging bowls of beads. I cannot tell,  
As you lamprey-cling to your ache in the niche of the night,  
If you are a Jinn, a Jonah, malignant troglodyte, —  
Kaleidoscope of feeling, —  
A peeling, shriven sprite,  
Or a hurt, gone quiet, healing.

Sheena Blackhall

# Battlefield Casualty

Battlefield Casualty

Poem inspired by the Letters of Lieutenant Norman Cecil Down, 1 / 4 Gordon Highlanders, during the 1914-1918 War

Moonlight

A yawning hole, 50 feet deep  
The dead stretched on its sides  
Like Vesuvius victims

Inner gas explosions

Cause one or two bodies to twitch  
Sliding into the butcher's shambles  
Down at the mired base  
The whine of bombs and battle draws ever nearer

Through the driving snow on the rutted path below  
The pipers march, playing 'The Athol Highlanders'  
Behind them, the struggling, muddy tail of  
Gunners, snipers, bombers  
Civilians learning the bloody games of war  
And mules dragging supplies,  
Their hot breath white in the air

The ghosts of these battalions  
Linger on, in Calais, the Menin Road  
The heights of Hooge,  
The slaughterhouse of Sanctuary Wood  
Hill 20 and the Bluff,  
The mist of ruins shattered in yesterday's Ypres.

My father's cousin John died in this place  
Caught mid-joke, blown into obliteration  
No funeral costs, a name upon a wall

Sheena Blackhall

# Be Sure To Eat The Strawberry

Having the presence of mind  
To keep your head above water  
Hanging by a thread  
Between a rock and a hard place  
Is where most of us spend our days

If the rock doesn't get you  
The cancer surely will

But in between,  
Be sure to eat the strawberry.

Sheena Blackhall

# Beauty & The Maiden

Beauty and the Maiden  
Went walking down the Street  
You'll be my own true love dear  
Till spring and winter meet

Beauty and the Maiden  
Strolled naked on the grass  
See how your suitors multiply  
Behind your looking glass

Beauty and the Maiden  
Lay on the shifting sand  
Till Death came dancing by them  
And took them by the hand

Sheena Blackhall

# Beetle

A small green beetle sat on my open page,  
Antennae probing the wind like weather vanes.

His shell was a wet umbrella,  
His ticklesome shadow, barely half an eyelash.  
The sun lit a spot of fire on his domed back.

He moved like a war canoe propelled by six swift rowers;  
Halfway over a comma, he paused to clean his two back legs,  
A small fat ballet dancer tugging off his tights,  
His voice so small it did not reach my ears.

Sheena Blackhall



## Bella Caledonia,50 Miles Up (Scots)

Scaffie day. I wis pittin oot the bins  
Green fur girse cuttins, blaik fur bairns hippens etc,  
Fite pyoke fur papers, a green guffin boxie fur compos  
Syne I tuik tae thinkin 50 miles up...  
Furlin ower the heid o oor Bella Caledonia,  
Furlin ower the heid o oor Bella Caledonia,  
Spent rocket stages  
Auld satellites,  
Hauf a million bitties o sottar  
Aa speedin (nae hidden cameras) at 17,000 mph  
1,000 satellites that dinna wirk  
2,600 satellites that DAE wirk (an risin)  
Aa this clanjamphrey o orrals  
Tae aid navigation, communication,  
Weather forecastin, militar espionage  
Weaponary, exploration fur science, agriculture  
Alang wi a glove tint bi astronaut Ed White  
On the first USA space wauk  
A perr o pliers  
A briefcase sized tool boxie  
A teethbrush  
A spatula drappit bi Piers Sellers  
Spent rockets an telescopes  
Nuts, bolts,  
Dauds o aluminium slag  
Pyokes o soss haived oot bi cosmonauts  
Birlin roon the cosmic highwye  
Wi Buddhist Bodhisattvas,  
Arkangels, cherubim, seraphim  
Thor, Zeus, och ma heid fair stoons  
Wi the thocht o't....shawin fariver  
Man gyangs, he aye creates a sotter

Preserve, bi aa dinna forget tae promote, fur thon's far the future lies.

Sheena Blackhall

# Bennachie, Ad 84: Aftermath Of The Battle Of Mons Graupius

Our eagle sulks on its standard.  
This morning will bring mist as thick as soup.  
Ten thousand dead! Too sullen to surrender,  
The few survivors melt into the trees,  
Into this grizzled swampland they call home.  
Here even a frog's green arse soon freezes up.

Agricola, our commander, dines alone.  
All night he wrote dispatches in his tent  
Under the sharp stars, under the sky's mad eye.

My poor horse will be maggot-feed by noon  
Crows flap around his belly on the moor  
Where Flavius is roasting plundered cattle.

It is like this, after a battle. Killing's my trade.  
I am a legionary. I stab and murder  
All in the name of Empire, at an order.  
Last night I dreamt an adder left a rock  
Throttled an eagle like a thin garrotte.

The purple mountain's red with tribal blood;  
They made a stand, poured down the hill and lost.  
The mountain bares slit flesh and twisted metal.  
The natural amphitheatre of the heath  
Beheld the spectacle.

Ah, how their women moan!  
They watch us pick each loved one to the bone:  
An ancient bird croaks on a wet black twig.

Marcus got him a torc that shone like gold  
Cut from a corpse whose whiskers were beer-stained;  
I robbed a boy who stared up to the clouds  
Of corn and plaid.  
Relieved him of his shield,  
Then broke his fist to see what it might yield.

The palm held peaty earth, no precious jewels -  
For this, he died. For this sour scoop of soil,  
Fought like a baited tiger.  
We won, although their carnyx bellowed like a bull  
Led up to Mithras for the sacred slaughter.  
Each night I dream of sun, of goats, of wine  
Of Mother Tiber, lush and serpentine  
Each morning I awake to stinging midge;  
Cold eats my bones. Death, watches from the ridge.

Sheena Blackhall

# Between The Cemetary & Macdonalds

Tattered memories blow across the pavement  
A toddler cries fat tears down chubby cheeks

Seagulls are active ingredients in this cityscape  
Sirns wail by, opening wounds in the ear of day  
Millions of birds have slipped through the back door of night

This street, these centuries, this city  
How many winters will pass before they crumble?

Will pestilence, war, or global warming prove fatal  
Before more than birds pass through the door of night?

Sheena Blackhall

# Bird Strike

For hawks, there's no speed limit in the sky  
No air traffic control can intercept them  
Their bird strikes are wing on wing

At Battersea Power station  
High upon mast or crane  
Peregrine's piercing eyes survey the scene

Merciless, he stoops,  
Beheading a dove or buzzard  
He falls like a guillotine

He may nest on the houses of parliament  
Tate modern, the sides of the hospital  
At Charing Cross

From cathedral or skyscraper  
He swoops at break-neck speed  
200 mph of instant death

Monogamous, he mates for life  
Cossets his gap-beaked brood

No more countryside for him  
He's king of the London skies

Sheena Blackhall

# Birth Of A Calf

His mother stood in her stall  
Sides shuddering under the cobwebbed beams  
She was straining and stretching  
Bellowing in the throes of labour pains

Then he slid out in his jelly shawl  
A caul of colours. He landed with a leggy plop  
Into the nest of straw that was his birth bed

My aunt rewarded his mother with hot mash  
And a tot of whisky, after all her trouble  
Then briskly brushed the knob-kneed newcomer down

He was all legs and wobbles, all stumble and shake  
As his wet young mouth clamped on the dripping teat  
Draining life from the elixir of colostrum

Violets widened their yawn  
Flowers were an insect lure of petals and scents  
When the black bull calf was born

All the hens outside were clucking and broody  
The dog barking, the washing flapping wildly

Sheena Blackhall

# Birthday

Today, I am nearly six.  
I am ten steps up the stair, looking in  
Through the parlour door at a party.

I am bad as bad can be.  
I have not been the perfect hostess,  
Sweet as a chocolate smarty.

I am a black shark's fin on a chintzy china sea.  
A Shirley Temple of girls is worshipping my cake.

I have dreaded this day all week.  
Mother is raging. 'The things I do for your sake,  
No nice pink frock when I was wee.  
You could pretend to be grateful.  
The hours I've spent on invites, icing, games,  
Sulk then. Go sit on the stair.  
We'll have a party without you.  
Don't blame me if the others call you names.'

Today, I am newly six.  
A circus of giggling girls  
Is ritually passing the parcel,  
Is whooping and laughing and yelling.

I am ten steps up the stair.  
I am bad as bad can be.  
From my two bad eyes, two hot wet tears are spilling.  
I am wrapping my arms round my sides to hug me better.  
I want to rub myself out, like a squiggly letter.

In my two bad eyes, the sadness drops keep filling..  
I am dressed like a lamb on a sacrificial plate.  
The jellies are spiked with spite, are laced with hate.

I am newly six. I am bad as bad can be,  
Sitting way out on a limb, at six, sixteen or sixty,  
Feet of clay, and a heart of rusty tin,  
Ten steps up the stair,

On the outside, looking in.

Sheena Blackhall



# Biting Dust: English Poems Of Pandas, Panic, Love And Death

Summer of Love

In a farming parish full of hills and honey  
Catriona had many suitors

The cowherd dogged her steps each summer evening  
As did the quiet widower from Glen Shiel  
The laird's eyes followed her round the Lammas fair

Three girls the blacksmith courted, quick and lusty  
And each one filling up with his planted seed

Love can be a path of stones and tares  
It starts with strewn flowers, and ends in tears

She turned the butter churn, near burst its sides  
Never were farmhouse flags so fiercely scrubbed

And every night she stared at the horned moon  
While the cattle grumbled and coughed in the moonlit byre

Now Love's bitter bloom had taken root  
Too late she'd waited, hoping to win him over

So no one thought it at all the least unusual  
When the bog gave up two bodies that windy Autumn

Love can be a path of stones and tares  
It starts with strewn flowers, and ends in tears

The Haywain

A sardonic string bean jogger who loved Bellini,  
murdered by a mugger in the park

A guffawing graffiti artist, with septicaemia

A jovial Japanese postman from Chicago,  
struck by a taxi speeding through a light

A happy slapper manicure assistant,  
polished off by cancer in her prime

A prisoner with Aids, swops one grim cell for another  
A player whose final act was suicide,  
after a string of scurrilous reviews

A recluse whose untuned harpsichord burned with her  
A ballerina culled by anorexia,  
worn away to a shadow of herself

A babe whose superfluous feet dropped down a well  
An Army general felled by a ski-slope trip  
A vegetable seller blown to bits by a bomb  
A Baptist missionary swallowed by a cyclone

The haywain hurls them all to their destination  
Gritty granules of narratives and bones

#### Autumn Bride

The truth is I was born frozen, I seldom ever thaw  
I wish I had said 'I'm going!' and slammed the door  
That windy Autumn  
But I needed proof that the world outside was safe

What if I'd gone outside to a firing squad?  
For the first time ever, the bullets might have been real

#### Moon

Once upon a time, the moon lived in a book  
When I turned the page, a cow came out of the corn  
Like a shining child wearing a golden halo

It surprised me when the moon over the loch was a giant face  
It was no use pretending it wasn't there

It was monstrous, immense, an ogre

Panic

Panic lives in a box  
Like a squashed balloon

It smells like roasted butterflies  
Like singed cobwebs

It sounds like the silent scream  
From a rabbit with myxomatosis

It tastes like barbed wire  
Constricting the tongue

It feels like needles  
Stuck in the heart's cushion

It lives in the dark,  
A furtive, hidden thing  
Drop it, and it races around

Screeching 'Flee flee! '  
And it seems like your feet are on fire  
□

Ode to Sugar

This sugar  
Could be the death of me  
In the diabetic minefield that is food  
Spread on buttered bread  
It's poor man's jam

Wasps swoon for it  
Bees hunger for it

It's beaten to a pulp from canes  
It's the essence of slavery

With no trace of the sweat of salt

Stir it in tea, or coffee  
It performs its vanishing trick

It turned the Virgin Queen's teeth  
Black as tar

### The Day Paul Summers Died

The local grocer slashed the price of butter  
Mrs Chang-Lee dropped an earring down the drain  
No mail arrived at the house with the whitewashed fence  
Neighbours agreed the weather was going to be stormy  
The Webster's daughter cut her first milk tooth  
Mrs Bitajee was frying lamb and potatoes  
The market was alive with tourist shoppers  
The picnic on the green was a disaster  
The cat on Crooked Lane was scratching fleas  
A sudden wind blew sand along the street  
Travellers pitched their vans on the football pitch  
'Whose going to pay for the funeral?' the doctor wondered.

### Panda-monium

Pandas pee up in the air  
Creating a spray for their hair  
It's an odd thing to do  
Better urine than poo  
That's why mating 'tween pandas is rare

### The Yak

How I'd love to parade on a yak  
With a leg on each side of its back!  
If the heavens should rain  
You might hear me complain  
Has anyone here got a mac?



# Biting Dust: Scots People Poems

Seagull an Stovies, King's College Campus

I didna buy this maet for ye  
I canna makk it clearer  
The seagull cocked its heid ajee  
An hodged a bitty nearer

Neist it lat oot an eildritch skreich  
Near rugged ma lugs apairt  
Jist like a mappy fin a tod  
Sooks at its deein hairt

I crummlit oatcakes ower the girse  
Tae stop its lamentation  
An straichtwye I wis nearly smored  
Bi hauf the seagull nation!

Spa-Watter, Pannanich

Ilkie simmer they sent ma up the knowe  
Tae sup the orra tastin iron watter  
Tongue-fyachie, nesty mineral medicine

It syped frae happit springs in the knowe's breist  
Jibblin doon, a fyachie roosty reid ower skelps o rock  
Like a tod's bluid, thon scunnersome elixir

Slugs oozed easy mangst the blueberries  
An mochs an butteries wachtit soft as oo

Pirls o rubbit's drappins rowed aneth the bracken  
Like unstrung beads o jet skaled ower the moss

The sun full on ma chikks pit roses there  
The brummils scoored ma knees wi scrats an scurls

An aa the while inbye an auncient inn

Grown ups sat suppin tay frae cheena cups  
Excheengin kin-claik, swappin bits o news

While puddocks hunkerin in the sappy sheughs  
Craikit an lowpt, wee green pyokes o farts

Heid o the Hoose

He trimmed his blue-blaik neb hair's cannily  
His curls had shrunken tae a baldie-pate  
Thon heich, braid, fernie-tickelt Heilander  
Fa wauked the warld wi a firm-stridin gait

This chiel, born in a nicht o Wintry storm  
Wis kent tae cairry ither body's waes  
He raised his sister's bairns as weel's his ain  
An vrocht tae keep them fed an happt in claes

Auld age struck late, near echty fin it cam  
Like lichtnin, time's knell felled a mighty aik  
TV sooked him intae its flichterin warld  
He'd nod an lauch, turned tae a dweeble state

Fit gin this winter's bairn'd bin born in June  
His fowk hid bin twa spylt movie stars?  
Fit if a siller speen had fed his moo?  
He micht hae grown a drooth in skid-row bars

Bit like a thrissle, hardy on a brae  
That raxxes up its heid abeen wi health  
An care for ithers neth the warld's blae lift.  
His family, weel an thrivin, he caad wealth

The Hoosewife's gear

Bluid-reid lipstick, Max Factor  
Ile o Ulay, anti-agein  
Pooder puff an peint for nails  
Perm rollers for curls arreengin

Costume jewellery, like a magpie  
Cultured pearls, a musquash fur  
Rings for merriege an engagement  
Spyles o time.....teeth in a jar

Heilan Clachan

Neeps, tatties an kail in a veggie shop  
Gean petals skittered snaw-like on the cassies  
Rose stippled troot upon a dennerplate

Dauncers birl on the boords  
A flounce o tartan, skeely, for the tourists  
The inns are thrang wi Japanee an Yankees  
Clouds like lovers link hauns ower the sun

Rikk frae a lum is sweet, dry aipplewid  
Thunnerstorms like carousels  
Furl roon the heathery crags

Sodjers frae the barracks  
Stravaig the girse, checkin oot local lassies  
Nae need for bombs nor rifles,  
A cushie billet

On the Coyles o Muick  
An aيدر, fas tongue's tint the Gaelic  
Slidders throw hoch heich bracken

Burns rin forrit, niver back, for Centuries  
Whiles swallt, an whiles a treetle

An we are the waves o the clachan  
Jibblin up, a meenit's stramash an daizzle  
Syne ane wi the ram stam watter mirlin roon

Jeems at Echter

Jeems tuik a richt gweed willie-waucht o Time



His hauns, twa wrinkled neives, boosed roon twa fauld  
Fooshionless, he hytered back an fore  
Wyed doon bi sairs, the skaith o turnin auld

His youth, gaed tapsalteerie aff like leaves  
Doon-drappt an crined, theiur sap aa syped awa  
Aroon his een, kiln-crackit wrunkles spreid  
His neb, a dreepin tap, he didna blaw

A humphy-backit contermachious cyard  
Grown dottlet, foonert, trauchelt ower the years  
In youth, a gyangin fit, a ready lauch  
Nae braeheid seems ower heich fin Life first briers

Sheena Blackhall

# Blackbird Singing

Who wrote your song?

I, said the blackbird

Why do you sing?

I must, said the blackbird

What do you sing for?

Joy, said the blackbird.

Is there a cost?

None, said the blackbird

My song is a gift for any who need it

Freely I give it. Ignore it, or seek it

Sheena Blackhall

# Black-Nippled Reeds

In the lily pool, under the waxy flowers,  
A baby suckles the black nipples of reeds

The water loves the bones of it.  
The slow silt, the rock and lilt of the mud  
On the riverbed cushion its fall  
A fluid cradle

Its head is as smooth's an otter  
Its breath has floated away  
Like swan's down drifting

Its mother lowered it down  
Hoping the pool will keep her secret drowned  
The blood between her thighs,  
A slippery launchpad.

Sheena Blackhall

# Blackpool In A Gale

I am here in the 'Albert and Lion'  
Drinking coffee and watching the sea  
As a hurricane's battering Blackpool  
Making bin bags and little dogs flee

The waves are the colour of Tetley's  
As pale as Earl Grey...There she blows!  
And a gentleman lighting a ceegar  
Has set fire to the hairs in his nose

You'd think folk were climbing up Etna  
The way they lean into the gale  
It's like David confronting Goliath  
Every wave is the size of a whale

An ice cream is torn from its cornet  
Whipped away without any remorse  
And an old lady's hair looks like washing  
Pulled back, like a frightened race horse

Such a tumbling and thundering and rumbling  
Snatching everyone's shopping and hat!  
The tide's smashing onto the pavement  
On the tramlines, a cat is squashed flat

See that dog squatting down on the pavement?  
The gale's blown its business away  
It's flown off like a chocolate torpedo  
Setting off, on the road to Rothesay

At seventy miles per hour  
A pizza's whizzed out of a shop  
With a flourish of red pepperonis  
Giving seventeen tourists the chop

Gypsy Rose Lee the great fortune teller  
Looks distressed by the loss of her ball  
It's come over the news just this minute  
It's killed ninety two yaks in Nepal

The gulls are enjoying the freebies  
Now that twenty six doughnuts from Greggs  
Have come whirling along by the seaside  
Chased by haddocks, and three pickled eggs

A lady from Brighton, sightseeing  
Has been picked up and washed out to sea  
It's lucky her implants inflated  
Extra-large, both a size fifty-three  
Oh never go strolling in Blackpool  
When a hurricane's due to arrive  
It's worse than the fate that took Albert  
When that zoo lion ate him alive!

Will I risk creeping out from the 'Lion? '  
Will the gale whip me up by the scruff?  
I know Blackpool's full of attractions  
But a hurricane's more than enough!

Sheena Blackhall

# Blue Whale Visits The Supermarket

The whale entered the supermarket  
At the height of the winter floods  
When unspeakably murky waters  
Blurred the edges of dry and water worlds

The whale was drawn to the red pepper stand  
The chillis reminded her of Calypso beaches she'd heard of  
On the whispers of the waves

The biggest thing she could swallow was a grapefruit.  
She only ate in summer, 3 tons of food per day  
And a girl must think of her figure after all  
Which was why she only visited fish, veg, fruit aisles

She was bursting with excitement,  
Positively drooling, with her tongue the weight of an elephant  
And her heart the size of your average family car

When the insurers entered the premises,  
They noted the fridges emptied of salmon, pollock  
And seaweed, and the curious fact that sea-oil products  
Had been consumed, enough to loosen the bowels  
Of 3,000 consumers. Blue whale sailed into the deeps  
On a definite high, topped up with 10 gallons of rum

Latest adverts claim Blue whales endorse fish fingers

Sheena Blackhall

## Bluid Kin (24 Scots Poems)

an: Ötzi the iceman.K1 subcluster o the mitochondrial haplogroup K

He bedd there ben the aeons,  
The ice- caul ower his skull as smeeth as glaiss  
Haein gane hyne ayont aa men's fear  
Inno the mids o the void.

Ae sunny day twa hikers fae Nuremberg  
Waukin in the Ötztal Alps  
Left the merked fitpath on a whim

Passin a steeny corrie filled wi icebree  
They luiked wi grue upon a human corp  
Mistook him fur a modern murder victim.

Sae, Ötzi the ice man cam tae be reborn  
Fiftythree hunner year efter his daith  
His body, (thirled like iron tae the rock)  
Bi jack haimmer an ice-axe, yarked fae its lair  
Hacked fae the glacier's breist

The morgue at Innsbruck laid his secrets bare  
Smaa and sturdy, Europe's auldest mummy

It's odds on that the subject's een war broon  
His lungs war blaik wi breathin in hairth-rikk  
His neb an ribs had brukken, bit healed ower.  
His shank banes telt he wis an uplan herdsman  
Traivellin lang miles on unca steep terrain

Six months afore he deed, he'd bin nae weel  
Heezin wi wirms and flechs, a sufferin host  
His teeth, worn doon wi forty years o chawin  
His back tattooed along the lumbar spine

Twa oors afore his daith, he'd taen a meal  
O ibex, wheat bran, reets an Alpine fruit  
Dined in a conifer widlan, in the spring.

Wi him, he cairriet flax, barley an poppy  
An the kernels o slaes & berries, fine an sappy

He wore a plaid vrocht ooto wuvven girse  
A coat, belt, pair o leggins, loinclaith, sheen,  
Aa leather, cut frae different kinno skins.  
A bearskin bunnet, leather strap aneth.

Inbye his pyoke a rowth o eesefu ferlies:  
A scraper, drill, flint, fungus, an bone awl  
Alang wi berries, birch baskets, fire-flint  
Wi medicine mushrooms tae takk care o sairs

Upon his feet, sheen watterpruif an wide,  
Seeminly vrocht fur traivellin ower snaa;  
Bearskin fur soles, deer hide as the tap panels,  
A nettin ooto tree bark. Girse fur hose  
Sae weel designed, a Czech entrepreneur  
Priggit tae buy the richts fur manufacture.

An there ye hae't. A Stane Age warrior  
Lyn aside his weapons on the Ben.  
Flint knife wi ash haunle. Aixe blade wi yew haunle,  
Quiver o arras. A bow an a sherpenin antler

These are the facks, nyaakit laid oot in the lab  
Neist, cams conjecture.

Did he dee frae caul in a storm o coorse blin-drift?  
Was he a victim o ritual sacrifice?  
(He had an arra deep in his left showder)  
Wis it a tribal tulzie in the Alps?

This, mynd, is truith:  
Forensic expert Dr Rainer Henn,  
Fa pit the corp in a body bag wi his bare hauns,  
Deed in a road accident, on his wye tae a collogue  
Tae spikk about the resurrectit ice man

The Alpine guide Kurt Fritz  
Fa organised the ice man's helicopter  
Deed in a snaa slide o a suddenty



The anely ane o the climmers tae be killt

The hiker frae Nurenmborg fa fand him  
Fell 300ft doon a skyty Alpine brae  
His corp fand frozen unner a sheet o ice

Ötzi the ice man's keepit in the cauld  
Wi ae wee windae fur fowk tae keek in  
Tae gawp at him, his rig-bane like a zip  
The curator makks a cafetiere o coffee  
As bairns in uniforms gyang kecklin by

The corp is deaf tae aa bit the soun o seelence  
His harns haud secrets anely corries ken.

## 2.A Bairn's first Screivins

The crayon hyters alang  
Like a brukken wheel  
Yarkin up an doon wi a will o'ts ain

The littlin's haun is the bridle  
On a kickin sheltie  
The infant letters kickin ower the traces

## Howf Ower the Border

There's a howf ower the Border best gien a wide berth  
Fowk wyte fower oors for their maet  
The ashets are chippit, nae bowls match ava  
An the pudden's plunked on a side plate.

The soup's in a basin..it's satty an cauld  
The coffee machine gies a hoast  
A shakk an a shudder. It floods ower the fleer  
Syne pyochers an gies up the ghost  
An auld wifie wytin fur tatties an mince  
Fell asleep fairly scunnert be't aa  
She wis deid ere dessert...bit wi leeks throw the bree  
There wis naeb'dy tae cairt her awa

There wis nae table watter, forbye's a wee skoosh  
The cutlery cam in aa sizes  
There wis crumbs lyin thick on the cheers an the fleers  
Fegs there jist wis nae eyn o surprises

The waitress hid plooks an a stook o pink hair  
The waiter wis dour an hauf canned  
An they baith shauchled roon wi the speed o a slug  
In thon howf that the cdeevil hid spawned

s I ken About Masei

I'm crabbit wi moochers an dossers  
I lue ma baby grandother's creashie neives  
Chauncers gie me the dry boke  
I lue the sun on a loch like sharn sheenin

Ma life birls widdershins  
Mair bairn-like as the thinnin reel rins doon  
Yestreen I saw a deid tod on the road  
An wad hae gien a warld tae see it lowp

Visions

A siller mermaid left the meen  
An lowped intae a midnight burn  
An cheenged intae a lichtsomesome linn  
That turned a kelpie's butter churn

Bit scunnered o thon darg she rose  
An sang a dirge ootower the sea  
An syne a muckle anchor brak  
A lang-drooned galleon brukk free

The dowie liltin o the whales  
Rang dreich aroon the deadly bay  
As tae the shore the seelent ship  
Wis crewed bi thrang o ghaisties grey

The mermaid skelped her sonsie tail  
Three times, an cheenged intae a sail  
O purest silk, tied tae the mast  
That cud survive baith storm an gale

An up the dreepin boatie raise  
Frae meenlicht sea tae starnie nicht  
Intae the hap o rollin clouds  
Syne wi a grue, it dwined frae sicht

#### 6.A Letter frae the Future

Ye'll come tae this  
Ye aywis kent ye wid  
For I hunker doon inbye ye, even the day  
An incubus, bow-backit  
A crined an slaverin orral o a craitur  
Aa een an saggy skin  
Wrinkled prune wi the nails o an auld craa

Crone. Cailleach. Scrattin the yird o yestreen  
Like a hen-wife luikin fur eggs in a thorny buss

Ye'll craik like a taed in the sheugh  
Shauchle warty an creashie  
Ower ilkie day obstacles like stairs

Yer bairns will veesit, dutifu, ae ee on the clock  
Daith will come as a frien.

Lippen. Even noo  
He's jinglin his key in the lock

ation on Winter

The nicht is in ma mou  
Craas race in a briest fur the wids

Wytin fur snaa  
Burns jeel aneth ice

Frost ploos sharper rigs  
In the ley park

The hurtin cauld  
Gnaas at ma dirilin neives

I mynd fin friendship wis pure an true  
I mynd hate grew frae a hard betrayal  
I mynd fin ma neive clenched like a stane  
Anger wis forged on the hairt's anvil

The wren on the tree kens nocht o thon  
She kens anely the warmth o sun  
The needs o her cheepers inno the nest  
Wids, air, win, an the dappled grun

Owersetts in Scots o Poems bi Charles Simic

Stane

Gae inbye a stane  
Thon wad be my wye  
Let some ither body becam a doo  
Or gurr wi a tiger's teeth  
I'm blythe tae be a stane

Frae the ootside the stane's a riddle  
Naebody kens foo tae answer it  
Yet inbye it maun be cweel an quate  
Even tho the coo steps on't full wecht  
Even tho a bairn haives it inno a burn  
The stane sinks, slaw, nae geein itsel  
Tae the burn's foun  
Far the fishies cam tae chap on it  
An lippen

I hae seen spirks flee oot  
Fin twa stanes are rubbit

Sae mebbe it's nae derk inbye efter aa  
Mebbe there's a meen sheenin  
Frae somewye, as tho ahin a knowe  
Jist eneuch tae makk oot  
The eildritch screivins, the charts o starnies  
On the was inbye

### Twa Dugs

An auld dug feart o his ain shadda  
In some Suddron toun  
The tale telt me bi a wumman gaun blin  
Ae fine simmer evenin  
As the shaddas war creepin  
Ooto the New Hampshire wids  
A lang street wi jist a worriet dug  
An a pair o stoorie chukkens  
An aa thon sun stounin doon  
In thon nameless Suddron toun.

It gart me myne the Germans merchin  
By oor hoose in 1944  
The wye aabody stood on the pavement  
Watchin them ooto the neuk o the ee  
The yird shakkin, daith gaun by...  
A wee fite dug ran onno the street  
An got taiglit wi the sodjers' feet  
A kick gart him flee as if he'd wings.  
Thon's fit I keep seein  
Nicht comin doon. A dug wi wings.

### Ferlies Need Me

Toun o purily-lued cheers, baffies, fryin-pans  
I'm breengin back tae ye  
Passin ilkie car on the wye  
Searchin fur ye wi ma bricht heidlichts  
Doon the teem, derk streets

O ye hairtless fowk fa canna wyte

Tae gyang tae the beach the morn's mornin  
Fit about the blaik an fite photie o yer forebears  
Yer leavin ahin?  
Fit about the keekin glaisses, pottit plants an coat hingers?

Deid alarm clock, teem birde cage, pianie I niver play  
I'll be yer waiter the nicht  
Ready tae takk yer order  
An ye'll be ma eildritch denner guests  
Ilkie ane wi a tale tae tell

10. An Owersett o Chandra Candiani's Untitled Poem in 'Tomorrow's Moon'  
(Aruna Pub)

I wad like tae ken foo tae screive  
A letter tae the wids  
Tae a burn or  
Tae a quality o the lift  
Nae a letter o human dowieeness  
Or angert reproaches  
Bit paper that flooers  
Inno gems draain bluid  
Risks o heich tide  
Blin caller lift or clouds  
Wioot win foo I wad like  
A leid o pine preens  
O resin an floatin  
Troot a cloudy  
Leid that follaes  
The merest thochtie o cheenge

etts in Scots o a when o Basho's Haiku (1644-1694)

(Karumi- lightness of touch- one-ness with nature)

Gin I'd the knack  
I'd sing like  
Gean flooers faain

Yalla rose petals

Thunner  
A linn

Weety June  
Lang hair, face  
Peely-wally

Winter doonpish  
Even the puggie  
Needs a watterpruif

Meen-dichtit buss-clover  
Wheesht....in the neist chaumer  
Snoring hoors

Lanelineses  
Caged girse-lowper hingin  
Frae the waa  
Friens pairt foraye  
Wud geese  
Tint in cloud

Dyew-draps  
Foo better wash awa  
World's stoor?

Frae the hairt  
O the sweet peony  
A boozie bee

Simmer girse  
Aa that bides  
O sodjers' dreams

pede

A centipede bidin in Crail  
Tuik a notion tae gyang tae Kintail  
She wis hit bi a train  
Sae the trip wis in vain  
As hauf o her's stuck tae the rail

### 13. Barren

The bairnless wumman's bairnies  
Wad luve tae climm the stairs  
Frae naethinness tae nipple  
Tae sookle human wares

An whyles a cradle's stappit  
Wi a littlin cam unsocht  
Intae a warld o sorras  
Far its wee needs are nocht

### Story

You `n me  
Doon bi the sea  
Side bi side  
Watchin the tide  
Nae seagulls

### 15. May Time 2

A bairn's in the burn wi his breeks rowed up  
He's plowterin amang the steens  
The yowes are pechin aneth the sun  
An the pink's on the floerin geans

An aathin's swack an brierin syne  
An swippert's a lamb new-born  
The calfie rugs at the dreepin teat  
An green lies the infant corn

### Burn (1)

Yestreen yowes climmed the girssy stair  
O flooers an stanes, a douce-like brae  
An feasted on the clovers' bree



Aside the burnie's roundelay

Their dinin room, a mornin's wark,  
Wis wheeched awa by levellin scythe  
A muckle gap in Natur's mids  
A swatch rived frae the side o Life

The nettles staun lamentin roon  
The bauld, teem stibble at their breist  
The mavis in her specklit gown  
Winners fit weird'll happen neist

For aa maun boo afore the blade  
That tumbles man an everglade  
The gorblie cheepin in the rain  
Flees bit a Sizzen, syne is gaen

Burn (2)

Yowes are croppin the girse bi the ley o the brig  
Their wechty oo is weety wi sappy smirr  
Their lantern jaas crunch sidiewyes in their mous  
Up on the road the antrin car wheels berr

Hyne ower the loch ae Ben stauns happed in sun  
Favoured alane far the clouds hae pairtit air  
Gowden-green mangst the derk, onchancy storms  
The wids that hap its shouders are fey-like fair

Ahin it the gluggerin watter's clatterin doon  
Plain an purl in its Arran pattern puil  
Slokin soun, wi the yowes fur an audience  
Like seven wee lassies, first day at the skweel

The win is ruggin a toosht o oo in the fence  
Docken an buttercup swey back an fore  
Ferns bi the dyke wyve doon like a Raja's fan  
A draught is blawin frae Heiven's open door

18. The Burn 3

The burn comes breengin doon aneth the brig  
Aik boughs jink furlie-orum ower the watter  
The foggy stanes gar bubbles blink an pop  
Alang the shady banks the ferns chitter

The rasps are still fite floeries on the buss  
The foxglove bunnets hing, disjaskit, mauve  
A swiftie skytes awa alang the girse  
Tae feed her gorbliies is an on-gaun tcyauve

The sklaik o birds I takk tae be delicht  
Mirrored inbye masel, like Bens on Loch  
I staun an sup ma fill o Natur's braas  
Like a hett drouthy cuddy at a troch

The lift is fu o bird-sang. Clouds o rain  
Spirk spirk throw simmer air, as smaa's a preen  
The burn rins neth the brig's wide-gapit mou  
This meenit, tree, burn, fern an I are ane.

## 19. Callander Oasis

On the train frae hame tae awa, I'm teem as a cowpit pot  
A trauchelt hull o banes, breengin throwe space

Callander is a lush hiatus, a wee oasis  
O a gairden, ooto the hugger-mugger o life

A cat sprauchles, macho man, cat-Rambo  
Barin its furry breast an crotch tae the world

This gairden's like enterin Wonderlan  
A bawd micht mask his tea amang the cups  
Roon a table set wi seats for Arthur's knights  
Should they, o a suddenty, step in frae a bus

Floers ream in linns doon waas, dykes, Chinee urns  
An ay oweraa the hinneyed hum o bees

Kerplunk! A lowpin paddock pairts a puil  
The sun butters the lift like a hett scone

Aneth the roses, dragons scrat their dowp

Wars in the Roses

Spencer House & Radcliffe House are two beehives in the garden of Callander's Bookshop

Twa infant queens growe fat on Royal jeely  
Syne baith creep oot tae claim their richtfu place  
Heid o the hive's a job fur jist ae leader

Noo they maun duel tae the daith tae seize the croun  
Their battle skreich's fine- tunin is G sharp

Ridin the bosky wins o bluffertin June  
Ae queen, wi killin barb concludes the regicide

Noo she maun mell wi 15 drones or mair,  
An orgy that is wirthy o a Borgia

Syne it's a chermed life, she's fed an petted  
Until her eggs dry up, an syne they turn,  
Her dothers, smore her wi their bizzin bosies  
A matricide, fur Natur tholes nae failure

21. Nellfield Kirkyaird

Horse chestnut leaves are dwinin in the heat  
Atap a shady yew a doo curmurs  
Here, a commercial traiveller's snubbed his case  
Near smored aneth a swatch o sticky burrs

A great tobaccy baron's turned tae aisse  
The haimmer's drappit on an auctioneer  
A butcher's heid is piddlit on bi cats  
A granite angel's bood ower tins o beer  
Teemed bi a dosser, dowie, doon-at-heel  
Like kirkyaird's tenants, a forgotten chiel

22. Frae Sraìd na Banrighinn tae Oban

The wannerin willies smore the sheugh  
The hooses smore the lan  
The high rise toors o Glesga toun  
Rise up on ilkie haun

A windae, thirteen storeys heich  
Veranda, grim an roosty  
Is hung wi dryin tools an draaers  
Sae bricht they'd blin Carnoustie

Fower coffin dodgers on a spree  
Crack open the champagne  
An scott awa at salmon, sliced  
Tap scran...bit on a train?

A baldie wi a shovel beard  
Clarts anti-midgie lotion  
Ower his bare heid an hairy hochs  
Like some witch-doctor potion

Blink bonnie loch atween the birks  
Sic winners hurtle by us  
Frae Glesga up tae Oban's port  
Like picturs frae Parnassus

Band, Oban

A shilpit wee craitur, chooks like a bubblyjock is giein it laldy  
A wee German laddie is hoochin an dauncin the ghillie mhor  
In a skyrie yalla t-shirt an Bermuda shorts

In plastic crocs an blin-fite knottit dreidlocks  
A wee quine aa her lane, makks up daunce steps in front o Semi-Chem

Pipe major is a capercaillie struttin afore his hens  
His digi tunin box, seems tae be takkin the bagpipes temperatures

The drummer is beeriet ahin his instrument  
Furlin an duntin his furry drumsticks

A Sicilian godfather, wechtit wi bling an gowd crosses  
Stubs his tabbies oot in a civic flooer box  
An aa the whyle the sea maws screech Hosannahs

Puffin

I'm a dapper wee craitur, I waddle an squawk  
On You Tube an Face Book ye'll see  
Ma neb like a wattergaw, face like a ghaist  
I'm the clown o the sea birds, that's me!

Sheena Blackhall

# Boating On The Lake, Kandy

It's an October day. In Scotland, chilled by frost  
The loyal robin shivers, others flee the coop.  
Already Christmas tills ring up the cost

The boatman pushes the small craft off the mooring  
We glide like ghosts into the man-made lake  
100 chiefs who raised dissent at its building  
Were killed by their last mad king  
Each one impaled on a stake,  
Driven into the bedrock of this place  
Doubly killed by skewering and drowning.

No bubbles rise in wrathful lamentation  
Under the dark umbrella of the trees  
Fruit bats hang like flags of Dracula  
We float past distant walls of sacred shrines  
Where shoeless pilgrims shuffle past the relics  
Blessed by the shaven monks in saffron robes  
The engine stalls, boat anchors, monsoon spits  
Stepping up to the shore we pass a speechless cripple  
He smiles, shows off his leg  
Elephantiasis. He lets his sickness beg.

Sheena Blackhall

# Boy On A Sofa

14 studs to the left.14 studs to the right  
The boy sits the middle, lips buttoned up tight

Expression of joy bereft, only a void in sight  
The boy sits in the middle lips buttoned up tight

Drawn up harsh and deft, backbone tense and slight  
The boy sits in the middle, lips buttoned up tight

Sheena Blackhall

# Boys On The Block

The High Rise block in Anytown  
Sucks up folk like a straw

It stands in the dusk  
Like a long tall glass of fizzy water

Its tenants are bubbles  
Breathing their hellos  
Their ahs and oos of tenderness or spite  
Or plain dog-tired defeat

Into the backdropp of silence  
Four teenagers down on the pavement  
Under the slit-eyed street light  
Sit like dumped sacks

A girl with a billowing skirt  
Cuts a small gash in their thoughts  
Their words spill out like oats  
The dumb-ass dark will swallow

Sheena Blackhall



# Brassieres

The puckered buttons of Mrs Arkwright's breasts  
Pressed the silk of her Markie's modesty coddlers  
The bra is her breast's vertebrae,  
The saddles her twin peaks ride on.  
Ms Selina's, like Nell Gwyn's fruit  
Are luscious breasts, according to her beau  
Who works in the ironmongery section of B & Q  
He likes to squash them, like Antoine Corlioni,  
Scooping ice creams  
Into their pale cornettos  
At night they loll, tongue in cheek,  
Over chairbacks and bedheads  
Yielding their owners scent to the sniffing air.

Sheena Blackhall

# Bravo!

Swordsman, soldiers row on row  
Lifted leg and flash of boots  
General orders. Off they go  
Rifle aims. It cocks. It shoots

Soldiers move like marionettes  
Orders lead to the war dance  
Off to fight in distant lands  
For Britain, Germany & France

Uniforms and numbered ranks  
Bravo soldiers don't you cry  
After all the wars are won  
Who'll remember why you die?

Sheena Blackhall

# Breakfast

Just on the cusp of dream,  
My father entered my bedroom

He was carrying Sunday breakfast on a tray  
For me, his spoilt grown daughter

The eggs could have been drawn on the plate  
By an artist as skilled as Velasquez

Fresh eggs, crisp toast, milk coffee, briskly stirred  
Like gifts given up to an idol  
A cracked clay idol, unworthy of such attention

I was always a free range bird  
Refusing the pen's safety

The heartache I must have caused him,  
The constant worry.

Men say pure love is often tinged with sorrow  
A way-ward child is often the dearest loved  
Albatross bird in the nest, so needy, raucous

Sheena Blackhall

# Breath Of Life

Breath of Life  
Breath in. Breath out  
You're recycling the breath  
Of Nero, Picasso, Keats  
The baker who set fire to Pepys's London

Savour this fact.  
Some of this breath comes from  
The country where no-one is born,  
The Vatican.

From the prehistoric pines of California  
From the Mexicans Feasting with the Dead  
From an Arab princess  
Wearing a million dollar dress by Schiaparelli

This breath may have used by  
Francois Villon. By Rossetti  
Over his young wife's grave

Breath should be tasted like a Unicorn wine  
Ancient and rare. Like Cougar Juice  
Oaked Chardonnay...like a fine malt  
From Islay

You only get to use it for a second.  
Think Genghis Khan, De Brus  
The anorexic model on the cat walk

Breath in. Breath out.  
Recycle the stuff of life

Sheena Blackhall

# Brian Blessed: Inspired By Fry On Qi

Brian Blessed's built like a barn door  
A miner's son with a lion's roar  
An undertaker, a plasterer's aid.  
From RAF to drama, the leap he made  
He's acted the ghost of Hamlet's Father  
Richard IV in the first Black Adder  
The voice of the rabbit in Peppa Pig.  
Shakespearean acting's Mr Big

Flash Gordon knew him as Prince Vultan,  
He headlined the panto of Peter Pan,  
He's the intro for adverts of Orange phones.  
That man's got showmanship hewn in his bones

He was Old Deuteronomy starring in Cats  
He's been Captain Hook in piratical hats  
He's TomTom's voice on its satnav devices  
He could sell anything, mothballs to ices

He's aped Pavarotti, he's climbed Mont Blanc  
Mount Everest too, with his crampons on  
He trekked on foot to the far North Pole  
His Surrey's answer to Old King Cole

His beard's so bushy, it could contain  
Two squirrels, a mouse and a weather vane  
Up Kilimanjaro he sprinted with ease  
He's battled through rain forests' bugs and trees

Like Thor his voice goes boom boom boom  
A King Kong giant, he fills a room  
He lives in the middle of woods and rills  
With a huge menagerie rescued from ills  
There's ducks, there's ponies sharing his home  
Donkeys and robins are free to roam  
Sharing the biscuits and bonhomie  
With the rest of the Blessed family

And when he dies and he's laid to rest,

It will be truly stated that man was blessed

Sheena Blackhall

# Bridget Cleary

Are you a witch? Are you are fairy?  
Are you the wife of Michael Cleary?

Once I was young and fair to see  
My wedded name was Bridget Cleary  
I walked the roads to sell my eggs  
The flowery paths of Tipperary

But on a day of pouring rain  
I caught a chill and took to bed  
All shivering from top to toe  
A raging fever in my head

My kinsman, Jack Dunne, came to call  
'That's not our Bridgie, ' he revealed  
'A changeling, left by fairy folk.'  
And so my dreary fate was sealed.

My husband to that charlatan,  
Old Dennis Graney, ventured next  
Who gave him secret herbs to use  
A potion strong, from hidden text

They gathered round, my kinsmen brave  
They held me down upon my bed  
They forced their foulness through my teeth  
Held a hot poker to my head

And as I lay and threshed about  
They drenched the bed with human piss  
A curse upon my cruel man  
Whose lips in love before I'd kiss

He threw me down on the flagstones  
And broke my skull, and cursed my name  
And ripped the clothes from off my back  
And then he put me to the flame

They wrapped me in a winding sheet  
And buried me neth a boreen  
And left me in unhallowed ground  
As if my life had ever been

My husband sailed to Montreal  
Strange was the love he showed to me  
Now little children skip and sing  
To keep alive my memory

Sheena Blackhall



# Brothers

Goose flesh stippled the skin of the new stripped boys  
Giggling and shuffling like ducklings  
Towards the pool

Their mother, shoe horning her breasts  
Into an out-grown costume had shooed two sons away  
To the waves, artificially blue, Trompe l'oeil of heaven

The elder led the younger from the crowd  
As a priest marks off a sacrifice from the herd  
The younger, trusting, chubby, an innocent  
Toddled unthinking on.

The quick shove  
Plunged him fathoms out of his depth  
The water closed above him like a lid  
A small eternity elapsed. Time froze.

The mother noticed the terrible absence  
Screams brought a diver, a saviour  
Who fished her dripping son in his arms,  
Up from the water. Flopped on his belly,  
Head to the right, he was a still life.

Then he twitched and vomited water  
Death stepped back. The day resumed its course

Sheena Blackhall

# Broughtyferry Youth Assaulted Barman With A Gannet

A barman, when hit by a gannet  
Said it felt like he'd been struck by granite  
His assailant got off  
As the judge was a toff  
And his brief said 'The boy didn't plan it'

Sheena Blackhall

# Brueghel's Paintbrush

I am Breughel's paintbrush.  
I enjoyed painting the sea  
On his latest canvas, in small clear pats of flat.  
Trees, fields, those meticulous clouds  
Came rolling off the palette  
On to the squared field of my framed world.  
So, when my master drew  
That splash of ridiculous Icarus —  
Windless, without a bolt from Jupiter;  
All, all disturbingly normal  
I was upset that he should spoil  
The rustic idyll of my careful toil.

Such a small death in the scheme of things.  
Now, people pause and shudder as they pass:  
It's tumbling Icarus comes back  
To haunt them like garlic on the breath —  
Not the measured furrows of the yeoman —  
From the far side of the painter's glass.

Sheena Blackhall

# Buddha At The Bodhi Tree (Sri Lanka)

Here, to the oldest living tree  
Pilgrims have flown, sailed, crawled and bussed  
To feel its shade to know its strength  
The world's not owned but held in trust

It never withers, fresh shoots grow  
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust  
Does not apply to such a tree  
The world's not owned but held in trust

Buddha, in this tree's motherland  
Had conquered self and fear and lust  
Now every seed the message gives  
The world's not owned but held in trust

Treasures you covet, things possessed  
Silver and gold all turn to rust  
Others will claim your home, your land  
The world's not owned but held in trust

Your little self's a puff of smoke  
To every living thing be just  
Power brings responsibilities  
The world's not owned but held in trust

The fluttering leaves eternal tell  
Man's not immortal, die we must  
Live a full life but live it well  
The world's not owned, but held in trust

Sheena Blackhall

# Buddha-Frost

Whether or not we're born in a stable,  
Back of a dyke, a hospital ward or a tent  
It's a date that clings to us, a sort of  
Defining skin like the click of a clock

Around the world, at the time of the Eastern star  
In the frosty season, someone's always left  
In the dark, wishing the lights would dim  
The tinkling of tills fall mute

The i-pods sing in the street, the beggars grow strident  
Gales tear tinsel down from its gaudy heights  
Rudolphs glow in Disney living rooms

The trees and the dark are there, they never leave  
The true and forgotten stars.

If memories like stabs of pain flare up  
In the skull's recesses, there's always the frost  
Beautiful, sharp and complex, many patterned  
It seeks no gifts, no platitudes, no ritual ho-ho-ho

Remember the secret snow, seek out its source  
Merge with the Christmas landscape, a watching owl,  
A part of the whole that starts and stops the heartbeat  
One with the trees, the darksome constellations

Somewhere, the sheet's drawn over a silent face  
Deaf to the clamorous streets, the shrill, unending carols  
A new mouth opens, the in and out of life

Sheena Blackhall

# Buddha's Strawberry

The birth tiger opens its  
Red maw and it roars,  
Its mouth wide with pain.

It releases the man  
Who climbs down the well  
On the navel rope  
Eyes glazed with fear

He knows there's no going back

On the well floor  
King Cobra, hissing, waits  
Eventually they'll meet

Meanwhile, the white mouse of day  
The black mouse of night,  
Nibble the rope.

What to do?

A luscious strawberry glistens  
On the well's side

How delicious it tastes on the tongue!

Sheena Blackhall

# Bum Notes

Nobody likes the perfect. The Nazi in us  
Wants to destroy it, take an ice-pick to it.

The bum note on the piano that I play  
Makes all the rest seem sweeter.  
It's tone deaf. Maybe its good at maths.

In a sky of rain clouds,  
Who hasn't felt a lift, seeing a chink of blue?

Sheena Blackhall

# Bus Journey

It's pencil-scrawled, the bus's destination  
As if the actual journey might be arbitrary,  
Uncertain, an Odyssean travail.

The driver is both Chaplinesque and sinister.  
Above his square moustache, the eyes behind the glasses  
Are grim as the F.B.I.  
He grips the steering wheel with whitening knuckles.  
He is festooned in bling, a Stirling Xmas tree  
In flaming June.

A woman with silver toenails, flowing silver hair  
Entwined with pink like Barbie seaweed,  
Rests her feet on a chair, a drying mermaid.

I pay and sit. Stare at an empty ashtray  
The trip begins. My old bones judder  
In their skin bag. The aisle-smells, pee and petrol.

A school decants itself.  
The bus floods with a many-headed hydra.  
Beano Bedlamites...Luddites of law and order  
Hotspur hooligans. I am breathing icebergs  
A cloud thunderous with perturbation  
Hangs over us. Puberty hands me a shocked wreath.

Straps hang from the roof, two rows of idling nooses  
I can imagine heads there, swaying like coconuts at a country fair.

Three seats are wearing jagged gangland scars  
Across their faces. Veterans of vandal wars.

The bus stops and the wincing door's kicked open  
The pupils whooping pour outside  
Like a bucket of oil on daisies

Somebody opens a window in the roof  
Air, straight from the mountain rushes in, a calm orison  
A feast of balm. A brightening on the horizon



The trip resumes, past sheep, domestic thistle.  
The bus reclaims its silence, clean as a whistle.

Sheena Blackhall

# Butterfly

I fall asleep, books piled by my pillow  
Reading's my transport from the known and near  
And often, this dictates where my dreams go.

Books are my world, they teach me all I know  
The more so now my days are turning sere  
Pages like leaves so quickly turn and blow.

The soul's a butterfly, as light as snow  
In poems and tales it travels here and there,  
Often it ventures to the long ago

White butterfly, your wings now beating slow  
This book worm yearns, like you, to change to air  
Till then, my little library must glow  
Each book a candle, tallow burning low

Sheena Blackhall

## By The Lake (Angkor Wat)

A farmer bathes his cow in the lake  
Like a servant, ministering to his mistress

The cow stands patiently  
Enjoying her noontime pampering  
Flicking her ears in ecstasy.

Ducks, full feathered, tied to the handlebars  
Of a passing bike, hang speechless

Two tuk-tuk drivers, slumped in tree-slung hammocks  
Sway side to side, under the idling leaves.

The spirit house on stilts,  
Houses the spirits of their ancestors  
Ghostly footprints leading down to the waves

Sheena Blackhall

## Byron (6th Baron Byron, George Gordon, 1788-1824)

How many students d'you know who keep  
In their rooms, a real live bear?  
Who drink their wine from a human skull  
Buy a hundred s of hankies for spare?

How many writers have you met  
Who receive pubic hair through the post?  
Who sleep with their sisters (and choir boys too)  
Well hung, no idle boast!

His great uncle William (the wicked lord)  
Killed his cousin in cruel attack  
His grandfather was an admiral  
The tars called 'Foulweather Jack'

His father was Mad Jack Byron  
Wed his mother for her dowree  
She'd the temper of ten wild goats, folk said  
With a Royal pedigree

If you travel to Greece, he's still revered  
As a hero there, though dead  
As famous for poems and bravery  
As the notches on his bed

Sheena Blackhall

## Byron's Waddin (Scots)

A jeelin win blew frae the sea  
The snaa cloud gurly flew  
Tae County Durham's, Seaham haa  
A waddin pairty drew

This twa days intae Januar  
The year, echten fifteen  
The bride, Sir Milbanke's dother  
A virgin, fair an clean

Young Annabella stude unveiled  
Snod in a muslin dress  
Her een war glentin, bricht an blue  
Her bridegroom tae impress

The groom, fite-face an curly powed  
The lad o her desirin  
Cam hirplin, gammy-fittit in,  
George Gordon, sixth Lord Byron

At his command, the bridal richts  
War keepit quaet an quick  
Her dowry, less than he'd hae liked  
Luve, thin as caunle-rikk

The bride pit on her traivellin claes  
The coach wis fussed up  
Far kirk bells pealed an muskets fired  
George dooned the stirrup cup

An first they cam tae Rushyford  
The groom wis stern an dour  
The bride sat winnerin, fearie-faced  
Fit merriege held in store

At Halnaby, throw drivin drift  
Baith lay at last in bed  
Lord Byron, throw a nichtmare cried  
'I am in Hell! ' he said

Daybrakk wis cauld, The groom stepped oot  
His mainner...jibes an sneers  
Young Annabella kept inbye  
Her pilla wat wi tears

Sheena Blackhall

# Caledonia

Caledonia whyles rides on a kelpie's back  
Mists in her hair, traffic aroon her feet  
Her breists are Bens  
Sna bree treetlin doon  
Frae her Cailleach paps

The Firth o Forth's her middle  
Glimmrin dolphins slider aroon her wyme

The Nor Sea brakks on her sides  
Her fierce teeth brakk it inno smithereens

Her ferms are sweet wi the scaled  
Bluid o warriors, faan in tulzies

She is a winged kintra  
Twa flags flap frae her showders  
The Saltire an the Lion

Caledonia, dinna test her mettle  
Lan o fusky, aets, symbolic thrissle

Sheena Blackhall

# Caledonia Remembers

The extra magic of history's hocus pocus  
Distance of time can blur or sharpen focus

Three thousand years BC, flint weapons scraped my sides in Orkney  
Building the tomb of Eagles long ago  
So few people, always the mists, the haar  
The keening winds. Time burning fossils in stone, intaglio

I seem to hear the echoing cries of murder  
Bog people sacrificed in the lost aeons  
Pictish armies weaving through the forests  
Wattle and woad the clank of roman legions

Monks and warriors shuffled centuries  
Like packs of cards, knaves saints and charlatans  
Vikings stained my settlements with blood  
My country raised up Kings and champions

Wallace, Brus, both fierce as wolves in winter  
And those who sailed beyond my shores to fight  
The Garde Ecosaise marched with Joan of Arc  
The Maid of Orléans, God's acolyte

The extra magic of history's hocus pocus  
Distance of time can blur or sharpen focus

The Mouth of Hell, carved in the Rosslyn chapel  
Heralded awful tidings, a nation's pain  
Flodden... my finest children scythed like grass  
Tears from the widowed, fell like heavy rain

Sometimes I dream of that pale, pretty widow,  
Mary, come from France. So young! So fresh!  
And that retiarius Knox, forever circling  
Trying to trap her in his righteous mesh

Who'd think James shared a drop of Mary's blood!  
The wisest fool in Christendom, it was said  
Along with his court of sycophants, witch burners



He `swapped a stony couch for a feather bed'

Pah! How the Stuarts intrigued and connived  
With favourites, mistresses, plots and rebellion  
My soil was tilled by fire, by sword, by plague  
Then Holland sent us William the Orangeman

The Hanoverians....Victoria's prince  
My coast has always been an open door  
From Hanseatic times. My children sail  
To trade and emigrate, invent, explore

The extra magic of history's hocus pocus  
Distance of time can blur or sharpen focus

In nearer decades, horrors mushroomed up  
The Flanders battlefields, the Blitz, Iraq  
How things go round and round, a cursed mandala  
Saracen and Crusader gallop back

Lately, the chance arose to freely rule  
My hatchlings voted yes, their elders no  
So so, we live in interesting times  
For mighty oaks from tiny seedling grow

Sheena Blackhall

# Caledonian Anaconda (21 Scots Poems)

Flicht o the Fite Moch:

Winner First Prize (Hugh MacDiarmid Trophy) 2010

Twa beggars in a nerra wynd  
Lay doon aneth the midnicht stars  
O neon licht an sex-club signs  
Ahin a hotterel o bars

Their bowster wis a rowe o cloots.  
Cooryin doon on his richt side  
The auldest chiel wis sleepin first  
Een steekt, wi his mou gapin wide

An frae atween his lips there flew  
A silken moch. An eildritch sicht  
That raise intae the fooshty air  
Bravin the orrals o the nicht

Bumbazed, his watchin fier espied  
The fite moch waucht intae the sky  
Syne drap upon a lid o tin  
Tae sook the watter trapped inbye

It flichtered forrit tae a hull  
Bane-bare, a merle, drappit deid in flicht  
Pyked clean bi sewer rattens' teeth...  
The reid-eed tenants o the nicht

A meenit there, it flappit aff  
Sattled abune a hudderie heid  
O connached beauty...a gang quine  
Member o junkie-lan's undeid

It dauchled yonner, syne cam back  
Frae quine, tae bane, frae tin, tae mou  
Afore the watchin beggar's een  
Atween the sleeper's lips it flew

Fin baith raise up at skreich o day

'Oh sic a dream! ' the sleeper said

'I dreamt I saw a sheenin loch  
Far sillier dertin fishies sped  
An there lay magic, that cud sain  
Aa skaiths that roon the warld bled.

I jyned a boat o ivory..  
The feyest boat ye iver saw  
Wi feathers fleein frae its masts  
Aneth a skinklin wattergaw

It berthed inbye a dragon's cave  
I entered...pierced its stounin vein  
An in its breet-felt agonies  
Jade-green, its bluid ran doon like rain

Ahin it stood a bonnie quine  
Sic een! The dyews o Heiven sat there  
Her hair wis sheenin, lang an derk  
She wis fower-fauld surpassin fair

I tuik her quaet haun in mine  
Throze the douce nicht we lay as ane  
Ah! Coorse it wis tae wauken here  
Inthis dreich airt, jeelt tae the bane

The fite moch' s wings are wafer thin  
Its flicht is lichter than a braith  
Its brither is the Laird o Dwaum  
Its sister is the Leddy, Daith

ances

Herded like nowt tae Glesga's stoorie streets  
Or crammed on ships for hyne Canadian shores  
Wirth less than the glekit yowe that stauns an bleats

Threwsed an ruggit bi press gangs frae their doors  
The reid lowe set tae their reefs..whyles, left fur deid

Less tae the chiefs than the stag that stauns an roars

Nae meat in their wymes. Nae plaid tae hap each heid  
Pairtit frae hames, their braes o muir an mist  
Aa fur a chieftain's gain, a chieftain's greed

Blaik shame that mony'd tae leave a corp unblisst  
Greetin in cairts, tae the coffm ships they gaed  
Wi feint a pyok or a press, a plaid or kist

Anely their Gaelic leid, their sangs they keepit  
Some things canna be killt, or smored, or steekit

Efterstang

Sic a cuttin an slicin o thrapples o woundit men  
Donald Mckay o Glen Urquhart, shipped tae the Indies  
Cumberland'a reidcoats settin a lowe tae the glen  
The prince on his fite shelt, slippin the leash again

Snaa storm an rain on the deid on Drum Mossie muir  
Riderless mounts ran lowse throw the cauld peat bree  
Murdoch McRaw, bystander, ower near the melee  
Hingit in Inverness on the Aipple Tree  
For Campbells an Inglis sodjers tae wheep an scourge  
An hen the Heilans the banshee wail o the dirge  
Jyles fit tae burst wi men, hoose, byre an steadin  
Brunt withe fowk inbye, at the Butcher's biddin  
Kilt, bagpipe, banned... a culture pit tae the sword  
Aa fur aa faithless prince, an a chieftain's wurd

n

Crops dwined wi nae a pikk fur moosie's share  
Hunger an wae grew greater ilkie day  
Nae man can feed his bairns on bowls o air

Ill years. Wird wis the prospecks nicht be fair  
Gin Scotian cud rig oot a colony  
New Caledonia could offer mair

The Bay o Darien, fowk did declare  
Wad be Utopia...richt cantily  
Five ships sailed aff, tae drap their anchors there

Echt month trailed by, wi rowth o tcyauve an care  
Three quarters o the settlers, neth the clay  
Ower late tae sen wird hamewird. Unaware

A secunt wave o settlers socht thon lair  
Tae fin it fever-rid, fu o dismay  
Far Spain an Englan kept the presses bare  
Sae brocht tae wrack, the Darien affair

Song: The Doric Festival: The Weaver o the North  
5. Gallowgate Doric Celebration Tune: The Weaver o the North  
Written for the Gallowgate Doric Celebration, 2010 Doric Festival

At Gairden Pairties in Holyrood  
They say the food is swell  
Bit a stovie plate is a must-hae date  
At the Doric Festival

Chorus:  
The Doric Festival, the Doric Festival  
There's fun for aa in the North East Neuk  
At the Doric Festival

In Glastonbury amang the dubs  
Wayne Tony an Michelle  
Wish that the gig wis at Ellon brig  
Wi the Doric Festival

In the Central Belt the seats are selt  
For the international  
Bit the Holy Grail's at the meal an ale  
O the Doric Festival

In Shetlan up at Uphellya  
Frae Lerwick roon tae Yell  
Their fiddlers cheers at the burnin pier

for the Doric Festival

The Colosseum in Auncient Rome  
Fair liked a spectacle  
Ye'd hae as much fun in a butcher's shop  
Try the Doric Festival

Sae here's tae fiddle an sang an ploo  
Braw an traditional  
Ye can hae yer pick...bit book in quick  
At the Doric Festival

#### 6. St Margaret's Kirk: Tune: The Dundee Weaver

The Gallawgate wis puir an dreich  
In Queen Victoria's time  
Fowk didna leave the hoose at nicht  
The derk wis ruled bi crime  
An on the Sabbath they wad hae  
Tae thole the stink o fish  
Parked there in barras on the street  
The ratties favourite dish

Here Faither John Comper did come  
Tae help the diocese  
He wirked fur mony a wirthy year  
Wi little thocht o ease  
An in the toun he made his ain  
Lang murned eftir his daith  
The Piskies named gweed Faither John  
A Hero o the Faith

For Margaret Queen o Scotlan  
The Pisky kirk wis named  
She wis a saintly body,  
For charity weel famed  
This leddy prayed at midnicht,  
Rose wi the mornin bell  
Tae feed the orphans an the puir  
Afore she dined herself

The Gallawgate aince sealed the fate  
O mony's a guilty loon  
Fin friar's wirked tae meenister  
Tae seek fowk in the toun  
Bit sune frae their auld biggin  
St Margaret's kirk will meet  
New neebors up at Marischal  
Fin the council takks its seat

## 7. Str aaberry Day

Near gloamin time, the listeners pass aroon  
A bowl o weety straaberries, glimmerin reid  
Whilst dauchlin at the skepp o hinney bees  
A wasp sikks entry fur a sleekit feed

The bowl is antique patternet, fite an blue  
The berries, crarnmosie, melt in the mou  
The poets feast on wirds, whilst bummers pu  
The harebells doon, each pollen pooch stap- fu

The bees grow weariet, bizz inby their hoose  
Tae dream o thyme an heather, rose an brier  
The poets thochts flee aff in fantasies  
Sic ploys dae wirds an staaberries inspire!

An aa is rhyme or anti-rhyme, or verse  
The pattern o the ripenin mapamoun  
Afore auld age comes past wi shroud an hearse  
Poets an bees daunce tae September's tune

## Twa Faces o Bride

Twa goddesses wauk doon Princes Street  
Sharin the same skin, stewed in the same bree  
Jyned at the hip: ae wumman, Jekyll an Hyde

Their wirth is eaksy-peaksy  
Wrunkkles, auld wummin guffs  
Are vrocht frae Youth wi its gallus, bigsie face

Baith breath, keech, hae their eeses

Ower the wersh wikks o Yule,  
The dowie haar o the Faa  
This schizophrenic body luiks like a Cailleach  
Hudderie-heided, shauchlin in bauchled sheen  
Wyse wumman, haudin the keys o the hoose o Daith  
Ye'll meet her in blindrift, kistin, ilkie obituar

Luiks are a trick o the licht, a whigmaleerie  
In the wolf month o Februar, ben Allan Ramsay's braes  
The yowes' teats swall wi milk  
Lammies drap frae the wyme on trimmlin shanks

In Embro, new girse briers in the neuks o closes  
Corbies nest in Kirkyairds throw the toun  
Skelpin alang the Royal Mile  
Cams Bride on fite stilettos  
Her wee breists jigging wi promise  
A vergin ripe fur the puin

onian Anaconda□

On Monday I ett twa Firths an a cuttie steel  
On Tuesday I ett Grayfriar's Bobby an a Fife partan

On Wednesday I raxxed ma gub  
An ett the hale o Princes Street gairdens as weel  
On Thursday I'd indigestion  
On Friday I ett the Stirlin monument an Sir Sean Connery  
Follaed bi the Loch Ness monster an Ailsa Craig

The leavins made broth on Setterday.  
On Sunday I ett a Glenlivet distillery  
An cracked a teeth on Ben Nevis

Thon nicht I flittit tae Orkney  
It is jist the richt size fur a picnic

I hae ambitions  
Neist wikk I micht tackle France



## 10. I Lue ma Kintra

I lue ma kintra fur its wyver's wabs  
I lue ma kintra fur its whigmaleeries  
I lue ma kintra far the North Sea bites  
Wi cloud an wave thegither, tapsalteerie  
I lue ma kintra fur its nettles' fire  
I Jue ma kintra fur its buckie shells  
I lue its rikkin kye in park an byre  
I lue its flichts o gloamin pipstrelles

I lue its tarns, its lochans an its puils  
I lue its drookit waucht o lavender  
I lue its clarty rigs o tattie shaws  
I lue its ghaistly laricks in the haar  
I lue ma kintra wi ma heid an hairt  
Toun, ferm an glen, ilk prickly pikk an pairt  
The thrissle wi its jobby, ainnoured skin  
The sangs, the leids, o Scotia's kith an kin

## 11. Time in a Pyoke

Gin I cairriet time in a pyoke, wad it unzip itsel  
Gyang 'Boo! ' like a cuckoo clock?  
Gin I cairriet time in a pyoke, wad it blaw up,  
A bomb in a crooded shop?

Sic things stop time in its track  
A tsunami, an Armageddon  
Cairtin Daith on its back

Gin I cairriet time in a pyoke  
Cud I beery it? Makk time mute?  
Bit naethin wad age nor dee  
Be born nor fruit.

Gin I cairriet time in a pyoke  
Pain wad prig me tae speed  
The stervin wad bite ma heels

Frae verra need

## 12. Autopsy o a Corp (Flodden)

There wis nae claes on the corp  
Ryped bare bi reivers. A keek at its powe  
Shawed twa likely means o daith

The heid, skewered throw bi an arra  
The skull, hacked in twa bi an Inglis halberd  
Ae haun hung bi a threid

The corp wis identifeed as Jamie Stewart  
Nae sign o grallochin  
DNA suggested a Danish mither  
A Scottish faither, a German granminnie

He wis fand on a Friday nicht  
Eftir a hard doonpish o rain  
Nine thoosan deid aroon him quaetly stiffenin  
Twa abbots, fifteen barons, umpteen lairds,  
Nine earls, aa bizzin wi flees

For ease o disposal o this corp, kent details are aneth:  
Darg: King.  
Age: 40.  
Marital Status: Merriet  
Cause o daith: ambition  
Effecks o Daith: a mighty nation murnin

## 13. Gadiefest 2010

Far are ye gaun, ma bonnie wee lass  
Far are ye gaun, ma dearie?  
Far are ye gaun, ma bonnie wee loon  
Wad ye like tae hear a story?

At Gadiefest ye'll meet the best  
Cath Little she will cheer ye  
Wi tales o Wales an the tumin year

Tae entertain an fear ye

At Archeolink, John Wheeler wytes  
Weel wirthy o a mention  
The joy o tellin a crackin plot  
He'll share wi flair an tension

He'll pirl a penny whistle tune  
He's skeely an excitin  
An bairns frae Oyne will tap things aff  
Is onythin mair invitin?

Oh Glastonbury's kent warld wide  
For dubs an sang an blether  
At Gadiefest weir an extra vest  
An niver ye heed the weather

For in the Roon Hoose bi the fire  
Wi Picts an Roman sodjers  
Draw up yer seat an hae a heat  
Wi Bronze Age coffin dodgers

#### 15. Harlaw

The great Macdonald o the Isles tae raxx his pouer wis keen  
Tae claim the Earldom o Ross an spulzie Aiberdeen

Chorus: Wi a dirumdoo a dadumdoo a didtiy and a day

The great Macdonald's army wis ower 10,000 men  
Wi swords & bows & arras, bringin terror frae their glen

The provost Robert Davidson wi tradesmen frae the toon  
Jyned forces wi the Earl o Mar tae tum the robbers roon

The provost marched frae Aiberdeen, aa clad in armour black  
As black's his widda's sorra fin his corp wis cairriet back

Wi cavalry & infantry & shelties rinnin free  
The bluid ran doon sae thick an faist it reiddent girse an tree

Brave Lesley o Balquyne he fell, wi his sax sons sae leal  
An mony a lad wis beeriet at the kirkyaird o Kinkell

On Monday in the momin, the battle wis begun  
Bit lang e'er it wis gloamin time, ye'd scarcely ken fa'd won

Sir Alexander Irvine tae the battle he has gaen  
Wi Hector Roy Maclean he focht till baith o them war slain

Sae weakened war the Lowlanders, nae victory did they claim  
Bit mornin brocht the cheery news MacDonald had marched hame

600 hunner year ago an mair this dreidfu fecht wis focht  
At Harlaw Hoose a monument tae merk the day wis vrocht

The tradesmen o fair Aiberdeen, a flag they still display  
Their forbears cairriet forrit at Harlaw tae heid the fray

Gin ~~G~~in onybody speir at ye fit lies aneth the grun  
The banes o slaughtered sodjers, that battle had undone

#### 16. The World Accordin tae ma Faither

'There's naethin bonnier than the win  
Rinnin ben bracken. Listenin tae the soun o't  
Watchin the meevent o win ben corn an girse.'

The Grampians are tale-tellers  
Frae the heid o Lochnagar,  
The Nor East lies like a brose bowl  
Fu o sun an wattergaws

Ye micht traivel far, farrer than yer ain faither  
Bit ye'll niver traivel ayont the wyceness o this  
Bit ye'll niver traivel ayont the wyceness o this  
It's a puir vratch gies the hee-haw tae his hame

#### 17. New Deer September, for Philip & Vicki Watt,

Roon bales o strae lie biggit in the barn

A skreich o craas flee in the winny weather  
Mids o the park ten nowt aroon a pen  
Chaa at their tooshts o stringlit hey thegither

Their sharny dowps, their skelpin, dubby tails  
Present. Jaas doon they ett their daily maet  
Ane wanners aff, wyme stappt, ootower the girse  
As prood an vauntie's ony heid o state.

The ferm road's a kirn o dubs an glaur  
Puils frae a jeelin doonpish full the track  
Laired doon bi wecht o tractor's churnin wheels  
Cobblin frae ferm tae park, tae wids an back.

The hinneysuckle berries sheen like flame  
A wee jade flee reests on a rose-hip bush  
A hingin chyne chings, swingin on the byre  
Ower seen the brier's flooers will tum tae smush

Grey gloamingjeels the win, herds clouds like nowt  
Hashin afore the derk tae their cauld hame  
Curmurin cushies coorie in the reef  
Flee ower teem staas ooto the spit o rain

A grummlin pertrick clatters frae a sheugh  
The barley boos, somelike a shepherd's hyeuk  
A moosie's hole aside a timmer post  
Rins ben the girse doon tae its secret neuk

The wannerin willies' petals dwine awa  
The kittlin o the place keeps tae the steadin  
The stirlins on the phone weers cheep an churl  
Or blaw like rikk along the face o Heiven

The wannerin willies' petals dwine awa  
The antrin while I feel as wan as them  
Anither year draws closer tae its eyn  
Auld age. The future trimmles on its stem

20 The Norlan Win

The Norlan win's ajeelin win, sets icicles a-dreepin;  
The robin fears the Norlan win. Wi hunger she sits cheepin.

Doon it sweeps frae the Polar air, its oxters fu o snaw.  
The Norlan win sets men fur hame, cauld, cauld, they hear it blaw.

The lift is grey. The iron grun sets young an auld aa skytin  
Cars hoast an rikk, at momin time fin the Norlan win comes bitin

An the cauld rife bawd in her winter fur, wishes the win awa  
An langs fur spring an a swackenin sun tae stert the slokin thaw

There's mony the bird an breet an tree that canna thole its cloor  
The Norlan win is the hinmaist thing they'll fin at their deein oor

Bit the stamies sherp in their cosmic birl like fine tae hear it skreich

## 21. Owersett o John Clare's 'Trespass'

□

I dreided waukin far there wiz nae road□  
Wi feartie-fitsteps ower the girse I trod□  
An aywis turned tae luik wi tentie ee□  
Yet aa the airt I'd traivelled wiz sae fine  
An luiked sae braw I trampit forrit syne□  
I thocht that ilkie stranger frooned at me□

An ilkie kinder luik appeared tae say  
'Ye've bin on trespass in yer wauk the day.'  
I've aften thocht, the day appeared sae fine,  
Foo braw twid be gin sic a place war mine;  
Bit, haein nocht, I niver feel alane  
An canna use anither's as ma ain.

Sheena Blackhall

# Cambridge

Cambridge is Brueghel's Village come to life  
Warren of Gothic windows, red brick walls  
Eating, laughing, drinking on the streets  
Visitors throng the eateries and halls  
Ring Toni's Ice cream van and market stalls

See there, a wattle fence, a low thatched roof  
Clipped cleanly as a tonsured, shiny friar!  
Ale houses, colleges, and grazing cows  
All line the River Cam, by College spire

Daffodils, aconites, anemones,  
Swans gliding up to punts along the backs  
Sun dappled bridges, lazy, languid days  
The splash of water raised by oar smacks

A cycling city, all the world is here  
Queen's College, where Erasmus came to teach  
Labelling local girls 'the kissing kind'  
Oh, Youth's the time to suck life like a peach

John Harvard, an Emmanuel graduate  
Son of a Southwark butcher, crossed the seas  
Funding a college in the Pilgrim World  
His name, his library, success's keys

Magdalene College houses Pepys's diary  
Christ's College boasts bee-hives, a mulberry tree  
That shaded Milton as he wrote his poems  
None could compose so powerfully as he

Corpus Christi holds King Alfred's book  
The Anglo Saxon Chronicle and Psalter  
Once owned by Thomas Becket, martyred man,  
Murdered within the sight of holy altar

The College of St John set on the Cam  
Beside the Bridge of Sighs, has a Great Gate  
With mythic beasts. Three saints attended

Here, along with bishops and great heads of state

Nobel Prize winners, Huxton, Bragg, et al  
Came up to Trinity, and that bête noire,  
Lord Byron, kept his pet bear Bruin here  
Down in the stables, poetry's dark star

And the rain falls out of the Heavens  
And sparkles, with sun distilled  
Like the thoughts of the Cambridge scholars  
Who the Book of Knowledge has filled

Sheena Blackhall



# Canine Babel

Albanian dogs go ham ham ham  
Catalan dogs go bup  
Chinese dogs go wang wang wang  
They learn it as a pup

Slovenian dogs go hov hov hov  
Greek dogs go wav wav  
Ukranian dogs go haf haf haf  
It's all the words they have

Icelandic dogs go voff voff voff  
Indonesian dogs go gong  
Italian dogs go bau bau bau  
All notes of the same song

But British dogs go bow wow wow  
Before they bite your leg  
And if you have a tasty bone...  
Why, they'll sit up and beg!

Sheena Blackhall

# Caribbean Paradise

Lounging on golden beaches  
Snorkelling, swimming with dolphins  
Tropical lagoons and pirate cruises  
Hidden grottos, skies a sapphire blue

Caribbean paradise smashed and suffering  
Hurricanes trailing tornadoes in their wake  
Horrendous winds, sea-surges, 15 feet

Millions evacuated, thousands cowering in shelters  
No power, no food, deserted streets,  
Storm waters thundering  
Palm trees bent like elastic ready to snap

Power lines toppled like ninepins  
Roads and bridges drowned  
Cars and houses floating past like flotsam

Looters hit and run. Aid charities on standby  
Troops defending the homes of vanished people  
Caribbean Paradise, flip side brings devastation  
From the skies.

Sheena Blackhall

# Catching The Mumbai Train

Mumbai's a giant Mogul. At night it never sleeps  
In shanty towns rat armies, through tin can houses creep  
Towerblocks soar to the Heavens  
from the dung of garbage heaps

Shakti crossed the line for the ten minute walk for water  
Aged seven, a flower seller's daughter  
Death was instant and messy. The goddess Kali caught her.

Ramesh the shack dweller begged at the railway junction  
Polio stole his future, fresh air was his luncheon  
On the wrong side of the tracks,  
killed running from a truncheon

Neeja went off the rails to avoid the moneylender  
Just one more suicide stat... a small time spender

Jagdeep was sixty-one when he fell from the train  
He slipped to the open sewer  
He drowned in the rain

Durga ran out of steam at Divali  
Tired of harvesting plastic tossed rupee  
Glue-sniffing she walked in front of the 6.03

Santosh climbed on the roof. No fares up there  
Lost his head to the wire that crossed the air  
On the mortuary slab, he'd nothing to declare.

Mumbai's a giant Mogul. At night it never sleeps  
In shanty towns rat armies, through tin can houses creep  
Towerblocks soar to the Heavens  
from the dung of garbage heaps

Sheena Blackhall

# Cats' Ears

How ugly our ears must seem to a cat!  
How bald. How wrinkly. How pink. How flat.

For theirs are tapered, a furry thatch  
That's lined with mother of pearl to catch  
The dove's flight, fluffy as eiderdown...  
Cat's ears are caverns where starlings drown.

Sheena Blackhall

## Cats In A Gale (25 Scots Poems)

3-leggit Mannie

There's a 3-leggit mannie fa bides in Portree  
He keeps twa pet goldfish inside his TV  
He weirs a canary on tap o his heid  
It cleans oot his lugs wi acroissante o breid

His waas are spaghetti hoops, pink on aa sides  
Wi an upside doon lum, an a reef o coo hides  
He sits doon tae rin, an he lowps fin he sleeps  
An he plays in a band wi a soo weirin breek

His wife makks a steer-pudden ooto aa weathers  
His dother-in-law drives a car made o feathers  
His bagpipes are made frae a kettle o tea  
Thon three leggit mannie fa bides in Portree!

-Cannie

Fowk say that ye are fit ye eat  
Sae ca-cannie fin chawin yer meat  
Swiss rolls an paninis luik daft in bikinis  
An petticoat tails hae nae feet! ☐  
☐

rs an Brochers an Boddamers

Bulgers an Brochers an Boddamer chiels  
Hae lobster for brakkfast they catch in their creels  
At nicht in the meenshine, their airms turn tae nippers  
(Bit Gaymrie fowk step oot in sealskin an flippers)

-Sleeper

There is a roch sleeper rowed up in a clout  
She sleeps on the street fin the starnies come oot  
Wi papers an boxies tae gie her some heat

Fin Jack Frost comes nippin her lugs an her feet

Roch sleeper, roch sleeper, in your flechy sark  
Wi anely the rattens as friens in the dark  
Roch sleeper, roch sleeper, ye should hae a flat  
Wi a fire an a bed an a black purrin cat

Roch sleeper, roch sleeper, ye spikk tae yersel  
Fit kinda stories an tales dae ye tell?  
War ye aince bonnie, an cuddlit an clappit  
Roch sleeper, roch sleeper, wi frost an leaves happit?

in a Gale

Lingle lingle lang tang Cats hae tails  
Tae tie roon trees  
Fin wins blaw gales  
Gin tails brakk aff awa they flee  
A flicht o cats abeen Dundee

Heidie

I ken o a skweel far the creme de la crème  
Winna send aff a heidie without an Amen  
Especially tae ane wi a blue Volvo car  
As vintage as Sir Winston Churchill's cigar

Wi her leavin in sicht, ay, the eyn drawin near  
The byler set fire alarms birrin wi fear  
Bit the fire brigade chiels kent the bairns wad be fine  
Mile End turns oot pupils like ships o the line  
At Sports Days, ower divot an fitba-kirned sod  
She roars ooto a megaphone, luikin rale odd  
Tae stop Myles or Ranjit frae crossin the line  
Till the deem wi the fussle blaws oot that it's time

A Spike Milligan fan, fin the sna's dingin doon  
Aroon Xmas, her carols cheer staff, quine and loon  
For she stauns in the playgrun an on her heid weirs  
A reid Sunty hat, tae an ootburst o cheers

She loves singin an music, an poetry an floers  
She'd tell tales tae the littlins fur oors an oors  
Aa gweed things maun eyn, an she'll seen be awa  
Bit och, as a heidie, I'm telt she wis braw!

### Wee Catty

There wis a wee catty caad Shug  
He barked at a shelt an a dug  
The shelt didna heed, bit the dug, at full speed  
Bulldozed him an noo he's a rug

### ie Tree

Cloutie tree, cloutie tree, hingin wi wishes  
Preened there bi fowk like a sea-fu o fishes  
Gie me a cat wi a wee siller bell  
Cloutie tree, cloutie tree, aa tae masel

### nay

Hogmanay. The Auld Year's gaen  
Clean the hoose. Bring in the New  
Licht the nicht wi mirth an sang  
Joys be mony. Waes be few

Bairnies turning in yer beds  
Dream yer dreams an grip yer teds  
The New Year's here. Hip hip hooray!  
Sleep soun bairns while big fowk play

### dit

Dinna start yer girnin  
Makkin on yer seek  
Diana think I'm listenin  
Yer groundit fur a wikk

The teacher said ye plunkit skweel  
An wadna takk a tellin  
Ye thumpit Dolly Baxter  
An ye didna learn yer spellin

Dinna start yer girnin  
I'm tholin nae mair chikk  
Dinna think yer saftenin me  
Yer groundit fur a wikk

Max etts beefburgers wi chips on the side  
Fur denner an brakkfast. He's 16 fit wide  
He lies on his back fur he's ower fat tae rin  
He opens his moo an draps beefburgers in

the Coo

Molly the coo wauked tae the toun  
Skittery-dowp an aa  
She vowed that there she'd saddle doon  
Green girse is best tae chaa

The traffic roared an wadna stop  
The horns did peep an blaa  
Naethin ava bit street an shop,  
An larries, raa on raa

Molly the coo turned hungered syne  
Nae neeps in wynd or lane  
She flicked her tail an tossed her heid  
An hoppity-skipped back hame

e Toddle Dyeukie

Toddle toddle dyeukie  
Toddlin ben the dubs



Splyterin in the watter  
Luikin fur the bugs

Luikin fur the bugs  
Wi yer beak gaun snap  
Toddle toddle dyeukie  
Wi yer feet gaun plap

e Wallie

Paradiddle paradiddle prum, prum, prum  
A wee germ's lowpin in ma tum, tum, tum

I'm feelin affa wabbit  
Peelie wallie, seek an crabbit  
Nae winner that I'm crabbit an I'm glum, glum, glum!

#### 15. Skweel Secretaries

We're at the coal face o each wee primary skweel  
We deal wi enquiries, type letters as weel  
We decipher the answer phone's mutterins an rantins  
We ficher wi siller, we haunle the bankins  
Withoot us the newsletters widna be deen  
The fax widna fax in the faxin machine  
We're better detectives than Poirot....wi' zeal  
We hunt doon the parents o bairns that's nae weel

Has a playpiece bin tint?  
Has a packed lunch bin drappit?  
We winna gie up till they're sniffed oot an trackit!  
Has a tuba, a fiddle, a jimmy gaen missin?  
Is the library floodit? The heatin pipes hissin?  
It's us fowk aa rin tae...we MAUN be divine  
Cause they think we wirk miracles near ilkie time!

We're wizards at Phoenix, we're dab hauns at Boss  
We redd up the snorreels, the stooshies, the soss  
We deal wi confusions that's caused bi the snaa  
Fin the trains winna rin an the pipes winna thaa

We're there in a crisis, fin aathin looks black  
We're the dynamic duo. We deal wi the flakk!

### Littlin

Far are ye gaun tae littlin?  
Doon far the bandies sweem  
In the rashes by the lochan  
An the yalla's on the breem

Can I gae wi ye littlin?  
Na, for a grown-up's ee  
Wad miss the magic ferlies  
That anely a bairn can see

The road I wauk is lichtit  
Wi sun on its ferny track  
Ay, bairn, it's blythe gaun forrit  
It's waesome steppin back

### Trees o the Trossachs

The trees o the Trossachs are sturdy an braw  
Wi knobbily knees that thole thunner an sna  
Their trunks are as hardy as Desperate Dan  
They've three times the smeddum o auld Ghenghis Khan

Gin yer needin a caber tae haive ower a park  
The trees o the Trossach step up tae the mark!  
They'll flee through the air an the dunt fin they lan  
Will gar aa yer sausages lowp frae the pan!

### 18.J. J. the Puddock

J.J. the puddock liked tae rap  
He wis a fitbaa fan  
He pit his cap on back tae front  
An drave like Desperate Dan

## Spaceman's Holiday

Willie's gaun tae Disneylan  
Neil, tae Auchensheen  
Jockie's aff tae camp in Troon  
Bit I'm aff tae the meen!

Tasnim's aff tae Pakistan,  
Jack, tae Aiberdeen  
Omar's sailin roon the Gulf  
Bit I'm aff tae the meen!

Sawney Bean is in ma class  
Wandrin Willie....John O' Groats  
Deacon Brodie, Grandpa Broon  
Skirlin Wattie, takkin notes.

Rabbie Burns is tap at music  
Jamie Saxth's the classroom feel  
Willie Wallace is the jannie  
Guairdian o this Scottish skweel

John Knox is the HMI  
Dae yer hamework or ye'll fry

## Oxfam Shoppie

The Oxford shoppie has queues o frocks  
Neuks that tick like electric clocks

A tour o Pisa o auld cassettes  
Dallies fur bairns an trock fur pets

Curtains hingin like wearie washin  
Speens an spurtles an gee-gaws flashin

A clockin hen wi a cheena reest

An ashet vrocht fur a xmas feast

Fyauchie dishcloots an ties that squirm  
Roon the coonter like snake an wirm

Naebody needs tae prig nor mooch  
Oxfam shoppies suit aabody's pooch

## 22. the Fun Fair

This Setterday morning we gaed tae the fair  
Granny an mither an faither war there  
Ma wee sister Lizzie wis bired in the waltzers  
Wi granny fa tint her new hat an her falsers

Fin ma brither Joe tried the merriematanzie  
His face turned as green as the neck o his ganzie

Da drappt frae the Big Wheel an raxxed his bihoochie  
An left in an ambulance wippit in stookie

Mither sat on the dodgems an drave like the Deil  
She demolished the ghaist train an whirlies as weel

I thocht that oor babby wis sproutin a beard  
It wis popcorn as ower his wee coupon he'd smeared

A queer keekin glaiss gart ma granfaither blink  
He'd shrunk hauf his size tae a skinnymalink

At the coconut shy staa I won twenty prizes  
An then I wis chased bi a gang o as sizes

Ma big sister Katie gaed inno a tent  
Her fortune wis telt, aa her siller wis spent  
She wis telt that her future lay ower the water  
She skyted in dubs an fell doon wi a splatter

Sick, battered like puddens, we aa hytered hame  
Da's promised neist Sunday we're gaun back again

### 23. Wee Willie

Robert the Bruce had a pearl in his croon  
James the fifth, in his sceptre  
Henry the fifth had ane stown frae his tent  
At Agincoort...fit a mishanter!

Bit I am the biggest, the brichtest, the best,  
Frae Ullapuill doon tae Caerphilly  
I'm the brawest Scots pearl frae the North, Sooth, East, West  
An I gyang bi the name o Wee Willie!

Snail Limerick (the case of Donohue v Stevenson, 1928)

A wee Glesga wummin turned pale  
For her ginger beer drink held a snail  
It did her some gweed,  
Tho the puir snail wis deid  
It shelled oot fur a roon-the-world sail!

e Flugga Lichthoose

I'm the Muckle Flugga lichthoose luikin tae the frozen north  
Watchin tug boats chugga-chug along the spray

As the crew gyang glugga wi their cocoa ablow deck  
Throw the fugga-fugga-fog I sen ma ray

Foo I'd like tae rin awa frae here an be a barber's pole  
Or a helter-skelter belter at the fair

I'm the Muckle Flugga lichthoose. I'm scunnert, an I'm cauld  
An ma roosty jynts are creakin an they're sair!

Sheena Blackhall

# Census Matters (27 Scots Poems)

anan's Witches

Fair is foul and foul is fair  
Lumphanan's witches at their lair  
At Craighash bi the warlock's steen  
Echt weemin daunced wi Margaret Bean

Accusin them wis William Ross  
Fa blamed the hizzies for the loss  
O nine fat kye bi sleekit spell  
Learned frae Auld Cloutie's lips himsel

Margret Clarke, bi deevilrie  
Gart puir John Burnett quickly dee  
Whilst Janet Lucas kept a threid  
Tae wirk some hellish orra deed  
Isobel Ogg used the Black Airt  
Tae help her friens swick at the mairt

In the Tolbooth in Aiberdeen  
Their tongues war loused bi witch's preen  
Bi thoomb-screw, duckin steel, sair-pressed  
They aa tae witchin ploys confessed

John Justice the toon hangie led  
Tae stakes, the witches, threwshed, ill-fed  
Tae thrapple them, syne set the flame  
Tae aa fa tried the warlock game

Fair is foul an foul is fair  
Nae birds sing in the eildritch air  
In Craighash wid's great warlock steen  
Gin ye staun there, yer nae yer leen

Duchess o Richmond & Gordon

The Duchess o Richmond an Gordon  
Wi siller an lans wis blest

Bit Whiteash Knowe wi its Wyndin Wauks  
Wis the airt that she lued best

Here bilberries growe freely  
A capercaillie's treat  
An at the tap the views rax oot  
Far the Spey an the Heivens meet

le

Beach an pines an barbecues,  
Picnics seals an bonnie views  
Braw Roseile, the Moray Firth-  
War defences, sanny earth

Aipple

Sir Isaac Newton kent me weel  
I am the frien o snake an Deil  
Ma body draps at Simmer's heel  
I am the fruit o Eden

In Adam's thrapple I'm the knot  
An orchard is ma birthin cot  
I hotter in the cider pot  
I am the fruit o Eden

I'm tae the fore at Halloween  
Fin bairnies sport aneth the meen  
Reid chikkit wi a hairt o steen  
I am the fruit o Eden

I list yer faats? : Tae a Pit Bull Terrier on a Bus

Shall I compare ye tae a midden heid?  
Ye are mair fooshtie an mair fu o flechs:  
Yer leash is far ower lang fur sic a breed:  
Ye fleg the passengers wi gurrs an pechs,  
Ye are the Deevil's kin, yer maister's bling,

Fause gowd aroon his thrapple gars fowk cowk;  
He thinks he's Airchie, thon's the comic thing  
Bit ithers see a bully an a gowk:  
Whylst ye, wi slivers hingin frae yer mou  
Fartin awa eneuch tae choke a stirk  
Wad chaw the leg frae brock, or dug, or soo,  
Ye are his fier in ill-tricks in the mirk:

Sae lang as there are coorse cheils on life's stage,  
They'll pick a pet that is aa teeth an rage

Chiel

Dug chiel's dowed on the street ootby a buikshop  
Ain o Les Miserables. His luggit bunnet cairries  
Sax month's yird. His neb's a plooky ootcrap  
O boozers' blisters. His shilpit, shargeret physog's  
An stibble chooks, are cross hatched lines o keech.

We winna pikk o the guff that wauchts upwin  
It's a stammygaster. His neives are blaik's  
The swypins frae a lum. A brunt-oot tabbie's  
Stukken tae his lips. Fowk coor frae him  
Takk peety on the dug. Nae tyke sud hae  
Tae lie on a shitten quilt. The stank  
O strang an swyte's an affront tae stanks.

Dug chiel's finger nails cud growe hale tatties  
'Gie's cheenge' he prigs. 'Takk peety on the dug.'  
Nae fears. Twid ging on drugs. I'm nae a mug.

7. An Owersett based on Ballad bi John Clare

A faithless shepherd coorted me,  
He reived awa ma liberty.  
Fin ma puir hairt wis pure's the dyew,  
He cam an smiled an gart me grue.

Fin ma peenie wad hing doon,  
Me he socht tho snaa blawed roon.



Fin wi shame ma peenie raise  
He didna see ma dowie days.

Fin simmer brocht nae flegs tae fricht,  
He cam tae guaird me ilkie nicht.  
Fin winter nichts aa gurly grew,  
Nane cam tae guaird me or tae lue.

I wish, I wish, bit aa in vain,  
I wish I wis a maid again.  
I doot I doot there's nae remeid,  
Fan will the green girse hap ma heid

## 8. Aiberdeen 2011

The chippies, the buikies, the shops an the sales  
The parks an the banstan, the haar an the gales  
The howfs an the bistros, the bollards, the docks  
The malls wi a rowth o new troosers an frocks  
The high-rise, the bakeries, the pye an display  
The uni, the polis, heich waves wi their spray

The dug-keech, the taxis, tandooris, roch wins  
The potholes, the cassies, the wynds an the bins  
The seagulls, the sewers, the gairdens, the brigs  
The scaffoldin. Wirkirs aff cauld ile rigs  
The roondaboos, phones, an the lang taxi queues  
The theatres, cinemas, billboards, an doos  
The pizza huts, bottlenecks, sheddies an skips  
The beggars in doorwyes wi frost-hackit lips  
The benches, the roadwirks, the Dee an the Don  
The statues, the bussies, the braw fitbaa grun  
The joggers, the bloggers, the buggies, the rain  
That stots aff the gutterin an rins doon the drain

The schools an the hospitals, larries an vans  
The scaffies that wheech awa speecial brew cans  
The hardmen, the junkies, the trains an the planes  
The sheddies, the suburbs, the retirement hames  
The offices, factories, businesses, streets  
That are hotchin wi newspaper venders wi sheets

Tae tell ye the crimes an the sklaik o the toun  
Fa's chorin an muggin, fa's hoose has brunt doon  
The Sikhs an the Moslems, the Poles an Chinee  
We've a wide-luggit creel for oor citizenry

#### 9. Sheetin Hares bi Morven

Sodden up tae the gills in beer an fuskey,  
They ride wi the windaes open,  
Shotguns pyntin oot,  
On a dawn o sun an birdsang.  
Aa nicht they hae boozed an sang,  
Braggin o weemin taen an cast aside

The bawd wis killt mid-lowp,  
The win aneth its paas a corpse's cushion  
Shot in the heid, it lies like a teemed bottle.  
Its glaissy een gap-wide, takkin daith in.

The sharger leaves the car tae scrape it up  
It's haived on the car flair, reid mou sypin dreeps  
Still warm an soft, curled doonwirds in a grue

The loons are heich on bravado, on testosterone  
The sun abeen is hett as meltin lard  
On the heatherie knowe, the bonnie day is butchered  
The loons' spikk's aa about the Setterday daunce  
Fit quines they hae in their sights  
Foo they will wyle them, woo them, tease them  
Ooto their draaers, as easy as ruggin fur  
Frae the bawd's hett hochs

#### 10. The Queen oTatties

I hae won prizes...I am a tattie o distinction  
This is ma time in the sun  
Aneth the grun, I practiced fur celebrity  
TV ads fur crisps, or Cookery shows  
I hae luggit inno the claik  
O wirms an nochtie craiturs

Like hornygollachs, mowdies,  
Snailies, slaters.

I quately swalled in the derk  
An coored frae the thocht o Blicht.  
Passover Nicht o the Tatties ower in Erin.

I anely hae een fur you  
Takk me. Takk me noo

Mash me, mell me wi butter  
I'm a stoater. I am the Queen o Tatties  
A Gowden Wunner.

owersett in Scots o Fredman's Song by Carl Michael Bellman  
Fin there's siller for a drappie,  
Nota bene: Rhenish wine!  
An ma haun aroon her tittie,  
Nota bene: An it's mine!  
Blytheness it is in ma hairt,  
Nota bene: till we pairt.  
Aye, the times are aa ower merry,  
Nota bene: nae the best!  
Vratches wint mysel tae beery  
An the siller's rinnin faist.  
Some feel free an safe frae hell,  
Nota bene: bagatelle!  
Let it aa complete its gyre,  
Nota bene: make it stall!  
Age will nae convert the fire  
O ma deariel tae a troll.  
Drink an beauty gar me flee,  
Nota bene: till I dee

## 12. Heroin Blues(Updated Version of Cocaine Lil & Morphine Sue)

See them on the cassies in their zonked oot state  
Chasin the dragon wi the pennies on their plate

Honey get a hit fur me...Honey get a hit fur me (Sung to Buddy have a drink on me)

Cocaine Kate said 'I got nae shame  
For yer nae a celeb if ye've got nae fame

Honey etc

Doon by the harbour lyin on her back  
Donna's earnin siller for her baggie o smack

Honey etc

Let the world gae hing, let the bairn gyang tae pot  
Fin the poppies are a poppin an yer mammy's lost the plot

Honey etc

His pride's doon the pan an his quine's on the street  
Hoorin for the heroin tae keep him sweet

Honey etc

The dragon's in the schemes far the junkies play  
Fowk a-sookin on their methadone tae fill the day

Honey etc

Weel they say the crematorium gars auld men shift  
But the smack-heids of the city are a-lichtin up the lift

Honey etc

y

Scolty is Gaelic for 'cleft in the knowe'  
Owerluikin Deeside & fair Banchory's howe  
Reid squirrels skyte like flames up the green pines  
Burns fu o taddies tryst wee loons an quines  
Tae play in the wids or climm up the knowe tap  
Far the gowk sings 'Cuckoo' an the widpeckers chap  
The weather can cheenge sae weir sensible claes  
Tae daunder, tae picnic, tae reenge Scolty's braes

then

Derk, wyndin pathies, brigs abeen the watter  
Wheesht! There's a roe deer. Dinna makk a clatter!

Steppin ben the widlan easy-fleggit deer  
Three hunner year syne, coaches hurled here  
Drivin doon tae Lunnon...Merchant, lady, lord  
Cannie, for a cateran micht wyte wi drawin sword

Ghaisties flittin back an fore tae the curlin puil  
Noo it's a puddock's paradise wi midgies for a meal!

#### 15. Déjà vu, Littlin

Ma grandmother's like a new-fledged starlin's littlin  
Moo like a diamond, sikkin meat frae the shute  
O the birdie's beak.

Her reedy greet faas quaet, fur noo she's sooklin  
Ootbye the wizzent elm taps at the blearie windae

Sae mony ferlies fur new een tae see:

The curtains, fit's agin them  
The derkness, fit's inbye it  
The starnies, fit's ayont them  
The revelations wytin in the wings  
O ilkie day

She lies in her mither's airms, a noddin snaadrap  
Her perfeck lips are weety like the dyew  
I see her faither in her. Déjà vu.

#### 16. A Soldier's Frien ww1

Dinna tell me smokin's bad for me  
Bombs are bad  
Craters are bad  
Trench fit's bad  
Rattens, swalled wi human flesh are bad

Flech bites, trench fever, pyson gas  
These are REALLY bad for me!  
Hae ye seen a sodjer staun up  
An wauk oot tae the enemy jist tae get killt?  
Hae ye? Hae ye?  
Or a sodjer deein slow o mustard gas?  
Brunt an blistert, blin een stuck thegither  
Froth frae his lungs bubblin up on his lips?

Dinna tell me smokin's bad for me  
Whyles, fit's bad fur ye  
Helps fowk thole Hell

### Social Wirker

The office brings nae respite  
A rowth o files touerin up frae the desk  
I share wi twa, three ithers.  
Wires frae the laptop, the prenter, the scanner  
Mixer-maxter, jummelt like spaghetti  
The phone ay birrin, the radiator clunkin  
Wintin bled.  
My man, ay girnin aboot siller  
Bills fur gas an electric, car an phone an meat  
Bit yet he gyangs tae the howf fower nichts a wikk  
An the coorse winter, blin drift, ice, burst pipes  
The bairns pit hame frae schule bi lucky teachers...  
This mornin I brunt the toast, the cat cowked on the bed  
I'd a sair heid an the milk wis on the turn  
Ma first client bedd in a High Rise flat  
Baith lifts war brukken.  
Tae him, (tae aa) I say 'Fit's wirst wi ye? '  
The client's life's a snorrel o cares an waes  
Pitched inno the community frae the hospital  
Wi a pyoke o peels he winna takk fur depression  
Gin I'd a magic wand, I'd solve his tribbles

The ashtray reams wi tabbies.  
He says he's skint. The empties in the bin  
Gie thon the hee-haw  
His braith is soor, his claes are ripe wi swyte

He's on the edge o gaun back inno care  
I listen, takk notes, shakk ma heid an sigh  
The steamroller o life brakks doon his yett

er Seagull

I kick up stooshies an stramashes  
I'm a toonser gull, a rapper, a mugger, a radge  
Takk a swatch o ma iron wings, the bling  
O ma skyrie neb. Ma breist is fite's  
A tin o emulsion peint  
I can thole onythin ye can haive agin me  
I swallae fish heids raa  
I skitter keech ower baldie heids an caimb-owers  
I teem a picnic bench wi ae hairse skreich

& Ride

Ilkie Setterday nicht, back wynds in lanely airts  
Hae cars discreetly parked...nae side bi side  
Somebody's wife wi somebody else's pairtner  
Park & Ride.

tae a Drivin Instructor

Aince I cud wirk the clutch, the brake, the throttle  
There wis nae haudin me  
I wis an arra, an erne, greased lichtnin  
Till I skytit ma faither's car along the road  
On its reef, its windaes brukken  
Like a bairn's wee stottin baa

Thon fair dang the win frae ma sails  
I gaed frae vauntie tae feart,  
Creepit on ice at a snail's crawl  
Fit on the brake. Larries an motors tootin  
Ragin tae batter by in a wheech o stoor

I cud hear yer wurd in ma lug, Mr. Donnelly  
Ca cannie at the junctions. Dinna stall

Fag niver ooto yer neive, yer baldie heid  
Shiny's a glaiss bool, a boozers neb

It wisnae until ma mou struck the steerin wheel,  
Bluid spirkin ower the wrack o steel, chrome,  
Leather an glaiss, an ambulance, sirens skreichin  
Ferryin ma bairn tae the ward fur brukken banes  
That I kinna acceptit the fack:  
Drivin isnae a skill that tholes an aff day

Flech

I'm a flech. I hae ADHD  
I canna saddle secunts on ma dowp  
Bidin at peace tae me is purgatory  
I'm a flech. I hae ADHD.

22. Een faistened wi Prens

An Owerset intae Scots o 'Eyes Fastened With Pins' by Charles Simic

Foo hard Daith wirks,  
Naebody kens fit a lang  
Day he pits in. The wee  
Wife's aywis alane  
Ironin Daith's laundry.  
The bonnie dothers  
Settin Daith's supper brods.  
The neebors playin  
Fitbaa in the backyaird  
Or jist dowpit on the steps  
Drinkin beer. Daith,  
Betimes, in a fremmit  
Pairt o toun luikin fur  
Somebody wi a coorse hoast,  
Bit the address somewye wrang,  
Even Daith can't wirk it oot  
Amang aa the steeked yetts...  
An the rain stertin tae faa.  
Lang winny nicht aheid.  
Daith wi nae even a newspaper  
Tae hap his heid, nae even



A phone tae ring the ane dwinin awa,  
Undressin slawly, dwaumily,  
An streetchin nyaakit  
On Daith's side o the bed

### 23. At the Hairdresser: Gaelic /Scots

Can ye dae it faist?  
An urrain dhuibh a dheanamh sgiobalta?

Please hurry, I'm latchy  
Dean cabhag, le'r toil, tha mi fadlach

I'm gyaun tae a gaitherin  
Tha mi frithealadh co-labhairt

Nae ower muckle aff!  
Na toir cus dhe!

It's rainin again  
Tha e sileadh a ris

Is it gaun tae get ony hetter?  
Bheil e dol a dh'fhas nas blaithe?

I think I hae food pysonin  
Cha chreid mi nach eil truailleadh-bidh orm

Are ye listenin tae me?  
A bheil thu'g èisdeachd rium?

The watter's ower hett  
Tha an t-uisge ro theth

Takk a bittie mair aff the back  
Thoir beagan a bharrachd far a' chuil

Can I hae the bill?  
Am faigh mi ancunntas?

Hae ye made a mistak? ?

An do rinn sibh mearachd? ?

-Mates

After 'Having Twins', a drawing by Tracy Emin in the Scottish National Gallery

Ablow her doon-hingin breists  
A wumman sits like a human pyramid.

She is twa thirds wame,  
A vertical camel, hatchin

In her stappit uterus  
Twa siblins warssle fur space  
Moored bi leevin towes  
Tae her raxxed placenta

Inbye their amniotic sacs  
They cercle each ither  
Wee astronauts safe in their mither ship

Temps Menaçant

After the painting Le Temps Menaçant, by René Magritte, in the Scottish National Gallery

The sea is haein a widdendreme  
She is breengin an birlin,  
Wirkin hersel up tae a lather

Her dwaum is o a fite torso  
Sailin the lift  
A heidless figureheid

Aywis she hears a dowie note  
Like the hinmaist tuba on the Eirde

She langs for a teem cheer  
Tae rest her tides on  
The sea fa canna bide still  
Rugged back and fore like a quine  
Atween twa lovers

Owersett in Scots o a Nippick frae Mythical Story, bi George Seferis

I waukened wi this marble heid in ma hauns  
It wearies ma elbucks an I dinna ken far tae doonpit it  
It wis faain inno the dream as I wis comin ooto the dream  
Sae oor lives jyned an it will be an unca tyauve tae pairt them.

I luik at the een: neither open nur steekit  
I spikk tae the mou that ettles tae spikk  
I haud the chikks that hae passed ayont the skin  
I hae nae mair virr.

Ma haun disappeared an cam back tae me bladdit

n at the Corpse's Intimmers

Luikin at the corpse's intimmers,  
The pathologist liftit the lid o the skull  
An picturs o muirs an lochans scaled ower the table  
A muckle salmon or twa lowped oot  
Wi three bobbydazzlers o stags.

The hairt held the incubus o a granminnie  
A wheen traiveller sangs  
A dish o pottit heid  
An a puckle o versies bi Clare, Heaney, an Burns

A Flemish pirate lowpit frae the wame  
Follaed bi a sodjer wyvin a claymore

The lugs war fand tae be stappit  
Wi birdsang an hinneybees

Cause o daith:  
The oor-glaiss ran oot

Sheena Blackhall

# Chanticleer's Wife

Her throat is stippled, black and white and brown  
Her tie-dyed wings ark wide and wildly flap  
I love the feathered bracelets round her thighs  
I love his jealous crow, a thunderclap  
A tug that pulls a tiny train of waves

This farmyard wife has tags of chicks in tow  
Past puddles' khaki mirrors see her strut  
Small speeding chicklets cackling two and fro

Above, the skies are weeping, clouds are low.  
She stops to a small stab of pain  
Her beak sends circling ripples round the pool  
Raindrops, dance around her peck like grain.

Sheena Blackhall

# Charity

On the churchyard bench  
I opened my sandwich lunch  
Having passed and avoided two beggars  
The benches sit in an arc  
The dead lie prim behind  
Looking up from their modesty boxes

On the far edge, the gaunt faced beggars  
Slump into the wooden slats  
Wall eyed human skeletons  
The stuffing knocked out of the them  
The wind sucked from their sails

A crow hopped over the gravel  
An undertaker bird in mournful feathers  
Hungry, demanding, needing to be fed

He squared right up to me  
He had me in his sights  
A small Svengali  
Naturally, I granted his request

Sheena Blackhall

# Charlie Chaplin: Against The Odds (1889-1977)

Clowns often grow in backyard plots of misery  
Take Chaplin, born to a drunk whose liver was on the blink  
And a mad mother, locked away from his love  
Talented folk, but damaged, a fragile childhood

The Cane Hill Asylum's motto was a brave one:  
I bring relief to troubled minds it boasted  
Soon after she lost her voice, her mind took flight  
Along with the songs that made her passing famous

Smile, though your heart is aching,  
Smile, even though it's breaking.

A bit of a cockney sparrow her son survived  
Doing the Lambeth walk in the local Poorhouse  
The sad dark eyes of the Romany on his face  
He danced his way to America on the stage.

Actor, director, producer & composer,  
Mummer and comic, slapstick, silent movies  
The Little Tramp, his made-it-good persona  
Bowler hat, boat shoes, moustache and stick  
Waddled into the public heart and mind

Earthy and vulgar, the little underdog  
Invariably vanquished. New immigrants  
Could read the body language  
The soleful speaking eyes, the stoic shrug  
Authority figures reduced to inept baboons

The mouse grew whiskers: Chaplin turned to talkies  
Cocked a snoot at Hitler, The Great Dictator  
Was then accused of un-American actions  
Witch-hunted out of the States by Edgar Hoover  
The little tramp, dogged by the FBI

He was a ladies man, but liked them young  
The sweet sixteens, the bloom new on the rose  
His final bride, was older..turned eighteen

When Chaplin was a greying fifty four

Love, this is my song  
Here is a song, a serenade to you  
The world cannot be wrong  
If in this world, there is you

Switzerland opened its gates, the Chaplins entered.  
He used his Academy Oscar as a doorstep

Now honours poured like coins from a fruit machine:  
Knighthood, a star on the Hollywood walk of fame  
His face on postage stamps. A minor planet,  
3623 Chaplin, named in his honour,  
By a Soviet astronomer. Real stardom at last.

Neither drugs nor drink, but the fullness of time  
Claimed him. The living legend  
Died at home in his sleep.

A peaceful end with a sequel. His grave was robbed  
In scenes stranger than any he wrote himself  
His corpse a bargaining chip in a grisly ransom

Now under tons of concrete he lies buried  
So huge a legacy against the odds

Sheena Blackhall

# Charon's Passengers

Into the silent water, slips the silent prow  
Lifting the dripping anchor over the tilting bow.

There's no star on the skyline, past the silver moon  
All the world he ferries, in secret, late or soon.

Into the faint horizon where no man comes back  
Each man travels lightly. Each man takes no pack.

All the world he ferries, in secret, late or soon  
Into the faint horizon, past the silver moon.

Sheena Blackhall



# Chatsworth Estate

Chatsworth Estate

In an airy corridor

Duchess Georgina laughs from a painting

A grand society beauty broken

On the hazardous reefs of marriage

Ménage à trois, like another, later, Spencer

Now she's a period piece

Her home's a setting for the movie makers

Of bodice rippers, and 21st century Darcy lovers

In the farm estate

Pigs perform for the kiddies

Outside the smooth harmonious lawns

Lead off to misty horizons

Having enjoyed TV appearances

The mansion welcomes its fans

First on the hit parade of Stately Homes

Formidable ornaments, luscious and spectacular

Stun shuffling, gawping visitors into awe

Outside, a fountain like a released pee

After a lengthy wait, constantly empties

The contents of a channelled lake to the air

The splintering identities of a rock garden

By turns is Gothic, Disney, even flintstone Stonehengian

This pomp and pleasure seat exhausts the eye

With its surfeit of garnered goodies

The backdrop rural tapestry of trees

Capably sculpted by Brown, the master gardener.

Down on the Farm,

There's a Gloucester Old Spot Piglet

Perky bottom, corkscrew tail

Rooting and squealing this  
Gloucester old spot piglet  
Leaps like a crackerjack imp  
In an explosion of pork on trotters  
Envelope ears flap open  
As this high stepping guzzling grunter  
Greet the spring with a snort

There's a Shorthorn  
Russet and milky white 60's fringe  
The shorthorn's sides are swollen with calf  
Ballooning in late pregnancy  
Udder, in mint condition at the ready  
Tail beagragged with dung  
Whiskery mouth and steaming snout  
She is dreaming of Lickpenny Farm  
And Cuckoostone Lane,  
Glimpsed once from a cattle float

There are Chickens  
Stilt walkers on twiglet toes  
Cheepers, peckers, neck stretchers  
Gawkers, squawkers, huddlers  
Sibling clumps of cosy  
Balls of fluff from Eggland,  
Yolky yellow

There's a hen  
Seedy-eyed puffball of feathers  
Patterned like parquet flooring  
Pea brain coiffed with a red comb and wattles  
Like melted sealing wax  
Wing archer, pecker and strutter  
Scratcher of ground and pinions

A blob of excretia emerges from a feathery muff  
Plops on the dust, like a quivering dollop  
Of mint and vanilla cream

And In the Poultry Shed  
Hens perch like harem ladies

Squatting in orange saris  
Sociably grooming  
One preens her ruffled feathers  
Another snatches sips from a drinking bowl

By turns, timid and bold  
Broody and coquettish  
They are all winks and sashaying tails  
A crescendo of burbles

Like toffee slowing turning on the boil  
A matronly specimen, florid and flowing  
Stares through the latticed window  
Lacking the will to flee

Some rest on the ground  
Like upturned soup tureens  
Of mulligatawny, with  
Seemingly headless bodies,  
Beaks, eyes and necks tucked  
Most discreetly away

One has drawn up her eyelids  
Sealing her vision in sleep

Meanwhile, Goat's hair flows over his hooves  
Like a boy in a man's shirt  
His horns rise up between his ears  
Pointing in different directions  
Like a village signpost  
His snooty nose is aquiline  
His lipless mouth moves sideways  
Languidly chewing hay  
His beard is stained with spittle  
His tail, stuck on as a tufty afterthought

Sheena Blackhall

# Chez Suburbia

Another aimless day in suburb land  
Joining the dots of hours

The whine of next door's baby  
The vroom of a passing Honda  
Pass for birdsong.

Mrs Domeracki pegs out washing  
Onto a whirly which wheels  
In impotent circles, going nowhere  
Mr Domeracki slumps in his chair  
Like pre-erectile man

Tonight he will go through the motions  
Of coitus, bringing the bedsprings nearer  
To ultimate stress

Sheena Blackhall

# Chronicle Of A Forces Wife

I was a Forces bride  
In a street with a numbered name  
A vow and an ache from my land of birth  
And every house the same

And when the regiment marched away  
The wives were left behind  
To raise the kids, the roof, the rent  
And face the future, blind

The bombing in the Evening News  
That blew a tank apart  
Did it kill Jenny's husband Jack?  
Explosives have no heart  
And some young wives went quietly mad  
Or lay with local boys  
Through missing their men, who picked them up  
And set them down like toys

For out of sight and mind it's said  
The husbands, too had needs  
And many the fertile foreign soil  
Has welcomed soldier-seeds

I watched the shadows lengthen,  
The apples swell, alone  
The wedding pictures yellow  
Beside the silent phone

For every house was numbered  
Its contents cleaned and checked  
But women are not numbers  
To order and inspect

The night the men marched homeward  
Their bairns ran laughing, thrilled  
The bars went dry of whisky  
And every bed was filled

I was a Forces wife  
The sheets were white and cold  
I lay like a stone in a house of rain  
With only regret to hold

Sheena Blackhall

# Church And Still Horizon

Not every Sunday thundered storm and sin  
A psalm could make the hardest pew seem soft  
Peace like a golden dove flapped honeyed wings  
A tawny angel dropped a shower of blessings  
A psalm could make the hardest pew seem soft  
Not every sermon walked on torn feet

A tawny angel dropped a shower of blessings  
The Lord's face did not always wear a frown  
Not every sermon walked on torn feet

The world upon its axle stopped and listened  
The Lord's face did not always wear a frown  
The preacher raised a black arm to the sky  
The world upon its axle stopped and listened  
Not every Sunday thundered storm and sin

The preacher raised a black arm to the sky  
Peace like a golden dove flapped honeyed wings

Sheena Blackhall

# Class Distinction

Class Distinction

There is your desk.  
There is the globe of the world  
There is the blackboard, the chalk  
The clock, the letters, the sums  
There is your teacher,  
Her hair pulled back in a bun  
She will teach you the meaning of rules  
What happens if you break them  
Here, you're not daddy's Number One  
Here comes a bully. Run!

Take out your milk and apple  
Bow your head for grace  
Now it is dinner, then playtime  
The playground's a frightening place  
You are a daughter of Eve  
You are hobbled in life's race

And then you must stand in line  
'Don't move child!  
A wasp crawls over your face

Here are the old school walls  
No strap. No nervous twitch  
Classrooms converted to flats  
Where tenants are passing rich

Do they encounter the ghosts of children  
Learning their lessons by rote?  
The way to succeed in the future  
Is to take life by the throat

Sheena Blackhall



# Clean Break

Seven cars sat parked by the woods  
Three souped up motor bikes,  
The night like an oil slick

I remember the dance hall music rocking and rolling  
The diaphanous lights in the trees  
The way your jaw grew tight  
When I said it was over

'But I love you, ' you begged  
As if that somehow made things right

I broke your heart  
And it didn't hurt one bit

You, with the ring in your hand  
Your dark hair greased in a flick

Who'd have thought you'd snivel and cry?  
Well truth's best told.  
No point in dragging things out  
Clean break  
Goodbye

Sheena Blackhall

# Cleaning The Apostle Spoons (13 Poems In Scots)

## 1. A Case o Minor Cannibalism

The Secunt Duke o Queensferry, Jeems Douglas,  
Set aff tae sign his kintra's richts awa  
Leavin ahin his gyte loon, Earl Drumlanrig  
Unlockit, wud, inside the faimly haa.

The Earl wis roastin somethin on a spit  
Fin Jeems cam hame...the servant loon wis tint  
They say a cheenge o diet dis ye gweed  
Servant fur supper, wi a daud o mint

## the Glesga Necropolis

Wee Willie Winkie rins through the toun  
Upstairs an doonstairs in his nichtgoun  
Rappin at the windaes, tirlin at the lock  
Are aa the bairnies in their beds, it's past echt o clock?

There are bairnies sleepin here that niver waukened up  
Niver saw a simmer's day, or got the birthin cup  
Niver watched the sun rise, or gowans dauncin bricht  
There are bairnies sleepin in the Lang Guid Nicht

Yet their mithers murn them, their faither's ne'er forget  
The shadda-faimly littlins ahin Life's steekit yett  
May their sleep be blithesome, wi bonnie floerie dreams  
Aa the bairnies sleepin unner Daith's cauld steens.

## y First Century, Hello

Twenty first century, hello  
Ye'll hae yer share o gypes an breetes;  
For sure yer demographic flow  
Will test the haud o teuchest reets  
Fit tae cast aff, fit takk tae hairt  
Far blurrin bouns the Future meets.

Fit leid an customs tae impairt  
Fit myndins of the past's scailed bluid,  
Fit skirps tae keep o heirskip, airt  
Should we be ruled bi harns an heid?  
Nocht's blaik an white, aa's inatween  
History belongs tae the lang deid  
Let's gie't its due, a thocht, a steen  
May Holocausts bide in yestreen

#### 4. Scunnered

Hauns raxxed oot wide, as granmither wippit worsit,  
The grey oo makkin a baa tae wyve new hose  
Och, thon wis scunnerin

Dowpit quate in a neuk an daured tae spikk  
Fin the TV fitbaa gemme tuik ower the hoose  
Like a wee dictator, aathin boosed tae its will  
Och, thon wis scunnerin

Rugged tae the kirk for the meenister's langamachie  
He preached like a burn in spate, a rage, unstoppable  
Coontin ilkie peen on the muckle windaes  
Och, thon wis scunnerin

Waukin the tightrope o teachin, keepin a calm sooch  
Fin Bedlam brakks oot, an yer the wee thin line  
That stops the hotterel o mayhem fae bylin ower  
Whyles, borin scunneration has its merits

rmaritzburg Wumman

Pairt Scots, pairt Jew, pairt Zulu, pairt Malay  
Heinz 57 varieties, she eesed tae say  
Kath wis a Yoga teacher in the North

Sri Aurobinda's ashram honed her airt  
On a communal fleer, fowk lay apairt  
Raxxed oot like corpses, sookin in her peace  
The burr o Afrikaans hinneyed her spikk

Aa us de-stressers, hashed wi bairns or wark  
Thinkin oorsels hard-daen tae, foonert-like

In a rare meenit eence she spakk o her beginnins  
Her bairntime in thon Afrik stoory tooun  
Her mither shewed up floor bags for her claes  
Drave her room doors tae sell wee hame-made cakes  
Apartheid kept her doon-pit, unner thrall  
Barfit an hungert, watchin oxen haul  
Roch cairts wi maet an plenty wechtit  
Bit nane for her, or for her neebor-kin

At twal, her schulin stoppt, ower auld tae play  
Sent aff tae tcyauve in a hett factory  
Ay scrapin aa her pennies in a tin  
Till she'd eneuch tae pye her fare ower here  
Finnin a meenister tae sponsor her.

Vrocht like the Deil tae educate hersel  
Syne entered nursin, healin her bluid  
Her Zulu granfaither, a witchdoctor  
Baith feared an venerated in his prime

I see her yet, baith fleggit an bumbazed,  
As spyled halflins frae oor weel-heeled schules  
Breenged by her, sweirin, thinkin thirsels bigsie  
Ower auld fur dummies, ower young tae sign on

Thon wis the culture lowp she cudna makk  
A different warld, far halflins rule the reest

cal Storm, Sri Lanka

Aa nicht the Heivens trimmlit  
The lift turned the colour o salmon,  
Blaik an russet-reid  
Rain drooked the balcony flags,  
A batterin ram o watter

Flashes ryved the clouds like tissue paper  
The breengin tide cam thunnerin ower the shore.

The hotel linen sypit wi ma swyte  
Wrunkled unner ma restless corp  
The cweelin fan set hard tae maximum  
Fit gin the biggin's washed awa tae sea like Noah's ark?  
Twa years eftir, it wis.

Union Street, Aiberdeen

The mornin waukens up. A bonnie beggar  
Rattles her hopefu tinnie, hyne frae Eastern Europe  
An auld man hysters by on shoogly shanks,  
Humfin his eerins, his breeks skirpit wi keech  
A scaffie fussles, teemin a wheelie bin

Ootbye the jeweller's shoppie, a windae washer  
Hoses doon the peens, garrin them skinkle like starnies  
Three Nigerians nyatter inno their mobile phones  
Dressed tae the nines, fresh aff the plane frae Afrik

In the wersh sun, a ma wi a ring-pierced lip  
Nyakkit belly ower the waist o her joggin suit  
Plugs the mou o a squallichin bairn wi a dummy

The cabbies drum their fingers on their wheels  
In the taxi rank. Thin pickins at nine am.  
A skirlin siren nee-naws doon the street  
Cairtin somebody aff tae A an E

The green man chirps like a chaffie  
In the toun's kirkyaird the doos an gulls stravaig  
Beaks an beady een on the main chauce

## 8. Jessica Ootbye

The sun opens its warmth like a yalla rose  
The gairden's thrang wi wirms, flees an spurgies  
At the braefit, the traffic's soomin by

Nae drooth, nae war, nae lack o luv nor maet

The bruise on the littlin's airm wis accidental,  
Cowpin aff her plastic horsie toy

Foo braw tae be nae yet twa, at the stert o aathin  
Winnerment, laucher, greetin are passin shooers  
Wirds are new in the mou, the hairt still pure  
Fingers raxxin oot tae the dauncin gowans

#### 9. Aside the Watter

Fin wae or scunneration growe in me like a mushroom  
Fin I tcyauve an murn inbye the fower hoose waas  
Fin ma auld banes grind in their sockets  
Like the worn stanes in a quern  
I gyang far watter rins, atween cweel trees

I rest ma een on the water, still as the muckle heron  
I rest ma heid in the girse mangst gowans an violets  
I rest ma thochts, breath in the warmth o day  
Like the harebell in its simple daunce o blitheness  
Peace lives inbye an oot, on scales o gowd

#### 10.A Linguistic Maitter

A Glesga Sikh in Embro shop  
Stude sellin sticks o rock  
Gaed outside wi his cell phone  
For a blether an a wauk

'Come oan, Sheharazad, ' quo he  
(His patter laid on thick)  
'Jist dae ma shift an I will wash  
The dishes for a wikk'

Twa academics daunderin by  
Claikin o leid an race  
Declarin 'No one now speaks Scots  
It's out of time and place.'  
Near caad the wee Sikh in the sheugh  
Wi little thocht or grace

Quo he: 'Some fowk jist canna see  
The neb afore their face! '

## 11. Glesga: Tale o a Toun

Eastwirds o Glesga bi the River Clyde  
King James the 2nd gifted Glesga Green  
Tae common fowk along the watterside  
That they nicht wash their claes an keep them clean  
Dry fishin nets, graze kye along the braes  
An takk their leisure, rest an coort an sweem

Prince Charlie camped here for a puckle days  
James Watt inventit wunners waukin here  
Strikers an suffragettes their voices raise  
In rage an solidarity richt wersh an clear  
They winted cheenge an focht for it wi zeal  
The People's Palace tells o Yesteryear  
Fitba, Victoria the Empress Queen

Aa this an mair ye'll meet on Glesga Green  
George Square the hairt o this auld Scottish toun  
Wis first a slaughter haugh far shelts war killt  
Its namesake, George fa wore the British croun  
Tint the tobacco lans. Anither fillt  
The plinth, Sir walter Scott  
In Glesga, Scots whyles has an Irish lilt

The Riot Act wis read fearin a plot  
Bi Bolsheviks at the Black Friday rally  
Baith tanks an troops sent in tae quell the lot

In modern times at Hogmanay fowk sally  
Tae George Square keen tae celebrate the bells  
Wi pipe or raps or airs fae Tin Pan Alley  
An takk the New Year in wi dram an sang  
Richt blythe an hairty like the hale jing bang

## 12. Wild Cat

Wild cat waukens heich on the heathery brae,  
Her een growe wide as a bawd lowps doon ablowe  
She is hungeret, this is her airt

She kens nae peety fur ava for birds or mice  
They are her prey, the stuff that staps her wyme

Anely humans she fears, their guns, their cars  
Their wyceness. She haps her cleuks fin she spies them  
Nurses her hate.

### 13. The Faa o the Warsaw Ghetto

O aa the Jewish ghettos ower Europe  
Warsaw wis the wirst. Fowk herded in  
Penned up like nowt, a hauf a million sowels  
In ae squar mile. A kirn o fear an din  
Mony war hickelt aff in cattle-trucks  
Tae coorse Treblinka, nae chaunce tae takk flicht  
Whylst back in Warsaw, was war biggit heich  
Tappt wi barbed wire. Armed guairds shot on sicht

Typhus, stervation, ration portions set  
At fowerteen less per Jew than Germans ett  
Littlins o fower year auld wad smuggle in  
A puckle fooshty neeps tae full a plate

An in the sewers, the resistance hid  
Ettlin tae haud their stricken tribe thegither  
As tales crept back o ovens stappt wi fowk  
Weemen an bairnies, brither brunt wi brither

Passover Eve the German troops poored in  
Blew up the ghetto, block bi bluidy block  
Near sixty thoosan killed, Jew deed an focht  
In street an hame, ahin each kicked in lock

The Warsaw Ghetto, flattened tae the grun  
Annihilation wis the Third Reich's goal  
Waur nor a Plague, an Earthquake or a Flood  
The Evil that men dae is ill tae thole



Sheena Blackhall

# Cleaning The Apostle Spoons Et Al (22 Poems)

## 1. Cleaning the Apostle Spoons

Once a year, the apostle spoons were cleaned  
In Springtime when the heavy dining table  
Lay under its fleece blanket like an altar  
Newspapers placed on top to sop up spills

Three generations round the family silver  
My podgy fingers, mother's, grandmother's  
Cradling the spoons like cherished smiling babies  
Those strange, robed, tiny men on gleaming stems

When I gazed into the bowl of the shiny teaspoon  
My face distorted, clown in a fairground mirror  
Frightening, until she clouded it with her breath  
Making a game of the apostle scouring

Who needs quails' eggs, if granny's broth pan's full?  
I sat by her lap, watching the mint grow tall  
Grandmother's love was rooted deep's a thistle

Who needs the wide world if your shelter's stout?  
I sat by her knee's safety. All the while  
She peeled potatoes, cannie, in a basin.

Her fingers busy, busy, sewing, knitting  
I was her limpet, little toddling shadow.  
Her daily shade was my squat company  
Her riddles, rhymes, her hummings and her shushings  
The soundtrack running in my childhood background

In bed, my legs dug into her broad back  
I breathed her smell in, Bible, whisky, sweat  
Love, warmth and blessings richly mixed together

Her stories flew like birds around the room  
I was tossed hay in the pitchfork of her laughter.  
She was the sun in the passing storm clouds of childhood  
The frail spine of a book much loved, much handled

A little thing like death now lies between us  
She holds the darkness back, like Cerberus  
Both then and now, her love my firm foundation

## 2. Salvador Dali on Salvador Dali

When I paint the sea, the sea roars  
The others splash about in the bath

I seated ugliness on my knee,  
And almost immediately grew tired of it.

The first man to compare the cheeks  
Of a young woman to a rose  
Was obviously a poet;  
The first to repeat it was possibly an idiot

What is an elegant woman?  
An elegant woman is a woman who despises you  
And who has no hair under her arms

Intelligence without ambition  
Is a bird without wings  
Each morning when I awake,  
I experience again a supreme pleasure  
That of being Salvador Dali.  
There are some days when I think  
I'm going to die from an overdose of satisfaction  
The sole difference between myself and a madman  
Is the fact that I am not mad!

The thermometer of success  
is merely the jealousy of the malcontents.  
Let my enemies devour each other.

## 3. Dandy Disraeli

The Earl of Beaconsfield, Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) was a social reformer,  
author, and Britain's first Jewish prime minister

Disraeli was a dandy and a Jew  
Suffered a breakdown, took a travel cure  
Wrote novels which aroused a great to-do

Trained in the law, his politics were blue  
He loved to smoke a hookah, like a Moor  
And once he set a goal, he'd see it through  
At 35, in debt, he sought to woo  
A wealthy widow, still with some allure  
And in his fashion, to her he was true

To parties he wore clothes of every hue  
Bejewelled fingers like a firefly's lure  
Foes and admirers to him, quickly flew

And he was twice PM, first in the queue  
Passed fairer laws, determined to ensure  
Good lives should not be lived by just the few

He won controlling shares...took the long view  
Of Suez, though his critics called him boor  
He made his queen an Indian Empress, too

And when he died, how crowded was each pew!  
Such wreaths of primroses, pale gold and pure!  
No longer the outsider, parvenu  
His fame as a reformer will endure

#### 4. Pensioner

Pensioner is a pinched, cheeseparing word  
Living on rented time, in the rickety final years  
With holes in them, like leaves ravaged by ants.  
It smacks of blanks for words, misplaced  
Like spectacles, or a reason for getting up  
The eyes scanning obituaries, with a shiver

Its nails are coarse and yellow, constantly thickening  
It is absent from female TV presenters,  
Passed by, like slack-kneed mares put out to pasture

Nobody wants to rub it next to their groin  
Or caress its breasts. It counts out every  
Meal with pills and wheezes

In jobs, it's pushed aside by the thrusting young

Make way! Make way! cutting the dead wood down.

It is a fingerhold on the handrail of the Titanic  
Delaying the splash, the bottle green icy fathoms

#### 5. The Terminators

A gunman wearing a gas mask set off an unknown gas before firing into a crowded cinema, killing at least 12 people and injuring at least 50 others, police said. Witness Jaime Marshall, who was in the cinema at the time, thought the shooting was a practical joke until she saw the bullet holes in the wall. Another eyewitness, Obed Sanchez said that at first he thought the 'explosions' he heard were a 'practical joke'. (Denver shooting at Batman screening: 20th July 2012)

Round the trees in the park, rat-at-tat  
Three little boys simulate death by bullet  
In the cool air of spring, as babies gurgle in strollers

The civilised planted trees, like sleek Rolls Royces  
Overlooking this crash of mini- bangers  
Stand aloof to this pretended massacre

The daffodils do not shout, or feign belligerence  
Or feign slashing their neighbours to the ground

Boyish play-acting, aping the homicidal,  
Remark the doting parents  
Is only a healthy release of male aggression

Which is why nobody batted an eye  
When the mass-assassin entered the darkened cinema  
His rat-at-at bringing a blizzard of death

#### 6. The Half-Filled Cemetery

My memory's a half-filled cemetery  
Out of my mind's windows  
I see the familiar dead  
Rise dressed as themselves

See, there is the dark haired poet  
Sharp-suited, his flirt's mouth smiling

Promising kisses and honey

There is the mentor, his thoughts like  
Wood-smoke lodged in my head forever  
And three young brothers I taught  
Who never grew up.

Like worms cut in two, these visions multiply  
Thoughts, conversations, moments  
Partings and greetings  
See, here comes my brother, the conjuror  
Pulling music out of his hat  
And my grandmother Lizzie, kneading love like dough

There are cherry trees in blossom in this cemetery  
The graves are deep in clover  
So inviting

7. Napoleon to Josephine  
You kneaded my heart like plasticine  
I was putty in your hands  
Where were the kid gloves  
When you dropped me?

8. A Temporary Tenant  
I am a temporary tenant of the world  
I am a lighthouse in its shipping lanes  
I do not warn, rescue or destroy  
I am a watcher through Life's windowpanes

9. Alba the Pantomime Horse  
It speaks Scots, English, Gaelic or all three,  
It won't be ruled. It likes to range, untied,  
Cursed Caledonian antisyzygy,  
Has claimed its soul, you see  
Though schizophrenic, it still has its pride  
For William Wallace vowed it should be free

It tears itself apart eternally,  
An earthy Clydesdale with a kelpie side  
It sends its finest sons across the sea.

Its rider is tattooed explicitly:  
Love-Hate, a Mr Jekyll, Master Hyde,  
A Lowlander with Celtic ancestry  
When will it unseat curbing history?  
When will it stamp its hoof and turn the tide  
And change its past defeats to victory?

Yet it's a steed of ancient pedigree.  
Given its head, its seed, blown world-wide  
Might stay and labour for their home country  
Not chase the rainbows of some Eilden Tree.

#### 10. Questions

Where do you come from?  
A river as old  
As Lethe and Acheron bitter and cold

What do you dream of?  
A meadow of hay,  
Where linnet and swallow  
Trill Life's roundelay

Where are you going?  
A place known to few  
As secret's the firefly  
As fragile as dew

What do you weep for?  
The chances not taken  
Good choices adandoned  
Long lost and forsaken

Like a doorway staved in  
Like a sugarbowl broken  
Better such grief should be hidden, unspoken

Alleyway in Chengde City, China  
Shacks lean together in the alleyway  
It is morning, rats run off as people waken

Here, walls are cheap and shabby  
But people smile in the chilly yellow sun  
They are clamouring round the noodle sellers  
The steaming woks of food  
There is laughter, banter, crying out of wares

In my handbag, I carry my Western  
Medical armoury, immodium,  
Malaria tablets, sun block, cholesterol pills  
Family photos and money in small notes

The workers of Chengde alley have somewhere to go  
Have a purpose, criminal or legal  
Are as lively as crickets

A woman stares at my window, holds my gaze  
An exhibit in a zoo. But who is the caged one,  
Tourist or honest citizen?

12. The St Kilda Archipelago Soay Sheep  
Since Viking times, sheep  
Have settled here, sailing in  
With the Norse in their dragon ships

Their human neighbours needed more than sky  
More than the dizzy cliff tops could provide

Sheeps' needs, however, are starkly minimal  
And so they stay, their small deaths  
Open their sides to the wind like ruins.

13. Nocturne.  
It is 2am. The single mattress  
Seems to stick to the sheets  
Yet I persevere in the pursuit of sleep

Night moths beat a weary retreat to the shadows  
The house at the end of the scheme  
Is standing empty, its tenant lately deceased

She, unlamented woman, conquered sleeplessness



Death being the permanent cure

Now, they're airing her house-  
The windows are wide to the moon

Her coat lolls an arm from a bin liner  
Nobody'd buy her cast-offs  
The youngsters hated her  
As well they might

Young Monica, standing innocent  
Under the streetlamp with her beau  
Shocked dumb by her sewer mouth

'Gae hame, ' she screamed at the girl  
'Yer faanie maun be sair wi aa thon birzzin.'

ing a Mantra  
I am chanting a mantra  
Over and over, a chain of words in Pali

It feels like I'm eating spaghetti  
One piece at a time from a single curling strand

I walk down the street incanting it  
The sounds skipping beside me like loyal puppies

When I chant it beside the sea  
All the little waves leap up and clap

When I chant it in the woods  
The foxgloves nod their heads

When I chant it at the moon  
The stars look very solemn like precentors

#### 15. Full Stops

Joseph wanted to be a pianist  
Now he sells cars for a living

Mrs Adam's favourite son

Emigrated, dropped off the family map

Champagne left on the table  
Loses its fizz once popped

A husband looked at his wife  
And suddenly wanted to leave her

When the baker collapsed  
He fitted into his coffin  
Like dough in a tin

#### 16. The HMS Royal Oak

Within ten minutes, the great ship tipped and sank  
Explosions ripped her open,  
Waves rushed in and she listed heavy  
Balls of on-fire cordite zipped along the ship  
Burned her sailors alive. Survivors drowned

Silent, the German U boat slipped away  
Mission accomplished, back to a Nazi welcome  
Hitler crowed like a bantam. The war, just six weeks old

Now this war grave's covered with sea anemones  
With dead men's fingers  
The water is cold and green  
Fishes play in the ribs of the skeleton crew

#### 17. Letters from Home WW1

Letters from home told of casualty columns  
Of newspapers scanned with worry, of prayers  
And love, and how the children missed them

They came with parcels of soap, of chocolate,  
Of fags, to be opened by muddy hands  
Where bodies served as sandbags  
And brown rats feasted royally on corpses

Some letters remained unread,  
The intended recipients jerking on the wire  
Like dead crows peppered with shot

For target practice

After the roll call, the telegrams  
After the telegrams, grief

### 18. A Question of Science

Can an elephant jump or gallop?  
How fast can a T-Rex run?  
How long is a zebra's memory?  
Are there microbes in a bun?

Why does a firework crackle?  
Do pterodactyls dream?  
Can beetles walk on custard?  
Why does a snot turn green?

What's liquid body armour?  
How's canine toothpaste made?  
Why does a lizard have three eyes?  
Are jelly fish afraid?

est in Silva  
The poet is in the woods.  
Currently, she is a bird  
Whose flight never ends till it drops.

It is the business of birds  
To fly, they are winged creatures

The poet's little flights of imagination  
Rustle the leaves for a moment  
Snap a twig or two

The bird does not stop her flight  
Because it is Sunday  
Or she has reached the edge of a leaf

The nodding heads of trees never  
Freeze like Uccello's hunt scene  
As the poet-bird passes through  
Trailing her comet's tail of poetry

Within a whisker of a larch

The poet is in the woods,  
She is not a nine to fiver  
She is not a cuckoo clock  
With a wind-up spring

The air moves, and she rises

20. Exit Music for a Dead Musician

Ego must die, when the duende comes,  
Up from the past through mouths and hearts long dead  
Music arises, swelling tide of blood  
A cri de cœur of passion, rich and red

Let aeroplanes fly off, let boats arrive  
Wherever men can travel, music goes  
No narrow coffin ever held a song  
A coronach's more powerful than a rose

When the embroidered linen is set out  
The shining knife lies by the marriage cake  
Then, when the piper leads the couple in  
A dead man dances to the Ceòl Beag

21. The Charge of the Movie Brigade

Look! From the Gods to the upper circle  
Virtual reality has crossed the line

Riders whose horses thundered over Europe  
Pour from the painted screen

All the dead soldiers, putting the spur to their mounts  
Re-enacting, over and over, battles, bombing, bloodshed

The audience has caught fire,  
A banker down in the stalls, battered by rifle butts  
Bleeds into his popcorn, his right eye blown  
Deafened by gunfire, women cower in the aisles

A tiny bassoonist down in the orchestra pit  
Is squashed by a cannon wheel  
Careering by, stage left

It'll all be showing twice nightly with weekly matinees  
Only the characters change, the plot and the war's location

No one bows to the audience after a war  
Steps forward and confesses to muffing the lines  
That might have averted it all  
The tragedy is, that no-one faces the music

22. One Lump not Two

My dear woman, have you actually met the writer  
Not that one should judge  
But really, her agent should muzzle her

Oh, there goes X, noble but washed-up  
His partner's a real little asp

Knocking at fame's door in dreadlocks  
Isn't that Y, last year's lauded versifier?

If only he'd died when he'd written his first,  
His obit would have been 'A Trier'

And there's old B, the critic  
Whose reviews are mind-numbingly dire...

A lover no-one wanted, he wrote from the heart -  
A pity it was a transplant

Sheena Blackhall

## Cleikum: 14 Poems In English

as a Portrait. (Adolph Menzel: Foot of the Artist)

When is a foot a portrait?  
When the veins bulge up  
When callouses crown the toes  
When corns and bunions distort  
It's the sole of man

Connery

It's Sean Connery  
As a packet of cornflakes  
Head like a quail egg  
Mr Six-Pack the beefcake  
Bond hero par excellence

at rest

His mind on auto-pilot  
A mouse in a lab  
His antennae finely tuned  
The labyrinth is waiting

Warhol: Self Portrait with Platinum Bouffant Wig

Self-portrait with platinum wig  
Andy Warhol looks glum  
Lip-stick smeared and anxious  
A lamb in wolf skin  
Come out from hiding, mister

Knox wearing pie lid

John Knox the man  
With his Taliban hat  
His scowling face and beard  
Was the archetypal bigot  
Patriarch, judgemental, harsh

-born with Sibling: Cecile Walton: Romance (Childbirth)

New-born held aloft,

A mother is showing  
Off her latest baby  
Her elder son looks dismayed  
Knows that his perch has shortened

Lennox  
Annie Lennox, Aberdeen quine  
Androgynous, whey-faced  
No fixed identity  
Tartan choker  
Ghost woman, pedigree, Scots

Fried Egg Woman: (Sarah Lucas: Self Portrait with Fried Eggs)  
Artist facing her public  
James Dean look-a-like  
In tight jeans hugging her crotch  
Two fried eggs over each breast  
Sex, done to a turn

no Bird Sang  
A white feather fell  
To me from the roofless vault  
Of Melrose Abbey

12.A poem from Romanian proverbs (proverbs in italics)  
The sow is dead in the barn  
Today, she leaped like a dog into concrete

Yesterday, I saw her stare  
Like a cat at a calendar

I said, 'Go walk the bear.  
You look like a donkey in the mist.  
Have you got dwarfs on your brain? '

Quick as an old lady with a machine gun  
The sow replied, 'Make a whip out of poo.'

And that, my friend's why I shot her.

een: Capital of Decommissioned Rigs  
You'll live longer here than Glasgow

Granite's radio-active...kills the bugs  
The rooves on Union Street are eco-friendly  
Trees grow from chimneys. Grass, festoons the gutters  
Our council is exceedingly creative  
Every day it brings out new designs for ancient projects  
Honing the architects' skills, filling the papers  
We have declared war against GRIME  
Grime busters blitz the pavements of errant gum  
Scary clowns keep pensioners active at night  
Amsterdam has Red Lighst...we have NORTHERN LIGHTS  
Rome has pizzas. Aberdeen has rowies  
Filthy McNasty's is the place to drink  
No IRN BRU for us. We're granite-built.

se Abbey

Here in the vaulted ceiling of the presbytery  
St Andrew clutches his cross  
St Bartholomew flaunts his flaying knife  
St Peter coddles his keys  
St Thomas supports his spear  
St James bears his bludgeon  
St Paul shields his sword  
St Matthias arches his axe

Outside in the alabaster air  
Demons, imps, hobgoblins rule the roost  
The rose-tinted sandstone is hewn  
From the Eildon Hills

Glazed fragments of floor tile  
Shine up yellow and green  
Geometrics, starred with leaves

Gargoyles spew water from sky-high guttering  
Angel musicians reach from projecting corbels  
Crones smirk and grimace by a winged, calf-headed beast

A cook with a ladle stands stirring broth  
Where monks tell beads in eternity  
Masons long dead, wield chisels

A sculpted frieze of kings, queens, lords and ladies



Craftsmen, sinners, and a fat Falstaffian  
Blob of a portly pig, plays bagpipes porkily

Alone in the cropped grass, in the heart of the cloisters  
Lies the heart of Bruce in its leaden casket  
Magnificent in its simplicity, as all truth is

Sheena Blackhall

## Cleikum: Scots Poems

St Ronan an the Deil  
The Deil cam roon the Border Lans  
An he wis boastin brawly  
Quo he 'I'll catch masel a saunt  
An claim his soul richt surely'

St Ronan heard Auld Clotie's fit  
An cleuked him wi his cromack  
An tae be catched in sic a wye  
Wis mair than Nick could stammache

He flew awa, hisimps an aa  
Back tae his Hellish hame  
An noo the Innerleithen fowk  
Act oot the Deevil's shame

Doondrappin  
Leaves doondrap an dee  
This is Daith's cauldribe Sizen  
Dreich the weird we dree

Aiberdeen's Braa! : Tune: Bonnie Dundee  
Gweed fowk o the city the council agree  
Ye should redd up yer paths tae the umpteenth degree  
On a Setterday night fin yer oot on the spree  
Dinna fecht dinna cowk on the street dinna pee

Chorus:  
For Aiberdeen's bonnie an Aiberdeen's braa  
Its fine granite hooses its seagulls anna  
Wi oor Tolbooth oor Toon Hoose oor gran Music Haa  
We're the Cock o the North sae let's up an let's craa!

We're bilingual, Doric an English we spikk  
An we're cleanin oor toun, noo the lums dinna rikk  
If ye wint tae see history ye'd better come quick  
We're aa for the Future, malls rise brick bi brick

## Chorus

Wi hae parks an museums an theatres as weel  
We win prizes for flooers in basket & creel  
The Dee & the Don ye can fish line an reel  
Wi hae twa universities, fegs, we're nae feel

## Chorus

If it's dark up abeen luik for the Northern Lichts  
Or watch dolphins in herbour, a richt bonnie sicht  
Or tae Filthy McNasty's eat weel on cauld nichts  
At the Castlegate, rest, set the warld tae richts

## Chorus

Oor kintra aroon is beloved o the Queen  
There's castles an mountains an golf courses green  
If yer swytin in Palma ye'll wish ye hae gaen  
Tae the fine bracin breezes o great Aiberdeen

## Chorus

The Rothesay Rooms, Ballater: Tune: The Day we went tae Rothesay-oh  
If lookin for a place tae eat,  
Get in yer car, tae seek a treat  
And order local sides o meat  
At Rothesay Rooms in Ballater  
Fin Storm Frank roared been the toun  
An caravans war like tae droon  
It shook the hooses tap tae foun  
In ilkie street in Ballater

Dirrum-a-doo a dum-a-day  
Dirrum-a-doo a daddy-o  
A place tae eat, a place tae meet  
Hurrah for the Duke o Rothesay-o!

Prince Charles fairly raised the game

Wi funds tae help thon flooded plain  
An help the fowk tae thole the pain  
O watter's war on Ballater  
A pop-up restaurant, by himsel  
An Highgrove Shop, guid wares tae sell  
He's bigged tae show it's the death knell  
O waefu times in Ballater  
Dirrum-a-doo a dum-a-day  
Dirrum-a-doo a daddy-o  
A place tae eat, a place tae meet  
Hurrah for the Duke o Rothesay-o!

Will there be champagne, hinney, fudge?  
Drap in yersel sae ye can judge  
Quality's fit they dinna grudge  
At Highgrove Shop in Ballater  
For aathing there's guid provenance  
An tastefu, ye'll see at a glance  
Chutneys an jeelies tae entrance  
Richt Royal fare in Ballater

Dirrum-a-doo a dum-a-day□  
Dirum-a-doo a daddy-o  
A place tae eat, a place tae meet  
Hurrah for the Duke o Rothesay-o!

### The Curse

In 1525 the reivers had become such a nuisance that the then Archbishop of Glasgow, Gavin Dunbar, put a curse up all the reivers of the borderlands. I have owersett it into Scots.

'I ban their heid an aa the hairs o their heid;  
I ban their physog, their thochts  
their mou, their neb, their tongue, their teeth,  
their broo, their shouders, their breist,  
their hairt, their kyte, their back, their wyme,  
their airms, their shanks, their hauns, their feet,  
an ilkie pairt o their corp,  
frae the tap o their heid tae the soles o their feet,  
afore an ahin, inbye an ootbye.'

'I ban them gaun an I ban them ridin;  
I ban them standing and I curse them sitting;  
I ban them ettin an I ban them suppin;  
I ban them risin, an I ban them lyin;  
I ban them at hame, I ban them awa frae hame;  
I ban them inbye the hoose, I ban them ootbye the house;  
I ban their wives, their bairns, and their skiffies  
Fa gie them a heist in their darg

#### Dryburgh Abbey

Hereby's the \*domus ultimus of Scott      \*final home  
Beeriet bi richt o his ancestral reets  
Laid in his native lan, famed Borderer

A Merells Board's carved inno the north waa  
Cut there bi mediaeval stanemasons  
Here Nine Men's Morris aince inspired lauchter

Tae auncient Celts, the Morris Square wis haly  
The centre, eildritch source o re-creation  
Anchor o the fower elements an wins  
A fiery squirrel derts inno the cloister

The trees drap deein flames on the cauld yird  
A thoosan year auld yew makks mock o time  
The Abbey's ruins, ivy-clad, are seelent  
A carved bat coories in a hyne-up neuk

An Owersett in Scots from 'The Tumult of the World, by Abbot Aelred of Rievaulx (1147-67) . Rievault Abbey in Yorkshire was the mother house of Melrose. King David I (1124-1153) invited the Cistercians from Revaulx Abbey to Melrose.

#### The Stooshie o the World

Oor maet is scarce,  
Oor claes are roch  
Oor drink is frae the burn  
Oor sleep is aftimes ower oor buik

Aneth oor trauchelt corp  
There's anely a hard bass  
Fin sleep is swetest  
We maun rise  
Fin the bell cries us tae prayer

Sel his nae place  
Nae meenit fur latchiness or ill-daein  
Aawye is peace, aawye's serenity  
A mervellous liberty  
Frae the Stooshie o the world

The Bus Tour Driver Speaks (aged 25)  
Dinna leave naethin on yer seats  
Or I'll sell it.  
I like a bit o e-bay.  
Tea? I'll hae the odd kebab  
Bit I dinna dee Indian.

Ma mammy tells me I'm gorgeous  
Foo's yer auld hips an things daein?  
Jist chill. Jist chill.

Bonnie hooses in Selkirk. Gairdens are a mess though  
Onybody bin here afore?  
Horrible?  
Surely no!

Oh! There's a Morrison's store  
Slightly excitin folks....  
Ye can hae a nosey roon the shoppies.  
I'd hiv went doon an drapped ye  
If ye arenae up tae the walk

Oh my God dis that sae Polish Shop?  
My mistak! It's a POALISH shop  
Jist chill. Jist chill.

Bloody cyclists.

Ye wint tae ging tae Abbotsford?  
Fit's there? Nae anither Abbey?  
Sir Walter Scott's Hoose?  
Fa's he, like?  
Fitiver.

Jist chill. Jist chill.

OK Doke. Fit did ye think o Howk?  
Sorry...HAWICK.

Ye saw the graveyaird?  
Folk should be allowed tae test drive coffins.  
I'm convinced the Grim Reaper's in oor hotel  
Waitin fur ye tae pop yer clogs.  
Jist chill. Jist chill.

I asked the manageress  
Far the soap wis in ma room.  
'Across the road at Spar.  
It shuts at 10pm' she says.

Grippy or fit!  
She charged me 6p for a wee milk pottie fur ma tea.

Fit's that? Wordsworth bedd here?  
Sorry darling, niver heard o him  
Did he rate it on trip advisor?  
Maybe it wis him fa wore oot the carpet! !

Laird Learmont  
True Tammis wis a birkie guid  
Fa slept aneth an eildritch wid  
The Queen o Fairyland she bid  
Him jyne her ranks  
An taste the sweets o Fairyhood  
On magic banks

Fur seeven lang years he kept her side  
He wis her leeman, she, his bride

Her pairtin gift tae hummle pride  
An honest tongue  
He'd ban, miscaa, misfit an chide  
Baith auld an young

His prophesees aa cam tae pass  
King Alexander's daith, alas  
An Bannockburn far armies mass  
Tae fecht an kill  
An Flodden, wae o knicht an lass  
Fin Scotsmen fell

He telt o his bluidline's doonfaa  
Met William Wallace, stinch an braa  
Till, ae cauld nicht o frost an snaa  
A hart an hind  
Summoned him tae the Elf Queen's haa  
Far frae mankind.

A Scots Owersett of a Poem by Mikhail Yuryevich Lermontov, 'Foriver ye, the yirdy Russia! '

Foriver ye, the unwashed Rooshia!  
The lan o slaves, the lan o lairds:  
An ye, aa the blue-suited jobswirths,  
An fowk fa worship them as gods.

I hope, frae yer tyrannic hounds  
Tae save me inbye Europe's waa:  
Safe frae their een that sees throwe grun,  
Safe frae their lugs that hears us aa.

Ode to Francis II by Mary Queen of Scots, written at Fotheringhay  
Owerset into Scots  
Ochone fit am I? Fit eese has ma life?  
I'm jist a corp fa's hairt is rived awa,  
An eeseless shadda, cast upon a waa  
Wi naethin left bit anely daith-in-life.



Ochone ma faes, set jealousy aside;  
I've nae mair langin noo for heich domain;  
I've tholed ower lang the doonwecht o ma pain  
Tae see yer anger swiftly satisfied.

An ye, ma friens fa hae lued me sae true,  
Mynd, lackin health an hairt an thirdly peace,  
There's naethin wirthwhile I'll accomplish noo  
Speir anely that my dowieness should cease  
An bein punished in a warld like this,  
I hae ma portion in Aybydan blisse.

Newsin: A Scots owersett of 'Conversation' an English translation of a Welsh poem by Mihangel Morgan

Newsin  
I've got a spikkin cheer  
I hinna heard a cheer spikk fur years

Come an hae a news wi her. Her cheer is byornar clear  
I'm nae really guid at cheer. I can unnerstaun it aa richt  
Bit I canna spikk cheer as I dae brod

I hinna got ony spikkin brods  
The press neist door his larnt brod as a secunt leid  
Cheers are unca sib

Yett's rale sib as weel  
Bit yett's a deid leid  
It's a classical leid like windae-  
There's anely a fyeow fa spikk it

Bit the keekin-glaiss leid is spreidin ben the chaumer  
Thon keekin-glaisses hae nae reets  
Afore lang there'll be keekin glaisses aawye  
On the fleer, on the reef even on the cheers  
Ye winna hear a wurd o cheer eftir thon

The auldest kirk in Regensburg Tune: Drumdelgie

The auldest kirk in Regensburg's the Schottenkirche by name  
For Irish an for Scottish monks this biggin wis their hame  
The Abbot, Ninian Winzet wis by Scotland's Mary Queen  
Bespakk tae train new Catholic priests, a cheil baith wyce an keen

It stude throwoot Napoleon's wars, becam a priory  
Syne the Bavarian rulers turned it tae a seminary  
The pillars in this bonnie kirk are carved wi muckle skill  
Wi lions, ernes an crocodiles on mony a plinth an sill

An at the foun on columns' base there's grumphies, cuddies tae  
Wi tykes an furlieorums, a sculptor's bestiary  
The Schottenportal in the north, a third o ae hale waa  
Has caryatids richt an left wi Christ abune them aa

Ye'll spy a raw o human heids, an Eve frae Eden's Tale  
The Antichrist is there as weel, the haly tae repel  
A dragon swallaes a lion frae the Harrowin o Hell  
There's vices like Luxuria, unchastity hersel

Here hermits, monks an pilgrims, aa supped communion wine  
Arbuthnot caad the abbey a Scottish national shrine  
Syne Erskine, cardinal in Rome, he saved the Abbey's fate  
An held it sacred till it wis taen ower bi the state

Its mediaeval buiks war ryped, kent aa the world roon  
The Fort Augustus collection, noo held in Embro toun  
An this is foo the Abbey lear has cam tae reist at last  
In Embro, ower frae Regensburg, a giftie frae the past

Three Scots Owersetts o Poems bi John Clare

The Fern Hoolet's Nest  
The foonert widsman hirplin hame aneth  
His tichtly bun-up kinnlers, winners aft  
Whyles crossin ower the whin-be-chokit muir  
Tae hear the fern hoolet's sooch alaft  
In cerclin furls an aftimes bi his heid  
Wheechs by as quick as thocht an ill tae rest

As ben the reeshlin ling wi wechty tread  
He takks nae tent. He tramples by its nest  
That in aneth the breem or laigh-doon thorn  
Lies happit in the grun, an fizzin roon  
Thon lanely neuk she wakks her skreichin soun  
Tae the un-lippenin waste, till mirled morn  
Fulls the reid east wi daybrakk's comin din  
An the heath's echo mocks the herdin loon

#### Hornygollachs

Thon teenie dauchler on the barley's beard  
An blithesome unit o a mighty herd  
O ne'er dae weels the lauchin simmer brings  
Mockin the sinsheen in their glentin wings  
Foo gleg they creepie-crawl an rin an flee  
They arenae sib tae hard wirk's drudgery  
Smeethin the petals o the rosey glens  
An far they flee fur denner, naeb'dy kens  
The dyewdraps dinna feed them- jist the sheen  
O noon fa's sun micht bring them gowden wine  
Aa day they're jinkin in their Sabbath dress  
Till nicht brings sleep, an they can dae nae less  
Syne in the heather's silken hood they flee  
An somelike princes, sattle, quaet an wee  
Frae comin nicht an drappin dyews an aa  
In silken beds an bonnie peinti haa  
Sae blithsomenly they spen their simmer day  
Noo in the corn park, noo in new-cut hey  
Ye near jelouse that sic-like blithesome things  
In coloured hoods an richly sheenin wings  
Are feys rigged oot in some braw masquerade  
Disguised throw fleg, o mortal fowk afraid  
Haudin their jinky ploys a mystery still  
Lest licht o day should dae their secrets ill

#### Bawds at Play

The birds are gaen tae bed; the kye are still  
An yowes lie pechin on the mowdies' hill  
An in aneth far saugh's lang airms boo  
Like darg a-restin, lies the wirk-lowsed ploo

The blate young bawds throw aff their daylight flegs  
On the lane's stoor, tae daunce amang the seggs  
Syne skitter ben the grain bi nocht deterred  
Tae sup the dyewfaa aff the barley's beard  
Syne oot again they breenge an roon the hill  
Like blithesome thochts, daunce, hunker, dauchle still  
Till milkin lassies in the early morn  
Jingle their yokes as they stride ben the corn  
Throw weel-kent beaten roadies, ilkie bawd  
Lowps quick as fleg tae hide far naeb'dy's trod

Sheena Blackhall

# Cleopatra's Island

When Anthony gave orders, men marched to die or kill  
When Egypt's Queen commanded, the very birds stood still

A beach of purest silver, he shipped by Roman fleet  
A wedding fleet to charm her, to grace her Royal feet

Her woman bathed and oiled her, her almond eyes were kholed  
With lions milk to arm her, her bronze neck bright with gold

His body was a field of hay her red tongue flamed along  
So, was the warrior conquered, Love's ancient arts are strong

Here, on the Isle of Cedars, by olives lush and green  
The honeyed moon above them, a general wooed his queen

Against great Cleopatra, his legions were out-massed  
The waves along the shoreline, bowed, as her anklets passed

Sheena Blackhall

# Coleridge And Wordsworth

A pair, like rhyming couplets,  
Two poets roamed the fells  
Sam C. saw magic visions  
Whilst Will saw daffodils

Wordsworth ate porridge twice a day  
His rhymes were regular  
Coleridge took noxious substances  
Imported from afar

No mouse droppings in William's tea  
His household was pristine  
He read the Times, then wallpapered  
His walls with it. How mean!

He loved to skate upon the lake  
While contemplating odes  
And cursed the carts that trundled by  
Rude traffic on the roads

But Coleridge taking laudanum  
Would not have turned a hair  
Had the Old Man of Coniston  
Walked down his bedroom stair!

And after Wordsworth moved away  
De Quincey took the house  
More opium, more laudanum,  
No oats for man nor mouse!

Sheena Blackhall

# Colombo

Waves topple like skittles down the beach  
A gecko is the room's unpaying guest  
Sinbad sailed these seas by such a moon  
The old colonial bed stands on stiff legs

A gecko is the room's unpaying guest  
The hotel writing paper's wafer thin  
The old colonial bed stands on stiff legs  
Banjo the one-eyed dog howls for a bone

The hotel writing paper's wafer thin  
Catamarans hunt tuna round the bay  
Banjo the one-eyed dog howls for a bone  
Tropical lightning cleaves the night in two

Catamarans hunt tuna round the bay  
Waves topple like skittles down the beach  
Tropical lightning cleaves the night in two  
Sinbad sailed these seas by such a moon

Sheena Blackhall

# Coming And Going

Coming & Going

You came like a fanfare of sunflowers  
Left as quiet as a whisker dropped by an owl

Your flat was multi-tenanted brickwork  
Climbing the rungs of air  
Snow fell in the country of your mind

In your precarious eyrie  
The prying moon was the colour  
Of a cold turnip

When you curled on your lonely sofa  
Like a sere leaf  
Hours passed on the flickering screen  
Till the program ended

For me, nothing to do now  
But mark time, like aching Orpheus

Maggots burrow into my guilt  
I stamp my feet in the cold  
Wait for the border to open

Sheena Blackhall



# Comings & Goings

Comings & Goings

The sky fills with light

Wavy lines patterns the hurrying grass

Forget-me-not, forget-me-not

A ghost whispers through the branches

Sometimes it is good to walk backwards

Through dove-white blossom over the low graves

Today, I tell my son

Who will never, now, grow old

His sister has borne a daughter

A springtime blessing

The day turns like a tide

Sheena Blackhall

# Concerto On A Buchan Farm (Fadlydyke, New Deer)

Mankind, so high and mighty  
Takes scant heed of such things  
As death of fur and feathers  
Of prickles, hides and wings

The cuckoos and the nightingales  
That chant above the grass  
They celebrate each pilgrimage  
Of little souls that pass

They keep midsummer vigil  
Of the bees' marriage bed  
Where ghosts of hens and butterflies  
From farmlands have fled

The barleys' rustle cheers them  
A verdant waterfall  
Of notes and trills of crickets  
That under-strum it all

They hear the grains' concerto  
As sweet as Mendelssohn  
And treasure raindrops' echoes  
When summer storms have gone

Sheena Blackhall

## Condor Ferry, Jersey- St. Malo

Who says piracy's dead?

The ferry is charging double, because it is packed

'You are lucky to get a seat, ' they say, quite shamelessly

School parties of giggling girls

Like hormonal flamingos

Mooch and pout and pose beside the portholes

All legs and spots and manes of Saxon hair

Sea mist sits on the waves

Like a cloudy broth, steamy and impenetrable

Two French Hells' Angels

Encased in shiny leather

Visors open on their silver helmets

Stand like giant ants beside the bar

A pensioner loudly discusses his funeral arrangements

Resentment festers, ruins the ferry crossing

I want to shout from the poop deck

'I've been fleeced.'

I want the operator to walk the plank

Sheena Blackhall

# Conference Of The Snails

Brothers, we are slithered here together  
In full flood, to ooze,  
Our manifesto a convoluted trail,  
A trellis of slime set out in the best Celtic manner  
With a flourish.

This row-boat venue is most apt.  
We shall be launched in moonlight,  
Secretive as the magnificent Masons

Our ceremonies shall include  
Horn weavings, ritual munchings of air and mulch.

All mention of shellings will be punishable by exposure to a thrush  
With long beak and no table manners.

We shall inaugurate a brotherhood of slugs;  
Worms to inhabit the lower orders,  
Split-backed bugs to be our emissaries.

The founder of our Faith was a visionary, Monsieur Pierre Lune  
Who slipped from a rainy taxi in Paris under a whore's umbrella  
To be eaten as a martyr.

We are a closed order.  
We colonise the dark.  
Such stereotypes those humans! So alike!  
Piff! Such nonentities!

Whereas we, beloveds, are most beautiful, mysterious,  
Infinite in variety, the Chosen;  
Our hymns and humours are divinely damp  
As Lucretia Borgia's vulva.

Anoint your antennae with Nivea!  
Each shell is a sculpture in motion,  
Sliding through the parting air inhabited moistly by mushrooms.  
We are a glide of turbans.  
Our tiny horns are minarets of joy!

Sheena Blackhall

# Constellation Of Innocence

Some found billets in abandoned houses  
Some broke furniture to feed a fire  
Horses, stabled in the freezing blizzard  
Perished, were stolen, or slain to fill the pot

Germans sniped and harried from the fringes  
Shot and shell made travel a screaming hell  
Famished, the fugitives faced the scourging gales of the North  
Like flagellants, enduring whips of ice  
And then, the ghetto, place of last abode

Footpaths were slippery, walking on them a penance  
Food grew shorter, neighbours' corpses plundered  
Sick, wounded, famished, weaponless, worn out  
Even the children wore the yellow star  
The constellation of innocence

When Mendel looked down on his brother  
Frozen to death in the street beneath the stars  
'I would have sold my boots at the railway station,  
To lie there in your place, ' he said

The moon in its mighty mansion in the sky  
Glittered, the heavens seeded by Death's disciples

Sheena Blackhall

# Cowan Bridge School

The uniform picked the poorest out  
Charity kids, to mock and tease  
The Bronte sisters, youngest there  
Left Haworth village for spite, disease.

Charlotte, short sighted, held her nose  
Like a tiny bat, close to the page  
Up before dawn to break the ice  
To wash. Small sparrow in a cage

Breakfast of porridge, burnt, the norm  
Lessons. The stool, with the dunce's cap  
The cane, the shamings, the Faith of Rage  
Where was the God of Love in that?

Sunday. A six mile walk in rain  
A thundering sermon, a meagre snack  
Cowan Bridge where the innocents died  
Taken by Fate to Hell and back

Sheena Blackhall

# Cows

Cows in their green parlours,  
Chew in sideways chews,  
And for conversation,  
Fill their mouths with moos.

Mumsy blousy matrons,  
Vie to boost milk yields.  
Tails like stirrup pumps rise,  
Fertilising fields.

Khaki flies in clover,  
Nuzzle in the mess.  
Meanwhile, cow sinks down to  
Lick her piebald dress.

Cows have secret places,  
Where they lie concealed,  
Shadows by the beech trees,  
Rye grass in the field.

Udders swing like satchels,  
Cows from Crieff to Dover,  
Bow their horns to Heaven,  
Pray for banks of clover.

High above their noses,  
Cows can ticklish be.  
Rub them like Aladdin  
They'll moo in ecstasy!

Lumbering and lactating,  
Harem behind the bull,  
Bless those grassy munchers  
Who make our coffee cool!

Sheena Blackhall



# Crannog Woman

You can be killed by wolf or man

Lightning, childbirth, fever,  
Are also death-bringers

I look from the crannog  
Over the peaty waters of the loch  
The Lady Moon is wearing her white hood

Mice squeak in the roof-reeds  
Rats scratch at the hazel stems  
Of the crannog's woven walls

My thoughts are like dark canoes  
Circling and restless

Today I pounded grain  
And helped a new-killed fox  
From its coat of fur

On the shore, I gathered berries

The stone lay there like an egg laid by a storm  
Now it nestles in my hand  
As did the heart I plucked from the hare  
After its blood spilled on the dewy grass

I sit by the fire and carve it,  
Chipping away at the blank face of nothing  
I give it knobs and spirals, a sense of rhythm

It rests my mind, this time of pattern-play

The cunning man has looked into the future  
Mine is short and dark.

I shall throw the stone back to the field  
My little worry-ball, my small tamed rock



# Cromwell's Nose

Is it a cauliflower? Is it a rose?  
No it's the wart on Cromwell's nose  
This hater of Kings, this Royalist hammer  
Wore his wart like a badge of honour

The Prince of Wales has bat-wing ears  
And Trump has hair that rises in tiers  
And Tony Blair has teeth like a shark  
So white they are seen from the isle of Sark  
And Fergie's fetish is sucking toes  
But the cream of the crop's on Cromwell's nose!

Sheena Blackhall

# Croque Noir

Croque Noir is the old French term for mortician, from the mediaeval practice of biting the toes of the deceased to ensure the person was dead. The following euphemisms for death are all found inscribed on tombstones in Allenvale Cemetery, Aberdeen.

Hector Macdonald, piper  
He walked with the Lord  
Through hard times.  
Toes like a horse's hoof.

George Morrice, trawlerman  
Dropped anchor after his thirteenth pint  
Gout in every toe joint

Sarah Gillies, hatter  
Passed over by everybody  
Short changed in the looks department  
Toes so long they could have plucked a harp

William Fyfe, Police Constable  
Entered into bliss  
After a life of hard knocks  
Size nines callused with pounding the beat

Frieda Gillanders, tightrope walker  
Taken home by Jesus  
As a result of fallen arches

David Cruickshank, flesher  
Fell asleep in bed  
Toes as pink as Ruben cherubim

Mary Rose, barmaid  
Called home after last orders  
Bunions big as cauliflowers

Flt Lieut. Gordon Short  
Died 1980  
Ten toes, all present and accounted for

No piggy took them to market  
They left in a wooden box.

Sheena Blackhall

# Crossing The Bridge (English Poems)

Bennachie: A Pyramid Poem

Bennachie

A  
sky-scraper

guiding cloud-traffic

ant people scramble up her sides

Osprey  
Honorary Native, the Norway spruce  
Is an osprey perch

The great bird plucks the fish  
From the plate of peaty water

Woof Woof  
This hill is doggy paradise  
And they'll love every minute  
Please, what drops from their waggy end  
Dog owners, bag and bin it!

A Ben for all Seasons  
A Ben for all Seasons  
Think safe, think warm  
Take boots, jackets, fleeces  
For mist, rain or storm!

Nature's Playground  
Peoples' playground, birds' pantry  
Squirrels' hoard, winds' nest  
Ferns, elfin, nettles, fiery  
Rubies on the rowan's breast

Walking the Mat

Nobody walks the mat today. They click, date, dump by text  
Union Street's a conveyor belt of consumers  
Trailing bags of shopping like Livingstone's bearers

Toddlers scream unchecked in red-faced rage,  
While child-mums flick their ash on buggy- heads

Skateboarders scrape the flagstones, striking sparks  
A teenager riding a bike bombs past the Adelphi  
Parting the waves of walkers, Moses on speed

At bus stops, peroxide grannies grumble at city changes  
An ambulance parks at McDonalds for a human carry out

The sun puts in an unexpected appearance  
The sounds are of Eastern Europe, Africa, Dubai, Doric

Everyone stops as a white stretch limo oozes over the tarmac  
As large as its driver's ego, sleek's a suppository

By the greasy steps to the Green  
A scraggy, spaced out youth has hit ground zero

A child drools at the tempting aroma of chocolate  
Wafting out from a shop of candied morsels

In the cool of Archibald Simpson's,  
A beer drinker downs his lager,  
Flashing a bicep tattooed with a Devil's leer

At the Market Cross, the feeky drinkers  
Swagger and stagger, frightening away the tourists  
Under the indignant hooves of the rearing unicorn

Everywhere, seagulls indulge in seagull thuggery  
Everyone's keeping their rowies under wraps

Miss Haversham

Miss Haversham, attachment's bad  
It sours the milk of kindness  
And things that happened in the past  
Are better left behind us  
Miss Haversham, my pin-up girl  
Your function's to remind us  
Savouring things long out of date  
Will only cause gastritis

Sheena Blackhall



# Crossing The Bridge (Scots Poems)

At Coull Kirkyaird

Ye've jinked the mools an ye've skipped awa  
Stepped oot o yer mortal claes  
Aroon lie anely the aisse an stoor  
Dry banes o fowks' warldly days

An unkent journey we aa maun makk  
Wyte lad, fur I'm close ahin ye  
I see ye yet, tho yer bit a shade  
Tho marred bi the tears that blin me

An whether ye gyang tae Angus Og \*  
Or tae Paradise in the lift  
May the time be short afore I see  
The Bean Nighe\*\* rinse her shift

A Scots Owerset o the poem Requiescat bi Oscar Wilde  
Wauk lichtly, neth the snaa she's lyin near  
Spikk doucely, she can hear the gowans brier

Aa her bricht gowden hair, wi roost turned soor  
She fa wis young an braa, drapt tae the stoor

Like a swack lily as fite as the snaa  
She cheenged tae a wumman  
Grew doucely an braa

Kist-boord an wechty stane lie on her briest  
Lanesome, ma hair is sair noo she's at rest

Peace, peace she canna hear lyre or sonnet  
Aa ma life's beeriet here. Hap yird upon it

Along the River During the Qingming Festival Scots Owerset from Vietnamese

Scots Owerset of a Vietnamese Poem  
Faist swallas an spring days wir skytin by;

O ninety sheenin anes saxty hid fled.  
Young girse spread aa its green tae heiven's tap;  
Some blossoms merked pear branches wi fite dots.  
Noo cam the Feast o Licht in the third month  
Wi graveyaird rites an deinties on the green.  
As blythesome pilgrims flocked frae near an far,  
The sisters an their brither gaed fur a daunder.

A Sequence of Poems commissioned for an installation project about Bennachie  
by the Forestry Commission, Scotland

Reid Squirrel

Reid squirrels hae lugs wi tufty hair  
They skyte up a tree like a mighty stair  
Gin they hear ye...wheech, they're gaen  
A glisk ben the wids like a straik o flame

Bennachie (1)

Hame's far the hairt is, the landscape o langin  
Aybydan Mither, the Ben o belangin

Bennachie (2)

Braith o the Ben is girse an whin  
Heather afore an trees ahin  
Meenlicht on Bennachie, starnies sae sherp  
Hoolets wings flichterin, saft throwe the derk

Maiden Stane

Stranger-Danger! Watch yersel!  
The Deil takks maidens for himsel!  
Romans, Picts wi hairy knees  
Are they watchin throwe the trees?

Bennachie (3)

Rowan tree, bracken, scree  
Peesies pipin, dockens doverin  
Yeities cheepin, saughs greetin  
Yowes hirplin, glegs sookin

Shaddas raxxin, rabbits lowpin  
Kye, chawin, sun swytin  
Futterats rinnin, snailies slidderin  
Beech reeshlin, bummers bizzin  
Dubs dryin eftir storm

#### The Colonies

fowk diggin wechty waas strang foot granite stanes  
bield fort the farm Buchanan illies sturdy banes  
people building heavy walls strong stout granite stones  
shelter fort the farm Buchanan men sturdy bones

#### Cheengin Sizzens

Reid deer, roe deer  
Ower Oxen Craig they're reengin  
Bennachie throwoot the year  
Colours, Sizzens cheengin

#### The Hub

At the hub o the Ben sikk oot a trail  
Rabbits' roadie, hawks' flicht path  
Siller cercles o snailie

#### Tick-Tock

Bennachie stauns stinch throwe aeons  
Dragonflee's gaen in a glisk

#### Teetie-Bo!

Widpecker chaps on timmer  
Win soughs in the larick  
Pine trees reeshle thegither  
Simmer air, sun glimmer

#### Gilree Burn

Tinklin ower foggy stanes  
Peaty burn, trinklin doon  
Shamrocks skirp the girssy bank  
Sappy wavelets, furlin roon



# Crossing The Bridge/ At The Rest Room

You crossed the bridge too soon  
Who would have thought one room  
Could hold such pain?

The coffin sits full, but empty  
Such silence, such terrible silence  
We sit, one living, one dead  
So near. Never so far apart  
The roof is drummed by the rain

Funeral roses drop their petals like tears  
Plenty of time ahead for the sorrowing years  
To circle like dogs, with their  
Should haves, could haves, didn't

Nothing can hurt you now  
You're beyond all that  
Every time you stood up  
Life knocked you flat

Not just a hurried wave, or a passing mention  
For once, beloved, you warrant our full attention

Who would have thought one room  
Could hold such pain?  
The world for others goes racing on apace  
My world without you will not be the same again

Sheena Blackhall

# Daisy Chain

I am watching a tiny daisy in the grass  
In twenty minutes it has not moved one inch  
It has not lowered the drawbridge of the day  
So that light may canter over its flag of gold

In twenty minutes  
Seven dappled shadows have blown their patterns  
Over its sundial face

I think it has grown tired of rehearsing for Winter  
I think perhaps it is plotting to tear  
The calendar of the leaves  
Into a thousand petals raging across the grass

Sheena Blackhall

# Dancing With Maenads: (21 Poems In Scots)

H N' WATTER□

Pitter patter, Scotch n' watter,  
Melt as weel as cod wi batter,  
In this world o win an weet,  
Hailstorms, rainstorms, snaw an sleet

Scotia's weather's dreich an drookin,  
Paradise, fin sailin, dookin,  
Hame tae salmon; trooties, eels  
Puddocks, kelpies, dyeukies, seals...

At brakk o day the kettles bile,  
Frae Thurso tae the Royal Mile,  
While coffee mingles wi the Tay,  
The Tweed, the Ythan,,Dee an Spey.

Wee goldfish in their tanks at Troon,  
Frisk in their bowls, tapped up wi Doon.  
In Inverness, each font an ewer,  
Hands Moray Firth frae sink tae sewer.

The yowes that sup the burn o Ey  
Are blythe's the cheepin males in Mey;  
While tattles bile, in speecial bree; □  
At Kinlochewe free Loch Maree□

.  
In basin reamin wi the Clyde, □  
A Glesga roader steeps his hide.□  
Fite poodles, shampooed bi Loch Fyne, □  
Pristine, cud at Balmoral dine  
□

Wi Firth o: Forth, Dunfermline grannies;  
Lather their pinkies an their crannies.  
While Embro bairns, wi jugs o Leith  
Maun wash their lugs, their necks, their teeth.

The Gadie bathes, the Gairn baptizes,  
Fur salmon catch, the Dee wins prizes,

While towrists read in foreign press,  
A monster lurks in derk Loch Ness.

Along the Deveron, whisky stills  
Pit mettle in the salmons' gills,  
While Irn Bru, frae roosty nails  
Is brewed wi bree that rinses whales! ☐

Ay, H2O rins throwe wir veins,  
An out wir taps, an doon wir drains,  
Till Winter cams wi fozen pipe,  
That plumbers hae tae weld an wipe,  
Fin puddles dreep frae lum an ceilin,  
An plaister plaps, wi paper peelin.

The thunner cracks. The lift growes derk,  
The doon-pish syne cud launch an Ark.  
Toon gutters poor like Blue Whale's spoot,  
It's weet eneuch tae droon a troot.  
Rain drops on wellies, sypes on sark,  
Sends chip-pyokes sweemin in the park.

The self-same rain that brews yer dram,  
That swalls the reamin. Hydro dam,  
Dauncs a reel at Burn o Vat,  
At Loth Kinnord Iies douce an flat.  
On Ben a' Bhuid... a wreath o snaw.  
A fite carnation in the thaw....

Watters o Scotia...here's yer health,  
The wellspring o wir Kintra's wealth!

## 2. PEPPERMINT AND CARNATION

Marooned ahin ma bedroom door, ticht shut  
Thus, banished tae the riggin o the biggin  
Wi hackin hoast as lood wad crack a nut  
Exiled frae hairth despite aa greets an priggin  
Braith strivven for, lungs sair..  
A lanely, feerie tug o War fur air



A crippin boast cud brak a rotten stick  
Flesh clammy. Breist beens clartit thick wi Vick,  
Like some cauld pluckit chukken ripe fur roastin  
Foriver hoastin, hoastin, hoastin, hoastin  
The guff o Friar's Balsam, strang an cloyin  
Wyvin its Witcherie, like Tom cat cloyin  
Wi curlin rattens' tails aroon a room□  
O broken sleep, far Nichtmare's floers wad bloom

Pariah, in ma sick-bed flannel gown  
My voice wis barbit wire, a skreichin soun  
Craik craikin like a wintry hoodie craw  
Thrapple on fire, sma face turned tae the waa

Hoast worsened. Faimly doctor cried in neist  
Dapper. A pink carnation at his briest  
The Minty whiff o pandrop he wissookin,  
I smelt, fin he boosed ower, his bag tae open  
His stethoscope wis jeelin as I wheezled  
Wi rochies, like a flute wi fluff bedeevilled.  
Ma semmit ower ma heid, facefite as chakk  
He drummed a piper's mairch alang ma back,  
An ay the croup-hoast, hackin, rackin, shakkin  
Ma hale wee frame. I heard his hasty fuser.□  
Ootbye, cin consultation wi ma mither  
If this growes waur, fit we will hae tae dee  
Is slit her throat...a tracheotomy

I saw a butchered pig aince, by a bin,  
Its cuttit thrapple curvin like a grin  
An open lauch at its annihilation  
An thocht o peppermint an a carnation.

### 3. LITTLIN, TINT.

Oh quine I niver wished ye thon,  
Teem airms an rypit hairt  
Yer littlin's shawl's the clarty yird  
Hope, in the kirkyaird laired

It niver sooked yer mither's milk

Nor gied a gledsome greet,  
A corbie skreich's its lullaby  
Its gown's a windin sheet

A fit that niver fulled a shee  
A moo that spakk nae wird  
Eence tappit at the dooro Life  
Sma summons, gaun unheard

Oh may its sowel fin sanctuary,  
In land ayont aa pain  
Far birds o Paradise micht sing,  
Ben shouers o gowden rains  
An ilkie road be as a rose  
Wi wattergaws abeen  
Far spleet new deid-born bairnikies  
Unsteek their steekit een

Cauld, wis ie in yer nest  
An wersh the birthin, wine.  
Oh quine, I niver, wished ye thon  
Tho yer wyes binna mine

## ING

A raven races tae its timmer reest  
A yowie styters ower a steeny brae  
A derklin rose blooms bluid-reid in the wast  
Gloamin...the smuchterin fire flaucht o the day

## GULL SPIKKS BACK

I'm the auldest gull in Nigg  
I bide on the lorry brig  
O assault and battery I staun accused.  
Bit if you should pit yer haun  
Atween me an a bit scran  
It's a racin certainty ye'll end up bruised.

Oh I jist canna abide

Fowk fa tell me far tae bide  
For ma bride an me belang tae this gray toon,  
Ay, we hinneymooned at Cove  
Bringin back oor treasure trove  
Twa yalla-flipper nippers, speckly broon

I look ower the Craigie waas  
Far the muggers sit in raws  
An I winner foo fowk drive me aff ma seat  
Fin aa I dee is raik  
Roon the herbour fur a hake  
Or a haddie or white pudden fur a treat.

I am telt grow sair  
Wi oor skirlin. Fit is mair  
Ye dinna like us up on yer reef tap...  
A skyscraper tae a gull's  
Jist anither cliff tae full  
Wi oor bairns, far we can doss or hae a flap.

I'm the auldest gull in Nigg  
Sae, toon cooncillors, I prigg  
That ye'll listen tae an Aiberdonian's plea  
Jist cause I'm a different race  
Wi white feathers on ma face  
Makk a law tae stop fowk persecutin me!

## 6. AENEID: BULK VI LINES 702-752

Aeneas spied a laigh howe, set apairt,  
Fell secretive, a widlan oot the wye,  
Its branches soughin saftly in the win,  
Ben thon airt Lethe's waiters drifted by.

Thereabouts a heeze o fowk war flichterin  
Doon drappin onno floers o ilkie hue  
Like bees ower hey parks on a simmer's day  
Crestin the brink o bonnie glimmerin daffies,  
The hale lea bummin wi thon lichisome crew.

Aeneas, meeved bi sic a sicht, syne speired

Fit thon nicht mean, fit watter wyndit yonner  
Wi sic a rowth o fowk, along its banks.  
The fremmit traffic o the spirit's ranks.

Repon syne, gaed faither, auld Anchises  
'They are the sowls fa'll dree rebirthin's weird  
Eenoo, at Lethe's burnie they are drinkin  
Watters that droons man's tribbles, sain the sered.

Lang, long I've socht tae tell ye o sic ferlies,  
An shaw them tae yer nyaakit, kennin, ee  
Tae coont them ane bi ane, seed o ma seed;  
Sae ye'd find Italie, the same as me'

'Bit faither, dae sic sowls climm back abeen?  
Reclaith thirsels in flesh? Is thon their weird?  
It's fey that sic as they sud, cam tae be  
Sae thirled tae the warld o theYird.'

'My loon, I'll tell ye plain, twill aa be clear,  
I'll answer ilkie question ye nicht speir.  
First ye maun ken the Heivens and the Yird,  
The watters o the Sea, the Meen's bricht sphere,  
Throw makk an marra o aa mortal things,  
The sun an starnies aa are keepit gyaun,  
Leavenin as tae gait Creation wirk,  
Bi Speerit. The Aybydaun Mind reams thrang  
This merriege richt eneuch, did mankind sire  
Breets, birds o air, fey craiturs in aneth  
The muckle ocean's quate, unrunckled face  
The virr inbye these myriad sowls is fire.

The spunk that kinnles aa's celestial.  
Deidened an dimmed, thon licht in corp o sin,  
Flesh wechtit doon wi daith, in crock o clay  
Oor sowls ken fear, joy, sorra, langin, tae,  
Bit blin, in their derk prison they're cribbed in.  
They canna see the bleeze o Heiven abeen.  
Nae even fin the hinmaist licht blaws oot,  
Dis Evil, or the ills as flesh maun thole,  
Owergie wir peeliewallie sowls pursuit.

It maun be sae, that mony's the blicht grows slee,  
A Coorseness thirled tae the verra bein  
Owerlang inby the flesh, unhampered bidin  
An sae the deid are cleansed in purgat'ry.

Some wrangs are sained, washed aff bi whirlpails  
Pit there tae pye the wages o auld sins.  
Ithers are brunt awe bi birsslin fire.  
Some hing stretched tae the bluffert o teem wins

Ilk een o's fins in the neist warld his pyre.  
A puckle fowk, loused, hairmless hummle doddies,  
Wanner Elysium's sweet scentit roadies  
Till sic time comes, lang aeons dicht oot blame  
The blicht inbye, fegs, naethin's left shin  
Bit Leevin Speerit, Sowl's aybydan flame.

Efter a thoosan years be come an gaen,  
God sens fur aabody at the hinnereyn  
The myriads steerin ben the banks o Lethe.  
An syne, wi memory washed awa, their lane  
They cross the portal o their yirdy hame,  
The biggin o the flesh, tae stert again.

.  
.

## 7. I MAUN GYANG DOON TAE THE QUAY AGAIN

I maun gyang doon tae the quay again, far the gowden ile slicks sheen  
Far the roosty cargo boats are berthed and the win is a ripe sardine  
An the hoors mell and the syreens skirl and a seagull 's wildly shakken  
A herrin's heid while a junkie's haun his dose of heroin's takken

I maun gyang doon tae the beach again, fur ma yearly dose o catarrh  
Tae wyde ben sanitary tools an tins in a jeelin Nor East haar  
Far masochists in dookers wee are briestin the icy wave  
And a soor-mooed shag it fixes me, wi an unnertakker's scrutiny  
As if tae say, Foo nae jyne in/ Fa's neist fur an early grave?

## 8. TINT

My granny's tint her memory, she canna tint ava

Ae day she hid a memory, the neist it wis awa.  
I think my granny's memory his gaen awa tae Spain  
In a hett air balloon because it cudna thole the rain.

My granda's teeth are missin. Far are they bidin noo? .  
I think an alligator cam an tuik them tae the zoo.  
They sit in the admission box, an clack, at fowk gaun through.

My da his tint his held o hair.  
Because his scalp is cauld,  
He's grown a strip that's ten fit lang,  
An roon an roon his heid t'will gyang,  
Tae hide that he is bauld.

My ma his tint her temper  
It makks her face turn reid  
Like a collie wi distemper  
Her een birssle in her heid  
Oh far's her temper hidin?  
If ye see it, post it back  
Wi a skull n' crossbeens ower the box  
And DANGER screived in black

## 9. POLISH DAY

Forks, sherp as the jags o Neptune's trident  
Fish knives, caunlesticks, bricht wi sailer plate  
Poker that split coal's hoodie hairt reid raw,  
Like the crimson linin o a conjuror's cape.

Speens an toast racks' aluminium ribs  
Siller joogs far cream curled coy in dribs  
Lyin oot on the table, braisse fur horses  
Lyin oot like a when streakit corpses  
Wytin the Resurrection o the dicht  
Each ferlie dull's a dowsed, an happit licht

Granmither cannily cowpin yalla jeelips  
O Brasso inno a torn clot  
Rubbin the sides o braisses like Aladdin  
Trystin the genii oot.

The clout grew black as sin  
It fulled aa neuks, aa crannies,  
The guff frae the strippit tin

Copper kettle winked tae fender's feet.  
Siller tings winked tae braisse-studded seat  
The hale metallic boorichie o gear  
Takkin the sunlight, garrin't glint an brier  
Takkin the n catchie wi't.□

## 10. COLLECTION DAY

Pensioner- clunk. Thank you  
Pensioner-clunk. Thank you.  
Pensioner- clunk. Thank you.

Fit charity are ye collectin fur the day? Mental Health is it?  
I thocht it wis cancer, or hairt disease..somethin important...  
Mean tae say, we've aa got problems.  
Ither fowk get on wi't.  
Pull thirsels thegither, hae a bit o tenacity....  
Gallsteens, ulcers, piles, I've hid them aa.  
Aathin frae varicose veins tae hoosewife's knee.  
I dinna knuckle doon....I sodjer□  
I dinna complain, nae me. I wish I'd niver stopt. Here's 20p.

Pensioner- clunk. Thank you  
Pensioner- clunk. Thank you.

Businessman -chink. Thank you.  
Young inner- chink chink. Thank you.

Go on Jamie, give her all your pennies. No, all of them.  
Go on. Not everyone is born with your advantages.  
Kindness is very important. We should never forget  
The psychiatrically disabled. Even a little can relieve their misery Unfortunates  
with no nice home and family like us,  
The poor and destitute of our society.

Pensioner-clunk. Thank you.  
Pensioner-clunk. Thank you.

Businessman-.clunk clunk clunk. Thank you.

Nae rattlin yer tinnie, ay, that's guid.

I cannie thole yon fowk that rattle tins.

I eence went tae the Palais wi some friens..

I asked this lassie up... Oh, she wis nae ile peintin, let me tell ye.

'You've nae chaunce, son, ' she said, 'yer jist a dreep.'

Seein you staunin there, remindit me.

Collectin fui. the Mental is it? Ay, They're aywis boddom o the heap.

Here's 50p.

Pensioner-clunk. Thank you.

Pensioner- clunk. Thank you.

Hoosewife- chink chink. Thank you.

Pensioner- clunk. Thank you.

I'm sick tae daith, fair scunnert, o fowk that phone an pester constantly

Fin I've new satten doon tae hae ma tea

Tae sell me double glazin, holidays in Spain

Or Funeral Plans, implyin that I'll dee

I'm nae fur a meenit suggestin that it's you...

Some bam's ay on the scraun fur charity.

An Mental Health is een I dinna gie. I'll miss ma bus.

I'll really hae tae flee....

Pensioner- clunk. Thank you.

Pensioner-clunk. Thank you.

We neen o's ken fit fate micht haud in store...

I ken the figures, lassie...een in fower....

Wi worry, I've bin touch an go masel

Near tae the edge. A special kinno hell.

Coins are a scunner..my brikk pooches rax.

As weel ye get the siller than the tax.

Pensioner- clunk. Thank you.

Pensioner- clunk. Thank you.

Teenagers-clunk clunk. Thank you.

Fa's the siller fur? Ay, I'll donate.

My neebor lost his hoose because o thon.



He aywis kept hissel immaculate  
A C.P.N. ay luikin oot an in,  
He wis a quaet man, nae drukken reprobate.  
Until his laddie wrote tae say he'd visit.  
That wis eneuch. He luikit forrit tilt.  
The young eens dinna think. They sudna promise...  
Hope's a floer that's affa easy kill't.

His furniture wis cairtit tae the skip, Nae wirth the keepin.  
Naebody tae store't.  
An fit cudnae be dumped wad hae bin chored.  
Fur him, I'll gledly gie, haud oot yer tin  
Wi aa o's need a haun sometime in life.  
I tell my man we're lucky, we've each ither.  
Jist wyte a wee, ma lass, ye see, I'm blin.

.

#### 11. BUS HURL: ABERDEEN- KEITH

The sky slippt unner ma skin the day  
A sky o bluebell blue  
Wi a pluffert o cloud like a dandelion's  
Blawn tooshts o lichtsomes oo

We bad fareweel tee the traffic's gurr  
An streets, wi tounsfowk thrang  
Dour tenements like staunin steens  
Gaed wye tae the teuchit's sang.

Syne, raggedy daffs, like yella cloots  
Stude wallop in the sheughs  
An the snell wins wheeched atween the whins  
In icy wauchts an soochs.

The hauns in ma pooch grew kittly kyne  
Tae raxx fur a girssy stakk  
O wyvin girse frae the Garioch braes  
Far sweeter nur blackboord chakk

Ten taes tapped, as the rigs raise up  
The rigs sae crummly broon  
As insteps mynd on the cradlin cup

O a ploeed park, sinkin doon.

Though the bus wi its birrin, duntin sides  
Kept oot the widlan smirr  
At the back o ma neb, I's sweir I caught  
The rosity yoam o fir.

The glents an daws o a wattergaw  
Shone braw throw sun an weet  
Gaun ower the howes like witcherie  
It gledden't ma hairt tae see't.

An buiks an tcyaave o the greybeard years  
Daunced aff in fairy sheen  
An a bairn luiked ooto the kintra bus  
Throw an auld wife's een, yestreen.

## POWSER

The powser's sleepin like a clootie doll  
At ilkie neuk his cleuks hing doon, twa-fauld  
His sprauchled kyte's a drift o snawy fur  
His thrapple ripples wi a rochlin purr.

His breist bane swalls wi pech, a bellows, blawin  
Like a wee boatie, bobbin up, syne faain  
On the great sea o sleep, the landlocked powser  
Shoogles ae lug, an rankles up his mowser.  
An sic a mowser... It micht string a fiddle,  
A sailor's riggin, or a fairmer's riddle!

This spurgie's Bogieman, his wame, stap-fu,  
Sleeps douce an gentle as a cushie-doo.  
Bit aince ootower the yett; the doo's a Deil  
A sleekit shadda wi a hairt o steel.

Sliddrin alang the glaury, gloomy, toun  
His een, twa slits o green, gley up an doon.  
The muckle, sherp-pronged trap that is his mou  
Gants reid an glinunrin. Cheepers, saft as oo,  
Chitter an squeak...the makkins o a meal

Tasty as herrin in a fisher's creel.  
Their wicker nest's a pair defence 'gin Daith  
Sud powser chuse tae snip the threids o Braith

He'll skreich an spit. A rowth o battle scars  
Tell o his tulzies in aneth the stars  
King o the cassies gaun-aboot-nicht-fowk  
The powser reigns supreme. He's nae man's gowk.

eard at the Airport

'I've niver fleen afore. I'm feart o heichts

And takk yon sweetie aff her! Look, she's clartit! '

'I'm sure I'll like the new Job, eence I get there.  
It's jist that I'm hamedrauchtit. I'll be hameseek.'

'The news last nicht wis bad. Air crash ower Russia! '

'Foo late's the plane? We should demand a refund! '

'Far's yer ticket? God...I kent ye'd lose it.  
Ye'd lose yer heid without me here tae haik for't.'  
I hope ye packed yer peels. Yer lookin poorly.  
We dinna wint a stooshle in mid-alr.'

'Och aabody spikks English. It's compuls'iy. Wioot us towrists comin, they'd be skint.'

'I thocht yer da wid come tae wave us aff.'

'I hear this traivel company's near bankrupt.. There wis a bomb alert last month in Ireland.'

'Ice on the run wye. Is't ower late tae cancel? '

'Hae ye hid aa yer jabs? My airm wis swollen.'

'Fit queues are wytin fur the Lunnon plane! '

'Trust you tae book a seat near a schule pairty.'

'Mind, buy a pint or twa o Glenmorangle. The duty free's the thing fur Hogmanay.'

'Last warnin. Will aa passengers come forrit? '

'My final shift. The plane's packed tae the gunnels.'

This is your leader spikkin. Danger. Danger. Will aa geese in formation, Please sheer left! A Metal bird's trespassin in oor air-space! Alert! alert! Drap doon aneth the clouds!

'S CROSS

The widda's shadda's lang  
Her cross wis bein born  
Intae the age o Victoria.

Nee winner she's door on her plinth  
Face like a torn scone  
Enough tae curdle the Dee  
An soor the Don.

#### 15. SONG OF AN IMPOVERISHED ABERDONIAN

Let's as gae doon tae the scunnerin beach  
Tae the nesticky bricht gee-gaws  
Far the coffee's frothy's a putrid peach  
An the icicle North Win blaws.

Let's pump a wikk's wage inno the slit  
O a hoor-like hungert bandit  
An fin we lose, wauk aff wi a smile  
As if yon wis the wye we planned it.

Let's watch the littlins turnin blue  
In their bumbee frilly panties  
While dribbly shoogly weet ice cream  
Dreeps doon their mas an aunties.

Cam, takk ma haun tae the sewage stran  
That reams wi Alsatian- pee  
Far the partans clack an the mongrels snap  
It's scunnerin, bit it's free.

## 16. BYRON SQUARE, NORTHFIELD

Ay, it's poetic justice. Fifty-fifty.  
Best meisurs aywis come in equal doses  
Hauf oor fire-new Labour MSPs are weemin  
Eesefu fur mair  
Than beddin doon like Cocker's ceevic roses.

Thon's official. Tell ony shut-in lassies shovin prams, the buzz wird  
Noo is this. Life's open endit.  
Mitherhood isna a derailed career, jist ane that's momentarily suspendit.

Playin the smairt card in the votin game in Byron Square  
Means makkin sure the richt tae wirk's defendit.  
Sae fit's the seasonin, makks a politician?  
The grit tae graft, tae act on a decision.

Wirkin twa wikkdays in the granite city  
Three, doon in parliament, on committee  
She sits throw lang collogues, far she taks tent  
0 hopes an dreams, frae fowk she represents..

This year, a mace, wi skill an thocht designed  
Shawed Fowk, Lan, Parliament war closely jyned.  
Smeddum; wi gowd an sitter intertwined.  
The will tae wirk towards the gweed o aa  
Within the boundaries o this kintra, sma.

The votin ower, new breems sweep stoor awa  
Frae Transport maitters, Learnin, Health an Law.  
The ritual's ower, oor traivellin MSP, on Setterday, rotates her surgery  
Far the constituents can bring concerns  
On traffic, health, the schulin o their bairns  
An girn or air fitiver gripe they hug, in the electit parliamentary lug.

An she maun juggle different district's needs  
Like traffic chuggin aff at different speeds.

Tae wirk for fowk, guid MSPs sud be,  
Netwirkin, email literate, non demeanin  
Skilled in computer age technology  
Wi ideals, fresh as mountain burnies reamin  
Tae fecht agin injustice, poverty,  
An as the ills that plague society!

#### NOR EAST WIND

D'ye catch yon gurl frae the Norlan Sea?  
Thon waucht o taigles an herrin bree?  
Frae icy corrie tae bylin shore,  
The great caul breeze shifts back an fore.

Hear the sooch o it, snell an roch,  
The Nor East Win, frae Ben tae Broch  
Crisp an caller as Heilan Linns  
It skelps the waves far the Gadie rins  
An the weariet fairmer at the ploo  
Blesses the win that cweels his broo

Fin Springtime dyews lie fresh an weet  
The Nor East Win blows saft an sweet  
Gars brierin barley ben the howe  
Trimble an shakk its lichtsomes powe

D'ye catch yon waucht o the Norlan sea?  
Thon swatch o taigles an herrin bree?  
Ower the rigs an three times roon  
Sweepin the byewyes o the toon.

The Nor East Win's a win o chance  
That hansels mony's a waddin daunce  
It rattles the yett roon sneck an nail  
It takks an tosses the bridal veil  
Syne, locked ootbye, it hauds its wheesht  
As meal meets ale in the bridal feast

The barley dried bi the wanderin win  
Is cut an gaithered an hairsted in  
Tae brew the dram that gars us lowp  
Tae fill the keg an the whisky stowp

It cuts a swathe ben the Buchan smirr  
The Nor East win is a win o virr  
In the oorrie wids it sougns an sings  
An it showds the clouds far the rainbow hings.

## IE HOWKERS

Spirkit wi sleet, the howkers wirk the rigs  
A raw o dreepin nebs booed ower the yird  
Humfln the sculls, hauns dirlin wi the cauld  
Liftin the tattle crap wi feint a wurd

Like human brigs, twa-fauld, they stride the glaur  
Dellin the dubs fur tatties, clorty-neived  
Weet mochles, pirlid wi styew, they plyter on  
Till ilkie pikk o park is howked an seived.

A line o choochin ingins, puffin rick  
The braith o bairnies rises frae the dreel  
At fly-time, halflins ett their pieces thick  
In this, a different drudgery frae the skweel.

Back-brakkin darg. Loons warm tae the wark  
Their elders tcyauve ahin, coats auld an torn  
Brikks stapped in waldies. Tattiebogle duds...  
Driven bi thocht o cash in haun the morn.

## 19. INTERNET

America  
Africa  
Aiberdeen  
Twa wee clicks  
An the wirds hae gaen.

Nae lickin  
Nae stickin  
Nae postie ava  
Tip- tap, tip-tap  
Click-click-  
Ta Ta!

## 20. TWA HOODIES

We are twa skreichin hoodies  
Fa stravaig about the ferm  
Oor tarry coats an rochlin throats  
Fegs, dinna seem tae cherm

A chukken fur oor brakkfaist  
Tae chaa ahin a buss  
Ye'd think we war mass murderers  
The wye ye luik at us

Fit did YE hae fur denner?  
Lamb's chop...or wis it veal?  
Fit's guid fur ain is guid fur baith  
We bid ye aa fareweel

## BUS

Here's the bust. Shove past the queue!  
Staun on the cripple blin man's fit!  
Push a pensioner intae the road  
There's ae seat left, an I'm gettin it

Foo are you glowerin, mannie?  
This bus is fit o complainers!  
Jist cause I dichtit ma fit on yer breeks  
Wi dog's dirt stuck tae ma trainers.

Melanie Anne...yer affa quote.  
I hope ye've feenished ma Maths.  
Ye ken fit clypes an wimps get..  
Hauf drooned in the public baths.



Mary! D'ye wint ma chuddy? I hinna chawed it lang...  
Hauf ooto ma tree I wis last nicht, on cider chaip an strang.

Hiv you got a problem wifie? Wi yer face like a torn clot?  
Is that a wig yer weirin? Dis Cornhill ken yer oot?

Fit's that? I've got nae mainners?  
I'm a rude, lood, glekit stinker?  
Watch yer moo ye fat auld coo  
Or I'll clap yer lug, ye minker!

The passengers are feart o me.  
I skid. I fart. I caper  
If I roar oot chikk, they look doon quick  
An they hide ahin their paper.

My pyoke o crisps is feenished.  
I'll blaw an burst it. Bang!  
See yon auld foosht turn purple?  
Her pacemaker's gaen wrung.

The driver canna stop us...Ma pals takk ower the bus  
An if ye ken fit's guid fur ye, ye winna makk a fuss.

See yon wee first year shakkin?  
As much backbeen as butter!  
Let's chase him up the lanie!  
Let's fling him doon the gutter!

Let's ring the bell a hunner times... on the seats, let's scrat oor names!  
My ma thinks I'm an Angel...  
An sae I am, at hame.

Sheena Blackhall

# Danse Macabre (22 Scots Poems)

is the perfect place tae be Tune: Oh No John etc

Come tae Kings fin May is bloomin  
Wird is there. Ye'll surely meet  
Buik prize winners, sancts an sinners  
Dinna wyte, ensure yer seat  
Kings is the perfect place tae be

Taiko drummers, Manga, Ceilidhs  
Mair nur saxty authors here  
Film an barderie, Art, theatre  
North East highlight o the year  
Kings serves a cannie cup o tea

Ireland, Spain, America Bulgaria  
Petrarch, Darwin ghaistie trains  
Doric, Gaelic, bring yer uncle Alec  
Best o claik an brichtest brains  
Kings brings ye tales o seannachie

Tartan Noir, First Aid fur Fairies  
Unicorns an Whiskey tours  
Eejits, Readin Bus an Bogies  
Trysts in Zoo at the Midnight Oors  
Kings brings ye things o oddity

Dinna dauchle buik yer ticket  
Throw the university  
See the treisurs therein gaittered  
Fit's mair some events are free  
Kings is the perfect place tae be!

's Hit-List of the Makars With apologies to William Dunbar & Kenneth C. Calman

MacCaig, Maclean, prood Lord Byron  
Ian Crichton-Smith, swack Henryson  
Fergusson, Bruce o Broch kintry  
Daith is the weird we aa maun dree

Oliphant, Garrie, William Soutar,  
Laing, Garioch, douce Angus Calder  
Mackay Brown, Cruickshank, wry Murray  
Daith keeps a goodly company!

Tho sawbeens an physicians strive  
Tae cure their patients, nane can rive  
Their prey, frae the Derk Angel's grip  
Aneth the yird ilk ane maun slip

Fine wirds can jink the Reaper's cleuk  
An live as lang's there's prent an buik  
Sae, tho the mools are derk an slee.  
Daith hauds nae swey ower barderie

the Healer

Stanley Robertson tells a traditional traveller's tale of an Old Woman who shut the door on Death. Here, I have turned the story into a song, sung to the tune 'The Wind & the Rain'

Aince an auld cailleach steekit her front yett  
Daith, daith, she'll nae let ye inbye  
She'd meat an fuel eneuch tae keep her hett  
In the cauld kirkyaird she swore she'd niver lie

Winter cam howlin roon aboot the warld  
Daith, daith, she'll nae let ye inbye  
Roon cauld rig banes her plaidie she has furled  
In the cauld kirkyaird she swore she'd niver lie

Syne at her windae, a tinkler lassie chapped  
Barfit, she socht a bield tae bide  
Tho the sna fell thick the cailleach she had vowed  
There's nane wad share her warm fireside

The quine lay doon on the snawy snawy grun  
Like tae dee in the cauld blin smore  
The auld wife's taen the tinkler lassie in  
Till the Spring brocht flooers tae thon lanely door

Come auld wife, wauk oot wi me  
Spring's here, the blossom's on the lea  
O na sweet quine I winna step ootbye  
Daith lies in wyte fur sic bodies as me

She's taen the auld wife by the han  
Heivens flooers are winnerfu tae see  
These are the blooms o Paradise  
They growe on the howes o Eternity

Auld wife, auld wife, it's are ye blin  
Daith's dues nae mortal can deny  
Ye Deed the day ye let me in  
In the sweet kirkyaird noo ye maun lie

Birdies

Abune a dyke a spurgie sang  
Grey chikks, grey wyme, grey croon  
His thrapple an his briest, war blaik  
His beak, bricht yalla-broon

The sonsie quine he wooed wis blate  
Dowped on a wheelie bin  
He churred he cheeped, he bobbed fu deep  
Her maidenheid tae win

He promised her the brawest nest  
A spurgie's wife micht wish  
A door o ivy, waas o strae  
Sweet crocus for a dish

He vowed he'd bring her butterflees  
The rarest he cud bring  
Tae feed her, gin she'd bit agree  
Tae weir his waddin ring

As watter weirs a stane awa  
Tae gar him haud his wheesht  
She merriet him. An noo there's  
Sax new spurgies on the reest.

5. The Scots Diaspora tune: The Deil's Awa wi Exciseman

Dedicated to Billy Kay, author of *The Scottish World: A Journey into the Scots Diaspora*, Mainstream Publishing, 2008

Tae Norrway frae Cairnbulg, tae fjord frae Buchan shore, man  
A Bulger sailed tae makk his merk far seal an reindeer roar, man  
He sattled yonner, tuik a wife, the years gaed birlin roon, man  
An syne wis born Edvard Grieg, the maister o guid tune, man

America is big a brow, some like Andrew Carnegie  
Fa'd think that a philanthropist could fill sae deep a coggie?  
In Pittsburg toun, this weaver's loon, by eident application  
Becam as rich as Croesus, sirs, an gaed awa his fortune

Baith Scot an Yankee lue their sport, a baa tae kick or thump, man  
Oor coast'll hae a braa gowf-course, wi thanks tae Donald Trump, man  
In Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, oor pipes raise mony's a cantrip  
Roon Scarb'ro's Muddy Creeks ye'll hear the Scots revere their heirskip

Aroon Japan there is ae man, as ye wad sune discover  
The Scottish Samurai they praise, the chiel caad Thomas Glover  
In Nagasaki he did trade, in industry he prospered  
An shared his lear, an wisna sweir, tae shakk the hands they offered

Tae Africa sailed Livingstone, wi jungle breets fur neebors  
Far frae Blantyre by Zambesi, he screived agin the slavers  
An Mary Slessor wisna feared in Calabar tae settle  
Tae tell the tribal chiefs o God, an pit them on their mettle

Gin ye cried by the wintry coort, o Peter, Russia's Tsar, man  
Ye'd find his dominies war Scots, weel-eesed tae cauld an haar, man  
Paul Menzies, Henry Farquharson, baith shared their sense an skills, man  
An Robert Erskine he wis there, tae cure the Royal ills, man

The Auld Alliance ower in France, fin warld war two wis ragin  
A secret agent in the kirk o Paris, wis assuagin  
The plight o Allied servicemen, his name wis Rev. Caskie  
The Tartan Pimpernel, he risked his life in mony's a plisky

The Seminole o Florida, the Cree fowk o the Plains, man

Hae mairriet wi the immigrants frae Scotia's hills an glens, man  
The Chieftain o the Cherokee, grown auld afore his years, man  
Wis Lang John Ross o Heilan bluid, that wauked the Trail o Tears, man

Twa names abune them as staun oot, for luv o liberty, man  
Twa poets, Burns an Byron baith, weel laudit ower the sea, man  
The Greeks extol the son o Gight, in daith he prued his wirth, man  
While Burns, fa niver left oor shore's, kent roon the Muckle Furth, man

Sae here's tae the diaspora, an tae the ties that bind them  
Like ivy-wreath tae kith an kin, an may we ever mind them  
Tho ocean wide, it may divide the baimies frae the Mither  
We'll raise a glaiss for Scotia's sake, o cheer fur ane anither!

#### 6.A Tribute to Stanley Robertson

Fit did ye learn at yer mither's knee?  
Nummers an ABC's?  
The traiveller's bairn roon the camp fire rikk  
Learned ancient mysteries

Did ye bide in a street in a granite hoose  
Wi a shop-bocht clock's sma chime?  
The traiveller's hame wis shiftin san  
The Sizzens merked his time

Did ye watch the glitzy Hollywid tales  
On muckle pictur screens?  
The traiveller sang aff the beaten track  
O the sorras o Kings an Queens

He learned the history o the lan  
Through legend, ballad an crack  
Nae frae a schule-buik, tape nor film  
Bit frae kinsmen hynie-back

Mair precious than gowd that's easy spent  
Bricht as the seraphim  
Is the lear that the traiveller kept in his hairt  
Treisur sic fowk as him.

n Sairs: for John Reid/David Toulmin (1913-1998)

Ae day a loon on a fairm plunked skweel.  
Thon day he learned these lessons:  
That life wis wersh,  
That the makie-on o bairnhood  
Wis a fause bield.  
That atween hissel an his faither  
Lay a gulf as braid's an ocean.

The puppet show he vrocht  
Wis a nochtie ferlie,  
Whigmaleerie o shadda an paper  
That the storm o his faither's rooze  
Could blooter wi ae neive.

A loon, fa wad be a writer,  
Booed in the peetiless rain  
Tae hyew the neeps,  
Blawn seed in a lane rig.

He grew, a chiel amang us  
In the hard sheenin corn  
o the cauld Nor East  
An aa the whyles  
His hauns spun gowd frae strae

Briered in a roch airt  
An ilkie year o warssle a hidden sair  
The Clyack Shaif wis his,  
Sprung frae a late hairst,  
Lang in the growin,  
Sweet in the gaitherin in.

ish Place Names in Canada

Airdrie, Ardrossan, Bonnie Doon  
Bon Accord, Calgary, Barhead  
Banff, Carstairs, Mount Hector, Clyde  
Mintlaw, Mallaig, & Bankhead

Abbotsford, Balfour, Invermere  
Craigellachie, Montrose, Fintry  
Angusville, Elgin, Elphinstone  
Gretna, MacGregor, Carberry

Dalhousie, Drummond, Aberdeen  
Lower Kintore & Hamilton  
Iona, Melrose, Holyrood  
Buchans, Balmoral, Campbellton

Glencoe & Knoydart, fair Loch Broom  
Dunvegan, Inverness, Argyle  
New Ross, New Glasgow, Finlayson  
Macmillan Pass & Melville Isle

Angus & Alloa, Ailsa Craig  
Coutts, Aberfeldy, Aberfoyle  
Ardbeg & Ardoch, Armadale  
Arstrong & Ayr & Campbellville

Badenoch, Baxter, Ballantrae  
Bannockburn, Bothwell, Berriedale  
Brechin & Bruce, Cairngorm, Cargill  
Crombie, Dalmeny, Gillies Hill

Dalrymple, Drummond, Ferguslea  
Glenburnie, Glencaim, Invermay  
Jura, Kilsyth, Kincardine, Laird  
Lanark, Lochalsh, MacDonald's Bay

Macdiarmid, Lowther, Leith, MacDuff  
MacGillivray's Bridge, Lake Dalrymple  
Malcolm & Morven, Lammermoor  
Paisley, New Scotland, Nairn, Maxwell

Perth, Rannoch, Renfrew, Scone, Scotch Bush  
Speyside, St. Andrews, Tarbert, Tay  
Tweed, Breadalbane, Glenfinnan Isle  
Lochaber, Thurso, Stornoway

Arran, Balcarres, Cupar, Kyle



Girvan, Glen Ewan, Balgownie  
Markinch & Mortlach, Ravenscraig  
Orkney, Tiree, Inchkeith, Birsay

### 9.A Plea fur Mercy

Hae fiver ye tholed a langamachie  
Fin 'a fyew wee wirdies' streech tae a buik?  
An niver a mercy seat in sicht  
Tae park yer dowp in a quaet neuk?

Oh fur a shears tae snip the threid  
O spikk, fin pouer rins tae the heid  
O some wee pedant fa's gien free rein  
Tae pooshun yer lug an numb yer brain

Gie's the scauld's bridle or mercy seat  
Or a crook, tae blooter him aff his feet.

ver

Fin I wis a littlin  
Hikers an climmers thocht I wauked alane  
An ootlinn amang ma fiers

Dis yer ma ken ye play yersel  
Far the linn cowps ower wi a roar?  
A ghillie speired, his gun slung ower his airm.

I telt him I wis sib tae the glen  
I telt him the burn spak tae me  
I telt him the wid wis ma frien

Lyin doon in the heather  
I let a hairy oobit crawl ower ma haun  
Gulliver, raxxin oot in the sun  
A curtain, drapped frae its runners  
Sae fu o licht I could daunce on the heid o a preen

Hamecomin o the The Wolf –

As I cam in by Cnocan Dubh the reekin lums war smored  
The weemin milkin on the braes, thin ghaists on Beinn a Bhuid  
At Coble Croft the cottars' waas war tummlet torques o stane  
Auld heroes in their nerra graves war fitenin sticks o bane

The Tree o Gowd by Luibeg wis wizzent tae a stump  
The muckle wids I eesed tae prowle war dwinnlet tae a clump  
At Carn na Cuimhne, lang I stude, the roch win in my face  
Mydin on tales o Druid times, dwined withoot track or trace

In Shetland, wolves war Wulver men. The Pawnee caad us blessed  
In mony an airt aroon the warld, a wolf wis caad a guest  
For frae the Wolf Star Sirius, my kinsmen trode the trail  
Alang the Speerit Path far ghaisties birlid like astral hail

Bit I wis born near Invercauld, heich on Creag Choinnich's side  
Baith sherp o tooth an wit forbye, I focht tae win a bride  
An faithered cubs tae dog the deer, throwe warmth, an Winter's snaa  
Till ane by ane, masel the last, Clan Fhionnlaigh slew us aa

Oorie, the glens I eesed tae stalk, a crined, unscented floer  
An I masel, a shadda-shape, a wolf o whiff o stoor

nin

The nicht ma faither wis born  
Lichtnin entered the hame like a bricht angel  
Doon throw the lum it wheechid  
Birsslin the chaumer door on the wye oot.

It wis Winter. The loch had jeeled  
Aroon the seggs, the watter like  
A keekin-glaiss o milk

Ma faither's rage cud rock the verra Heivens  
Havver peace like an aixe  
Aabody keepit a calm sooch till it sattled.  
The lift wis aywis bluer eftir the storm.

Buik Launch: Tune: Geordie Weir

Weel, ye've written yer buik an ye think it is braw  
Yer hopin tae launch it at Wird or Stanza  
There's jist the ae blot, an it's nae made o ink  
Thon thing cad the critic, fa's faschious tae jink

Fowk speir noo an then fit ye dae for yer wark  
Dae ye earn a fyew pence bi the swyte o yer sack?  
Ye tell them that barderie rins in yer bluid  
An they glower as if ye'd sprootit horns on yer heid

An syne there's the foxes that pad throw the hoose  
Leavin fitprents ahin them, queer thochts on the loose  
Nae winner some bards droon their sorras in booze  
Weir their claes inside oot or are randy as doos

Maist luvvers fin spurned takk the thing in their stride  
Speed-date or sen aff fur a mail-order bride  
Bit yer poet screives ballads o melancholy  
Lets his bleedin hairt stoon fur the hale warld tae see

War ye brocht up on breid-an-air, watter an kicks?  
Write confessional poetry an gie it big licks  
Makk ilkie wee sonnet as derk as a bruise  
An declaim like a Heilanman weirin ticht trews

Here's advice tae puir craturs fas thochts rin on rhyme  
Like Big Ben on the oor ye are programmed tae chime  
Tae the sports car, the pent hoose, the fame, bid adieu  
Gyang hire ye a garret an sign on the Broo.

15. Burns comes tae Burnheid o Blairside Sandy & Doreen Petrie. Mrs. Petrie is a descendent of the North East Burness family, from which the poet himself was descended.

'The 250th anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns has been celebrated on a global scale and as it should be - with dancing, singing, laughter and of course the odd dram.' Alex Salmond, First Minister

Wi pheasant feather in its dowp  
Its hochs wi tartan ribbons happed  
The haggis, ferried frae the hoose  
Is served wi neeps an tatties, chapped

The stove inbye the sheddie's primed  
Cheers, set like sardines in a tin  
Bit friendships like an open pooch  
Wi luck, ye'll ay fit ae mair in

A pre-recordit quine tries hard  
Frae a wee box, tae cherm the lug  
Bit music, live frae fiddler bow's  
The thing that gars oor hairt-strings rug

Three generations host the nicht  
A grandson licks a trifle speen  
Reid-chikkit lad, the caunle-lowe  
Sets starlicht glimmrin in his een

The auld cock craws, the young ane learns  
As tis wi birds, tae tis wi bairns  
The littlin's lappit roon wi sang  
O love, o loss, o man's consarns

Sae ilkie virgin century  
Encounters Burns. Like scattered corn  
His thochts, his loves, his hopes, his dreams  
Brier in the briests o fowk unborn

Abeen, a wintry meen keeks doon  
On ither airts, an ither climes  
Nae ither kintra claims a bard  
Tae be the spokesman o fowk's minds  
Whaur, as at Burnheid o Blairs  
Burns stauns aside us, kens oor cares.

Curlin Puil

By a puil hard jeeled wi ice,  
On a howe in the hoch o Craig Coilleich

I watched the sunlight dee.

Gloamin sat at the elbuck o the wid.  
On the far side o the brig,  
Rikk raise frae the clachan's lums  
A semaphore o cloud.

The wud things o the knowe cheepit an flichtered  
Shaddas streeched like hoodies midnight wings  
Slaw an siccar, hippit an weariet, the meen raise in the lift.

Fugue: by Paul Celan. Here, owersett into Scots

Blaik milk o daybrakk we drink it doon at gloamin  
we drink it at noon in the mornin we drink it at nicht  
we drink it an drink it  
we howk the mools in the wins far ane lies unkistit  
A chiel bides in the hoose he plays wi the snakes he screives  
he screives fin gloamin faas tae Germany yer gowden hair Maggie  
he screives it an steps ootbye an the starnies are skinklin  
he fussles his pack oot  
he fussles his Jews oot in yird has them howk for a grave  
he gars us strikk up for the daunce

Blaik milk o daybrakk we drink ye at nicht  
we drink ye in the mornin at noon we drink ye at gloamin  
we drink an we drink ye  
A chiel bides in the hoose he plays wi the snakes he screives  
he screives fin gloam faas tae Germany yer gowden hair Maggie  
yer hair o aisse Sulamith we howk the mools  
in the wins far ane lies unkistit

He cries oot howk deeper inno the yird aabody ye ithers sing noo an play  
he rugs at the iron in his belt he wyves it his een are blue  
howk deeper ye chiels wi yer spads ye ithers play on for the daunce

Blaik milk o daybrakk we drink ye at nicht  
we drink ye at noon in the mornin we drink ye at gloamin  
we drink an we drink ye  
a chiel bides in the hoose yer gowden hair Maggie  
yer hair o aisse Sulamith he plays wi the snakes

He cries oot mair sweetly play daith daith is a maister frae Germany  
he cries oot mair derkly noo straik yer strings  
syne as rikk ye'll rise inno air  
syne a grave ye'll hae in the clouds far ane lies unkistit

Blaik milk o daybrakk we drink ye at nicht  
we drink ye at noon daith is a maister frae Germany  
we drink ye at sundoon an in the mornin we drink an we drink ye  
daith is a maister frae Germany his een are blue  
he strikks ye wi leaden bullets his aim is true  
a chiel bides in the hoose yer gowden hair Maggie  
he sets his pack ontae us he gies us a grave in the air  
He plays wi the snakes an dwaums daith is a maister frae Germany  
your gowden hair Maggie  
yer hair o aisse Shulamith

by Thich Nhat Hanh: Owersett here into Scots

They waukened me this mornin  
tae tell me ma brither had been killt in battle.  
Yet in the gairden, ootraxxin dyewy petals,  
a new rose briers on the buss.  
An I am leevin, can yet breathe the smell o roses an middens,  
ett, pray, an sleep.  
Bit fan can I brakk ma lang seelence?  
Fan can I spikk the unspukken wirds that smore me?

From: The Cry of Vietnam  
Unicorn Press, Santa Barbara, CA, 1968, p.22

Macabre —

Fowk hae daunced since the stert o time  
Kick yer heels tae the piper's blaa  
Fiddle's bowin is blythe an braw  
The Danse Macabre will catch ye aa

Silkies slidder ower Shetlan shores  
Solans reel ower Foula's snaa  
Strip the Willow Orcadian-kind

The Danse Macabre will catch ye aa

Ilkie hurricane needs a haven  
Music's bield is a wattergaw  
Psalm an shanty, lament an paeon  
The Danse Macabre will catch ye aa

Carol, madrigal, stinch precentor  
Galliard, troubadour, Ars Nova  
Maypole, Morrisman, hornpipe jig,  
The Danse Macabre will catch ye aa

Dashin White Sergeant, Echtsome Reel  
The Fleein Scotsman aroon the haa  
Yiddish, Irish, Baroque or Pole  
The Danse Macabre will catch ye aa

Michty Emperor, sonsie quine  
Aathin growes tae its ain doonfaa  
Littlin rowed in its kirkyaird cloots  
The Danse Macabre will catch ye aa

### Shuffle Monster

There's a Muckle Shuffle Monster fleein roon the Milky Way  
His een are like twa bleezin lumps o coal  
His lugs are lang an pynty. He chaws asteroids like crisps  
An he bides doon at the foon o a Black Hole

His best frien is a Martian, wi a Scorpion for a pet  
They explore the galaxies on Summer nichts  
The Martian's humfy-backit an the Shuffle Monster's green  
An the Scorpion's een are like twa traffic lights

They lowp frae Mars tae Jupiter on Pegasus the shelt  
(Their space umbrella stops a meteor shooer)  
Ye micht catch a glimpse bi meenlicht o the Shuffle Monster's kilt  
If he isna sailin through some astral stoor

The Universe is feary, wi Reid Giants an Fite Dwarfs  
Fu o Heivenly dugs an bears made ooto stars

Bit the Shuffle Monster's gallus an he disna easy fleg  
He's the winner o a umpteen Galactic wars

And the Martian has a weapon..it's a really special pouer  
Wi ae luik he can shrink aathin wee as piz  
Bit he's really feart o Earthlins, sae ye needna hide an cooer  
As he wheechs along the Heivens wi a fizz

### Campus Coo

There's a coo on the campus  
She's haein a luik  
At a braw new production  
A Readin Bus buik!

She'd like ye tae jyne her  
The buik is at King's  
There's poems aboot spacemen  
An midgies wi stings  
Ye'll meet dinosaurs, forkietails,  
Cats on a waa  
The wird on the street is  
It's Nae Bad Ava!

### 22. Seeventeen Bairn Rhymes

#### Register

Far's Maisie Finlay?  
Aff wi a hoast  
Far's Sunita Ranjeev?  
Chokit on her toast  
Far's Nimi Munzah  
His face is fu o plooks  
Far's Abdul Sharnam  
Paidlin wi the dyeuks!

#### Wee Sister



I hae a wee sister, she burst ma fitba  
I wish the tooth fairy wid takk her awa  
She bust ma fitbaa an she blamed it on me  
I wish that a monster wad ett her fur tea!

### Big Brither

My brither pits wirms in ma bath tub  
My brither pits slugs doon ma back  
Ae day tae the recyclin centre  
Ma brither I'd willinly tak

An maybe, instead o a brither  
They'd recycle him as a bike  
I'd dae wheelies on him in the gairden  
Noo thon is brither I'd like!

### Baby Blues

I dinna wint a baby.  
I'd rather hae a baa  
A tortoise or a rubbit.  
Dinna hae a baby, ma.  
Hae a budgie or a goldfish.  
Baby's makk an affa noise  
Willy Duthie's got a baby  
an it pinches as his toys!

### Neebors

The fowk next door keep dugs that gurr  
A spittin cat wi taiglet fur  
An auld wrecked car in the backie there  
An a muckle bogie aneth the stair!

### The Rubbits' Prayer

Please gie us greens for denner!

We think that greens are braw!  
Wi salad for oor brakkfaist  
An celery tae chaw!

Let us hae sprouts an parsley,  
Kail, piz, an rinner beans  
An dinna skimp on lettuce,  
Us rubbits luv oor greens!

### Flapper the Whale

Fin Flapper the whale sets aff for school  
He wallops his tail an blaws his tap  
He staps his bag wi crisps an juice  
An aff he sweems wi a flappety flap!

### Mister Minger

Mister Minger's got leathery skin,  
A baldie heid an a stibbly chin  
He etts fajitas an chaws the plate  
An I think Mister Minger's great!

### Sancastle RIP

I like tae watch the boaties  
An play alang the shore  
I like tae look for partans  
An watch the seagulls soar

I like tae bigg sancastles.  
I'm a cheery kinda lad  
I've jilt ae teenie problem..  
Far did I beery dad?

### Mute

I tint ma voice in bed last nicht.

I think it's wi the stars  
I think it's singin lullabies  
Tae Jupiter an Mars!

### Measles

The measles cam tae veesit.  
I'm happit, heid an tail  
There's ten on my bihoochie..  
Nae winner I look pale!

I feel jist like cheetah.  
My skin is fu o spots  
Bit fin I'm really scunnered,  
I jist jyne up the dots!

### Daith o a Goldfish

Slowly an sadly we laid her doon.  
We rubbit her nose in butter  
We pit her in a sardine tin  
An floatit her doon the gutter

### Bonnie Mary o Argyle

Bonnie Mary o Argyle,  
Sittin stride-legs ower a stile  
Like a tattie on the bile,  
Fa's the lad that gars ye smile?

### The Caulifloer

I wish I wis a caulifloer.  
I wadna wash my lugs  
I'd be as lazy as I liked  
An blether wi the bugs

## Billy

Billy's a scunner, he spits an he rages  
I've seen nicer tigers in zoos an in cages  
He farts an he rifts, he'll nae dae fit he's telt  
Bit ye'll hae tae excuse him, for Billy's a shelt!

## Granny's Bairn

I'm gaun tae ma grunny the morn.  
She'll caa me her favourite quine  
I'll hae sweeties faniver I wint them,  
wi jeely, an aathin that's fine  
Bit I'll jist bide a day an a denner..  
I'd niver laist oot for a wikk  
Atween jeelies, an cookies an puddens,  
Bi the time I ging hame I'll be seek!

## Easter Eggs

Mhairi got a hennie's egg  
Rory's egg wis chocolate  
Ian got a widden ane  
Wi pentit spots upon it  
Pieter got a jeely egg  
Wi sugar at the core  
Evie's egg wis green an big  
It hatched a dinosaur!

## Sheena Blackhall

# Dark Night Of The Hen

Fourth right in the chicken coop,  
Next to a bantam and a Rhode Island Red,  
The condemned hen ate a broody supper.

She bequeathed to her sister,  
Annabelle Long Toes II,  
Her scarlet comb.

Her feathers were left to a  
Quaker quilting commune.

A pigeon agreed to perform the final rites,  
The scattering of seed and dust.

She died, it's said, a chicken to the end.

Sheena Blackhall

# Dark Night Of The Trees

Dark night of the trees□

Truncated casualties lie stretched in B & Q.

No room here for owls to stretch their whirring wings,  
No room here for stags to strip their antlers clean,  
Everything passed by planners, joiners, planers,  
In keeping with forestry needs, trees must be culled.

There have, however been sightings of  
The Great God Pan in newly erected suburbs.  
Men say, he is carrying an axe.

Sheena Blackhall

# Dead Man's Penny

Badge, boots, knife, straps, khaki hose  
Ammo pouches. Helve head cover  
Water bottle. Bayonet frog  
Small pack, Large pack. Kilt wrap over

Entrenching tool head, bayonet, scabbard  
Dressings, iodine ampoule  
Flashes, greatcoat, groundsheet, helmet  
Dubbin, blacking, boots to bull

Hussif, ID disc and jacket  
Gordon Highland tartan kilt  
Kit bag, mess tin, fork and spoon  
Leather jerkin, towel, waist belt  
Pay book, PH gas hood, bag  
Puttees, toothbrush, vermin powder  
Razor (cut-throat) Shaving brush  
Button stick and Tommy cooker

Flannel, soap, comb, brush, foot powder  
Brass oil, polish, rag to rub  
Rifle, titles, tam o shanter  
Wash roll, shirt, enamel mug

Mud or frost weighed down the kilt  
Cut the Tommy's freezing skin  
Lice would breed in tartan seams  
Pleats on barbed wire trapping him

With his short Lee Enfield Rifle  
Quick to load and quick to fire  
Corned beef, army biscuits, tea  
What more could a man desire?

Rats and mustard gas and shrapnel  
Horses rotting in the trench  
Flooded latrines, eyeless comrades  
Limbs and mud and rain and stench

Foot rot, shell shock, impetigo  
Frost and fear, the soldier's bed  
One way out, to win a discharge  
Wounded, missing, mad or dead

For the families left behind them  
Widows, orphans, the unborn  
Comes the prize, the Dead Man's Penny  
For the troops cut down like corn

Sheena Blackhall



# Dead Mens' Whispers: (17 Scots Poems & Owersetts)

Eruption of Vesuvius

Years later, in two letters to the historian Tacitus, Pliny the Younger gave his eye-witness account of the events.

Letter no I

Tacitus, ma frien,

[My Uncle] wis at Misenum thon time Commander o the Fleet.

Ae efterneen In August, mither pynted oot a cloud.

He'd had a sunbath, bathed, his denner taen,

Cried fur his sheen, laid by his buiks an ran

Tae far this unca ferlie wis best seen.

The cloud wis risin fae a hyne-aff Ben

(Eftir, we learned it wis Vesuvius)

Shaped like a pine tree, thon upwauchtin rikk

Wis pairtly fite, dirt-straiked, it seemed tae us.

My uncle socht tae see the sicht nearhaun

Ordered a boat, an speired gin I'd gyang tae

Bit I preferred tae bide, tae tcyauve awa

Screivin a lesson set thon verra day.

Jist as he quit the hoose, a letter cam

Fae Tascius' wife Rectina, byous feart.

Her villa lay at the volcano's foun

A rescue on his boat, the boon she speirt.

He cheenged his plans, hairt softened bi her priggin

Hopin tae save some ither fowk an aa

He launched the Quadriremes, straicht for the lan

Sic virr! He notit doon aa that he saw

The meevement an the makk o thon coorse cloud

Aisse drappin on the ships, derk dauds doonfa

An steens aa blaik an birssled bi the lowe

The sea, pit-mirk, blaik lava choked the shore

He dauchled fur a whyle, syne forrit gaed

Tae see fit ither ills Fate held in store.

At Stabiae, far Pomponianus bedd  
The chiel hid stapped his ships wi rowth o gear  
Hopin tae jink the danger weirin close  
As seen's a favourt win cud blaw them clear  
My uncle berthed, embraced the frichtit man  
Gaed tae the baths, dooked, dined, made seemin licht  
O blaik Vesuvius wi as its lowes alicht  
Brichtenin the lift, makkin a day o nicht

He quaetened fears bi leein that the lowes  
Cam fae the hairths that fermers left ableeze  
An syne he slept, fowk heard him pech an snore  
Aisse piled ootbye, yet still he tuik his ease.

Waukenin, tae Pomponianus forth he gaed  
They winneret fit tae dae. Rin oot the door  
Or bide inbye the biggins? Wis it safe  
Fin ilkie hoose wis trimmlin at the core?

Hames sliddered back an fore. Ootbye, rocks drapped  
They ran doon tae the shore tae watch the sea  
Day turned tae nicht, sae derk they nott a torch  
The waves brocht nae remeid, bit misery.

Wi bowsters on their heids tae fen aff steens  
They ran. He fand a bield neth a boat sail  
Sipped watter, syne the derkness thicker grew  
The stank o sulphur, brocht a fiery hell  
Upheld wi twa wee slaves, he stood, syne fell,  
His lungs fair choked wi stoor. My uncle deed.  
Twa days he lay till daylight ploed its dreel  
In daith, they say he luiked like ane asleep  
This is the marra o't, my frien,  
Fareweel.

Letter No II

Tacitus, ma frien,  
Ye speir fit wis ma mither's weird an mine,  
On thon dreid day that I wad fain forget  
Eftir ma uncle left, ma studies dane,

I bathed and ett, but sleep was aft upset

There had been tremors in Campania  
A puckle days, bit this wisnae unkent  
Thon nicht the shakkin worsened, mither breenged  
Inno ma chaumer, aa her courage spent.

We sat atween oor biggin an the sea  
I read a buik by Livy, an tuik notes  
Wis't brave or daft tae be sae unconarned?  
A frien o uncle's threipit doon oor throats  
That we should be afeard an set tae flee  
The day began, an aye the hooses shook  
We quit the toun, a boorich at oor dowp  
As mony as the corn-ears in a stook

The cairts we'd ordered sliddered up an doon  
Altho their wheels war settled on flat lan  
The tide wis sookit back, an unca thing  
Sea craiteurs peched for braith upon the san

Ahin us, mighty clouds bi lichtnin rent  
Gapit ajee tae show us fearsome flame  
My uncle's Spanish frien quo 'Save yersel  
He'd wint ye safe, the anes fa share his name.'

A whyle we wyted, syne the blaik cloud raxxed  
Frae lift tae sea. It blottit oot Capri  
My mither priggitt wi me tae gyang on  
Fin derkness happt Misenum's promont'ry

She urged that she wis auld, she'd haud me back  
I tuik her haun, an on we ran thegither  
The derk cloud floodit aathin left ahin  
The crowd gaed breengin by masel, my mither.

We sat doon in the derk, the stoor, the wae  
O weemin greetin, skirls o bairns an men  
Some grat fur parent, spouse, frae verra fear  
Some prayed that Daith wad takk them there an then.

Some raised their hauns tae Gods, some tint their faith

An cried the Gods war deid, twis the World's Eyn  
Whylst ithers leed, made pandemonium waur  
An still the aisse drapped doon, derk an malign

I thocht, that e'en the Eird itsel wis deein  
We shook aff stoor until the cloud thinned oot  
Tae a fey haar. The sun, an eildritch lowe  
Glisked ower a lan, rowed in a tarry clood.

Syne ithers threatened terrors still tae kythe  
The grun wis shakkin, mony fowk gaed gyte  
Eneuch! My tale is telt, my pen's laid doon  
Gin this epistle's puir, it's nae my wyte.

iti in the Ruins o Pompeii

In the Basilica

Waa, yer that clartit wi graffiti  
I'm bumbazed ye hinna faan doon  
Epaphra, yer a baldie!  
May yer piles rub thegither till they stoun!  
Mell wi flame an ye'll burn yer pin.

I wint tae brakk Venus' ribs wi clubs  
I wint tae caa her fud tae stoor  
Gin she can strikk throw my saft breist  
Can I nae gie her heid a cloor?

In the Inn o the Cuddy-drivers

Host, we hae pished in the bed  
It wis wrang. The wte o't wis this...  
We cudna fin a chunty

In the Hoose o the Haley-Willy

Let watter wash yer feet clean,  
A slave dicht them dry.

Pit a cloth ower the couch  
Dinna fyle oor linen.  
Dinna makk lang een at oor weemin  
Dinna quarrel here  
If ye maun argy-bargy, ban, or sweir  
Ye'd best gyang hame.  
We dinna wint ye here.

#### Aroon the Bars

Lovers are like bees  
They hae a hinneyed life  
Appelles the chamberlain  
Wi Dexter, a slave o Caesar  
Ett here betimes  
An had a birze forbye.

In the Gladiators' Barracks (The remains of a wealthy woman were found in the  
gladiators' barracks)  
Floronius, sodjer o the 7th legion, wis here  
Jist sax weemen kent. Ower fyew fur sic a staig  
Aa the quines delicht in Celadus, the Thracian gladiator

#### n Glaiss: Owerset frae a poem bi Sylvia Plath

I am perjink an siller. I am teem o opinions.  
Fitiver I see, I swalla richt aff,  
Jist as it is, nae bleared bi luv or ill-natur.  
I'm nae coorse, anely truthfu  
The ee o a wee god, fower-neukit.

Maistly I meditate on the opposite waa  
It's pink an spottit. I hae glowert at it sae lang  
I think it's pairt o ma hairt. Bit it flichters  
Derkness an faces split us ower an ower.

Noo I'm a lochan. A wumman boos ower me,  
Trawls throwe ma founs for fit she really is.  
Syne she turns tae thon leears, the caunles an the meen

I see her back, an makk a leal reflection.  
For recompense, she greets an wrings her hauns.  
I am important tae her. She comes an gyangs.

Ilkie mornin, it's her likeness that shifts the derkness.  
She's drooned a young quine in me.  
An auld cailleach  
Rises frae me taewards her ilkie day,  
Like a scunnersome fish.

Scots Owersets o Hafiz (1320-1389) the Sufi Poet

A Singin Skiffie

A leaf says, Dinna pick me, dearies,  
I'm eident on God's wirk.  
I'm drappin ma veins an reets like towes  
Wi pails tied tae them, inno the yird's deep lochan.  
I'm heistin watter that I'll gie like a rose tae the lift.  
I'm a singin skiffie, dichtin aa the shelves o the air  
Wi ma brow green cloots.  
I hae a hairt. I can ken blitheness, like ye.

Ye say, I say.

Ye say, 'Foo can I fin God? '  
I say, 'The Frien is the linin in yer pooch  
The roon pink waa in yer stammache  
Sober up, steady yer airm, raxx in  
Turn the Aybydan an the Braw Vratch inside oot

Ye say- `Thon souns gyte  
I really dinna believe God's inbye yonner.

I say, 'Weel syne, foo nae gyang tae the Himalyas-  
Ye cud be nyaakit, makk on yer a heich yogi  
Ett bark an snaa fur forty years.  
An ye nicht think:  
Hey min, ye auld gype, foo nae gyang an shiel sna?

## 5. Marcus Antonius

Marcus Antonius far hae ye been?  
I've bin tae Egypt tae sleep wi a Queen

Marcus Antonius, fit did ye see?  
Fin she took aff her wig,  
She wis baldie's ma knee.

## 6. Scots Owersets frae Ovid's 'The Art of Love'

Book 1 Part XIV: On luikin Braw (Advice tae Chiels)

Dinna delicht in curlin yer hair wi tings  
Dinna smeeth yer shanks wi pumice steens  
Like sic as worship Cybele the Mither  
Skirlin like banshees in the Phrygian mainner.

Chiels' luiks are best neglekit. Theseus  
Still caught Ariadne. His heid wis a buss  
Phaedra lued Hippolytus, free o airt  
Adonis, hudderie, won the goddess hairt

Be trig, it pleases, tanned bi exercise  
A snod an clean-washed toga's shows some pride  
Nae stiff sheen-thongs, yer buckles bare o roost  
Nae bauchled feet, afloat in a lowse hide.

Dinna connach yer hair wi a coorse cut  
Let a guid barber trim yer heid an beard  
An nae lang nails, makk siccar they're yird-free  
An lang hair frae yer neb-holes should be sheared

Nae orra braith should guff oot frae yer mou  
Dinna offend the snoot wi breetish smells  
Ony mair nur this, prood jaads wad dae  
Or chiels fa set their sights on ither chiels.

Extracts frae Book III Part IV: Make-up, in Private (fur the quines)

I nearly telt ye, nae tae hae goat's oxters  
Or shanks, sprootin wi roch hair like a lass  
Frae the Caucasian knowes, nor sic as drink  
Yer waters, Mysian Caicus. Sic a soss!

I dinna need tae tell ye, clean yer teeth  
Washin yer face each day, likewise is guid  
Ye, fa can makk yer faces white wi pooder  
Fa blush wi artifice an nae wi bluid  
Ye fill the baldie bits o ilkie eebroo  
Pit patches on yer chikks, set aff yer een  
Wi aisse or saffron grown frae banks o Cydnus,

I even screived a buik tae help ye preen.  
Still, dinna let yer luver find yer bottles  
O peint an pooder skittered ower the place  
It's aff-pitten fin cream dreeps doon yer briest  
Art's better fin it keeps a happit face.

Even the eyntments ferried ower frae Athens  
Frae unwashed oo o yowes, the ile they pree  
Sae dinna clart deer marra on in public  
Nor clean yer teeth afore yer luver's ee.

Fit noo may haud the signature o Myron  
Wis aince dumb mass, hard steen, a deid statue  
Tae makk a ring, first crush the gowden ore  
That dress ye weir wis vrocht frae creashie oo  
A daud o merble, noo is nyaakit Venus  
Squeezin the watter frae her dreepin hair

We'll think yer sleepin while ye peint yer face  
Foo should we see the darg that makks ye fair?  
Steek tee yer chaumer door! Yer secrets keep  
There's mony things it's richt men shouldna ken  
The gowden actors on the theatre stage  
Sheen oot. Till the show's ower, they banish men  
Gin punters win ower close, they're gilded wid  
Sae tis wi weemin. Tho feel free  
Tae caimb yer hair lowse spreid, adoon yer back



An dinna rage gin it hings aa skweejee  
Leave yer pur maid. Oh dinna scrat her face  
Or job her airm, if a preen scrats ye sair  
She'll curse her mistress' heid at ilkie touch  
An greet, an bleed upon yer hatit hair

If yer hairdo is unca, hae it set  
At Bona Dea's place. Guaird yer door weel  
I aince arrived at a quine's hoose, an she  
Pit on a hairpiece backwirds! Fit a feel!

May sic affronts cam anely tae ma faes  
An Parthian quines, fa merit little mair  
Coos wintin horns, bare busses, girsless parks  
Are ugsome. Sae's a heid withoot its hair.

Book I Eleev V: Corinna in an Efterneen

It wis gey hett, the day jist by its noon  
I wis raxxt oot, tae takk a nap, oot-straiked  
The licht wis like ye'd see it, deep in wids,  
Hauf o the windae lowsed, the tither steeked:

Glimmrin like Phoebus deein at the gloamin,  
Or fin nicht gaes, bit day still hisnae dawed.  
A perfeck licht fur quines a thoctie blate,  
Fa fear affront, wad rather it's nae shawed.

Tak tent! Corinna comes, in a lowse gown,  
Her pairtit hair framin her fite throat weel  
Like bonnie Semiramis gyaun tae bed,  
Or weel-kent Lais lued by mony a chiel.

I rugged her gown aff...it wis unca thin;  
She strove tae keep it on, tho it wis spare  
Bit wi nae forcefu wish fur victory  
I conquered her, she stude afore me, bare.  
Her claethin tint, afore ma verra een  
Sic airms, sic shouders, wytin tae be kissed  
Sic bonnie briests I luikit on an straiked!  
Foo flat a wyme aneth a lissome waist!

Sic lang an youthfu shanks! A bonnie view!  
I held her nyaakit body agin mine.  
Ye'll ken the lave? We lay there, worn oot  
May aa my efterneens turn oot sae fine!

#### 7. Conversation (1)

They're a bonnie luikin pair, as the cra said o his legs  
They're as cantle as twa dyeukies cockin doon among the seggs

Quo the dother tae her in-laws, They're as warm as new-laid eggs  
Quo the in-laws tae the dother...She's a widda

He that merries wi a widda needna think tae please or pet  
He'll hae a deid man's held served up on ilkie plate he'll get  
Bees wi hinny sting as nesty as the coorsest hornet yet  
Quo the in-laws tae the dother...She's a widda

#### 8. The Conversation (2)

Guid friens are like fiddle strings,  
they mauna be screwed ower ticht  
Quo the meenister tae the miser.  
Ye should treat aa fowk richt

The deil's bairns hae their daddy's luck  
The miser crackit back  
I'd flay a flech tae takk its skin,  
an far's the wrang in that?

#### Conversation(3)

Ken fan tae spen an fan tae spare,  
an fin ye buy ye'll niver be bare  
As peesie-wheep in her nest sae fair  
Quo the auld, auld man tae the halflin.

The peesie ains bit the empty air.  
He that has muckle wad ay hae mair

Age hirples, hippit, it's youth's the hare  
Quo the gallus laddie, lauchin

#### 10. The Conversation (4)

If ae yowe lowps ower the dyke, the lave 'll folla  
If ye dinna see the boddom, dinna wyde  
Quo the spinster tae the limmer at the altar  
Beauty's muck fin honour's tint, she telt the bride.  
Quo the groom, it's caulder lyin aa yer lane

He that's born tae be hanged will niver droon  
Daith comes in an speirs nae questions, ower sune  
Tho Life's curly an it's crookit, as the Deil said o his horns

#### Conversation (5)

Veesitors are like fish. Eftir 3 days they stink  
Whyles as welcome as sna at hairst  
Quo the miser tae the tink

A craw's nae white fur bein washed  
The fink tae the miser said  
Daylicht keeks through the smaaest hole  
I like my clarty bed  
A wild goose niver laid tame eggs,  
an little gear, less care  
A bonnie bride's sune buskit  
Fit need hae I o mair

, at the Festival The Netherbow Bell was cast in 1621, and still works perfectly.

The muckle bell o Netherbow, wi'ts Nemo me lacessit  
I dinged yestreen in Embro toun, tho naeboddy'd hae guessed it  
The close-heid at theWorld's Eyn (a kettle on the bile)  
Wis thrang wi fowk frae aa the airts along the Royal Mile

Twa pipers in unleecensed sporrans by the R.B.S.  
Skirled oot the Flooers o Embro coinin in a rowth o bress  
A creashie biker filmed the pair, his hairy neive tattooed

Wi snakes an furliegorums some auld warlock micht hae spewed

Abune the Whistlebinkie Bar, three Saltires flapped thegither  
In sun an weat, the Autum heat made fell onchancy weather  
The skreich o taxis, toot o horns, near deafened ilkie lug  
A toothless craitur on his dowp, clappit his flechy dug

In windaes tartan tights war raxxed, ower plastic hochs tae dauchle  
A censured sticker happit weel a caber tosser's tackle  
Jist Chillin oot in Scotland said a sleepin Heilan coo  
Aside a postcaird o Loch Ness. Sic rareties tae view!

A litter bin in blaik an gowd, gulsh aff-casts wis amassin  
A low-fat, probiotic yogurt carton dumped in passin  
A reid phone box stude sicar like a Scots Guaird on parade  
Wi flee-ers stuck on ilkie pane. Sic shows an sichts displayed!

Ower the North Brig see Wellington's blaik chairger rear an prance  
Aneth him, three Plains Indians performin a Rain daunce  
Preserves! We'd little need o thon. Mair pipes an drums tae dird  
The day I rang the muckle bell, an Deil the body heard!

-Lowper

Bedlam's weel-kent. Robbie lives it, daily.  
An airt o brukken promises, breetish wirds.  
Feelins are skelfs. Hopes are the Deil's crook.  
Luv, is the refugee in the neuk.

Robbie is nailed tae his hoose's twisted cross  
His skaiths are unspukken an hidden  
He is a girse-lowper jinkin abune a midden  
His faither hubbers monologues tae the bottle  
Robbie jinks frae the door, the dunt, fu-throttle

Last nicht, his lug ran reid, he jinked ower slow  
But it's aa his wyte, he brings it on himsel:  
For nae ettin the meat his faither wirks tae pye fur  
For needin claes that drain awa booze siller  
For makkin a claustrophobic mairriage wirse

He jooks frae the flung buit, cooers frae the liftit belt  
Nurses each skelp in secret. An this is aa he kens  
Tiptaein ben his bairnhood, far the wolf sits at the hairth.  
Robbie is ten years auld. Against all odds, he growes.

#### 14. The Critic: The Last Judgement

Michaelangelo's painting in the Sistine Chapel depicts Minos, the Judge of Souls,  
in hell with the ears of a jackass.

There he stauns, wee nyaff wi cuddy's lugs  
Man-paps, beer-belly, face like a torn scone

A snake is gnawin his tadger  
A clype, a sook, a plook on the world's bihoochie  
A nesty, sleekit cadger  
Fa cudna draa a pail o clatty watter  
Let alane a ceilin fu o prophets, sancts an deils  
Critics war iver contermascious deils.

#### the Mools

Ayont the mools the deid lie licht  
Their wirks, their wirds, their thochts, still heeze  
Peintit on waas or screived in buiks  
A fuser aff frae sic as these  
We staun, a blink o a hiatus  
A meenit's skreich...a lang quietus.

#### d & Profane: In the Vatican

A twa-fauld Benedictine wauks  
Along the flags, the cassied street  
African merchants sell their gear  
Far pilgrim, towrist, Mafia meet.

There's kick-backs, rake-affs, knock-aff deals,  
Fake Gucci, watches ill tae set  
This needy neuk maun hae its due  
Frae pilgrims at the temple's yetts.

The magpie Popes hae rypit Rome o treisurs, sacred an profane  
The goddess Artemis aince stude inbye the hame o Hadrian

She's brierin testicles like warts frae briest tae shank; thon bonnie feet  
Aince by a priest war washed in bluid, the hinmaist gift o deein breet

Here, libbit Bacchus weirs a leaf sae nae douce matron nicht takk fricht Here,  
syphilitic Raphael peintit his mistress ben the nicht

Here, Michaelangelo's Pieta, wis caad tae shards bi ain clean gyte  
Fa thocht that he wis Christ hissel, his harns ower weak tae bear the wyte.

Here, Hercules frae Pompey's Theatre, skin o a lion ower his airm  
Struck doon bi lichtnin's resurrectit, ayont aa human skaith or hairm.

A group of Chinees students watch twa serpents fecht wi the Laocoon  
Aince Emperor Titus nummert this the brawest sculpture in his toun.

The Swiss guairds weir Medici claes, Renaissance style, braw an neat  
Black beret on their heids, their skyrie jaikets packin serious heat.

This toun inbye a toun that bides some like a Russian dall in steen,  
Boasts its ain airport. Hostesses bring haly watter wi ice cream?

A Jewish traiveller sizes up the Papal gloss, embroidered rugs  
Ootby, a shelt ryled tae a gig coosts up its tail an cocks its lugs

God, in the Sistine, raxxes oot at Crack o Dawn, the stert o Time  
Tae Adam: mitherless, fa shows a belly-button on his wyme.  
Thon Popes, lang in their merble tombs, pontiffs fas deid een canna see  
Wi aa their siller, pouer an lear, did they buy immortality?

The peintins, Flemish tapestries, the rooms o gowd, gin selt they'd gie (We're  
stammygastered tae be telt) India, a heist frae poverty.  
This is Vesuvius in reverse, sookin aa intae its vortex  
A treisur-trove o priceless gear. A Haly kistie o begecks

Oot in the unembellished sun, its warm rays un-beatifeed  
The lift's as blue an clear as Zen, wi this auld world unified

Sated wi winners seen inbye, foo sweet tae wauk girse green an bare

A spurgie raxxes sunny wings, it's flicht, spectacular an spare.

Canem: A Visit to Pompeii.

Feral dogs, that nicht hae sookled Remus  
Caper afore the temple o Apollo  
A lucky omen. Breet, we're telt, ay ken  
Fin earthquake or eruption's in the air.

A dug dang frae the Hoose o Orpheus,  
Cast in plaister, glowers foraye at Daith  
Chyned up, the craitur cudna jink the flame.

Teeth bared in grue, a swippert Pompeii quine  
Faces live cremation fur the towrists.  
(A wee frisson, syne on tae the neist ferlie)

Twa Philippino grannies frae the Bronx  
Keckle in the hoor-hoose, rub their rosaries  
This is the Lupinare, hoose o jaads  
A gyte Yank raxxes oot alang a bed  
O steens, makks on he is a customer

The murals on the waas shaw ilkie stroke.  
The hoors war Eastern slaves, nae free tae chuse  
Chiels pyed their maister fur the lassies' darg.  
Swyte an spunk pit meat upon teem plates.

A cuddy driver dowpit in a neuk  
Rowed in his roch plaid, bood tae meet his weird.

The cult o Isis offered nae protection  
Fin heelstergowdie, temples tummelt doon.  
Aroon this seelent toon, a hale clanjamfrie  
O chaip-jack booths, sell gulsh tae teem yer pooch.

Sheena Blackhall

# Dead Robin

The inadvertent fact of a robin  
Carelessly snapping its back on a glass bus shelter  
Is not a major tragedy of epic proportions.

Nevertheless, today there has been a death,  
Two beautiful slender legs  
Are crossed, a demure crucifix of twigs.  
Tail feathers, folded away  
Like ironed packing.

The small red body nestles in my hand  
A cold flame  
Fragile as an egg.

I do not want to bury it.  
I do not want to draw earth's curtain over its closed face.  
This delicate two-winged coffin.

I stroke and stroke the fiery breast  
The light brown back  
Turning it round and round like a roasting spit,  
Regret its fading essences  
Its lightness and its grace

Its softly thudding heartbeat  
Has sunk without a trace  
Into a sealed silence.

Over morning smells of toast and tea  
I have read columns of obituaries  
Black lists of names on thin cheap paper  
My eyes dusted the dead as lightly as swatting a fly  
But today one of the winged ones  
Has tumbled from the sky  
And I may stroke and stroke that small stilled throat  
But cannot stir one feather with my gentling.

Sheena Blackhall



# Death And Demons, Twa Bs, The Telepathic Butcher's Boy(15 Poems In Scots)

I ken a chiel  
Fa ains 3 TVs, a computer an a hi-fi.  
A sci-fi tumble drier an a wife.  
A librar stapt wi buiks  
A car  
A dug  
A hunner per cent Persian rug.  
A fitbaa game.  
He caas this hame.

I ken a ferm,  
That 5 consecutive femlies  
Hae laid claim tae

It likewise belongs tae  
The win, rain,  
Snaa, mist  
clay.  
A puckle orra mowdies.  
Hoolets, tods.  
Layers an layers o ludgers  
Hoose-martins in the eaves

The mony stratifications  
O sub-tenancy.

ie

Teenie talons  
Fit slim-fingeret birk  
Twa jigsas,  
Interlockin

oraich

Griogoraich, great tho the noise o yer fame be here  
In my faither's lan, fowk spakk yer name wi a sweir.  
Hollywood styles ye heroes, cattle dealers  
Culblean hid anither kennin. Bluidy reivers.

Fin the hairst meen hung like a crooked dirk in the nicht  
Ye cam in the derk like a wolf in the bare meenlicht  
Like hoodie craws on yer garrons, cateran cyards  
Tae shatter a crofter's warld an leave him shards.

The stervin bairns ye left tae greet bi the grate  
Foo wad they thrive on peat rikk hunger an hate?  
Oh, rodden berries glent on a fermer's broo  
Fin the Griogoraich left their merk...a crimson dyew.

Curs, I hae dogged ye back tae yer peat hag lair  
Tae the lang-lashed creamy kye o rich Strathyre  
The salmon lowp in yer lochs. Yer braes are fair.  
Wis it greed that gart ye spulzie a peer man's byre?

A deid bawd lay ootraxxed on the road yestreen  
Cut doon in flicht, a denner fur wirm an craa  
An I. thocht on supperless bairns wi hungert een  
Wi nocht tae stap their wames bit the driflin snaa

The kye ye reived poored doon the Ben like a linn  
Horn an hoof, a leevin burn o reid  
The banes o yer vauntie hame lie bare in the win  
The win that his blawn awa yer buzzard seed.

Griogoraich cock yer lugs in the maggots clay  
Sassenachs bide here noo, yer pouer's in its kist  
Yer hames are a rickle o stanes, yer lan keens was  
Ye are gane frae the muckle Bens like muirlan mist.

In the starlicht nicht, an oolet fierce ye fell  
Dropped like a murderin steen on the dweeble sma

Hardship an hunger were aa ye left ahin  
Griogoraich, great's my joy ye hae worn awa.

Dog's will aywis sniff roon anither's hame  
That winna clap at the yett or ring yer bell  
Gear is a hinner..a hinneypot...a lure  
The anely gem that ye truly ain's yersel.

#### IN FOR THE BUS□

This mornin, as I wyted fur the bus,  
I watched a wyver crunchin up a flee. Nae serviette  
Nae flooers on the table.  
Nae saft lichts, backgrun music, Nae waiters, fuss;  
Nae skinklin cutlery  
A mediaeval banquet o a brakkfast it munched awa the flee's mortality.

Echt chopstick airms  
Drew the morsel in  
It chawed the gollach,  
Left the wings ahin.  
Like rinds o bacon,,  
Or roast chukken skin.

Syne, kyte weel stappt  
Sank back, in its web-hank.  
An frae its mou,  
There danglit  
Ae  
Lane  
Shank.

#### 5. AFRICAN MERKET

(owersett in Scots o the poem 'Dead Beasts for Sale' by Paul Theroux)

Deid Breets fur sale. They maun be etten cooked.  
Merkets haud flesh, like luvvers, limbs ajee.  
A fremmit guff is dandy in a merket,  
A puckle thoosan miles frae cauld an hame.  
The happit quines, hauf herted, hide their fruit,  
A scraggit tyke slinks hungeret an bare-fanged.

An awkward pause. Chiels hunker, mangst bananas,

Yer hauns are held bi cailleichs, till they scran  
Yer palm, in reests o fooshty, mochie staas.  
Swyte slidders aff yer jaa. On far-aff roadies  
Ye mind. The sense o daith an watter's sexual.  
Wi'oot a doot, as is the oot raxxed fruit

Deein fish are staikit oot on boords.  
Goats, stirkies rived asunner, skint an hingin  
Bleedy in stoory sheds. Bittickies o suet  
Haived in pails. Skreichin cockerels  
Yarked frae their weir pens

Hunkered weemin saftly mummlin prices  
An meevent mangs the bodies. Blaik bairns  
Raxx, as if tae affcast duds. Roch, dub-broon sarks  
The wechty flesh o Hindu weemin meevin  
Unner silk. Deid maet, an aaweeye nyaketness

#### WIRM

Owersett in Scots frae 'The Earthworm, ' by the Swedish poet, Harry Martinson,

Fa respecks the wirm?  
He ploos deep unner the girse in the yird's mools.  
He keeps stoor iver-cheengin.  
Tcyaavin awa, stapt tae the gunnels wi dubs,  
Yird steeks his moo an een. He traivels blin  
He's doon ablow...the fermer in the sunks,  
Far parks are quickened fur hairst.

Fa respecks the wirm?  
Yon deep, quate, plooman  
Unstoppable smaa gray fermer in the yird.

#### FORVIE BRAES

'If evyr maydenis malysone  
Dyd licht upon drye land  
Let nocht bee seen in Fyvie's glebye's  
Bot thystl, berate and sande.'

The rigs that early fermers ploood

Is happt bi Forvie's sannie bents  
Wave efter wave o gowden dunes  
Like a braid sea o Arab tents  
In bleedless battle, claimed the lan  
Makkin the girssy glebe, a stran.  
A bield fur Arctic tern an gull  
Far they micht bigg their coastal hames  
An raxx their wings tae flee an furl  
An fish the fertile oceans teem  
Far clouds like driftin sna blew ower  
The cliff-tap fulmar's bonnie bouer

Wild iris scents the Ythan's bank,  
The hauntin whaup's cry shrill an keen,  
Like full-blawn yachts wi wings sae pure  
Full bellied swans sweem neth the meen.  
Far waves like peacefu boaties sail  
Or skelp an clash in gurly gale.

Noo nocht bit birdies makk their bield  
On Forvie's shores o dunes an girse  
Bit gweed may cam free wickedness  
An sae it is, wi yon auld curse,  
A hame's bin bigged, bi win an tide,  
Far craiturs o the wild, can bide.

The mind's a derk chaumer  
Lit bi twa slits o sicht.  
I am the keeper o the crypt  
I dinna steer up the shaddas.  
The Past sleeps unquate here  
In weird, aybdan nicht

.  
Inbye this pit-mirk chaumer  
A well draps doon,  
Fell steep,  
Reached bi a midnicht flicht  
O stairs o steen,  
That weety,

sterky,  
dleep  
richt  
doon  
Inno a jetty puil  
A puil that swallaes thochts,  
Jeels prig's pretension

Its icy waves  
Are cauld tae condensation

Whyles,  
A winnerfu lily floats on the puil  
Raxxin its creamy petals oot like stars.

Whyles  
A swan  
brakks  
throw the inky waves  
o yon subconscious airt  
Snakin its neck  
Like Cleopatra's asp  
Its feathers, shakkin skinklin watter pearls,  
Richt frae the verra hairt  
O thou black lair

Waves yonner, bob an birl  
Like Pan's close croppit hair

The mind's a sanctuary, secret, snibbed, unkent,  
Far thochts are coined, replacin ithers, spent

## 9.MILLY FRAE TILLY

Ma neebor thinks  
Ma fish-pond is a slaister  
She thinks my leakin cistern  
Spyled her plaister

Ma neebor thinks  
Ma cat pees on her flooers

A furry fiend  
That skreichs aa nicht fur oors

Ma neebor thinks  
Ma bidie-in is gallus  
Whylst her man keeps  
Their close-heid like a palace.

Ma neebor thinks  
I lower the tone o Tilly  
She says oor mower  
Maks teirs along her telly

I wish she'd move tae Torry, or Turlair  
I winner gin she'd nag the neebors there?

#### 10. Polis Maitter

Officer Sydney Beattie reportin tae HQ.  
We've jist new  
Arrived at the scene o the crash. Some smash!  
Nae winner they ran oota road  
The speedometer registers echty  
And as ye ken,  
It's nae Brands Hatch, Finechty.

Naebody's in the car  
Cud hae bin waur  
It's sittin teem.  
The deem  
Fa wis drivin it, his skedaddled  
Her make up's drappt on the fleer.  
It wis an accident wytin tae happen  
Eneuch tae mak ye sweir, A car like yon.  
A daith trap,  
Roost bucket  
I tell ye, it's caused some steer,  
This trashed auld banger. Faiver bocht it  
Fairly drappit a clanger

I wadna hae socht

the bluidy thing in a gift. Shift it?  
I'd pit a spunk tae the thing fur free  
The buyer'd as muckle sense  
As a cross-ee'ed chimpanzee

Aa yon ice an snaa,  
Nae conditions tae drive in ava.  
Nae winner she rammed the waa.  
As fur the hoose she hit  
Na, they winna hae tae flit  
Jist ae mair granite shooder  
Wi a dam't great chip in it!

#### QUEZ VEESITS A FERM KITCHIE IN SKENE

Her peenie lirked aroon her creashie wame,  
Granmither beeried her mukle girssly neives  
Deep in a boorich o lamb-fite downy feathers.  
Whyles keepin tee wi kinsfowk,  
An their blethers.

Her waddin ring o gowd  
Tichtened aroon a clutch o sherp pronged quills  
Syne free the deid bird's back,  
Her forcey fingers  
Rugged its cosy claddin.  
Its coat that kept it happt free winter chills.  
Delicate as auld lace,  
Slicht's a communion wafer,  
The blae skin lookit  
Plooky, unca, bare,  
Fite as wax, an pale as frozen lard  
As motionless and still's  
A frichtit hare.

She held the hauf skinnt chucken on her lap.  
The antrin feather caughted in a doon-drap  
Furled like thin fag rikk, slawly ben the air.  
Syne lichtit on the kitchie lino fleer

The thrawed hen's thrapple, yella beak ajee



The jeely preen o bird's pathetic ee  
Walloped ootower her muckle sonsie knee

A diamond o begeck  
Hung silent...squawk new-brukkeri in its neck.  
Its clooks trailed scaley,  
Bricht's the cracked egg yolk ryped free the bird  
Its nails war stapped wi stoor free dirt-packed yird

She yarked the bricht intimmers frae its wame.  
Broth needs chucken, tae be wirth the name.  
Snorrel o crookit, wummlin, stammach cable  
Reamed reid alang the scrubbit kitchie table.

An syne, she cracked a spunk, she singed its dowp  
Intae the buttered pan I heard it cowp.  
The hinmaist hen tae roast, afore the rowp.  
Twa things war endit in yon day. A hen, its fowk.

I bide in a bonnie scentit rose  
Its petals glimmer like the dawn,  
Its stalk is slender's a lassie's waist  
that nae a man's laid haun upon.

The air I breath's a rare perfume,  
As fine as is the lily pure  
The wins blaw saftsom roon my rose  
Sae's nae tae tash her bonnie boer.

And mony's the vauntie lady comes  
Tae sneck my dentie rose's heid  
As ruby blushes crammosie  
Yon blossoms chikks are derk's hairt bluid.

I am the keeper o the rose  
As ye boo doon tae brakk her neck  
I creep free oot my flooer's faulds  
A fyauchsome fleg. A sair begeck,

I am a gollach, hard and fierce  
My tail's a deevilock's forked in twa.  
Like a black tear, I treetle doon  
Takk tent, proud hizzie, side awa.

### 13. THE GREEN BOOER

The watter treetlit ower the moss  
It slipped ower slopin slabs o rock  
Green sliddery, slivery, slokin slide  
It teemed intil a gowden crock  
O dimplin waves an sanny foon  
A peel baith winnerfu an broon  
Far trooties louped... a puddock's soon  
Reeds, like cailleach's hair flowed doon

Abeen the peel on ilkie side  
Willows an birks raxxed leafy airms  
A wuvven reef o branch an bouer  
A taiglit canopy. A bairn,  
I dookit in yon hidden booer  
Ringed roon bi secret widlan flooer  
Ae musky, dusky, simmer's oor

The scentit violet, feathery fen  
Bloomed in yon green forgotten glen  
Enchanted airt, unkent bi men,  
Skiffens o sun cam skirpin throw  
The threided weave o leaf an bough  
Saft, crooed the cooshie frae the knowe

Canyons of concrete cut the skies  
Cameras record with spying eyes  
The city's treadmill clockwork pace  
It's stoney heart. It's glittering face  
Is diamond rich, in beauty, poor.

Timeless wis yon enchanted booer

RS

Caramels are chawy,  
Caramels are rare,  
Makk yer slivvers sugary,  
Makk yer fillins sair.

Pandraps are fur Sabbaths,  
Dinna crunch—list sook.  
Then, ye'll thole the sermon,  
Frae the Haly Book.

Chocolates are fur lovers  
Meltin, sweet an braw,  
(Bylins, sherp an nippy  
Widna dee ava)

Sweeties are the short cut  
The gift withoot a fyke  
Fin ye hinna got an inklin,  
O fit the deil fowk like!

#### WEATHER FORECAST

A hurricane's blootered Dunoon!  
Ilkie reeftap blew aff o the toon!  
They flew past Big Ben at a quarter tae ten,  
Wi a wife in an auld flannel goon!

A blizzard as coorse as a vice,  
His turned hauf o Lumphanan tae ice.  
Ye can skyte throw the shire, like a penguin on fire,  
An reach Russia, withoot blinkin twice.

A moonsoon's brocht chaos tae Ayr.  
A doonpish at a fitbaa match there,  
Washed the goalie, the baa, and the players anna  
Like wee boaties, awa tae Turlair.

An earthquake his shook Aiberdeen.  
Marischal College is noo in the Green.  
Three quarters o Torry fell doon Rubislaw Quarry,

And Northfield his flitted tae Skene.

A heatwave his frizzled Braemar.  
Aa the towrists hae meltit like tar.  
The troot in the burn, hae bin fried tae a turn,  
There's fish suppers frae Dess tae Cromar.

The weather cock jettted tae Spain.  
Says he'll nae be returnin again.  
This terrible weather has broken each feather  
And frozen the frills o his caimb.

Snaa, smirr, on-dings mochy an oorie  
We thole, forbyes drucht hett an stoorie  
Sae, gin ye ging oot, takk yer waukin buits stoot  
Yer wellies, bikini, an toorie.

Sheena Blackhall

# Death Certificate

Date of death: seventh day of the seventh month  
Inside my hollowed heart Grief howls like a wolf  
No mother should ever have to bury her son

People are queuing to pay their council tax, their rent  
They are booking their weddings,  
Processing their parking vouchers

Outside the sun is smiling her callous smile  
You are forty years old, tattooed and scarred  
By the plague that hounds your hunted generation

You ticked perfection's boxes when you were born  
My petal-lipped boy, my dark-eyed lissom charmer  
No passport needed for this onward journey  
Leave footprints in the clouds for me to follow

Sheena Blackhall

# Death Dancers: The Gordons, Waterloo

Trellis paper with roses hung on the walls  
At the Duchess of Richmond's celebrated ball  
Etiquette, in an age of set conventions,  
Was strictly observed. Stiff waxworks ladies  
Sitting round the room, would soon change  
Bridal white, for a funeral pall

And then the Gordons danced  
No cotillion, no hornpipe or quadrille  
No jig or waltz, the soldiers danced a reel  
In heavy regimentals, each in step that night  
With reigned in fire, then leapt around their swords  
One shilling per day (before stoppage)  
Was each man's pay. Until the fatal words  
Were whispered. 'Leave. We march to fight'

The leaders in the bitter fray to come,  
A rum lot. Blücher, the Prussian, on occasion mad,  
Raved that he was pregnant by a stallion  
Napoleon, with the haircut of a spaniel  
Nicknamed 'Puss in Boots' inspired terror  
Wellington, hawk nosed, eagle eyed  
Called his foot soldiers 'scum'.

And then, the armies camped, in little Belgium  
A sultry, fly-flecked June, by summer crops  
Of clover, wheat and rye, drenched by a thunderstorm  
The fields lay sodden in the misty dawn

The Gordons, raked and mauled at Quatre-Bras  
Had scores to settled, deeper wounds than flesh  
And then the order came,  
'Ninetysecond, now is your time&quot;...pause....'Charge! &quot;;  
'Scotland for ever! &quot;; the Greys came galloping past  
The Highlanders, leaping up to their cavalry stirrups  
Plunged into the cannon blast

How history turns on the single throw of a dice!  
And always the common soldier pays the price.

Boney summoned his bullet-proof carriage. Now, he fled  
Weighed down with a 100 pieces of solid gold  
With bottles of rum and Malaga,  
With 2 million francs of diamonds  
A cake of Windsor soap  
In exile he was poisoned, his papers said.

The Iron Duke died sitting in his chair, aged 83  
The victim of a stroke. Laden with titles and honours

The nameless dead who fell at Waterloo  
Gone, like a puff of smoke

Sheena Blackhall

# Death Of A Fly

Who says that flies don't mourn?  
Has anyone asked them?

Some die beautifully,  
Folding their black legs over their bodies  
Like Catholic ballerinas

This one's a perfect mummy  
In his frail Egyptian wrappings  
His thin papyrus wings  
His glittering eyes, all-seeing  
Like spherical disco balls

Dusted by death  
Let moths whisper a coronach  
Over the laced-up husk of Mr. Bluebottle

The herringbone-stitch of  
One fly's sable shroud.

Sheena Blackhall



# Death Of A Mentor

(for Dr. sall, Centre for Psychotherapeutic Research, Sheffield)

The morning sun has risen oer the hill  
And dawn is golden, pale as sifted wheat  
Now every flower holds up its cup to fill  
With dewy sun, the morning's rays, replete  
With rainbow's hues. But I awaken, chill  
From sorrow that our minds no longer meet.

A lover's thrust may thrill, may penetrate  
To fornicate's the feather, but the quill  
Is union of the psyche, higher state  
Of character, of consciousness, of will...  
With precious few I've chosen to relate  
A mountain tarn is fathomless and still  
The tuneful nightingale's an isolate  
And piercing is the darkness of its trill

I was a high-wire walker- you, the net  
Now you are gone, I tread with extra care  
Knowing no catcher waits to break my fall  
One slip could trip me into empty air  
In that fine web of friendship and of Fate  
Your death is both a vacuum and a tear

The morning sun has risen oer the town  
But colder than the crypt I see it soar  
For all my years, like windswept corn, bend down  
Heavy with grief, to Melancholy's floor  
High Spring- yet every bud in bloom seems brown  
One who was here has closed the final door

Sheena Blackhall

# Death Of A Nightingale

The claws are inert and lifeless  
Nightingale is about to share the delicate meat  
Of her body with an assembly of woodland friends

She is laid out on the grass like an invitation  
Her wings are pressed to her sides like linen napkins

Crow will start with her eyes,  
Washed down with the red wine of her blood

Flowers may be appropriate,  
But not obligatory.  
Wild berries will provide the fresh dessert

Sheena Blackhall

# Death Of A Pope (30 Scots Poems)

Pickins

Twa craas sat on a wrunkled bough,  
Teuch as a lang-shanked falconer's airm,  
Scaunin the widlans ben the haar  
Fur fur or feather cam tae hairm.

A mither hoolet's cowpit bairn  
Recycled makks a tasty meal -  
Some like the fish a heich prelate  
Etts frae the ocean's reamin creel.

In hyne Tibet, the buzzards skreich  
Ower a sky beerial. The daith  
O breet or man is yielded up  
As meat, sae leevin can draw braith.

The yirdly cloots o flesh an bluid  
Faist dwine fin speerit weirs awa;  
Necessity lends ugsome wyes  
Tae cleuks o fowk or hoodie craa.

Leid

It's forty year granmither's laired in yird,  
Wirm-maet; her bonnie smile's noo skin an been. `  
'Ye hae her sweirity, her lugs, her verra een, '  
Still I am telt.  
Heirskip can ne'r be gien awa nur selt.

I likit the calm sooch o Latin verbs:  
Their rules held stinch, as strang as roads that rang  
Wi chariots, shelts' hooves an sodjers' shoon.  
Foo Lang thon reets ran back frae wirds aroon!  
'It's a deid leid, ' quo faither. 'An nae gweed  
Can cam o hunkerin roon a cauld hairth's rikk;  
Yon's fossil wirds nae livin sowel can spikk.  
Sic wirds sit wersh an tasteless in the moo.

There's better things tae stap ahin yer broo.'

They gart me tchauve instead wi geometry,  
Wi vulgar fractions, trigonometry,  
Tae senators an satyrs wave ta-ta -  
Gied me the dry boak, fur Elysia.

Meditation An owersett frae Marcus Aurelius

`Aa things are a mixter-maxter, a haly bond jynes them;  
There is feint the ferlie iver stauns alane.  
Aathin's linkit, aathin wirks thegither tae gie form tae the ae Universe.  
The Warld order is: Ane frae monie, aa in Ane,

Rinnin throwe aa, Aa are ane, aa Law is Me, aa Truth is Ane...  
Like lichtnin, ilkie pikk o maitter mirs inno the Aybydan Kirn,  
Like lichtnin, ilkie maik o Causation reforms inno the Aybydan Rizen;  
Like lichtnin, the myndin o aathin's beeriet in the Howe o Eternity.'

-Cultural Scotland's for me! Tune: Black Velvet Band.

We're daein Devali this mornin,  
A lesson on ither fowk's lans,  
A tale aboot monkeys an demons,  
Makkin caunles an peintin oor hauns.

Mohammed sits by me at denner;  
He'll nae ett beefburgers or ham,  
Bit vegg maun be gweed fur yer noddle  
Fur they're clivver the bairns o Islam

A shrine's dowpit doon in the classie,  
Wi incense an floer an bell,  
Richt bonnie an quaet...fin I'm aulder  
I think I'll be Buddhist masel

In Perth an Kinross an North Lanark,  
Roon Glesga an Crieff an New Deer,  
Hogmanay is jist ower fin we're makkin  
Dragon masks fur the Chinese New Year.

Sae here's tae Yom Kippur an Ramadan,  
May oor different tribes aa agree,  
May tolerance win abeen fechtin  
Multi-cultural Scotlan's fur me!

### Eco-Plea

The world's broon veins raxx tae the lift  
Tae sook the sun inside her;  
Rain-wechtit clouds drap dyew doonby,  
Yird's maet an drink provider.

Aa this, an benison o Spring,  
Tae hap the braes wi flooers,  
Tae stap wi birdsang an delicht  
Wee isles o city bouers!

Ten meenits stuck in traffic birr  
I watched a bank o moss,  
It's jizzen bed o crocus-heids  
Smored bi torn-packaged soss.

I dreamt that an Apocalypse  
Cam wheechin ben thon street  
An yarked thon midden o a neuk  
Back tae an orchard sweet.

I wish that dragons micht flee back  
Quick, fur it's weirin late,  
An cast their auld enchantments roon  
Sae fowk micht venerate  
The world we scarifed an scoor  
Frae knowes tae run-doon scheme,  
Sae bairnikies micht ken again  
The glamourie o green.

ies

O late, ma body's becam

A shrine fur warts, baith secular an reeligious;  
Ma oxters are orchards o aik-aipples  
Legacies frae Cromwell's crop?  
Mebbe they cam frae Flanders...  
I hae the verra marra o a wart  
Frae the neb o a bodach peintit bi Bosch hissel.

Adrift in this Ship o Feels,  
Edgin nearer the rocks at ilkie shoogle,  
I cudgel ma hams about this knobbily matter:  
Should I zap them wi taed's bluid?  
Clart them wi snail's bricht slivers?  
Angels, I suspect, hae hidden afflictions  
Corns aneth the wings, carbuncles unner the gown.

Mebbe Lucifer, on his dowp-singed doondrap  
Saw, tae his mortification, ilkie scrat an scab  
Transmogrifee in the birsslin lowes o Hell,  
Bubble up broon like taed bree  
Witch-prickers merks, sprout frae his fated hide.

#### 7.A Granite Welcome Tune: Geordie Weir

Gin ye've come for learnin, we're ready tae skweel  
Ye in medicine or law, an computin as weel;  
Frae deserts tae up far the Greenlan whale sings,  
Fowk will traivel the oceans tae study at Kings.

Mony ships seek oor herbour, their needs they are met  
In a Tolerance Zone, keepin pros frae the yett -  
O respectable bodies faa keep the streets clean,  
We've an answer fur aathin in Auld Aiberdeen!

We spikk oor ain spikk, we gie welcome tae aa  
Come tae trade or tae dauchle, or cheer the fitbaa -  
Bit if yer team's lossin, tho yer bluid it should byle,  
Keep yer neives tae yersel or we'll clap ye in jyle!

We are the descendents o the Caledonii  
If Rome cudna tame us, then neither can ye -  
Gin ye've come in peace, we are leal tae a frien,

Gin ye've come tae quarrel, best leave us aleen!

Sae welcome incomer, oor toun's at yer feet;  
Bon Accord is oor motto, a gweed wye tae greet  
The gangrel bodies washed in bi the tide  
Tae the Grampian port wi the sea on its side.□

n in at a Coffee Shop

My class hae failed their target goals again...  
Kylie an Neil are stuck on level D.  
Attainment levels fair nose-dived this month.  
My wecht reduction programme's gaen tae pot;  
Last wikk I ett organic veg fur lunch,  
Bit elephantine keech! The cost, ower much!

This wikk, I'll try the Atkins. Efter aa,  
We're carnivores. Bit will my hairt valves clog?  
They shouldnae, since I wauk tae schule an back (  
Although I worry noo about the smog) .  
I see the local press hae snapped thon schule  
That's aywis in the heidlines - plantin trees

Inventin things or fechtin lung disease  
While we tchauve on, three RS, nae recognition  
An yon new loon fa's middle name's sedition.  
His files makk Al Capone luik apostolic.  
Pass the cream...it cowps oot frae the joog, a gowden ream -  
Jist calories..I'm nae an alcoholic -  
Mebbe I should retire. Bit I wad pine  
Wi naethin tae assess at lowsintime!

ts o Simmer Frocks

Ma mither's simmer frocks, huffed in the loft aa winter;  
Claiked about picnics, July shoppin sprees,  
Dreamt about special occasions,  
Waukin in sinsheen throw Glen Gairn's saftsome breeze.  
Fur the luv o linen, cotton, polyester, silk  
Ma mither studied the lear o catalogues,

Stalked shop aisles on the scent o a perfeck buy,  
Collectin frocks like lovers.

Efter she deid, naebody murned or lued them,  
Naebody smeethed their faulds or darned their teirs;  
Ma mither's frocks grat buttons o grue an wae,  
Tint aa sense o shape; their lirks grew waur

The scaffie hurled them aff tae a dreich demise.  
They haunt me noo, thon textile ghaists o simmer,  
Their hangers teem. Nae flesh tae gar them sweesh -  
They hugged her like ma faither niver did.

on a Global Bap

Heid-huntit bi ile-keelies on the scran  
Fur engineers, my son flew hyne awa,  
Sent hame a banknote frae a furreign kintra.  
Its name is Azerbaijan.

The banknote is siller an blue;  
It is faced wi an ile rig an relatit machinery.  
I hae luiked it up on the wab.  
It wis pairt o the Great Silk Route,  
It has minarets an mosquitoes,  
It trades in cement an baccy, petrochemicals an tea,  
It hairsts caviar frae the wersh-waved Caspian Sea.  
A hunner billion coggies o its ile  
Wyte tae be plumbed aneth its fremmit stars.  
Medes, Persians, Romans, Turks,  
Hae crossed its howes,  
Suppit its vodka, etten its spiced meats;

It has weathered Stalin's purges,  
Reivin, pollution an wars.  
Its singer-bards, the ashugs, croon fey sangs,  
Strummin the kobutz in the Turkish mainner;  
A lan o tigers, wins, an lowp-the-dyke gazelles.

This banknote gies aff neither souns nor smells.  
Is it safe tae wauk its bywyes efter dark?



Is the watter clean tae drink, is the workplace frienly?  
He says fin he drinks vodka in their bars  
Sittin alangside Rashid, Tojo, Kamran,  
They think he's Georgian, dinna ken he's Scots.

This lan, this Azerbaijan, is it a cannie bield fur aa incomers?  
Are they welcomed in this airt? A mither worries.  
Cockin ahin twa Moslems on the bus  
In Aiberdeen, I show them their richt stop  
Flees on the global bap we caa the World.

e dichtin her Feet: After Degas, 'Woman Drying her Feet',1886, Louvre, Paris

Teddies cock on her duvet, fur-bound sisters.  
The bedclaes yoam wi warmth; the quine new-risen's  
Paddin ben tae the shooer, its weety mist  
Treetlin doon the waa in lichtenin runnels.  
Conditioner, shampoo, smellies,  
Like the three wise men,  
Watchin the Ablution o the Crannies.

The chaumer's minimalist;  
Nae muckle press grinds timmer feet in the rug.  
This is a warld o steel an synthetic gless,  
Hoovered twice a day; nae antrin lick, spit, dicht -  
This lassie's clean's a fussle, deintie in her mainners,  
Wirks in an office block far nae stoor bides.

Laddette's nicht-oot photies cock aside the fruit  
Tastefu laid oot in a Japan cheena bowl.  
Friens phone her daily. Here's nae rage, nae grease,  
Nae male heid-bummery;

Three heich fite lilies, dowpit in a neuk  
Alangside tea lichts, signifee, `Gie's Peace'.  
Nae duntit beer tins scale along the fleer,  
Nae tabbie dowps are rammed inno the saucer,  
Naebody kens the neebors.

Boyfriens veesit - passin satellites  
Nae bairn skirls fur the briest, wi rinny snoot.

The lassie is dryin her taes in the warmth o her ain Name.  
Her feet curl up tae meet the towel's caress,  
Her weet hair hings, rats' sookins, roon her shooder;  
She is alane in a warld o comfort an pooder,  
Naethin ayont the need tae be clean an dry  
Like a cat boosed ower its pelt, its pink tongue lickin  
Awa the yird o the day.

Her sma briests press on the hard fite meens o her knees  
Her back is boosed, a wattergaw arcing unner the sunlight streamin in.

## 12. In the Box: After 'La Loge', Renoir, Courtauld Institute Galleries, 1874

The pair are dressed tae the nines,  
Her heid's at saxes and seivens;  
Foo dis he glower like a gype at the stage ablow?  
She is weirin her hair bund up,  
She his dyed it 'Autumn Glow';  
Her jewels (his ane luv-tokens)  
Skinklin on lug on airm, are oot on show.

Like Heivenly pears her breists rise in their cleavage;  
Her chikks are reid as geans, her moo's a bow -

He hisna keeked at her aince.  
The aipple of her ee  
Is watchin forbidden fruit...  
Efter she tuik an oor tae press his suit!

## Famous Artist: In Memoriam, Bill Gibb

I met a famous artist aince, ower supper wi twa friens  
Afore he grew illustrious. We dined upon baked beans.  
Wi toonser/teuchter prejudice, I thocht my claes mair chic,  
My Aiberdonian haute couture mair snazzy an unique.  
I pyed him nae attention fin he ran tae catch the bus -  
Ye dinna think a genius wad be ordnar like us!

via the Broch

It's forty year sin last I saw his face:  
A weddin guest. St Valentine's the day,  
At the tap table, three seats frae my place,  
A sculptor's idyll formed frae mortal clay.

I kent his origins: a lan o rock,  
Aybydan seas that maen neth a blae sun;  
Ootower the glimmin speens an table spikk  
He sat, temptation ye could shipwrack on.  
His een war blue forget-me-nots that shone  
An, fin he smiled, the chaumer wheeched aroon.  
His hair wis blaik's the eelash o a fawn -  
Young artist frae a satty fisher toon.

The bonnie quine fa hung upon his airm  
She lippent wi her hairt, nae wi her lug;  
He wis her hinney..see her glances heeze -  
He wis the floer Luv's gentle breezes shug

I kent then that I'd ne'r clap een again  
Upon his marra. Lush green years turn bauld  
An sere - bit like thon auncient tale o Troy  
His luiks hae niver cheenged, though I've grown auld.

Wad I hae wearied o him had we gane  
Frae guests tae lovers? Wad the brakkfaist plate  
O Time hae turned a love-feast tae a crumb?  
The alchemy o Age, cheenge luv tae hate?

I'll niver ken. Inbye, he'll aywis be  
My Paris frae the Broch, untouched bi years;  
It's forty year sin last I saw his face,  
His bonnie face can meeve me yet tae tears.

n Bairn Rhymes Genghis Khan

My name is Genghis Khan,  
I drive a cooncil van;  
I've biceps like Attila the Hun  
an a chin like Desperate Dan.

Wheel out yer rubbish bins,  
stale buns an fooshtie tins,  
I ken each route tae the skips about;  
I'm the King o the oots an ins.

#### 16.A Huddrie Dug

A huddrie dug wi yirdy paws cam bowfin on the bus -  
He didnae pye a fare at aa...he didnae hae a purse;

He clartit dubs upon the seat, a biscuit an a been.  
He telt his maister he'd be late bi howlin tae the meen -  
'I'm aff tae visit relatives, ma aunties Chris an Jean'  
He bowfed, an added `Ane's a Peke, the tither's a Great Dane,  
An he gaed breengin aff the bus an bowfed along the lane.

#### Yokie Yowe

Fin Jess the yowe turns yokie, she gies her oo a yark,  
An wi her knittin needles it turns intae a sark.

Her dowp's noo baby's bootees, her lugs, a grocer's tie;  
Her kyte is a tea cosy, an it's hingin oot to dry.

#### nicus Refuted

The porthole quo,  
'The world is roon, tho ye luik near or far'.  
'It's nae, ' the windae argyed back:  
'Yer wrang ma frien. It's squar.'

'It isnae, ' cried the wummly worm,  
'It's curvy as a cat.'  
The ironin boord leuch...`Yer as gyte.  
The universe is flat.'

Fairy: the myth exploded

Far dae dentists sen yer teeth?  
Tae fix the queen's tiaras!  
An fit's left ower they post awa  
as bullets tae the Paras

There wis a wee coo lowped ower the meen:  
The black holes are her turds;  
A sheetin star gaed 'Bang' in her lug  
An her udder inventit curds.

ie

A spurgie frae the Barras,  
gaed aff tae busk in Spain,  
Bit couldna spikk the lingo  
an he jist flew hame again -

Sae if ye hear him cheepin, jist speir  
'Hoo are ye's gaun? '  
An gin ye hae a take-away,  
haive him a daud o scan.

iar

My cat has fyky cleuks.  
He sprauchles along the sofa,  
Dwaums an purrs.

At suppertime, he's een up ma denner.  
He cowps ma gless, fechts wi his ain tail.  
The morn he'll be transmogrifeed inno the meen,  
Micht turn hissel inno a scythe tae cut the girsse,

While I, astride ma besom, scor the lift fur wattergaws,  
Meteorites, an ither whigmaleeries  
Yon wis nae sheetin star ye glisked yestreen!

## Bulb

The mids o Februar, atween the makkin o Chinee dragons  
(Scotlan's a multi-cultural experience)

An the pastin o Valentines,  
The class maun study bulbs

Efter their Wednesday music an computin.  
A bulb's dowed on a paper abune the table  
Its reets like pipes ryped frae the yird's intimmers.

I scrat its thrapple, peel a skein o skin;  
It disnae gyang 'Ye bam.' It disnae sweir.  
It's cocking there, a crocus, keepin its ain coonsel.

The pupils watch me teir layers frae its flanks;  
Its sides leak soorness. 'Noo, it winna growe, '  
A bairn says. It's a coracle o Spring,  
Its boddom holed, sinkin atween twa banks.

## Appyntment

We check oor diaries, synchronise oor dates;  
Fin we're baith free, we'll meet,  
Mither an dother, here on Catch-up Street.

7/24 yer needit fin they're wee -  
Noo it's the antrin oor afore their tea;

Gin clocks ran widdershins, `twidna be richt;  
Aa eggies hatch, an growin wings, takk flicht.

a 2005: by Sheena Blackball: tune Drumdelgie

The Stanza poetry festival is kent baith far an wide  
Tae punters at St Andrew's, fowk local an Stateside;  
Sae bring along yer Visa, yer Maistercaird or Switch -  
It's nae that bards are beggars, bit nane o them are rich

Neruda's risen frae the mools - be sure an book yer seat -  
A radish has a soul, an this Tom Pow'll lat ye meet;  
I'm telt there's Ghaists at Cockcrow, bit gin thon's ower late,  
Consumin Passions ower a pint pits versies on a plate.

There's jugglers an wird circuses, buik launches an Tai Chi -  
An gin yer heid is stappt wi wirds...jist glower at the sea;  
Bit ye micht miss the Jazz Howl, like banshee in its gown,  
Or Byron's wirks wad cherm the verra corpses frae a tomb.

There's Love Bites roon at Abbey Street, libidos fur tae please,  
An Larry Butler's Nibbles sharin Renga an split peas;  
Gin ye speir 'Whit's fur Efters? ', takk feedback sheet an pen,  
An gin it's gweed the SAC will fund it as again!

Fleein Scotsman

The haar his happit hauf the toun,  
Craas skreich throw wraiths o gray,  
The hingin luggit daffs boo doon,  
Spring's here, a thochtie blae.

The ghaistly lums, an shuntin yairds,  
Staun dowie ben the rails;  
Nae cheerie waves tae wag ye aff -  
The Dee is snailies' trails

That glent an glimmer neth the brig,  
An eildritch skein o rikk;  
Till wi a yark, by scheme an park,  
Train breenges, rick-ma tick,

A lichtenin flash's eflerstang.  
Mist furlin roon its heid,  
It's ramstam inno the unkent  
A metal wheech o speed.

Like jizzen-bed, like Life itsel,  
Ye ken the trip'll end  
Bit yet, wi hopefu een ye watch

New vistas meet each bend;

There's nane ken fit a day'll bring  
Tae pleisur or affricht  
The Fleein Scotsman timmers on,  
Nocht's certain, bit the nicht. □

y's Monthly Veasits

Granny's doon frae the hills the day!  
Cancel each invitation!  
Granny's doon frae the hills the day!  
Auld spikk fur menstruation.

I'm gled I'm ower wi the monthly tyauve:  
the hormones in a hotter,  
A wyme in knots, a stoonin heid,  
the scutter, the pain, the sotter.

The gledsome bit aboot growin auld?  
I can state wi certainty -  
Fin gran cams doon frae the hills the day,  
she'll nae be veesitin me!

the Lido, Venice

Blae haar hings ower the wastes o san -  
An eildritch ither-wardly lan.  
Teem biggins, gap-moued ben the stran  
Bi Adriatic Sea.

Ooto the mist creep weety waves,  
Wi smush o shells frae wattery graves -  
Fusperin o lang-drooned ships an slaves  
In Adriatic Sea.

Nae Byron rides at skelpin pace  
Ben dunes braid tides will sune erase,  
Nae bairnies lauch...nae human face  
Bi Adriatic Sea.



Twa boats lie dauchlin...nane tae buy  
An oor's fee. Nae sea-mawe's cry,  
A Titan's braith, rows ben the sky  
Bi Adriatic Sea.

As I wauk forrit, aa unseen,  
The watter smeethes merks o ma sheen; `  
Twill seem as tho I'd niver been  
Bi Adriatic Sea.

o the Toozlin Trade Gondolas were often used as floating brothels.

A gondola slippit aneth a brig  
It cairriet a peintit hoor  
Weel versed in the airt o love's sweet sins  
In passin a stolen oor.

Her mask wis white as ivory,  
Her cat-slit een war jade,  
Twa strings o pearls hung ower her briests -  
Queen o the toozlin trade

A thoosan years upon her back,  
She's gart her hurdies lowp -  
Her masks are mony, Jezebel,  
Bare briests an randy dowp.

Touns: Venice / Aberdeen

Canaletto, cannaloni, pizza, masks and macaroni;  
Boaties cairry fowk aroon this auld-farrant watter-toun.

Birr o bus on granite steen, traffic-cloggit Aiberdeen -  
Stovies, rowies, Cullen skink. Tarry tea or drams tae drink.

Towrists, peinters, gondoliers; biggins rotted bi the years.  
Dungeons, Doges, sliddery stairs; doos that skitter ower the squares.

Aawy trees an flooers in bloom. See auld biggins? Caa them doon! Tolbooth,

Provost, Castlegate..Queen wheechs throw wi Heids o State.

Harlequin an Columbine; orchestra an plastic vine; Octopus....Rialto brig. Bells  
that chime far beggars prig

On ilkie lum a seagull skirls. Sna in April sougns an birls.  
Dis it daunt us? Na, indeed! Aiberdonians.... hardy breed.

Venice may be warm an hat, bit there's floods at ilkie yett;  
Tho it's hyne frae Don an Dee, baith are merried tae the sea!  
Their tides, tae, bring licht an shade - storm betimes, bit muckle trade.

Sheena Blackhall

# Death Of The Hares

They are all gone away,  
The heath's untroubled, still,  
Those leapers through the hay  
Free spirits, furred and gray,  
That hunters loved to kill,  
They are all gone away

There's barely one today,  
To grace the moor or hill  
To dance Spring's roundelay  
Those boxers, merry, gay  
Bringers of land's goodwill  
They are all gone away

What harm did they display  
To earn man's poisoned pill?  
It hurts the heart to say  
Their race is in decay  
Nothing their lack can fill  
They are all gone away,  
Those leapers through the hay

Sheena Blackhall

## Deaths, En Suite

In a soaring penthouse in Rio De Janeiro  
Five minutes from Ipanema-Leblon beach  
Michelle Springer, sports commentator  
Having just finished a crab burger  
Washed down by an ice cold passion fruit caipirinha  
Dies of an aneurism, instantly

In an Alpine bed in a rented Heidi-chalet,  
Out of reach of a wi-fi signal  
(His delightful family skiing on baby slopes)  
Matt Olivier, plumber, dies of an asthma attack, scarily

Within sight of the Shard in London  
In a modest budget hotel, in a single room  
Kayleigh Higgins, sales rep in lingerie  
Drying off after a work out in the gym and a brisk shower  
Nose dives into a range of padded bras for the fuller figure  
Struck by a lethal heart attack, incongruously

Meanwhile in down town Manhattan  
Derk Van Eyck, antiques dealer  
Having split from his gay lover, a Mexican tattooist  
Dies of autoerotic asphyxiation at the end of a cord  
Like a popped lightbulb, weirdly

On a ladder outside a rented cottage in Dorset  
Charles Perkins, quintessentially British,  
Retired banker from Slough, an obsessive twitcher  
Drops from his perch while washing an upstairs window  
Felled by a stroke, having just seen  
A very rare Suffolk 'Houbara' (MacQueen's Bustard)

High above Hong Kong harbour  
Head honcho of a corporate hospitality company  
Mr Rashid Heinemann, on a shoogily peg in the tailspin  
Of the global financial downturn  
Half way down a £4,640 limited edition glass decanter  
Of L'Art de Martell, launched in 1997 to commemorate the retrocession of Hong  
Kong to China, dies of a cocktail of heroin, coke and cognac

From a Torremolinos balcony, Georgina Dunlop, student,  
Suffering from athlete's foot, acne and a broken heart,  
Leaps to her death, messily, ten yards from the hotel pool  
Traumatising two toddlers from Stranraer,  
And a coachful of Saga tourists admiring the sights.

Each demise, merits a mention in an obituary column  
One or two inspire an article  
Before Life, the seamstress,  
Mends the rents in the fabric of the day

Sheena Blackhall

# Deflowering

Into the valley of kings you led me,  
Hot as a camel, ship of the sand-clop night,  
Flickering ikon by ikon  
Into the carnal centre of knowledge, old and new.  
Black as the eye of Isis, your faithless head.

My love for you was amazing as the Amazon.  
You were as base as lead.  
A fir-tree nuptial canopy leant its prickly ear  
To that first raw cry of pain.

In the rigging of the night,  
The moon was snagged as the virgin blood slid down,  
A strawberry trickle, along my milk-white thigh.  
Your breath was cheap-cup whisky, farm boy.

How you gawked at my nakedness.  
I might have been an insect in a lab.  
I lay like the port of Venice,  
My entrance wet and breached,  
As you slid from me, the silvery moonlight dulled,  
Turned dreich, turned drab. Sloughing me off like snakeskin...  
Sloughing me off like sludge. Cleopatra on a slab.

Sheena Blackhall

## Deja Vu (2)

Déjà vu (2)

The bus lurches onto your street  
A woman of straw, I slump in my seat  
The stuffing knocked out me  
Deja Vu

'If only'...the worst two words in the World  
I should be the ghost, not you  
Look! There is your flat, your view  
Of the bookies, pawnbrokers, your neighbours  
A rag tag crew.

Where was your happy ending?  
Gone like the smoke from a puff ball  
Gone like the turn of a screw  
Gone like a nebulous rainbow  
My beautiful boy, Adieu

Sheena Blackhall

# Deva Victrix

I am Gaius, of the XX Legion of Rome  
Stationed at Deva Victrix.  
My Legion's emblem is the running boar

I am a Mithras worshipper. Within our temple,  
His statue's left hand grips a white bull's nostrils  
Meanwhile, his right hand stabs it.  
A snake and dog stretch up to lap its blood  
A scorpion claws its genitals. A raven flies over its head  
Three ears of wheat emerge from the bull's tail  
Torchbearers flank the slaughter scene.

Then, Mithras and the sun god, Sol,  
Feast on the dead beast's meat

I am Gaius, of the 20th legion of Rome  
My trade is a bloody one

Mithras was born from a rock  
If you wish to become an initiate,  
You must swear an oath of secrecy and dedication  
And answer ritual questions, correctly

Our sacred Mithraeum has several altars  
For sacrificial use. It is set in a hidden cave  
That holds a secret spring.  
I have passed the soldiers' grade in the cult of Mithras  
Beloved of the god Mars.  
I have passed through the ordeal of the pit

Last year, I stayed in a fort in Pinnata Castra  
(Fortress on the wing) in Caledonia,  
Built by the men of Gnaeus Julius Agricola  
Its defence was a turf rampart faced with stone,  
An outside ditch, gatehouses on each side  
But there was a Dacian invasion overseas  
Legions were tossed like dice  
So here I am at the other end of the country!



For my leisure, I visit the baths complex  
Our centurion insists we keep good hygiene  
No wonders have been spared in its construction!

There's a room for exercise  
There's a room for sweating  
There's a room with a cold pool  
There's a room that is pleasantly warm  
There's a room with a hot plunge bath  
There's a room for communal shitting

I like to visit the amphitheater south east of our camp,  
I go there to train, to watch the acrobats, wrestlers,  
The professional gladiators  
I bet a month's pay on a retiarius. He was killed.  
Slight griefs talk, great ones are speechless

I am Gaius, of the 20th legion of Rome  
My trade is a bloody one

I lie with Vedica, a woman of the Cornovii  
Her folk are cattle breeders, very vain and proud  
She wears a fine gold torc around her throat  
Her coppery hair falls down in two thick braids

Vedica worships the horned god, Cernunnos  
Her Latin's poor, but she's hot stuff in bed  
Although she's hirsute and she smells of horse

I close my eyes, pretend I'm back in Rome,  
With Caelina, my girlfriend from Ravenna  
Carpe Diem, as my mother says.

Sheena Blackhall

# Dia De Los Muertos

The Day of the Dead in Mexico,  
Passed down from Aztec, Maya, early times  
Commemorates loved ones who have passed away.

Día de los Muertos on November the first  
A day to remember children dead and gone,  
November the second honours the ghosts of adults.

Día de los Muertos is filled with music and dancing,  
Makeship altars celebrate lives of kin

Water in a pitcher, quenches the spirits' thirst  
Candles and marigolds guide the spirits home

Butterflies hold the souls of the departed  
Sugar skulls and toys deck children's altars

In Vietnam, Grave Visiting Day (L? T?o M?) ,  
Happens in lunar March  
The Thanh minh festival Day

Death day is deeply venerated  
Children express devotion, thank the ancestors

Vietnam folk poems say: "A tree has roots and branches  
That are hatched from the root and water  
That also run from its source to the rivers and seas".

Here, in this cold country,  
On my son's birthday,  
At Xmas, on his death day  
I visit his grave. I offer flowers,  
I water the earth with tears.

If candles could light his way  
Back from the world of shades  
I'd plant of path of them through fields of glass



# Dialogue With Table

We have taken away your forest,  
Replaced it with a kitchen.

Don't tell us you liked the owl  
With his hootings and lootings,  
Or the faithless birds  
That fled your coop each Autumn.

Ingrate, it is useless to deny it...  
When the light is dimmed,  
We have heard you groan and sigh.

We civilised you, table.  
Took you in from the cold.  
Wind shall not rot you, nor the rain decay.  
Why are you not ecstatic?

Sheena Blackhall

# Diminishing Lines (17 Scots Poems)

ility moderate

A ship sails by wi sides o steel  
Torn pennants flee ower sans surreal

The lift is alien. Nae birds flee  
Ben this deserted territory.

Bit gin the waves should rise an swey  
The Heivens cheenge fae blue tae blae  
The mirror crack, the dream growe real  
Fit monsters micht the Deep reveal?

Accord

Fae distant ports, the world's bree  
Sweels roon oor sturdy herbour quey.  
Doos strut aroon oor Norlan toun,  
Far lawyers stride in inky gown,  
An seagulls skirl an birl ootbye,  
Winged citizen's o evenin sky.

We are gweed hosts, as we hae been  
Fur centuries in Aiberdeen  
Tae politicians, priests, prelates  
An mony wirthy heids o state  
Like Kings we treat baith loon an Lord  
Oor City's motto? Bon Accord!

o Balgownie (1)

Brig o Balgownie, stoot's thy waa,  
Lang shaddas o heich trees doonfaa,  
Onno the wrunkled watter's broo,  
Roon banks lulled bi the Don's balloo.

Abeen its archwye, cauld an black,

It cairries cobbles on its back,  
Far traivellers dauchle, watchin dyeuks  
In convoy, sail fur shady neuks.

Snaadrifts o clouds slide soft thegither  
In archetypal simmer weather  
Far Don tynes its identity  
In the braid quicksans o the sea

0 Balgownie (2) Sheela-na-gig: Celtic female fertility symbol

The arch, reflected, shows Sheela-na-gig  
Flauntin her braid fertility, as if tae prig  
Mankind tae breech the portals o the brig.

Blue kingfisher flees faist, his hame tae bigg,  
While dugs stravaig tae sniff an pee unchyned  
Mangst reeds that doos nicht chuse their reefs tae thigg.

The God o watter looed this bonnie rig,  
Fin he howked oot a bed tae haud the Don,  
Flanked bi the shady willow's dreepin twig  
Ower yon Veenetian gondola, the swan

mation

I will spikk in ma first-born leid,  
Foonert, ferfochan, fey  
It is safe an kent,  
The lowe is aywis lichtit in the hearth,  
Drookit, dowie, dreich

I will spikk in ma first-born leid,  
Far short socks hing on the line,  
Far the meen an the eirde  
Are roon an fixed an hale,  
Sleekit, slystery, stoory, stammygaster

I will spikk in ma first-born leid  
Glawy, glysterie, gomeril

Afore the buik cam  
An the buckled skweelbag  
An the pen that aywis blots  
Afore I learned that silence wis ma frien.

□

y

Fin meetin fowk first aff,  
Ma Scots sel's aywis latchy.

It's a fey wee body.  
It winna enter a hoose  
Till the hearth's bleezin  
The kettle's bylin  
It's gotten tae ken the fowk  
Coo's tail skelpin,  
Niver lifts till last!

Ma English sel goose-steps  
Like a Nazi stort-trooper  
A caul jeel wauchts fae't  
Like an Arctic berg.

I bigg poems, pages, whyles hale buiks  
Ooto roch wirds howked fae ma fowk's spikk,  
Ooto the dubs an glaur, the tcyauve an plyter  
O their life's darg. A warld that nippit their thochts,  
That clippit their wirds like oo.

Wirds war cairdit threids, fae ma deid gran, minnie's moo.  
She wis the roch waa o a cauld byre,  
A bield, a cyarn o rocks.  
My faither wis the grit, held it thegither  
Agin the dreich onchancy warld o cheenge.

I hae taen their waa. I hae smeethed ae side o't  
Made o't a genteel, English side, that's freemit.  
Gib ye scrat aff the peint, wud bogies roar aneth it

The lowe o dispossession roars in the teem range.

rcorn

Peppercorn, peppercorn, fae hae ye been?  
I've been tae Asia, that's far I hae been.  
Peppercorn, peppercorn, fit did ye there?  
I touched up a boodle on Tienamen Square.

ts

□

An aa thon years I thocht ye gaed tae Perth  
Fur genteel holidays, takkin the air wi bankers,  
Grocers, solitary widows like yersel,  
Strollin the streets, a slider in yer haun,  
Listenin in ceevic park tae brash brass band.

Ooto the blue the truth's bin run tae earth...  
Nae Perth bit en suite in the Hoose o Daviot.  
A fey hotel, an inmate's view o Bedlam.  
Oh stigma, oh stigmata. Oh persona non grata.  
Did siller makk insanity seem sweeter?  
Fur entertainment, veesits tae the theatre  
Electric shocks tae jolt ye back tae kilter.□

Did siller takk the sting ooto the shame?  
Ye'd nae hae tholed the rammy o a ward  
Far ithers wanner oot an in o sanity.  
Ye missed oot there..there's comfort in the kennin  
Yer nae the anely soor cheese in the pantry.

Asylum. Bywird fur a haley haven.  
A sanctuary. A safety and a bield,  
Fae village sklaik wi aa its slichts an slanders,  
The Hoose o Daviot wad bin a shield  
Wi a revolivin door, on hinges hung,  
Far minds wheeled roon that whyles cam unsprung.

An easy fleggitt vratch, my memory hauds  
Ye coontin aff lang years wi lanely crosses.



Foo weel they dug a pit wi gleamin spaads,  
Tae hap yer hurts wi sods, like tainted losses.

Yet, if upon yer flesh ye'd worn yer wounds  
The balm o sympathy wad ken nae bounds.  
Did Buttons bring strange potions on his tray?  
Yer grave is green. The blaik yird winna say.  
Yer public face wis private. Burnished braise  
We'll keep' like thon. The lave is blawn aisse.

Yalta Yeitie Inspired by the singing of Nichole Robertson 12/11/2000

Doon the centuries daunced the sang,  
Prood an fine like a slaw Strathspey,  
Like flooers o the rodden, licht an fine,  
The blossom afore the crammosie.

Whyles, twid reest in the antrin throat  
That gart it craik like a corbie's crwa  
Coorse for a bonnie tune like thon  
Tae be malagaroused an it sae braw

Precious a culture's flickerin flame  
Kinnelt an kept bi the traivellers' kin  
Cannie thon hauns that cupped it roon  
Shieldin a heirskip frae the win

On a nicht o starns in a Norlan toon  
The gangrel tune fand a siller reest  
Fin a gowden heidit quine steeped up  
An lent thon sang baith braith an briest

Syne throw the howf in thon cauld airt  
The past swept by on bleedin feet  
For the sang wis cruel an the tale wis auld  
O a bairn an its mither left tae greet

Ye micht hae heard a preen doonfaa  
Fin sorra chappit the door agee  
As the singer jyned wi the quine langsyne  
Tae gie her dule tae Eternity

Nae a note nor a wurd she chynged  
Nor bi artifice, sikk tae smore't  
Up frae the foun o a quine thon nicht  
Hairtbrakk itsel tuik wing an soared

eist in a Hey Park

On simmer nichts, I'd herd the bairns like kye  
Tae Waukmill wids, up tae the trinklin burn  
Tae wash the stoons o day fae their foonert feet.

Village fires war lichtit, rikk furred skywird.  
Craas, like doorstops perched on the antrin post,  
There, far I'd sprauchle oot in the hey's saft bed.

Dreepin inno ma lug, the blaikie's notes,  
Drapt frae the derkenin mou o the warm gloamin.  
Win, like Vulcan's bellas, blawin the beech alive.  
Here, thocht tuik flicht, jyned wi the soarin hawk

r's Wytin Roon the Neuk

Widdershins the breezes blaw,  
Seety-feathered corbies craa,  
Winter's wytin roon the neuk,  
Shakks his wizzent powe an cleuk,  
Dunts the antrin leaf awa...  
Nicht growes langer. Berries faa.

Snifter-dichter in the sheugh,  
Snaa'll be wi us seen eneuch,  
Breets coor hungeret in their Names,  
Beens'll powk throwe wastit wames.  
Sae this day I gaither oo,  
Catch the sunlight on my broo,  
Gaither warmth afore it's hid,  
Stap the jar an steek the lid.

Veesitor

Ben the nicht on frostit taes, an eildtrich carl trod the braes,  
Shilpit shanks an hudderie hair, creepit fae a stormy lair.

His lang beard wis taiglit oo, cauld his shadda ben the dyew,  
Sib tae starns an waukrife meen, shards o Sorra in his een.

In his pack, baith deep an wide, gleanins fae the kintraside,  
He'll pit ferlies rich an rare....Putrifee their sweetness there.

Twa grey deerhounds lean an thin, ane afore him, ane ahin,  
Lowp aroon his hirplin fit, the gangrel wi the kirkyaird smit.

Ben Balquidder, late yestreen, strippin leaf fae runkled gean,  
Cam a carl I ken ower weel. Winter, wi his deidly creel.

14.A Brocher's Fareweel: for George Bruce 1909-2002 Tune: Tarwathie

Fareweel tae Auld Faithlie, adieu Mormond Hill,  
Fur the virr o a Brocher is sattled an still.  
He is takkin a voyage, grey oceans tae cross,  
An the skreich o the scurries rings lood wi oor loss.

He will niver lie weel in a lang timmer sark,  
He wis niver a Makar fa coddlit the Dark.  
Kandinsky, Nijinski, Beethoven an Blake,  
Ye've a fier comin ower will kittle yer claik.

Oh there's mony he'll ken o the fowk that bide there,  
Fur it's thrang wi the ferlies o speerit an air,  
Wi Pound, Yeats an Eliot weel he'll belang,  
Tir nan Og's far the gowden an gracious are thrang.

The price that the ferryman takks is his braith,  
Fin a life's at its lees syne richt kindly comes Daith,  
An aff tae the Ian o Tam Linn he is gaen,  
Like a wave - skelpin dolphin that's briestin the faem.

Fareweel tae Auld Faithlie, adieu Mormond Hill,  
Fur the virr o a Brocher is sattled an still.

He is takkin a voyage, grey oceans tae cross,  
An the skreich o the scurries rings lood wi oor loss.

Merriege o Convenience On Sir William Quiller Orchardson's painting Mariage De  
Convenance

Auld men, like dry sticks, easy brakk  
An should tak tent they dinna wed  
Young wives, fur they will surely shakk  
The siller fae their pooch, syne bed  
Some young an lusty gallus loon  
Will set the horns upon their croon.

A hoose, tho braw an bricht's a preen  
Is unca dreary aa yer leen.

ckshields East

Koran. Ramadan,  
Pollock, Pollock, Pollock, Pollock,  
Ran-dan, breid n' jam,  
Punjab keelies, Glesga Hindis,  
New Delhis weirin wellies,  
Lad-brokes, arti-chokes,  
Turbanned weans, curried beans,  
Quines in sahris, Arctic larries,  
Wee swally, Shug an Ali,  
Pollock Pollock Pollock Pollock  
Pollockshields East,  
Urdu's fand a reist,  
train rinnin, tootin, stoppin,  
Dev is here tae dae his shoppin,  
train stoppin, hop in, hop in,  
oh-mak-me-padme-rice  
oh....mmmmmmmmmm

17.In a Hindu Temple. Aarti Ceremony, dusk, Jaipur

Merrymatanzie o mochs, bricht dragonflees

Waucht ben a temple that's ableeze wi licht.  
A merble pantheon o Ganesh, Siva, Kali, Hanuman,  
Butterlamps glent bi alabaster shrines  
Upheld by jewelled an scented sahri quines.

Gowd stoor fae Heiven's billion waukenin starns  
Floats wi lotus petals on fower bowls.  
Three Hindu priests wauk forrit tae the altar,  
Heids bood like oxen yieldin tae the yoke.

Abeen their chantin, chink o tinklin bells,  
Drawn curtains offer Lakshmi, Narayan  
Twa deities, the Aarti gift o Licht.  
The preists skirp ritual watter ower the fowk  
Twa fat dreeps trickle, cruiked, ower my broo.

Inno the runnles o my Scottish chikk,  
Into the cracks anither lan has cuttit.

Sheena Blackhall

# Dimitri: English Poems

Bearsden Shark  
Walking the dog by a Glasgow burn  
What did Stan Wood find?

It wasn't a beer tin  
A shrivelled up condom,

A copy of the Glasgow Herald  
The used syringe of a junkie

It wasn't a dumped fridge  
An Asda Receipt  
A coil of doggie poo

But a Bearsden shark

Not a high-flying banker  
A low-life moneylender

It was a 330 million year old shark  
With a tooth-fin spine behind its head  
A new species of fish,  
Named Akmonistion Zangerli,  
Romans bathed in Bearsden  
Wealthy Glasgow businessmen live there now  
A limited species

In Kilmardinny Loch and Nature Reserve  
Gruffalos abound, and golfers find it a natural habitat.

The shark, however, is the star of the whole shebang  
Lording it in the Hunterian Museum  
Away from the eateries and crannies  
Of Scottish entrepreneurs  
Thankfully, it is dead

The Dandy Lion  
The Dandy Lion wallops his tail

Is he Art, or cultural vomit?  
Is he Disney bling? A despicable thing?  
A visual anal deposit?

Like a pot of paint in the public's face,  
Or Tracey Emin's bed  
Or Marcel Duchamp's fountain  
Art's in the Beholder's head

Some People Say

Some people say  
An ex-husband's dog dirt on a shoe  
A stale ham sandwich  
A cough in Skye in October

A rusty wheelbarrow  
Lilac mince  
A cat stringed fiddle  
A foxglove stuffed with earwigs  
The Kalahari desert in a drought  
An occasional nightmare  
The crack in a cement pool  
A soggy croissant  
A Ziggy stardust cigarette butt  
While an ex-wife is.....

Sheena Blackhall

# Dimitri: Scots Poems

Dimitri Keaw

Dimitri Keaw, a gleg Buchan Jackdaw  
Bides at Lower Bogheid, on a lum  
Wi a skreich an a caw, he is cockie an braw  
Wi his hoose an his fine cosy bum

Wi his siller-tapped heid, he's a cannie wee breed  
As a reiver, he chores wi élan  
Bit he mairried fur life, fin he chuse him a wife  
He's a far safer bet than a man!

The neebors neist door, flitted doon frae Kintore  
Flooded oot; They'd tae say faist farewells  
Bit they dinna faa oot, ower the reef, or the spoot  
Na, they keep their ainsels tae thirsels

Sae Dimitri Keaw, thon maist sonsie jackdaw  
(Far smerter than thon bird at Rheims)  
Is the king o Bogheid; he's got tricks in his bluid  
Ay hotchin wi pliskies an dreams!

The Curler's Coort

Twa o my kin gaed throwe the curler's coort  
Their lips wir steekit on the ongauns there  
It wis weel-kent a rowth o drink wis taen  
Bi aa involved in thon high-jinks affair

I've heard it said a goat wis mangst the thrang  
An whyles a brukken neb or shank or airm  
In Coorts langsyne, fin things gaed ooto haun  
Itherwise, fowk cam tae little herm

A grown-up plisky, secrets kittle up  
The weary darg o kintra life an wyes  
Licht-hairtit, as fin a fat brosie wife  
Sats doon tae rest, rifts, an lats oot her steys



## Awfu Weather

Awfu weather...fine fur dyeuks  
A win that wid sandpaper plooks  
It turns umbrellas inside oot  
Like ony brukken watter spoot  
It poors doon sarks, it drooks yer hair  
Stair-roddies stottin here an there  
Turn roads tae burns, an burns tae linns  
An wheechs awa fowks' wheelie bins  
As coorse as Noah's trial bi watter  
An aye the on-ding, splooter-splatter

## Scots Owersets o Poems bi Mark O'Connor, Australian poet

a Romana

Latin is a leid

As deid as deid can be;

Desk-tap graffiti rules. Bit I

Fa wastit ma bairnhood on deid leids, noo spikk

The saft leevin ane far aathin's bi/wi/rae.

It killt the auncient Romans

An noo it's killin me

Latin dirkit an spreid weel, ootlaistit

The less deadly Germans, won hauf

The Americas- aye yet keeps

Its eechie or ochie i an u, the dweeble Spanish s

Mony nouns in -is we fin

Tae the masculine pit in

In Italy the stinch declensions mell

Wi Teuton slang; fare an venire hae swapped

Sides; an ire, tae gae, is gane

Yet aa the wald leids dee at the hinnereyn:

Greek o grammar an cliques; Latin  
O solidifeed rules an Renaissance pedantry;  
French o coorse admirals an ower-subtle wirds;  
Inglis an Chinee o their screivit forms;  
Rooshun o subjects' ill-will. Challengers ee  
Spanish, an each ither's blin spots, spitefu-like;  
Bein aff-takkin tae the French, or Sassenach towrists, whyle  
Ilkie year the new street-spikk rowes oot: biftek, robot,  
Kaput, stress, Kodak, jeans, futbol, boutique,  
-A kist sic-like as Saxon herds vrocht  
Tae owergie boeuf an mouton tae their lairds.

ity

Here Mary skooshes the milk frae a warm breist  
Ben Christ's wee neive. Joseph, unfairly  
Auld, thinks on a Jewish wirkers weird, whyle his  
Kirk-lovin wife, kneels, wi faith in her Creation.  
Sae far, doubtless, frae fit first happened, gin  
There iver wis a staa. Ahin,  
The coo an cuddie baith ken exactly foo  
Tae rowe an tongue their hey ontae their teeth.

ct: section one of A Javanese Pieta

In rikk the bairn-mither hunkers,  
Newest loon pn lap, sellin  
Hett bottles o 7-Up  
Tae indifferent towrists.

Cameras ettle tae catch thon physog, that the street  
Has walloped tae wechty-lidded peace. She is  
Skeely in heat, clart, hunger, the airts  
O drinkin an keechin in public  
Canals; cooers frae rain aneth blue plastic  
Squars; kens birth-stoons an sooklin pleisurs,  
She an her son, belum orang  
-'not yet a person'  
Tint o hope, she's likewise tint o fear.  
Hatred subtracts; haein eneuch,

Plots; bit wae  
Breeds.  
Anely Natur, say her een,  
Coorse as tigers..

Deed tae the World

Ma laddie lay deed in his flat on a warm July at gloamin  
Oot on their balconies, neebors, like spurgies, cheepin  
Sklaiked about bettin chitties, fitbaa, the price o baccy

It was an evenin fur gowf, fur luvers' trysts an delichts  
Fowk steered hame frae their wirk  
Swyty an trauchelt, sikkin a bite tae ett  
A shoer, a pint in the bar

The pair ben the landin, argybargyin as usual  
The quine doonstairs, bleachin the reets o her hair  
Ootbye, a sparkie, ficherin wi his car  
The car bunnet up like a whale raxin its moo

In the kintra, his faither wis oot in the gairden  
Hyowin the dreels atween piz  
Ben the toon, I wis turnin the pages o a buik  
Ae sister hid jist jeloused she wis cairryin a bairn

Ma laddie lay deed tae the world  
An oor afore oor lives cam crashin doon

Sheena Blackhall

## Dirge (Scots)

The original Lyke-Wake Dirge is a 14th century funeral chant from Cleveland, North Yorkshire, where it was sung by a woman during the traditional watch (wake) at the side of the corpse (lyke) .

Dirge

Ye left me in the Simmer blythe  
The first tae weer awa  
An pyson robbed ye o yer life  
For Daith dis pairt us aa

Ma ain, ma first-born, bonnie loon  
The first tae weer awa  
Abeen yer mools ma tears drap doon  
For Daith dis pairt us aa

Nae pairtin kiss, nae fond fareweel  
The first tae weer awa  
Sorra has ploood a deidly dreel  
For Daith dis pairt us aa

In Winter cauld, in sna, in rain  
The first tae weer awa  
Yer loss has cut me tae the bane  
For Daith dis pairt us aa

An guilt has gralloched aa ma days  
The first tae weer awa  
That I hae added tae yer waes!  
For Daith dis pairt us aa

The meen will tumble frae the nicht  
The first tae weer awa  
Afore yer myndin burns less bricht  
For Daith dis pairt us aa

I wirk, I ett, I drink, I sleep  
The first tae weer awa  
Bit aye inbye, unseen, I weep,

For Daith dis pairt us aa

Sae I maun murn, until we meet  
The first tae weer awa  
Bit bein auld, ma years are fleet  
We'll tryst far lilies faa

Sheena Blackhall

# Diving For Poems Dhanakosa, Balquidder

Diving for poems,  
I entered the moon's reflection.

The water swallowed me like a womb,  
Like a shark, like a dark friend.

Shadows swam round me;  
I dipped into the depths, over and over.

Moon poems are beautiful, plucked from inky fathoms.  
I would wish for all poem fishers,  
Little lights set out along the shore  
To guide them back.

Sheena Blackhall

# Doing It Anyway

Don't spit. Don't back-chat. Don't be rude. Don't swear  
I'm going to do it anyway. So there!

Don't play on Sunday. Pleasure is a sin  
I'm going to do it anyway. Don't care

Don't lie. I know you're lying. You've gone red  
Mother, you still control me though you're dead

Sheena Blackhall

# Donald Trump: Half Lewisman

Son of Mary Anne MacLeod  
From the Hebridean Island of Lewis  
His mother was born in the village of Tong,  
In the parish of Stornoway

Her father was a fisherman  
A native Gaelic speaker and a crofter  
One of ten, who lived in a black house  
Heather-thatched and sooty

There, life was hard. Bleak moors, few trees, peat bog  
And a machair of sandy soil and shattered shells

The golden eagle spreads its wings on Lewis  
Red deer and seal, feed on its heart and fringes.

Once it was part of the Norsemen's kingdom  
This place of strict Sabbaths and crumbling peat

The Gaelic name of Leòdhas, from the Norse Ljóðhús  
Great song house, Eilean an Fhraoich, the Heather Isle

This is the land of the Callanish Stones  
The Sleeping Beauty, Cailleach Na Mointeach  
Old woman of the moors

The Lewis chessmen lay in its sandy shore  
Walrus ivory. medieval chess set

Shag, gannet, fulmar, kittiwake, and guillemot,  
Share its winds with the ubiquitous gulls.  
Red grouse, woodcock and the white-tailed eagle  
Soar over its moors. Oyster catcher, curlew  
Peregrine, merlin and buzzard swoop on its slopes  
Atlantic salmon, dolphin, porpoise, shark  
Swim in its offshore waters

Here you will meet with Seonaidh - a water-spirit  
Who likes to be offered ale



Or one of the Blue Men of the Minch,  
Storm kelpies, fear gorm looking for sailors to drown  
For stricken boats to sink.

Here is the ruined home of the giant Cuithach,  
Trapped by the Fians, and killed to protect the people

Still in a village ceilidh-house  
You may hear the Song of the Boatman  
Tell of a woman, sad and tearful  
As a white, torn swan sounding her death-call  
On a small grassy loch forsaken by all,  
On the lonely isle of Lewis

Sheena Blackhall

# Doomed Child

Last night a child, dead 400 years  
Crawled up the stairwell of my thought  
From a monk's book

It clawed at the door of my heart,  
A pitiful scratching

Two years old, naked, bewildered,  
He stands by the surging river

Did poverty drive him out?  
A lack of love or disease?  
A war or some other disaster?

Too young to comprehend  
Such portentous matters  
He stands, waiting for food  
Huge eyes, small needs  
Waiting for someone to pour  
A ladle of cleansing water  
Over his crud smeared buttocks

Pair of monks passes by  
Moved, they give him a meal  
Then walk away

Soon, he'll be an empty bowl of bones  
In the fattening reeds

I am outraged, appalled, horrified  
Yet I'll watch a TV advert  
Showing a child with ribs  
Like piano wires straining to snap  
As I sprinkle nuts on my porridge

Some leaves will always fall  
In the Wrong Season



# Dracula's Fangs

Dracula Fangs

The immortalist, Dmitry Itskov,  
Is pouring his Midas funds  
Into trials to human consciousness  
Into androids or robots

Meanwhile, infusions of young blood  
Are found to rejuvenate geriatric mice

Plasma from the umbilical cord of new-borns  
Might stem the tide of ageing

Dracula, in the Wallachian language, means devil  
Now, Dracula's fangs might find a voracious market  
As minds descend to dementia  
Young blood might be the suck-up source of cure

Ancient wrinklies lurking in darkened concerts  
Flapping their bingo wings in rancid corners  
Only betrayed by creaking hip replacements  
May pounce to feed on the life juice of the young

Dracula's fangs enjoying a fey revival

Sheena Blackhall

# Dragon Rikk & A Kenspeckle Creel (35 Scots Poems)

Denner Wine's Girn  
I chap fruit an vegg fur schule denners  
Avocada an aipple an pear  
I chap them perjink or squeeze inno a drink  
The bree frae an orange, wi care

As I wyle an I wash an I peel them  
I mynd upon derk Halloween  
As a littlin I dookit fur aipples  
An howkit oot neep lantern een

Syne I dice up the kail an the cabbage  
Pare tattie an carrot an ingin  
Kennin fine fin the bairns see the broth pot  
They'll cry oot 'Gad's sake' or 'Thon's mingin'

The bell brings them in wi a rummle  
There's dirdin an clunkin o plate  
I staun at the back o the veggies  
An serve baith the cauld an the hett

'I dinna wint greens, they're jist boggin'  
Says a loon wi a facefu o plooks  
An a quine girns 'I'm nae ettin ingins  
They'll connach ma braith. Ingin sooks! '

Syne I teem oot the vegg in the bucket  
Healthy menus are affa sair wark  
I telt ae wee bairn, 'Ett yer carrots  
An ye'll get tae see in the derk'

He tried his first carrot this denner  
'They're crunchy an tasty' quo he  
A convert tae fresh fruit an veggie  
An the miracle wiker wis me!

He scored twenty goals in the playgrun  
Star striker without ony doot  
'Fit's the secret? ' the ither bairns winnert

An he skirled oot 'It's veggies an fruit! '

icolour Wifies

I've got the blues, sez Mrs Broon  
I'm affa doon the noo

I'm turnin green, sez Mrs Black  
Wi ettin Irish stew

I'm in the pink sez plooky Pam  
Yer yalla, hisses Claire  
While Jean grew grey's the road  
An Jess turned fite's a polar bear

Fay Baxter tummlit doon the hill  
Noo she's a rainbow's dream  
She's violet, orange, crammosie  
Wi purple tints atween

Yalla or broon or black or fite  
Fine hues for skin or socks  
The anely colour naebody likes  
Is spotty chuckenpox

Timekeeper

Dinna listen tae the clock!  
Mither, tell it wheesht!  
There's a better timekeeper  
Tickin in ma breist

Dinna ging tae wark the day  
I'll bide aff the schule  
There's 20 bandies in the burn  
Doon in Wasty's puil

I could coont them, ilkie ane  
I'd add them an subtract  
Mither, fit the time ticks aff  
Is niver gotten back

I could paddle, splash an dook  
Ye could sook a straw  
Dandelion clock's the time  
I like best ava!

aas

I like makkin snaabaas  
In the wintry days  
Bit they weet ma mochles  
An they nip ma lugs an taes!

Hoast

I hate it fin I hae a hoast  
It staps ma snoot like glue  
It burns ma throat  
Makks my een rin  
Atchoo! Atchoo! Atchoo!

Sea

The sea rins oot  
The sea rins in  
Like a wee blue dug  
Wi a lead at its chin  
A lead at its chin  
An a ruff roon its throat  
Like a wee blue dug  
Wi a roch weet coat

es

Moosies are roon  
An broon an fun  
Saft as a new baked ginger bun  
They wheech their tails  
like trainers' pynts  
An they lowp ower leaves  
wi their double jynts!

Bowf gaes the dug  
He's a waukin rug  
He keeps the hoover busy

His tail is waggy  
His paws are dubby  
His mowser's black an frizzy

He chases the postie up the path  
He flegs Shane Webster's cat  
He luvs his beens an he hates his bath  
Fin he's pleased he caas ye flat!

n Rikk  
A dragon's in the gairden  
He's blawin dragon rikk  
He's turnin aa the warld fite  
Ay, ilkie steen an stick

A dragon's in the gairden  
Jist leave him playin there  
A dragon's in the gairden  
Blawin snawflakes ben the air

Shute  
The shiny shute is affa high  
It raxxes up near tae the sky  
An fin I skyte doon frae the tap  
The fusslin win sits on my lap

t  
Aa ye see is a rabbit's dowp  
Finiver it gets a fricht  
If ye gie't a fleg as ye wauk the wids  
It vanishes ooto sicht

It skytes like wildfire ben the brae  
Its heart gings boom-boom-boom  
An wad ye nae be fleggit tae  
Wi a monster in yer room?

up  
Dunt the bottle  
Shakk the bottle  
Ketchup on ma chips!  
First a knot an syne a clot



As reid as lipstick lips!

' Nests

Nests hae nae reefs

Foo dis the weet

Bide aff the eggs

Cheep cheep, cheep cheep

The birdies cry

I think they say

Oh dinna let it rain the day!

r

I lue Glen Gairn at the skreich o day

Fin the dyew lies weet on the fen

An the mochy haar ower the broon peat glaur

Cooers oorrie on brae an ben

The mist is mizzlin doon the howes

An eildrich's the larick's airm

As leirichie-larichie reeshlin saft

It fuspers a warlock's chairm.

I lue Glen Gairn in a snell foreneen

Fin the clouds are a cattie's hair

An the lift itsel is a salmon's back

Wi the sun-spirks hingin there

An a humphy-backit driver cloud

Comes caain the win alang

A drumly, gurly, growly win

A lowrin win, a soughin win

A furly, birly, snarly win

That's forcy, brashy, strang...

A reivin win, a nyitterie win

A nizzen win, an Easter

A howderin blinterin brak-neck win

That spears ye sair's a leister.

I lue Glen Gairn at the mids o day

Fin the sun is a din-skinnt cyard

A wattergaw, tween twa roch shoosers

That birsles the peat-hags hard

Fin it's close an malmy an plottin hett  
An ye swyte like a road new tarred  
Oh, braw tae dowp on a grouse's seat  
Fin the yoam frae the Glen's baith sherp an swete  
An the warld an his wife's weel-faured.

I lue Glen Gairn in an efterneen  
In the smirr o a growin shooer  
Wi a wattergaw, far the hoodies blaw  
A bow raxxed ower the stoor

I lue Glen Gairn at the gloamin time  
Fin the thunner an lichtenin cracks  
A splyter o weet, that's gey near sleet  
Dings doon, fin the on-ding braks  
Frae a spirk tae a spate, the lift's nae blate  
Tae drook us wioot devaul  
Tho it's coorse n' caul, the swackin swall  
Is the linns an the burnies' maet.

I lue Glen Gairn in the pit-mirk nicht  
Fin a pluffert o snaw doon-draps  
A blatter o hailsteens, lowsed abune  
The pine, dreeps doon in plaps

Tho it's stervin caul in the fite-oot smore  
It's wersh ahin, blin-drift afore  
An the meen is rikkin wi wintry hoar  
Muir's saft, as mither's paps.

I lue Glen Gairn in the Teuchit storm  
as weel as the Gab o Mey  
Fin the Gowk Storm's dane, the simmer's gear  
Trysts me far the larick's swey

I lue Glen Gairn at the Lammas tide,  
at the hinneren an aa -  
Be't wild an weet, be't saft an sweet,  
be't snaw, or wattergaw!

## 15. THREE GULLS: FUR THE LITTLINS

Three gulls, dowpit on a lum  
Luikit affa glum, luikin fur a crumb.  
Three gulls, dowpit on a lum  
On a caul an frosty mornin

The first gull rugged a plastic pyock in twa  
Efter things tae chaw  
Tore the pyock in twa  
The first gull rugged a plastic pyock in twa  
On a caul an frosty mornin

The secunt gull stuck his bill inside a tin  
Michty fit a din! Wisnae yon a sin?  
The secunt gull stuck his bill inside a tin  
On a caul an frosty mornin

The third gull cut his flipper on a glaiss  
Michty, fit a mess! Bluid as ower the place!  
The third gull cut his flipper on a glaiss  
On a caul an frosty mornin

## S O MAY

Birks toss their silken boughs like lowse-tailed lammies  
Lean ferns, like Celtic monks, screive fronds o scrolls  
A thistle raxxes, straucht's a Lonach pikeman  
A sma blue saltire, speedwell's flag, unfurls.

Salmony-pink slabs slidder neth the watter  
A wavelet lowps, a liquid wing o tan  
Doon in the deep pot's foun, the eels are steerin  
The lang blaik puil, slides unner the Fite brig's span.

A fisher laddie plays a plappin trootie  
The lift's adrift wi pearly doo-grey clouds  
Fir, aik, an pine staun close... a merle's clachan  
The win, a lullin mither, larick showds.

The creepie-crawlies in the girse hike hamewird  
Ants treetle ben their heathery, hudderie gait

A wechtit bee, hip-pooches swalled wi eerins  
Bizzes an braks the simmer gloamin's quate.

Gin my hairt war a quaich, I'd full't richt reamin  
A Heilan scowf, frae Mar, tae Kinker's lee  
Teem oot the cassies' stoor, the stank o city,  
Takk aff a dram instead, o caller Dee.

#### 17.HIGHLAND CATERACT: LINN O DEE

Watter an stane: it's the music they makk thegither  
Jinglin crystal stringles o ice-bree dreeps  
Treetlin ower the mirded face o a crag drap,  
Jibblin doon tae the green linn's dimplin deeps.

Glisks o a shaddawy salmon, slawly steerin  
Skelpin its muckle tail in the foun o a puil  
Lirks o sunshine flashin abeen its ceilin  
Brinkin bubbles link in the burnie's sweel

Lochans, licht, an linns, mell heich i the heather  
A winsome waddin, yieldin the Dee as bairn  
A rowany gypsy road the river raivels  
Furled roon bappity braes o fir an cairn

Carved an cuttit, scoored an smeethed bi Winter  
Black broos hackit an clawed bi Beltane's thaw  
The crags o the Linn rise up, foriver sindered  
Glower at each ither, ower a wattergaw

Sprintime's gift tae the glen is the green-gouned larick  
Raxxin its tooshts o needles ben the air  
Sap in the birk, an the greet frae a whaup's bill scalin  
Trystin the reid-lugged squirrel frae its lair.

Tan and tawny, bronze an copper an pearl  
A smush o roundit steenies spirked wi pink  
Stipple the bank far the wash o the tummlin wafter  
Cowps, a tuilzie o spray frae a boulder's brink.

Polar cauld is the wechtit wave's doonfaain  
Glaiss-green bree wi the antrin snawy fleck

Caain the rikk tae rise frae the linn's blaick cauldron  
Breengin on, like a rinawa shelt, brakk-neck.

Yon's the place tae be in the blearie gloamin!  
A hinneycaimb o cliff an thunnerin spray  
Wi the saft curmurrin croo o the cooshie dronin  
A pibroch as its ain, tae the deein day.

#### IRN-GRANARY

My thochts dwell on Glen Gairn  
Warm as a cushie doo her littlins happen  
Welcome's a frien's neive at the door chap-chappin  
Saft as the oo that kittlins takk an teaze  
Faist as an arra lowsed frae a bow-string flees  
Hidden's a brock fa's treisur's beeriet deep  
Secret's an erne's lair on the come steep  
Deep, as a mowdie cooryin in the yird  
Lang as the raxxin pine showdin the cloudy bird  
Pleisunt's the hinney-ale, hairsters drink tae the lees  
Lichtsomes the bolt o sun, piercin the reeshlin trees  
Sweet as the dew that draps frae the harebell's heid  
Wad that my ilkie thocht brocht sic remeid!

#### MONARCH O THE GLEN

I'm the stag that posed for Landseer's famous pictur  
Glued on tap o bottles, shortbreid, cake an toffee  
In a hunner cafes frae Sky tae Embro toun  
I'm the culture that they hing abune yer coffee

I'm the monarch o the glen... an institution  
Like 'The Broons' or 'Jimmy Shand' or 'Burns's Sonnets'  
I sprout sae mony pynts upon ma antlers  
As a hatstand I cud haud a score o bonnets.

Here I staun, an OAP amang the heather  
Wi the midgies an the tourists heezin roon  
I'm negotiatin wi the Daily Record  
Ower the rights tae sell my memoirs o John Broon

There's bin a cheenge or twa since Queen Victoria  
Glesga hillwalkers wi hairy oxters bowfin  
Drappin tins an tabbie dowpends like confetti  
An I sweir tae God their heids are fairly lowpin.

My jynts are stiff wi posin in the peathags  
Wi liniment they're cryin fur a grease  
Oh it's nae an easy darg tae be a model  
Gin ye wint tae be a famous masterpiece!

Noo the Frenchmen brag o Degas, Braque an Rousseau  
An in Spain they've Dali... yon artistic Titan  
Bit they canna haud a licht tae Landseer's peintin  
I'm nae sae much a pictur... I'm an icon.

## 20. AULD CAILLEACH

Frae an Inglis Translation bi Victor Serge o Louis Aragon's poem 'Old Woman'  
(Resistance, Les Humbles, 1938) here owersett inno Scots

Yon auld cailleach  
Fa traivels humfin a pyock o unspikkable trock  
Draps a shadda like a ricktickle shelt.

Puir cuddy,  
Her heid hings bi a wire.  
Auncient philosophers tcyauved wi the notion  
O whether sic craiteurs ained an ayebydan sowel  
Or nae sowel ava,  
(Wi scarce a sowel thirsels, educatit chiels  
Po-faced, clawed their croons about thon)

Mealie-moued deils, nooadays  
Wi fine-soundin wirds  
Wad caa ye their sister.

Auld cailleach,  
Ye dinna ken o their cosie lee  
Its umpteen thoosan miles  
Frae yer swalled, wechty fitpreints  
Trampit inno the dubs.  
The truth plaps aneth yer stride  
in yer sy-pin shadda rikkin o pish

Ye canna be saved.

Conseeder yon.

Three score year an ten

It's ower late.

Sax hunner year o thralldom ahin ye-

It's ower sune.

### CAILZIE

Oh the Deil fur fun, tuik the pepper frae a gun

An the claws frae a hoot-hoot-hootie

The neb frae a doo, syne he gart them stew

Rowed up in a dumplin clootie

Feech! Oot frae the pan, flew the auld widsman

Fa's kent as the capercailzie!

He wis soor as sin, wi a beard upon his chin

He wis nippy as a forkietailie!

His heid wis as sma, as a billiard baa

It wis stapt wi blitz an blethers

This cock o the North, gaed stridin forth

In a sark o spit an feathers.

Frae the China sea tae Killimanjee

Ye'd nae fin a waur ill natur

In a far flung airt, that wis fand in the hairt

O this contermaschious craitur.

Deep in the mids o the oorie wids

He stravaiged like a ram-stam bantam

Like a bubblyjock, wi a fan fur a dock

Wi his birse fair up, he'd be rantin.

He'd rage an he'd ban, this Napoleon

O the pines, wi his reid een flashin

Wi the Spring in his bluid, there'd be nocht in his heid

Bit his hens an the virr o his passion.

Like a hurlygush, he wad caa tae smush

Ony gowk in his road criss-crossin

`Tik up, tik up' he wad skreitch an hup

Wi his lugs, like the North Sea tossin.

He dined on pines wi his feathery quines

Fowk said he'd be far frae tasty  
He wis rosimy as peat an a teuch's a buit  
An as coorse as a hedgehog pasty!

Ochone, ochree, come a dirdum dree  
An American tourist sheeter  
Gaed oot on a dive, far the midgies thrive  
Wi a dram an a pirn-taed beater...  
Syne oot frae the muir, in a cloud o stoor  
In a rooze flew the capercailzie  
Like a pyock o seed, he wis fullid wi leid  
An the quills blawn aff his tailie.  
They cairriet him doon, tae the fir trees foun  
An the erne an the ptarmigan grat  
His beak an his claws, war bequeathed tae the craws  
An his breist-been chawed bi the cat

#### EL SLEEPIN

After the painting: La Bohemienne Endormie (1897) : The Sleeping Gypsy by  
Henri Rousseau, Le Douanier(New York collection; The Museum of Fine Art)

Her animus or guairdian?  
Fa's tae ken?  
Lion an leddy baith are twinned foreay  
Gad-about breet / gangrel Bohemiënne.

Sic quate! Sic blessed peacefu quate!  
The gangrel gypsy dwaums, her traivels deen.  
Aneth a roon hairst meen  
Glimmerin abeen a desert teem o steer,  
Dunes rax intae the nicht

Saft, saft as clouds o oo,  
Hyne frae the clash o world's hashed mineer.  
Her frock's a wattergaw  
A linn o colours.  
Skyrie strippit brows.  
Aside her heid, a mandolin  
(Yon sweet sang's wame)  
It's secret music hides  
Its harmonies. They're doverin like the quine.



A mild win blows.  
Aside her bowster  
Gap-moued as a wallie  
Catchin the meenshine  
There's a wide-hoched pot o wine

Nae tracks lead  
Tae the sleeper's sanny bed.  
The milky meen hings still  
Mysterie an Meenlicht meets in the peintit lift.  
A lion, ripple-maned  
Owerluiks the Gypsy lass  
Much as a thrissle ower a violet teets  
Twa Fauves, bi an artistic fancy tamed.

#### ITHER - TONGUE

The prentit leid (cut frae its navel-towe, the tongue)  
Is deed.  
Is hauf-a-tale. Cauld kail.  
A horse, wintin a cairt  
Fin spikk frae spikker's ruggit hyne apairt  
The twa pink shells that war my bairn-lugs  
Caught an keepit the saftsome Doric 'wheesh'  
It rippled ben them like a soughin sea  
'Wheesht my wee sodjer... steek yer eenies ticht' `  
Wheesht wis, IS and it will foriver be  
Beardie an bosie. Turnin doon the licht  
A closin curtain an a da's delicht.  
A purrin, strokit cat  
His guid-nicht `wheesht caimed aa day's taigles, flat.

I learned tae raxx his leid. Savour't alang my mou  
Wye ilkie thocht. His wards, war deep an fyew  
Inglis wis ten-a-penny. A chaip-John spikk that ony spurgie cheept  
A quick claik, clippit close as a sheared yowe  
An jist as eeseless 'gin the winter's snaws  
That roon the Doric wirds, sae leal, sae richt, war there.

Inglis, wis Sabbath brows. Mither's pretensions  
Cut glaiss in the mou and hypertensions

A tyrant leid, o bulldozer dimensions

Takk `Dreich' I howk it frae the yird  
O my first dreel. It rises blaik an bauld  
A cauld steen o a wird.

`Dreich's' a car-haik hame, by dreepin birks  
Braith rinnin doon the driver's windae pane  
`Dreich' my da wid say. The soun hung fire  
A littlin, wearie-eed, I'd luik ootbye.  
The lift wis blae The coos war huddlit,  
craws war drookit, wae.  
'Dreich' gars me chitter yet.  
First shark tae sweem, inno my memory's net.

This much I ken.

That `Dreich' is nae the same tae us  
As tis tae ither men.  
Fur we hae lived it, tholed it, sooked it in  
Leid's nae a secunt skin  
Raither a wye o thocht that bides wi'in  
Wards arnae claes tae weir, tae shift, tae cheenge,  
They're reeted. Screived in bluid  
My ain, my kinsmen An my faither's leid

FEEL

`The time has come' the feel jeloused  
`Tae spikk o mony things -  
O mower-mugs an galluses  
O barley bigged in bings  
O snochrie geets an tatty reets  
An scones on girdle rings.

`Those maun be aa' (I heard him craw)  
`A Doric Fiddle's strings.'  
`Her bards maun screive' (he threepit on)  
`O smachrie an sma beer  
The Greeks may hae their shelt o Troy  
For we hae shanks's meer  
It's tacket buits... nae winged queats  
A Doric muse maun weir.'  
`Nae Henryson, bit strouds on Don

Nae Will Dunbar... bit Udney  
Sing o a soo... the antrin coo...  
O chaulmer, tcyauve, or chunty  
Sir David Lyndsey penned fur kings  
We eulogeeze a grunty.'  
'Sud Gavin Douglas rise again  
He'd hae oor harns bamboozled! ' (   
Quo he, syne gied his powe a dunt  
Fur his wee thochts war toozled  
An frae his heid, there drapt doon deid  
A notion, malygruized.

A snell win pinged the jester's bells  
His lugs, it whussled ben  
Fur there wis nocht tae haud it there  
As teem's a guttit hen  
A pitcher fu o styte an stew  
As aa fa meet him ken.  
Tho kail is canty, brose is braw  
Sud Scots bide in the byre?  
Be banned frae kirk, frae schule, frae wirk  
Furl in a shrinkin gyre?  
Be keepit in the stirkie's stag  
It's mapamound entire?

The feel, sez 'Ay.' Gin HE'D his wye  
(Eclectic as a stirk)  
Oor Scots was schauchle, spinnle-shanked  
Inno Nihil's pit-mirk!

ND  
Tarlán. The roon hairst meen  
Sens doon its siller rays fur it aleen.  
Its weird Pict circle, kirk, its Bonspeil green.

The world stops at the burn, the mairket stance,  
Cyards' Raw, the gowf coorse, a broon tattie dreel...  
Dounside's reid kye ayont the littlins' squeel...  
Banchory micht be as hyne awa as France!

The young fowk tryst an tuilzie

At village discos, show, or marquee daunce  
Auld fowk swap claik at shoppies, ower a waa  
Or staas o veggies in the village haa.

The crook o circlin knowes  
(Blae Morven, Press n'Dye an Ledlilick  
Mulloch an Mortlich) vrocht yon misty rikk  
That reams ower barn an brae an hedderly muir  
They shepherd in a flock o sun-spirked clouds  
Loud wi craws skreichin steer.

Deeside's grain granary's the sheepfauld o Cromar  
Simmer nichts draw sweethairts tae the burn  
The kirkyaird's sleepers, laired hard by the howff  
Gently becam the yird they eesed tae turn.

Far randies gallivant, a gallus loon  
Cowps up a whisky glaisse  
Offers tae skelp a heid, kitties a kecklin quine  
Syne quatened doon  
He hyters on lowse shanks, unsteidy, hame...

A puckle lace screens switch... lang nebs powk roon.  
A late-nicht ceilidh crummles inno aisse  
A fiddler's mettled rant  
Gaes sweetly soundin  
Far broon pheasants gant.

The Sabbath briers wi wirkin claes rugged on  
Fresh ironed sack lies toastin ower a cheer  
A duntin heid is cleared wi tarry tea  
A pechin collie sprauchles ower a fleer  
On fifty fairms the nowt are sortit,  
Rich rigs ring wi sang  
'Roch tykes o Tarlan' sae the stories gyang

They're richt. The men hae virr, thir weemin, spunky blether  
Dog rose an brummil, wedded weel thegither  
Tarlan... fur sturdy lads an bonnie quines are thrang  
An fell unchancy weather!

ITHER BREED, ANITHER AGE

We are the same... bit nae the same  
They're fremmit. Bairns, o a fey mither  
Naethin we share... tae them, ae daud  
O grun's as guid as ony ither.

We are the same... bit nae the same  
A ring o elfin green tae me  
Brings tales o Wee Fowk steerin back  
Tae them, yon's haiverin idiocy.

We are the same... bit nae the same  
The Beltane dyew granminnie'd sain  
I hauf-think yet's a magic cherm  
Watter, tae them, is acid rain

We are the same... bit nae the same  
I feel 1000 aeons auld  
King o their world is the machine  
Clivver as clockwirik, an as cauld

We are the same... bit nae the same  
Anither breed. Anither age  
Gloamin tae me is glamourie  
Life wioot mystery's, a cage!

#### GUDEMAN'S CRAFTIE

The Gudeman's Craftie wis a bield  
Grown oxter-deep wi nettle bings  
A muir-moch's reest... an aيدر's boouer  
A hame fur outlinned, oorrie things.

Auld Clottie's neuk, noo delled an ploeed  
Yields a wersh crap o nerra meisur  
The Gudeman keepit open hoose...  
We steek the yett on Natur's treisur  
The wild an winsome weir awa  
An wi them, muckle pith an pleisur.

#### 28.A MEEN RUNE

(Traditional Gaelic, here set inno Scots)  
Fin I teet at the New Meen

It behoves me tae heist ma ee  
It behoves me tae ben ma knee  
It behoves me tae boo ma heid

I reeze oot yer praises,  
Meen o Wyceness  
Sin I've gIen ye anither gley  
Sin I've seen ye, New Meen

Bonnie Heich-Yin abeen the wye,  
Mony hae left the world  
In the time atween the twa meens  
Tho I ay enjoy the yird  
Ye Meen o Meens an o Blessins.

#### E O THE GENES

She wyled her guidman. Sax fit twa  
He wyled his wummin. Fair, an sma  
Syne chuse a hame tae keep his bride  
A car. A hinneymeen Stateside  
Opted tae plan their progeny  
Plenished their hoose maist eidently.  
Culled the decor frac 'Vogue, ' wi thocht  
Their likins stamped on aa they bocht  
Decidin efter five years grace  
They'd like a bairn about the place.

Nine month they wyted. On the nail  
The bairn wis born. Hairty, hale  
A pertrick in the barley patch  
It grew intae a nesty vratch  
Waesuck... the scrapins o the pot  
A muckle, coorse, genetic blot.

Ye chuse yer trock... bit nae yer kin  
Gowd pendles, whyles, drap tooshts o tin  
Is it yer weird... or callous chance  
That heids the generations daunce?

Anery twaery spins the twine  
Ooto the cradle lowps the quine

Fiddlum faddlum swack's a swaw  
Swippert's a puddock an saft's the snaw

Thethery blethery meenlicht's pale  
She's as curved as an aيدر's trail  
Aremy faremy spinnly silk  
Breist's as fate as a yowie's milk

Zinty tintv divverry: lover  
Grown as grait as a stirk in clover  
Stoorum stibblum thirty saxt  
The sonsie may is jizzen raxxed.

Eenertv, feenerty, gristly grist  
Doon the brae an inno the kist  
Furly birly rins the gird  
Stoor gaen back tae Mithir Yird!

#### BIRLIN YEARS: JAN 1995

In jizzen-bed, life's kinnelt like a punk  
Spirkit wi bluid as reid's a cockerel's caimb  
A skirlin skirp o virr's a mannikie  
Cast, weety frae the pit-mirk o the wame.  
A littlin's bit a bank o new-faan snaw  
A drift the world will set its fitmerks ower  
As the derk loch's the starnies' keekin glaiss  
His een takk in baith lauch, an angeret glower

Bairnhood sud be a kittlin's kecklin purr  
A thrapple fu o thrums  
Sweet meadow far the bumper haiks an hums  
Whyles, it's a hungeret tcyauve, in clarty slums.

A halflin is a tousie cloud o rikk  
Caad tapsalteerie bi the win o chance  
A time o sex an swither Masquerade.  
Gaun widdershins, wrang-fittin ilkie daunce.

Manhood's a meen afore the quarter's wane  
A creamy kebbuck moosies circle roon  
A mill wheel birlin ben the biggin years

The lovely, lang-shanked floerin o a loon.

Auld Eild's a doonhill sled gaun heigh-ma-nannie  
Rigwiddie... a cauld, dottled, pyock o beens  
The verra craws takk scunner tae flap ower  
Stringle o watter, on a bedd o steens.

BROON

Elly bides far the toun's kirk steeples soar  
Her neebors? The Northern Lichts an a pirn-taed doo  
Skyscrapers rise like gravesteens aside her door  
Mair tidemerks roon her bath than the QE2

Gaps in her teeth-as mony's a bandstaun railin  
The gas in the flat is aff. There's a Polar breeze  
Elly bides wi her gran far the planes gyang sailin  
Alane wi her sookin-cloot an a kink-hoast wheeze.

The leein box in the neuk shows hames wi plenty  
A da, a ma, twa bairns an a gairden neat,  
Wi a catty, roon's a barrel, fite an deintie;  
In Elly's kitchie the moosies sit an greet.

Monday mornin. Brakfast's a broken bikky  
Doon in the lift that peintit like a Sioux  
Scaunin the bins fur pieces, back o the chippy  
Far Billy McGinty's da lies rot-gut fu.

Aff tae the skweel, far Miss McBain is wytin  
(Miss McBain wi her nails aa buffed an reid)  
'Elly-yer late. Nae homewirk dane. Yer writin  
Luiks like a raw o spiders lyin deid.'

Ben 'Dictation', Elly's heid is noddin  
Hard bi the radiator's cosy guff  
Dwaums o a TV cat, in its furry cleddin  
Its bowlie fu, a spyled baa o fluff.

Twinty hoasts an the bell, brakk throw her dwaumin.  
'Hae ye nae hame tae ging tae Elly Broon? '  
Ootbye, a doonpish sets the litter sweemin -



The skweel is scalin the classies ben the toun.

Mebbe granny'll win the pot at bingo!  
Mebbe her da's come back, tae takk her hame!  
Elly opens the door... excitement risin...  
Tea's on the table. Breid n' jam again.

#### GOLLACH GANG

Ca cannie in the jungly girse - there, creepy crawlies heeze  
Doon far the horny-gollachs bide, the slaters tak their ease  
The muggers o the gairden, midgies, mob in coorse profusion  
They lurk ahin the weeds, tae smash'n grab a bluid transfusion

The wyver biggs its scaffoldin - a multi-storey lair  
She plavvers in cadavers, like ony Burke 'n Hare  
A forkietail gaes clankin by, a tank frae ooter space  
Antennae far his lugs sud be - an fur his heid, a mace.

Wasps in their strippit semmits sikk tae stab ye in the queats  
A minnie-mony-feet rins aff - a monster, mang the breets  
The flees are doon-'n-oots, ye find them, powkin roon the midden  
The phantom o the docken leaf, the wee clock-bee is hidden.

The leddylanners, reid as rouge, are peintit tae the nines  
The butterfly's a buddin ghaist - a flappin shroud fa dwines  
The ettercaps are smugglers in the heather-hinny sector  
A bummer is a hijacker - a reiver, in the nectar.

The Daddylanglegs wauchts aboot - a fankle i his legs  
He's spinnly, he's treelipy - a bogle-fu o flegs  
Ca cannie in the jungly girse - there's mair nor sooricks there  
The hale jing bang - the Gollach Gang - micht catch ye unaware!

#### CAT'S PYJAMAS

Ma's awa tae a hen nicht...  
A cluck o quinies claikin  
Will she win back hame,  
wi a beak an camb  
Efter her meenlicht raikin?

Da's awa tae a stag nicht  
Will he staun in the street an roar?  
If he jynes the breed wi horns on its heid  
Will we let him back ower the door?

Da says I ett like a grumphy  
Ma says I've the sense o a flee  
Gran says I'm the cat's pyjamas  
Bit I say I'm jist me!

#### REID FLANNEL SARK

The following poem has been reset in Scots by kind permission of the poet C Shiang-hua.

Takkin her man's swyty reid flannel sark,  
Cannily, a wife scoors it clean,  
Hings it aneth the windae tae dry.  
The saftness o the clout,  
The fineness o the wyve  
Its hue o crammosie wine  
Its glimmer o amber quaichs  
An the trim she wis in fin she bocht it fur him  
A day, a month, a year,  
Aa owercam's her.

The saftness, roched, roched,  
The ticht wyve, raxxed.  
The fineness, cheenged  
Tae nyittery repetition  
An the heidy delicht  
O crammosie wine an amber quaichs  
Fermented inno budgets,  
Hame computers, eerins,  
Peels - the scunnerin, obleegatory deceesions.  
The reid flannel sark hingin oot in the foreneen air  
Efter anely a fyew oors  
Is aathegither dry  
Leavin nae dreeps on the grun.

A cheil an his wife  
Are like watter, evaporatin inno the win  
A thirled twasome, melled

Tae dree the weird  
O their lang lives,  
Thegither.

### 35. HAIRST

The poem Harvest is by the Greek poet Dionysis Serras, here reset in Scots with his permission.

Lugs boo  
In the foremaist win  
reeshlin gow

the sun steeps  
larik yowies  
braisse

the meen in the bog  
an aisse-blaik lizard  
cheenged tae siller

bricht watter  
fite wings  
lie mirrored

a stane sinks  
kerfuffed cloud

crammosie gloamin  
draps licht  
onno fite floers

chittered leaf  
a nyaakit snailie dovers

pine needles  
wyver  
full meen  
siller cleddin

an almond  
tree twig in a teem glaiss  
ye speir about spring?

Snaw-fite trees  
in the knots  
simmer faulds

Sheena Blackhall

# Dream-Time

I close my eyes. I walk a river bed,  
Around my calves, each wave gleams like a fin  
I am a child again, unwooed, unwed

There's nothing in the trees around to dread  
My cousins guddle trout, tanned, farming kin  
No need to work yet for our daily bread

This is the path in dreams I often tread  
Around, the thrushes raise their merry din  
The Future's an unprinted book, unread

I think I am a mountain goat, cross- bred  
With the bright salmon leaping down the linn  
I slide down mossy stones, my water-sled

I store that magic place inside my head.  
That time when sunshine was my second skin  
My body baking on the heath, outspread

Now, I'm a crone, one of the nearly-dead  
But like a shepherd, I can call them in  
Those times, who to the fields of Past have fled  
And lead them back, on memory's golden thread

Sheena Blackhall

# Druids, Drachts, Drochles (51 Poems In Poems)

r's End: Deeside

The Dee lies smeeth's a kelpie's keekin-glaiss  
The swallin rose-hip skirps the brae wi reid  
Drookit wi sun, the purple heather blooms  
Forget-me-not uplifts her winsome heid

A kirn o craws, blawn lum-rik, furl an flee  
A peesie rises skirlin frae her reest  
The milky clover dovers on her stem  
A bumper sikks a harebell's dyewy breist.

A heron, stiff's an elder o the kirk  
Is haloed bi a sunbeam, glimmin gowd  
Birks nod thegither — clash o claikin quines  
A beech tree's fuserin ghaist-ales tae a cloud

Sma bandies shoogle dwaumin bi the banks  
The wechty watter's lappin at their lug  
A fisher wheeps a line slang a puil  
Soft breezes gie carl doddie powes a rug

Like pink pagodas Wandrin Willies rise  
A heeze o midgies steer in nippy ranks  
A wid-wasp tries a fox-glove on fur size  
The nettle stang's a fire along the shanks

The yoam o Simmer's wauchtin frae the wids  
The barley boos its bonnie, braided tap  
Fern furls her feathered airms abune the brae  
Trout lowp like commas, plunkin wi a plap.

Aside the slokin waves, thin-shankit girse  
Hings dowie, dreepin dreich as widda's weeds  
A muckle aix ootraxes hyne alaft  
A daunce o licht an shade amang the reeds.

Neb beeriet far the thrissle breists the brae  
A muir-moch frae a den o dappled neuks

Flits far tod-haunted shaddas sook the sun  
A futterat pads, a moosie in her cleuks.

Tail-en o Simmer's sweet slang the Dee  
The larick biggs a reef ower glidin deer  
Hawk hings, a bolt o lichtnin on the wing  
Hairst-sizzen, reamin brose bowl o the year.

## 2. Daith

Daith meeves amang us, sleekit vratch  
His victim's ill tae ken  
He makks a gairden o us fowk  
Syne pues ane bi ane

## 3. The Quoich

Fin pibroch lingers on the lug  
Fin wauchts o simmer come unsocht  
Fin saftsome wins, the laricks, rug,  
The Quoich rins aften ben ma thocht.

A Heilan cateran, its puils  
Are targs o crystal, purest glaisse  
Whyles in a tuilzie, ower it sweels  
In Simmer, gowd. In Autumn, braisse.

Swack as a dauncer kicks her queats  
Or swippert troot owerlowps a steen  
The Quoich jinks roon a broon beech-foun,  
A bonnie, bricht, plaid-preen.

The stars that licht the Heavens bi nicht  
Skinkle atap her waves bi day  
Pit-mirk draps doon her dusky gown  
The shade, in ilkie amber bay

A fuser o rebellion hings  
Yet, in the haughs o lowrin bens  
Far Bobbin John cried oot the clans  
A hornets' nest, that teemed the glens.

The dawnin studs the Quoich wi dyew  
The merle rings her banks wi sang  
A hunner hare bells tinkle noo  
Far anely ghaists an ghillies gyang.

#### 4. Bog

Secrets bide in the bog  
O warld, an weird, an wid  
Still, an quate as a thocht  
Sooked deep doon, an hid.

Midnicht meens lie there  
Happt bi broon peat bree  
Like coins in a kelpie's lair  
Ye've tyned, an canna pree.

Secrets bide in the bog  
O warld, an weird, an wid  
Still, an quate as a thocht  
Sooked deep doon, an hid.

#### 5. The Bombing

"Faither, fit kinno birdie's yon? "  
Speired a loon at the door  
"Anely a seagull hashin on  
Fur the cauld sea shore."

"Faither, fit kinno soun is yon  
I hear aboon? "  
"Anely the birr o traffic, bairn,  
Gaun ben the toun."

"Faither, fit kinno ferlie's yon  
That faas frae high? "  
"A deidly floer that blooms like a rose  
Come back inbye."

"Twelve hooses stude slang the road  
An noo there's nine."  
"Gie thanks that War has passed us ower..."



This time, "

## 6. Skyscraper Faimly

Skyscraper faimly, it maun be a chore  
Bidin twenty storeys frae yer ain front door.  
Bi day ye've gulls fur neebors, syne ye've stars aa nicht  
Save on the electric wi the meen fur licht.

Skyscraper faimly, it's affa heich, yer hoose.  
Div ye keep a bat there, far we nicht hae a moose?  
Fit a tapsalteerie wunner o a street  
Faimlies at yer heid, ay, an ithers at yer feet.

Skyscraper faimly, dis yer washin dry?  
Dis yer mither peg it onno rainbows in the sky?  
Div ye get a hurl on a passin aeroplane?  
Veesit Spain an Italy, syne hame fur tea again?

Skyscraper faimly, ye've affa far tae faa  
Naewye tae play wi a bicycle or baa.  
Fin the bairn greets, dae ye hing her on a cloud?  
My, it maun be lanely, hyne abeen the crowd.

## 7. The Keepsake

Nae as muckle's a fitscraper  
Nee as muckle's a braisse bawbee  
Did Aunt Margity pairt wi.  
An ye canna come richt oot 'n speir  
Wi the corp nae cauld.  
Bit dam't, I wis sweir  
Tae leave yon bottle o Dimple  
Wi gaed Uncle John last New Year  
An him twa-fauld wi the flu  
We'd jist be claimin wir ain  
Gin we socht it, widn't we noo?

"The pooch o a shroud's gey teem"  
Said Dougal an me.  
"Ay, bit I'm nae the body that's weirin it"  
Back cracks she.

"John promised tae leave me a keepsake",  
Quo Teenie frae Brighton.  
"Ah weel, " sez the widda,  
"Ye'll hae't ... gin he's pit it in writin."

"Yon clock on the mantle  
Belanged tae great granfaither Sim"  
Quo Bunty an Bert.  
"I thocht that it made a guid price  
Fin I selt it, ". Said Aunty rale smert

Gin ye hear a reeshle like leaves on the windae pane  
It's anely Aunt Margity, coontin her siller her lane.  
She sleeps on a bunnle o fivers, as cosy's a tup  
An pyes her ain cockerel, at daybrakk, tae wauken her up.  
She haives 50ps at the fleas fin they bizz roon her heid  
Shews a hunner poun patch on a swatch o her trews wi a threid.  
She's a necklace o tippences strung like a fence roon her thrapple  
An as muckle ten pences at hame as wad beery a Chapel.

## 8. Care

Wisna easy, y'unnerstaun...  
Ye war her flesh an bluid  
Seed o er seed  
Bit she jist cudna haunle it  
Jist cudna thole it, see?  
Nae wye fur a hame tae be  
Wi a bairn, boss o the hoose  
Oot on the loose

Oot oan the street's  
Nae place fur a halflin geet.

A wee bit gallus loon,  
Sudna be daein the Kung Fu  
Drinkin the feekie wine  
Winchin an chorin  
Ettin the magic mushies  
Sniffin the glue  
Caain

aa

bastard

doon.

She did it  
Fur yer immortal soul  
Yer moral safety  
Yer siblins welfare  
Her ain sanity  
She did it fur  
Peace an quate  
It wis a sair finality...

Abune aa  
She did it fur  
Fit she thocht wis best  
She pit ye  
Intae care  
Ooto care.  
It crucifeed her —  
A corp that winna dee  
Nur lay tae rest  
She signed oan the dotted line  
The Judas haun, that cowped ye  
Frae the nest.

Yer a credit noo  
Tae aa the multiple stauners-in  
Mithers baith he-male and she-male  
Ye met in the Child-care zoo  
PS She nearly furgoat tae say  
She Luvs you

#### 9. Garlogie School, Circa 1915

Slowly an sadly we laid him doon  
We rubbit his nose in butter  
We pit him in a sardine tin  
An floatit him doon the gutter!

#### 10. Quasimodo

The sweet rot o the bramble buss,  
Scratched entanglement o firs,  
Places o half licht,  
Are jungles o concealment.  
Shaddaes, lang i the sun,  
Cannibalised, amang a wab o jylers.  
A wounded boar, riven wi spears  
Will drag its dreepin spoor  
Along the daithly puddock steel  
Far few daur gang.  
I turn my spears, in their kent agonies  
Watchin them bleed in secret;  
Drag my Achilles heel,  
Disdainin calipers,  
The quasimodo hump, sae weel  
Attached, I canna lay it doon,  
An wid be tint wi'oot ...  
True Tammas, wi his honest tongue  
Sisyphus, wi his stane,  
The fykes an flecks o  
An ill load, culled,  
In the pebble wame,  
Oot-scalin o insanity.  
Cauld comfort,  
Wi the cosie name,  
o poetry.

#### 11. Simmer Strand, North Sea Beach

The simmer sea's a keekin glaiss  
The lift, soft as a cooshie doo  
Teets in o't, wi an ee o oo  
Drappin feathers, pink, an grey, an pearl  
The sun skytes doon a sunbeam ower the swirl  
O buttercup-bobbin waves  
Chasin their blae begetters  
Inno sandy graves.

Shoals o seagulls skreich;  
Roch-wirdit fishwives,  
They stalk the satty bree  
On reid-raw shanks, fat matrons, ooto pech

Hopin a prize tae pree.

“John lues Stacy”

Screived along the sand

Laists till the tide

Owersweels the wattery strand

The sea sooks staves like bylins intae smush

Till they’d fit ben the ee o a needle

A skittery hurlygush

O teenie-weenie grains

Reeshlin along the sea’s unfaddomed veins

The waves are shelties,

Ruled bi the meen’s reins.

## 12. Willie Tawse

Fin e’re the hoolet cried “hoot-toot”

Willie Tawse stravaiged aboot

Like a futterat he wid prance

At a rave, he’d heid the dance

He’d shakk, he’d lowp, like fire in’t smiddy

Like ony wino on reid-biddy

He widna wirk, tho far frae glekit

Langsyne his schulin he’d forsakit

Bit mair an mair, nocturnal grew

(Apairt frae signin on the Broo)

Aa day, some like a crooshied clout

Ower sofa, he’d be streekit oot

Ye’d takk him fur a Wally dug

Or flattened Oriental rug

He widna meeve... jist snored, an fleched

An moched an raxxed an dwaumed an peched

Till, on the T.V. horror picturs

O timmer-sarked, wirm-etten craiturs

Gart littlins shakk. Oot on the loose

Willie wid steer, an leave the hoose

Wi ither flee-bi-nichts hobnobbin

Will-o-the-wisps at discos bobbin

Bit wheesht... I hardly daur tae tell

About the cheenge come ower himsel  
For Willie's snoot grew sherp an pynted  
Like sleekit tod, wi nicht anointed  
His lug turned saucer-shaped's a bat  
His ee luiked nerra as a cat  
Like strippit brock, his guff wis rank  
Nee langer roon the quines he'd swank  
For frae his sheen, new-riven teirs  
Showed orra cleuks, a ratten, weirs.  
This mixer-maxter breet-cum-human  
Turned blaik's a cauldron o bitumen

A rareity, pur Willie Tawse  
Fa'd brukken aa o natur's laws  
Bedd hame affrontit. Stoor crept ower  
His taes, his kyte, his verra glower  
As deid's a curtain's velvet tossle  
Willie Tawse, becam a fossil  
O raves an discos, bairns, be feard  
Mind ye on Willie Tawse's weird

#### Auld Curiosity Shop

Fower ferlies bedd in a neuk  
A clarsach, a clock, a plate  
Wi a caunlestick, yalla's a stook  
Fa keepit his coonsel quate.

The clarsach's trimmlin note  
Aince gart a laird takk tent  
Ae pluck o her warblin throat  
Aa sorra an blytheness blent

The ashet frae Auld Japan  
A gairden catched in his glaze  
Far a Geisha flutteret her fan  
A Mandarin tae bumbaze

The clock wi her kennin face  
Keepit time tae a littlin's lauch  
Till the littlin grew twa-fauld  
An the braith o't wis snippit aff.

The caunlestick cast a lowe  
Ower a leddie's keekin glaiss  
The licht ay cocks its powe  
The vauntie leddy's aisse.

#### 14. A Bumbee Stang Me

A bumbee stang me  
I winna tell ye far  
A bumbee stang me  
I winna tell ye far  
A bumbee stang me  
I winna tell ye far  
Roon at the back o  
My jeely jar!

#### Green the Grocer-Oh

A fragment of a cornkister composed by the poet's grandfather Alexander Middleton, born Gellan Coull 1877, died East Mains Aboyne the tune Rothesay-oh

A kintra chiel made up his min'  
Tae stert a business in Abyne  
Abune the door he hung his sign  
'T wis Davie Green the Grocer-oh  
An if at nicht yer feelin dry  
The Charleston it will not supply  
Jist takk a dander roon the wye  
O Davie Green the Grocer-oh

#### Chorus

Caunlesticks caunles castor-ile  
Fleein machines o the latest style  
Aathin ye wint wi a cheery smile  
Frae Davie Green the Grocer-oh

A stickin plaister fur a sair  
Or soothin iyntment he'll prepare  
The druggist caas him somethin mair  
Nur Davie Green the Grocer-oh  
A stud o splendid horse he's got  
At cairtin jobs he's keen tae quote  
Auld Middleton he cud see him shot

Davie Green the Grocer-oh!

Tod

Tammy tod ahin the dyke  
Did ye steal Dan Wabster's bike?  
Faither says that we maun watch  
Ye, ye tarry fingered vratch

In the hen hoose on the lea  
Are twa hens, far there war three  
Wi a dyeukie in yer mou  
I saw ye creepin ben the dyew

I ken ye canna help bit reive  
Bit its agin man's law tae thieve  
Tammy Tod, foo wad ye wyle  
The days awa, stappt in the jyle?

17 The Futterat

The futterat snaps up mice, fur a wager  
His mowser's brave as a serjeant major  
His een are hat preens  
Pink's yer crannie  
He likes bluid,  
Sae ye'd best ca-cannie  
He'd hae yer haun aff  
Flesh, thoomb, been  
His teeth's as sherp as a guillotine  
He guffs like a rotten, rottin in a drain  
Lowps ben the girse like a rin-a-wa train  
Like a wee fite brig  
Staunin humphy ower a burn  
Wi his twa een bleezin  
He'll stop an turn  
An "Wha daur meddle wi me? " he'll spit  
"I'm as jobby as a thrissle an I'm faist o wit  
I can lowp, I can fecht, I can rin upstairs"  
Bide awa frae the futterat  
Or LUIK OOT FOR SAIRS!

18. The Heilan Fling



Licht's a harebell on the Ben  
Straucht's a thrissle doon the glen  
Bob an birl like Jenny Wren  
Tae daunce the Heilan fling oh

Like a stag wi kinnelt bluid  
Airm, razzed heich abune her heid  
Ilkie step, a patterned threid  
Tae daunce the Heilan fling oh

Velvet jaiket, siller braid  
Kilt an bonnet, tartan plaid  
Brooch an buckle fur the maid  
Tae daunce the Heilan fling oh

Hear the rousin bagpipe skirl  
Gars the pulse tae stoun an dirl  
She maun lowp an hooch an birl  
Tae daunce the Heilan fling oh.

#### 19. Daddylanglegs

Daddylanglegs, like a crane  
Stots aroon the windae pane  
On his stilts he styters ben  
Wandrin Willies in the fen  
Like a muckle lang giraffe  
Ower mony legs bi hauf!

#### 20. Midgies

Vampires roon the campfires  
Heeze heeze heeze  
Midgies midgies midgies  
Dinna bite please!

Gang tae Transylvania  
Gang an takk a dook  
Midgies midgies midgies  
Yer naethin bit a sook!

From a traditional bairn rhyme, spoken by Charles Middleton

A B C

Fin I wis three  
I eesed tae like a tatty  
Noo I'm fower,  
Fowk staun an glower  
An aabody caas me fatty...,

in the Glen

Doon in the glen  
Wi horns like lums  
The snailie sleeps  
An the wyver thrums  
An the mavis threips  
Her sma sma tune  
Doon in the glen  
At the broon beech foun

ers

The rottens daunced alang the barn  
The glegs they pranced abune the sharn  
Up bi the burn, fur a braisse bawbee  
Willie McArthur daunced wi me!

ess Craw

Mistress Craw  
Sat doon tae jaw  
Bit aa her neebors  
Ran awa!

Hornygollach

I met a hornygollach.  
I winna tell ye far —  
His heid wis facin North an East  
An fit wis even waur  
His airms an legs war bandy, fegs,  
His teeth bedd in a jar.

I met a hornygollach.  
I likit him rale weel

He bood tae me, an leuch tae me  
An daunced the eichtsme reel.

ie

Snailie snailie on the waa  
Are ye niver feart ye'd faa?  
Wi yer hoosie on yer back  
Like a hiker wi a pack?  
Feech, snailie, dicht yer snoot  
Slivvrin ower the waiter spoot!

## 27. Winter

The sna's here  
It drappit doon  
A duvet ower the park  
Let oot a sneeze  
Amang the trees  
On ilkie timmer bark  
Jack Frost he peintit siller  
On the fir tree's sark.

The sna's here  
The robin wytes  
Fur me tae gie him breid  
His breist is nippit wi the cauld  
It's dirlin-sair, an reid  
His granny sud hae wuvven him  
A toorie fur his heid!

The sna's here  
The icicles like  
Antlers o a stag  
Are hingin lang an pyntit  
Wi ilkie win they wag  
An aa the clouds abune the crowds  
Are playin tig an tag

28. Traditional Bairn Sangs as taught to the poet by her father, Charles  
Middleton, Aboyne

My mither said  
I maun go  
Wi ma daddy's denner-o  
Chappit tatties, beef an steak  
Twa reid herrin an a bawbee cake

I cam tae a river  
I cudna get across  
I pyed 5 shullins  
Fur an auld blin horse  
I jumped on his back  
An I gied him sic a crack  
That I made him daunce the polkie  
Till the boat cam back

### 29. Dandy

My lad's a bonnie lad  
My lad's a dandy  
My lad's a bonnie lad  
He likes sugar candy  
Gin ye wint tae gie him a dram  
Dinna gie him brandy  
Takk the bottle frae his heid  
An gie him sugar candy

### 30. Doric Food Rap

Birssle! Birssle! sing the twa broon kippers  
Caught fur the grill bi the North East skippers  
Oatcakes, cornflakes, da likes haddies  
"Weetabix fur us" cry growin laddies!  
Granda's suppin up pease-meal brose  
Gyad! Yon's scunnerin, haud yer nose.  
Granda's teeth's in a wee fite mug  
Doon gaes the pease-meal — Glug, glug, glug.  
Molly, the collie, chaws an auld coo's been  
The catty gnaws a ratty wi its milk an cream.

Skweel denner's trendy... Mine's a pyock  
O chips wi a burger an a can o Coke  
Kali, frae Bali, in classroom three

Swallaes her chippataes wi a cup o tea  
Dod, Jean, n' Donna, sit doon tae dine  
On a parten, an a labster, frae the ocean brine.

Hame tae teas-snuff the smells as roon!  
Hairy tatties wyte fur Willy Broon  
Pizza fur Peter brocht frae Italy  
Omelette fur Jessie bocht in gay Paree  
Stir-fry chucken jist fur Mary Ann  
Paella fur Bella — chilli fur Sam.  
Mary Buchan's waukin back tae stovies  
Mrs Giuseppi's dishin up anchovies  
Jimmy May'll hae a plate o skirly  
Cullen skink is in the pan fur Shirley  
An I can tell bi the sea-fish-bree  
There's buckies bilin in the hob fur me!

On wi the jammies — suppertime noo  
Shortbreid, cocoa, my kyte's fu!

### 31. Fairm Toun

Cross rinnin watter — turn a nippy neuk  
Skiff roon a dyke an wauk a ferny brae  
Sheep dover in the gloamin. Rowans, dwaum  
The mist amang the birks is furlin, fey.

It rings the fairm biggins like a torc  
A hoolet flichtert frae a beech's fork  
Sae saft's the grey curmurrin o the doos  
Bees sikk their skepps, the wechty barley boos.  
Heich simmer in the Howe. Page frae perfection, torn  
Rigs reeshle, green wi girse, or gowd wi corn!

### 32.'The days are riggin us in blaik'

Al-Maarri: Persian Poet, died 1058. Inglis Translator Henry Baerlein.

The days are riggin us in blaik  
Fur Him fa'd hing us like craws.  
There's nae daith fur the sun. I ken  
The centuries are nippicks o the nicht.

Hinna ye heard wyce bodies gie the dreich threip?

That spite o wir bigsy wyes  
Wir bit quaet shaddas,  
Tied tae wir taes.

First ae religion's tapmaist  
Till anither's briered  
Fur man can niver thole a mortal weird  
Bit ay sikks anither gowk-spikk.

God's abü'll niver win  
Wir freedom, frae hauns that  
Dig wir mools.  
Nor can we shakk aside the wechty cloud  
Mair nur a slave can brakk  
The hefty chyne that rules.

et in Scots frae The Prophet/The Druid, Kahilil Gibran

Quo a wife wi a bairn at her breist  
"Spik till's o littlins"  
Sae he made repon, "Yer bairns arena yer bairns  
They're the bairns o Life's Langin fur leevin.  
They traivel ben ye,  
Bit arena pairt o ye. They bide wi ye  
An yet ye dinna ain them;  
Ye may gie them luv  
Bit nae yer thochts.  
Their thochts are aa their ain...  
Ye makk a bield fur their flesh  
Bit nae their speerit,  
Fur their speerit bides  
In the Hoose o the Morn  
An that ye canna veesit  
Nae even in yer dwaums  
Fur life gyangs aywis forrit  
Niver back"

Quo a mason, steppin forrit  
"Spik tae us o hooses"  
Sae he made repon  
"Bigg in yer thochts a sheilin in the muir  
Er ye bigg a hoose in the toun

Fur fin ye gyang hame in the gloamin  
Sae dis the gangrel inbye ye  
The Iver-Afar-Aa-Alane

Yer hoose is yer greater body.  
It grows i' the sun,  
It sleeps i' the quate o nicht,  
It isna teem o dwaums.  
Dis yer hoose nae dwaum,  
An dwaumin, quit the toun  
Fur wid, or muirlan brae?

Tell's, fowk o Orphalese  
Fit keep ye in yer hames?  
Fit is't ye guaird  
Wi snibbit doors?  
Is't peace? Is't mem'ries? .  
Yon glimmin brigs  
That raxx along the summits o the Mind?  
Is't bonnieness o speerit?  
Tell's — hae ye these  
Inbye yer hames?  
Or hae ye anely comfort — an the wint o comfort  
That sleekit scunner that gains the hoose, a guest  
Syne feenishes its host, its verra maister  
Its hauns are saft. Its hairt's forged in the smiddy  
The lust fur comfort smores the speerit  
Syne wauks smirkin tae the kirkyaird like a gowk.

ess an Luv

Owersettins Freely Made in Scots o Yunus Emre's Verses o Wyceness an Luv Frae  
the Inglis settins o his wark in the buik 'City of the Heart; Screived bi Suha  
Faiz,1992 (Element)

Fin animate/inanimate are melled  
Ye ken nae wint, nae fleg  
Science an tcyauvin dwines awa  
Aa's ane. Nae scales. Nae brig.

Rowe yersel in Unity.  
Sing its sang richt merrily  
Tae leave ahin Duality

Oh thrall, foresweir Identity!

Cast doon yer plaid,  
Rin forrit, kin tae Kin  
Mirled wi the muckle Ben  
Tae ye, aa wyees syne win

Sense is nae langer socht  
A single Mou spikks ilkie leid  
An ilkie thocht that's iver Thocht  
Comes frae the selfsame Heid  
An ilkie claith that's iver vrocht  
Twines frae a single Threid.

Scottish Bairnies' Makker

"Is Jimmy Annand hereabouts?  
Tell him tae come ben"  
Cries auld St Andrew crouselly  
"There arena mony men

Can reel a rhyme as guid's a gird  
The little fowk tae cheer  
Throw monys the stoory classroom  
His wirds, like caunles, brier.

Thon gleg Scots wirds the lave ower gie  
Tae muckle wechty thocht  
Forgettin ilkie siller pound  
Is wi smaa pennies bocht

Bring Jimmy Annand ower tae me  
At rhyme, there's nane that's swacker  
An he sall be at my richt knee  
The Scottish bairnies' makker."

36. "Tak tent. Ma wirds are steerin again": Fragments o Colotes

Tak tent. Ma wirds are steerin again  
Claikin tae thirsels, wi me  
Harknin tae them, fooshionless.  
Puir Colotes, vratch an gadaboot o the thochts



Aywis harknin tae the wirds reamin ower  
Sayin, "Ye, Colotes,  
Colotes, ye o Lampsacus, born  
Amangst the olive wids an crickets  
An splytrin burns, an crickets, rinkin on  
Blythe in the sun, rinkin on aboot  
The pleisur o bein blythe in the sun  
Ye, Colotes, (ye'll mind the name aa richt)  
Cricket o Lampsacus  
Pleisur-sikker, underling, skiffie o the bluidy sun,  
(An yon's jist dandy, sez I)  
Skiffie o sorts tae a claikin tongue  
Ay harkin tae fit  
It's claikin aboot Blytheness  
An the state o yer Sowel."  
Mind... The state o ma sheen  
Hisna a luik in!  
Nae yet, onywy.  
Nae on a day like this  
Wi the sun warmin the yird tae stoor  
An buggar aa else adee.

### 37. The Man in the Meen

The man in the meen is a hardy gurrin  
Wi ice in his ee, an stars in his sporrin  
He teets in the windaes, the burns, the lochs  
The puils in the cassies, the stirkies' trochs

He strikks a glint frae a futterat's cleuks  
Draps spirks o fire on the weety stooks  
He's the will-o-the-wisp in the blaik pit-mirk  
Crackin a spunk on the crookit birk

He kinnles a lowe in the sharn bree  
Syne lichts the bawd wi her littlins three  
Taps the spire o the cantie kirk  
Till it's fite's a swan an as clear's a dirk

He heids the onguans, at Halloween  
The auldest warlock the world's seen  
King o the ghaists an the bogles tae

He's the leerie-man o Hogmanay

An ill-faschent carl, fa glowers aroon  
The crannies an neuks o the sleepin toun  
The tod an her littlins ken him weel  
He's the lamp that brichtens the hoolets' meal

Nicht-watchie abeen the ocean wave  
Guairdin the cradle an the grave  
He's a gangrel cheil o the traivellin race  
Wi a pack on his back an a big, bap, face

He bedds him doon in a dubby park  
Wi his quine, the gloam, an his loon, the dark  
"Ta ta" sez he, "I'll be back the nicht  
Brichtenin the world wi ma oorie lichts"

### 38. Here's the Kirk

Here's the kirk, an here's the steeple  
Open the yetts, an here's the people  
The meenister preached tae Thee an me  
"Aabody's damned bit us, " quo he  
"The Turks, the Hindis, the Chinee tee  
Fur we are the chosen people"

### 39. Trial by Cutlery

Serviette ower lap or thrapple?  
Blaw on soup — or brunt yer mou?  
Ett yer pudden wi a fork.  
Yon's a stammygaster, noo!

Brakk a croissant wi yer fingers?  
(Fur it skytes aneth a knife  
Flees across yer ashet makkin  
Squarly fur yer host's guidwife.)

Mind yer pan-loaf, dinna steep it  
In the broth, syne steer it ben  
Dinna speir fit's in the tatties  
Fegs, ye widna wint tae ken.

Niver news wi half a pheasant  
Keekin oot atween yer lips  
Dinna glug the wine like Bacchus  
Dilettantes sup in sips

Gin yer cutlery's gey stoory  
Niver dicht it on yer brikks  
Till they bring ben the Drambuie  
Ae fause move, ye've crossed the Styx.

Villa, Alcludia

Sun, shadda, palm.  
Thrush's clashin anvil  
Teem shell

Sun, shadda, palm  
Time's sounless file  
Teem lairach.

Blues

Gairdens are stane Bastilles  
Waas spiked wi shards o glaisse  
Far fat-arsed corgies  
Fyle smaa squars o girse.  
Gin ye stravaig tae a park  
The world an its wife are there  
Tirrin a creashie sark  
Tae the tinnie berr o trannies,  
The lawns, shaved flat's a bap.  
Gin ye stravaig tae the beach  
The sea wull wash a condom  
Ower yer sannies,  
Served wi a satty plap.

Like human hutches,  
Each wi'ts ain wee run  
Wir gairdens thole dreich doonpish,  
Wattery sun  
Glimsks ower a toun wi granite biggins happed

Ilk knowe and howe ceemented ower an capped  
Wi forests o street lichts  
Rivers o fowk rin reamin ower the cassies  
The lift is blae wi rikk  
Cars, breenge an berr  
Wi seagull-drappins  
Clartit ower their chassies  
As sweir an contermaschious as Auld Nick

The days are threidbare  
Fur the indiginous Scot.  
The nichts hing doon like bats,  
Frae a thoosan semis an flats  
Clashes the claik  
O fremmit ile incomers  
Makkin wir wyes an heirskip  
Seem a wake.  
Gaels, claw respect an siller frae fat cats  
Oor lan, an leid, is  
Cairtit aff bi rats.

#### 42.AIDS

The act o luv brings daith instead o life  
The plague o AIDS strikks silent as a scythe  
The Reaper skitters skulls mangst bits o bairns  
Takks flooers frae luvvers' hauns, tae hansel cairns.

#### 43. A Thing of Beauty is a Joy Forever/ Birse Farmer, Circa 1963

Heich simmer makks the hochs a love-juice cauldron.  
Dauchlin astride a sunshine-drookit dyke  
I heard an engine purr, an iron bawdron.  
The bowfin o a coo's-lick touslie tyke.

Syne suddent, frae ayont deep shaddaed trees  
A fairm-chiel drave his combine ower the lan  
The jetty curls upon his broo ableeze  
Wi sun, as ony bonnie Grecian Pan

Braid showders, glistenin broon, the loon, bare-backit  
Sat squar abune the corn like a young God

Ridin alang the barley-rigs half-nyaakit  
Watched bi a lustfu virgin, an a bawd.

Reid kerchief lichtly wippit neth his chin  
A mou wad sook the hinney frae a bee  
Sweet fusslin, ower the birrin chariot's din  
He smiled full on me, wi a bull-black ee.

Twa birdies flichtered, coortin ben the corn  
Syne drappt tae couple, as pretensions turred  
Their birdsang like the soundin o a horn  
Biddin me cast ma bairnhood tae the yird.

He raise tae cry his tyke, the stoot claith held  
The fite swan o his secret manhood trussed  
As faist's a muir-fire wi a breem is melled  
I kent the gnaawin thorn-stob o lust.

44. Januar

The year birls on its axle  
Rikk frae a wintry reef  
Is a ribbon o grey frae a cauldron  
Furled like a cassen leaf

Hyne in the wast, cauld cailleachs  
The ghaists o the Grampians lie  
Back o the ploo far the bare birks boo  
Is blaik's a tinker's gley

A keekin glaiss o watter  
Is the puil that the dubs rise roon  
Far the elfin green o the chitterin breem  
Casts its drookit likeness doon

Straicht lines o Black Watch sodjers  
Haudin their bayonets heich  
Are the fir wids raxxed ower fairmlans  
Far the leaden lift hings dreich

Januar — spinnly branches  
Wi their fingers about tae brier

Throw the snaw an haar o steen-cauld glaur  
Gie birth tae the bairn-new year.

45. The Sang o Amheirgin: owersett in Scots

I am a stag o seeven tines  
I am a spate alang a lea  
I am a win ower lochan deep  
A tear, the sun loots doondrap free  
I am an ern abeen the Craig  
I am a stob aneth a nail  
I'm a bumbazement mangst the flooers  
I am a warlock... it's masel  
Kinnles the cweel heid reid wi rikk.  
I am a spear raxxed heich fur bluid  
I am the salmon in the puil  
I am a lure frae Tir-nan-Og  
A knowe far sennachies travail  
I am a boar, rampagin reid  
A hurlygush o waefu weird  
Drooned daith, aneth the ocean's sweel  
I am a bairnie ... fa bit me  
Teets far fey staunin steens are stapped?  
I am the wame far otters bide  
I am the sunbleeze on the knowe  
In ilkie bees' skepp, I'm the bride  
I am the bield fur ilkie powe  
The mool, far ilkie hope is happed.

46. Yule & Simmer

Owerset in Scots frae the Welsh poet Thomas Telynog Evans(1840-65)

Aa the blytheness o Natur  
Beeriet in the mools o blaikest Yule!  
The win sang a dowie lament —  
Sic dule in its cauld cry keenin!  
Syne the girthy Simmer daunces ben  
A rowth o life in its airms  
Skitterin rosie flooers sae bonnily brierin  
Ower broo o knowe an glen.  
In bonnie unity, the wid dons its green goun  
Simmer cocks on the throne wi the ae eerin

Tae strum its clarsach, the willow  
Fa's strings hung quaet, sae wizzent wi wae in Yule  
Noo, singin its ain sang —  
Wheeshtie. Tak tent! Tak tent!  
The warld is steerin.

#### 47. The Burn an the Ben

Owerset in Scots frae the Welsh poet John Ceirog Hughes (1833-87)

Burn o the Bens, slokin an pure  
Birlin doon tae the glen  
Fusperin sangs i' the girse  
Wad that I war as ye!

Heathery knowes in flooer  
At sicht o thee langin owercams me  
Tae bide on the Ben wi ye, if  
Foreay mangst the win an ling.

Sma birds o the mighty Ben  
That soar i' the caller air  
Flichterin frae tap tae tap  
Wad that I cud jyne thee!

Bairn o the Bens am I  
Hyne frae hame, in the dreich deid-thraa  
My hairt is ay in the glen  
Wi the heather, an birdies smaa.

#### 48. Tae the Sun

Owerset in Scots, frae the Heirskip o the Scots Gaels

"Guidday tae ye, sun o the Sizzens.  
As ye traivel the lift hyne abune  
Stinch is yer fit on the clouds  
Blythe mither o the starnies."

"Ye coorie doon in the gurly sea  
Withoot skaith, and or the hint o a scrat  
Syne rise up ower the quaet wave  
'Bune aa, a young quine flooerin! "

49. Heich fur Houghmagandie!

The makk o man is richt designed  
A wummin's pud tae pleisur  
Gin he's weel-hung, she'll draa the bung  
Tae praise him in guid meisur

An he may chap his tirlin-pin  
Her yett tae caa ajee  
Fur ilkie merry maid maun hae  
A jo tae birzel wi

The mount o Venus boos tae grip  
A stick o Adam's stock  
The tappit hen lies doon afore  
The crawin o the cock.

In mony's a hame at dawn o day  
The spurtle bangs the coggie  
An gin it winna, wives will gie  
The guidman's cod a shoggie

Sae shortsome, shortsome is the nicht  
Warmed bi anither's shanks  
Weel leeze-ye 'tween the snawy sheets  
Fin luv kicks aff the branks

Some worship lear, an ithers, gear  
Gie me a rousin randy  
A brawny back, tae stap a crack  
Syne heich fur houghmagandie!

50. "In This Braif Toun": No363 Union Street (Bruce Miller's)

Afore that this braif toun wis bigged ava  
Langsyne the lan wis roch, an taiged wi whin  
A puckle staunin stanes raise tae the sky  
A Druid circle in the keenin win

The pagan priests were maisters o the dark  
The Lang Stane bides ... a marker tae their wark  
Ony fa sikk tae shift it, coort a curse



Loss o their hearth an hame, their gear, or worse.

A puckle wars, a Celtic thane or twa  
Disturbed this airt o muirlan bog an breem  
The Causey Mounth — yon auld road frae the coast  
Cut ben its braes frae Sooth tae Aiberdeen  
The infant toun that traded bi the sea  
Bairn o the dimplin Don, the sparklin Dee.

The cruel Montrose set aathin tae the sword  
An sacked & plundered wi his Heilan horde  
Syne doon yon road the deein an the deid  
Fled frae the toun an washed the braes in bluid.

The lan wis tamed, the yalla corn waved heich  
An strawberry gairdens ripened in the sun  
A country idyll far the tounsfowk strayed  
A tryst fur lovers, fin the day wis done  
Until the swallin toun raxxed oot an airm  
Flang Union Street throw gairden, glebe, an fairm.

Braw granite hooses grew frae corn & peat  
An doctors gaithered, snod as Harley Street  
In yon, the genteel quarter o the fen  
Far swanky gigs an broughams cantered ben  
Stablin, an cairriage hire wis 'stablished near  
Tae park yer shelt, ooto the business steer.

In 1890, in this self-same neuk  
A maister-craftsman warked wi willin bent  
Carver & gilder, Thomas Hampton tcyaaved  
Tae earn a bawbee an tae pye his rent  
Syne Galloway & Sykes tuik ower his gear  
An leased the feu fur mair nur echty year.

Noo Music's selt here, fur the thrivin toun  
Piano & fiddle cheer the cassies' croun  
Druid & crofter, doctor, fairmer, tee  
They as hae bidden here, at 363.

51. Ins an Oots

They skelp a baa aroon a park, aimin fur a hole  
Preenin aa their veesion on a flag abune a pole —  
Or kick a baa aroon the girse, dubs frae buits tae knee  
Rinnin back an forrit, like a reid-ersed bee.  
Powk a baa along a cloot, aimin fur a neuk,  
Doon it draps. Oh winnerfu! It disna. Fit a sook!

Wedded wives an bidie-ins, aa the truth maun face  
Fitba, snooker, rugby, gowf, hauds menfowks' pride o place  
Laundry, cookin, swypin styew... weemin bide at hame  
Skirlin littlins, shitey hippens, ilkie day the same...

Yon's Jock Sim stood at the door... Can Tam come fur a pint?  
He canna. Faith... he's 'neth the thoomb. His nose is ooto jynt.  
An gin ye gyangs, ye may be sure, ae pint is twalve an twa  
He'll drink a hauf wikk's wages doon... syne pee't agin the waa  
An hyter hame a sorry sicht... wi pub in tow  
(Jist drapped in fur a news ye ken, fur drams an cairds till 5 am...  
Fit needs there be a row?)

They caa this thralldom 'wedded bliss'... ye'll find they dinna grudge it  
Tae chyne ye tae a kitchie sink, wi bairns on a smaa budget.  
Tae pairt wi siller tae the wife wad jist be vile wastrie  
She'd spen it as on eesless dirt, like heatin, claes, an pastry.

I jinked the jyler. Noo my lane,  
There's naebody tells me 'Canna'  
Divorced, an sae I come an gae  
An naebody sez I mauna

Man's anely eese that I can see, is in aneth the sheets  
My perfect stud wad hae tae haud the virr o ten Magrittes  
A dash o Chopin, Freud, an Blake  
Moravia an Dali  
Georges Simenon, Hans Holbein, Keats,  
Buddha, Burns, an Saki  
Napoleon, Dante, Tarzan...  
Ted Hughes, an jist fur fun  
Leonidas, Aurelius,  
An Attila the Hun.  
Seamus Heaney, D.H. Lawrence,  
Poirot, Pepys an Heinrich Heine

... Bit I'd settle fur a shottie  
O a pairt-time concubine

Ay, luikin't up, an luikin't doon  
I'm nae in ony doot  
Afore I'd be a bidie-in  
I'd be a bidie-oot!

Sheena Blackhall

# Dublin

Baggot Road and Beggar's Bush  
Chancery Place, Fitzwilliam's Lane  
Meath Street, Cork Street, Misery Hill  
Gig wheels spin in spits of rain

Stoneybatter Road, the Spire  
Folk from Wexford, and County Clare  
Bride Road, Cuffe Street, Bachelor's Walk  
Buckos from Sligo and Rosslare

Abbey Street, Croke Park, and Cahir  
Waterford and the Liffey's banks  
Here the world's accents clash!  
Boston bleats out Howdee! Thanks!

Shannon, Limerick, Liverpool,  
Norway, Rajasthan, Killarney  
Here to sample the Irish wit  
Taste the Guinness and hear the blarney

Harmony Row, St Stephen's Green  
Fishamble Street, lush Phoenix Park  
The restless ghost of Oscar Wilde  
Strange assignments after dark

Platefuls of prawns from Dublin Bay  
Artists, poets, drunks and dreamers  
Cruises, buses, cobbles, crowds  
Foodies, fashionistas, schemers

Here's tattooists! Dolphins! Snugs!  
Cow's Lane. The bones of Strongbow, too  
Malahide Castle. Mussels, Punks  
Bretzel bagels and Irish stew.

The Jeanie Johnstone famine ship  
Shamrocks. A leprechaun's green hat  
Pigs' trotters, bog bodies, cold surf  
The Book of Kells. A mummified cat

The words of Behan, Beckett, Yeats  
Heaney and Wilde, Bram Stoker, Joyce  
Jonathan Swift, George Bernard Shaw  
Such craic as theirs made the world rejoice

Mulligan's Kehoe's and McDaid's  
All teem with diners, boozers, chancers  
Poets in search of Kavanagh  
Stand at the bar with toffs and dancers

Gulliver's Travels do not rate  
Nor Ulysses with his wanderings  
When Joy takes up its flute and pipes  
On Parnell Square, and your feet grow wings

There's Rock and Garage, Classics, Pop  
The Haepenny Bridge has heard them all  
The Duke of Wellington passed near here  
Where Mol Malone put on her shawl

Theatres and cupcakes, Garda, hurling  
An Angel, bullet-hole in chest  
High on O'Connell Street she stands  
Her badge of honour upon her breast

Wrens of the Curragh, long forgot  
Wraiths, slink in shame from their turf dens  
The lepers of St Stephen's Green  
Vanished, like mists from Gaelic Glens

Prick with a stick, Joyce statue, sees  
A wheelchair user, bald and bleary  
A girl in a leopard-skin print bra  
A red-nosed dosser, pissed and leery

Hags with the bags, life sized in bronze  
Immortalizing women's need  
To gossip, and set the world to rights  
The crowds in passing, pay scant heed.

Gum-chewing pony-tailed young man

Bare ankles and his shirt well worn  
Strolls past 'The Chariot of Life'  
(Or Mad Milkman as the statue's known)

In dyed pink hair, black at the roots  
In thong-toed sandals, toe-nails, gold  
And purple shorts (her bum cheeks hang  
Like melons, waiting to be sold)  
A tourist steps, with heavy pack  
To catch a show or ceilidh act

A tourist guide, her golden hair  
As fair as crinkle-cut French fries  
Smiles to her queue of skinny jeans  
With resignation in her eyes

While labourers, bellies over belts  
Dig drains where Trinity's on view  
As round the bollards and the fence  
Mohawk-haired scholars push on through

Here dove-grey Garda watch the horde  
Go by, their phones clamped to their ears  
Like limpets, while two lovers kiss  
An old drunk trips, tanked up with beers

Here Brendan, Aengus, Ciaran, Eamon  
Jostle to find a nice coleen  
Cathleen or Caitlin, Nora, Orla  
Who'll cook a stew or a nice drisheen

Rucksacks festooned with foreign flags  
Are used as seats by owners' asses  
A tomboy motorcyclist vrooms  
In bleached blond quiff, and huge black glasses

Full-bearded Moslem, acne-faced  
Leads forth his offspring like Van Trapp  
Sprinters and strollers, joggers, priests  
Shoppers and stragglers, baseball-capped  
All vie for right to hog the path  
Where do they go, this congregation?

Flanagan's pub? To work? Or home,  
Hoping no queues wait at the station?

Jewish Museum, jails, the Famine  
History seeps from the walls around  
Viking longships, Easter Monday  
Treasures above and underground

Georgian Mansion, & Bloomsday travels  
Beat of bodhran in the Temple Bar  
Darkey Kelly's, the Hairy Lemon  
Dublin's the place for a wandering star!

Sheena Blackhall

# Earth

Come close; come closer.  
You must.  
My lust is slow, but consuming.

Come blindly into my darkness,  
My wet, black rose.

I'll lay you down,  
I'll loosen your loins  
In my rich, sweet niche of rot.  
In the sift of ages,  
Pharoah and slave come hot  
To my tight embrace;  
My tawny sepulchral charms  
Are irresistible.

Don't quibble. We are well met.  
Not a single hair of your precious head  
Will I share.  
Your nacreous skull,  
The pearly gleam of your eyes,  
The curved rib of your hull  
Will launch me a forest yet.

I breed the power of the oak,  
The sloth of the snail.  
I swallow shadow and shape,  
I am the curving knife behind the eleventh veil.  
Returned to my midnight nursery,  
The prideful nettle, the timid Columbine,  
Eagle and ant and king in me combine.

I am the breast that feeds the suckling corn,  
I am the rag-doll bride of the plough.  
You who would reap my harvest,  
Now do you know who colours the morning green?

I am Queen of the May,  
I am the blood of the bull,



I am the seed of decay,  
I am the pounce of the owl,  
I am the door of dismay,  
I am the wolf's howl.  
I am end, and beginning of all,  
The roll of my heavy thigh, is rhythmic, seminal...

Hear me, each white, umbilical root  
(Desdemona abed with her Moor) ,  
I am a cruel Madonna  
Sharing the throne of the mole,  
I settle all dispute.

Sheena Blackhall

# Ebineezer Scrooge: A Scots Poem Version Of Charles Dickens 'a Xmas Carol'

The Victorian era wis byordnar jeelin  
Wi icicles hingin frae windaes an ceilin  
Bit inside an office in thrang Lunnon toun  
Wis the cauldest o chaumers in aa the warld roon

A clerk caad Bob Cratchit wis chitterin wi cauld  
For Scrooge wis a maister baith crabbit an auld  
Wi jist the ae coal hoastin rikk up the lum  
Maister Scrooge wad grudge even a robin a crumb

Twa cheils cam roon rattlin a charity tinnie  
He gied them a flee in their lugs, nae a penny  
Sae fin nephew Fred, young & cheery, appeared  
'Wad ye cam tae ma pairty, dear uncle?' he speired.  
'A pairty's for fowk that are saft in the heid  
Fin yer penniless dinna beg me for yer breid! "

The blin drift furred roon as Scrooge hytered back hame  
Tae his teem, fooshty chaumer, friendless an alane  
Syne tuik tae his bed tae save lichtin a lowe  
Fin an eildtrich-like soun hid him scrattin his powe  
The chaumer wis clunkin wi chynes bein hauled  
An horror o horrors! Physog grey an bauld  
Jacob Marley, frae ooto the mools latten free  
Tae tell Scrooge his pairtner the weird he wad dree  
The chynes Marley cairriet, his wyges in daith  
For squeezin bi greed fowk fin he still drew braith

'Three nichts in a raw, ye'll be met bi a ghaist  
Takk tent o each warnin, noo I maun makk haste  
Tae leave ye, for here cams the first o ma fiers.'  
Wi a wheech, Yuletide Past richt disjaskit appears  
Like a bairn. He takks Scrooge on a tour o yestreens  
His waesome upbringing, his schulin, cauld steens  
That wye on the miser's blaik hairt, syne they flit  
Tae Scrooge's apprenticeship. Fezziwig's fit  
Wis first in the dauncin an last tae be still

Wis there e'er sic a maister? He'd aye pour a gill  
O friendship an brandy tae warm Yuletide's jeel  
Even Scrooge luikin intae the past, wished him weel  
The ghaist didna dauchle, he hickled Scrooge ben  
Tae anither scene. Twa luvvers waukin a glen.  
Twis Belle, Scooge's quine that he'd wooed an betrothed  
'Yer luv's for anither since first ye proposed  
Tae me. Let's agree tae makk siller yer wife  
For greed hauds the tiller that steers yer new life.'

Neist meenit he's hame. Like a ceelestial strobe  
Yuletide Present awytes in a braw emerald robe  
'Aa I set afore ye this nicht will cam true  
Unless ye repent o yer grippiness noo'

The ghaist shaws him inno his clerk, Cratchit's hoose  
An a meal that wad scarce lay doon fat on a moose  
At the ingle, sits Teenie Tim, cripple an dweeble  
Smaa wyges provide smaa repast fur their table  
Gin a year tumbles roon, there'll be nae cripple's staa  
In puirtith an wint, he will dwinnle awa

Syne they wheech throw the air tae his nephew Fred's hame  
There's lauchter an blitheness. An Scrooge hears his name  
'It's a peety he aywis refuses each year  
Ma deid mither lued him. She'd wish he wis here.'  
The ghaist though, has aged, he's grown wizzent an spare  
Wi a lang baney finger, he pynts tae a pair  
O bairns coerin hungeret-like. 'Scrooge, takk ye heed:  
Ignorance is the quine, an the laddie's name's Need

Wi a grue, he has gaen. A derk body wauchts near  
The ghaist o the Yule that's tae cam in a year  
There's a fuser o Daith. Fowk hae rypit a kist  
O its gear, clyes an siller. Its ainer's nae missed  
In the world o business, the fowk's clashmaclavers  
Tell weel fu ill-thocht o he wis bi his neebors  
'Oh fa is the vratch that aa spikk o sae ill?  
The ghaist heists Scrooge up far the graves owerspill  
In the kirkyaird. New cuttit the name on't wis plain  
The name that he saw on the stane wis his ain!  
Scrooge drapped tae his knees, prigged an vowed he wad cheenge

Be better an kinder, gin Fate cud arrange  
Tae alter the pathwe his feet traivelled ower  
As gweed as his wurd he set aff in the oor  
A muckle fat goose he pits roon tae his clerk  
He raises his wyges, is kinder at wirk.  
Tae the puir cripple laddie, he gies education  
Fin speired, fit his cheenged him, quo Scrooge wi a wink  
'The Speerits o Yule are ower pouerfu tae jink! '

Sheena Blackhall

# Echo Of Rumi

A fish is floundering between hook and pike  
A hare blinks in the headlights  
Will I choose a nut or an apple this fine evening?

A pile of bones collapses soundlessly  
A log implodes into a pile of ash  
A lochan rises up in clouds of mist

Touching the hours, the void appears as normal  
I step through the glass in thought, unlike the swallow  
Broken-necked on the ground, its pulse-beat halted

My tides are pulled remorseless by grey hands  
A deerhound watches, emerald eyes ablaze

The deep beast in the loch  
Turns in its coils  
Too cold for me to fathom,  
Far, far down

Sheena Blackhall

# Elegy For A Son

'Yes, I am lying in the Ground  
But my lips are moving' : OsipMandelstam

Your life was a blind alley  
Of blacked out windows  
Perpetually stuck in a winter of the soul  
Tormented by Harpies

To ward off night terrors  
In childhood, you gripped your grandfather's hand

My little black pearl  
Your hopes were hammered out  
On a hard anvil  
The forge that beat your talents into ash

The family album's seared by your deletion  
Memory's the only dog-eared page that sticks

Nobody ever strewed your bed with petals  
Or opened your ears to the lark's ascending song

Death hounded you day to day  
When all you ever wanted  
Was a place at the hearth  
A door wide open in welcome

Sheena Blackhall

# Elephant Ride, Jaipur

Then the mahout nudged the elephant over the flags  
Wet and slippy with dung and trampled leaves  
This animal carriage, painted with stars and moons  
Flapped her enormous ears and curled her trunk  
Up like her turbanned master's relentless grin

Dripping with rain, white knuckles gripped the howdah.  
Behind the mahout's head with its crimson bandage  
His white suit, almost clean,  
From the sky's trap door the monsoon falls in sheets.  
A frenzy of hawkers dog the elephant's sway  
Puppets, madam, the cheapest in Jaipur!  
My name is Tony, I take your photo:  
Click! Bangles? Earrings? Fit for a Maharani!

Spooked by hustlers, hawkers snapping round like wolves  
Leaping, waving trinkets of wood or leather  
Tourists are tills, the hagglers smell our money  
We count our notes,  
Pinned in the rank howdah  
Foreign currency making a fraught exchange

Sheena Blackhall

# Ellen Knight

Ellen Knight from Tunbridge Wells  
Thought she'd try her hand at spells  
Found inside a witch's book  
By a foggy soggy brook.

First she turned her sister's braces  
Into caterpillar's laces  
Next, to vex her brother Eddy  
Her magic powers shrank his teddy  
Which fell down in the toilet bowl  
One flush and it was swallowed whole.

Her ma said, 'Ellen, eat your greens'.  
She changed them into fairy queens  
Which flew ten times around the telly  
Frightening to fits her Aunty Nelly.

When Pa grew cross and tried to shout  
Her magic whisked his dentures out  
They jumped across the room and flew  
Into her granny's Irish stew.  
And there they sank beneath the gravy  
Like two old dinghies from the navy.

Grown bold, she changed her cousin's cat  
Into a tiger large and fat  
Which went with her to the the-atre  
And at the curtain's fall it ate her!

So little girls who'd like to be  
A witch of power and mystery,  
Make dog or mouse or fish go splat –  
But never ever change a cat!

Sheena Blackhall



# Emigration Stone

Great grandfather stood like a stone  
As the ship crossed the horizon  
To dropp off the world as he knew it  
His shovel beard, his barrel chest  
Heaving a little, wordless

Letters would come in litters, like little puppies  
From his lost children, Look at me, look at me,  
But never bound at his heel in the surly mud.

He could use the pages to line his heavy boots  
Softening the lonely walk behind the plough

He could use them to plug the holes  
Where the rats came, gnawing away at his heritage  
Loss, tugged at his heart like wool on thorns

Few now, to pass the salt, to chide, to praise  
His saplings gone. The sky a red pyre, bleeding  
What is a patriarch without a clan?

Sheena Blackhall

# Empty Chair In A Field

I think the empty chair I saw in a field  
(A gleaned, shaved, empty field)  
Is where the Abortions come  
(Those little unwanteds, parents flushed away)  
To sit for a time and wonder

I think at twilight they tiptoe out of limbo  
And take it in turns to imagine  
What kind a person they might have grown to be  
A real person with walls a roof  
A life and a dog called Bones

I think at twilight they tiptoe out of limbo  
And take it in turns to imagine  
Going to sleep with a stuffed bear  
And a lipsticky kiss all smeary and smelling of cakes

I think they sit on that chair and pucker their little lips up  
Inventing names and families for themselves

Somebody took the rockers off the chair  
I call that an act of cruelty

Sheena Blackhall

# English Poems (The Witnessing)

## The Id

I am your id, Freud's bogie-man  
Lift off the lid of your skull cap  
And up I jump, an imp, a rake  
For all things bad I take the rap.

Your lust runs riot? It's my fault  
I am Apocalypse unleashed  
I am to blame, the randy id  
I do not bow to rule nor priest

I'd ravish all things with a pulse  
I'd steal the last crust from the poor  
I am the id, your shadow-side  
A sloth, a brute, the Devil's spoor

## Sports Shoe Trends

Street appeal- they're image makers  
Lace-ups a stitch-up? Sport, or game?  
Adidas, Puma, Nike, Reebok  
They bleed you dry, top range brand name

Soles, heels, uppers, forward thrust  
Global uniform, velcro  
Shock absorbers. Upper Crust  
Sweat shop labour on skid row

## The Pig's Defence

I speak the truth before the bench  
And not to save my bacon  
That swineherd who I trampled on  
Deserves your condemnation

He called me porky chops, old ham

An fit for nought but rashers  
He mooned at me, showed his behind  
The lowest kind of flasher.

He claimed I stank, (foul calumny)  
Beat me to make me dance  
My kinsmen, sirs, seek truffles out  
For the high Kings of France

He said I was a bristle-brush  
A wormy tub of lard  
A gammon hoard, a filthy hog  
I took these insults hard

I share the genes of deity  
The Golden Boar's blood  
Runs through me, loved in ancient times  
By Freyr, the Viking God

That swineherd's nose is in the trough  
He robs his master blind  
Male chauvinist, and gluttonous  
It's him should be confined

If pigs could fly, then I expect  
I'd join the swine on high  
But I will reappear again  
As sausages and pie

The Witnessing

(Based on Witness Accounts to the Knock Apparition, 21 August 1879)

Witness 1

I saw the vision on that August night  
The Blessed Virgin, Saints Joseph and John  
Their eyes too bright for me to gaze upon  
They were mute statues from unearthly spheres,  
I filled with wonder at the sight I saw  
It so unmanned me I knelt down in tears.

What would life be without its mysteries?

A dreamless sleep, dry dust, a scentless flower

Witness 2

The Blessed Virgin Mary's hands were lifted,  
Her eyes turned up to heaven, sweet Paragon  
The night was dark and raining, but the scene  
Was plain as daylight in the noonday sun.

It was pitch dark, the rain was falling heavy  
And yet there was not one single drop of wet  
Upon those figures clothed in snowdrop white

What would life be without its mysteries?  
A dreamless sleep, dry dust, a scentless flower

Witness 3

The altar had no linens, candles, gold  
Above the altar, resting, was a lamb,  
Fronting the western sky.

I saw no cross or crucifix, but round the lamb  
Were golden stars, all pure and luminous

Witness 4

I came along the west side of the church,  
I saw the figures clearly,  
Full, distinct

What would life be without its mysteries?  
A dreamless sleep, dry dust, a scentless flower

Witness 5

I saw a crown upon the Virgin's brow  
The night came on, so very wet and dark.  
A light was shining round the likenesses  
Though it was raining, all of them were was dry.

Witness 6

I left the peat load on my ass's back.  
It stood there, beast-like, braying  
I joined some others, running to the site  
People were there before us. Some were praying,

The figures were round as if they were alive;  
I walked up near; and one old woman there  
Went straight ahead, embraced the Virgin's feet  
Nothing filled her hands but empty air

Upon the altar stood an eight week lamb  
Behind the lamb a large cross on the altar  
Above, I felt great wings fast-fluttering  
Around the Lamb I saw bright angels hover  
What would life be without its mysteries?  
A dreamless sleep, dry dust, a scentless flower

Witness 7

When I arrived I kissed the Virgin's feet  
Felt nothing touch my lips but the cold wall

Sheena Blackhall

# English Poems From The Sanctuary Knocker

A Talk with a Tree

Through your bald branches

I see an open skylight

Have you ever decided to shut up shop?

To fly to Chile, Siberia, or Leamington Spa?

Be a tree of a different leaf?

What does morning sound like, to a tree?

All those chattering birds,

Those moaning winds

Lovesick foxes and grunting grumpy badgers

Will a house inherit your roots?

Like a goldfish trapped in a bowl

You're chained to your birth spot

Walkers in hobnailed boots

Trample your porch

Lovers etch names in your sides

Scallywag hares for neighbours

Mushrooms for tenants

It's April. Soon you'll be dressed

In your elfin negligee

What's that? No comment?

In summer you'll flaunt your skirts

Like the flare of flamenco

I applaud you tree,

Olé

Through the glistening eyes of flowers

Through the glistening eyes of flowers

Glint of tears- they cannot stay

All their beauty's transient

Lives that vanish in a day

As with flowers that bloom we must

Follow them into the dust

Smoke

A puff of smoke, grey fluff and feather

Bursts from a hedge

On a clumsy fledgling flight

Nature has dressed the braes around in gold

A glut of glorious daffodils

Snowdrifts beneath the tree

Are a distant memory

The clock ticks on

Round the changing face of seasons

The mirror shows late winter all year round

Between the Cemetary & MacDonalds

Tattered memories blow across the pavement

A toddler cries fat tears down chubby cheeks

Seagulls are active ingredients in this cityscape

Sirens wail by, opening wounds in the ear of day

Millions of birds have slipped through the back door of night

This street, these centuries, this city

How many winters will pass before they crumble?

Will pestilence, war, or global warming prove fatal

Before more than birds pass through the door of night?

Gilding the Lily

How do you gild the lily?

A nip- a tuck- a face as tight's a mummy?

Contact lenses? The toothy Hollywood smile?

Nile women henna-dyed their hands

Rubbed kohl around their eyes

(lead ore, antimony, malachite)



Romans painted their eyes with golden saffron  
Blackened imperial eyelids with wood ash

The poet, Ovid, pounded narcissi bulbs  
Stirred egg and flour of barley bean  
Into the ultimate Bardic beauty cream

Galen, the Greek physician, favoured  
Beeswax, olive oil, mixed to a spread  
With water, a soothing face pack

England's Virgin Queen  
Whitened her cheeks with lead  
Put plumpers into her mouth  
To puff out sunken cheeks,  
Hide rotten tooth-stumps

In Restoration England, blotches  
Were hidden by patches

How do you gild the lily?  
Underneath the knife?  
Or do you walk au natural through life?

The Sunbathers (1960s)  
Desk chairs in rows, dig their wooden heels into the sand  
A businessman in a suit with a striped tie  
Wears an incongruous hanky over his eyes  
Over the hanky, he has placed his specs  
Perhaps to keep the win from blowing the hanky off  
Trimmed sides of hair, stand guardian  
To the bald dome of his head.  
He is seated in the middle of row nine

Beside him, women in winter coats with head-squares  
Like Hijabs, recline in their deck chairs  
Taking in the ozone

Behind him, a perm-haired women  
Is darning a sock. Everyone is stoic

Facing the bitter winds of June from the North Sea

Someone was saying you have to make the best of it  
Someone was saying, what can you expect from summer weather  
Someone mentioned the fact that the ice cream vender was late  
Someone was complaining there was no Punch and Judy man  
Someone was saying the Band of Hope was coming  
Everyone's coat was buttoned up to the neck  
Stiff upper lip in sixties summer Britain

Picnic

Friesian cows graze nonchalantly round two picnickers  
The cows are like moving tables, for flies to dine off

The picnic pair have flip up chairs and a table  
Have taken their kitchenette for a trip outside.  
There is a bottle of beer on the tablecloth,  
A basket of goodies on the grass.

The husband's glasses catch the noonday sun  
His shirt's crisscrossed by braces  
His suit jacket is hung neatly on his chair

His wife wears a black lace dress  
For cocktail hour. The heels on her shoes  
Have gathered balls of grass, like rural castors

Custom and costume collide  
The gentleman's reading his paper,  
The woman's adjusting her lacy serviette  
Neither, look at the cows.

The cows ignore the picnickers  
Both species co-exist in a parallel universe

The Beauty Contest  
Three bathing beauties with bouffant backcombed hair  
In frilly un-wet swimming costumes  
Place their long nailed hands  
Provocatively on their haunches

One yawns, her suit half- basque half-swimmer  
A peroxide blonde with a painted on fake tan

A young man leers at her bum  
An old man with bald tufts of hair  
Is drinking tea oblivious to her crotch  
A nose length away from his scone  
Perhaps he has noticed the girl has halitosis  
BO and body hair.

She has escaped the curse of acne  
Not the sharpest tool in the box

Pies and chips will see her charms go west  
For now, she looks in the mirror  
Sees the fairest one of all

In the Victorian Chemist  
Leeches, moustache grease and arsenic too  
Jars of every known colour and hue  
Cobalt blue bottles for syrups to sip  
Potions for bottom rash, earache, sore lip

Actinic green glass for poisonous substances  
Herbs, spices, soaps and traditional brushes,  
Lavender, liquorice, cough sweets in bags  
Cocaine and camphor, sharp needles for jags

Tins and emollients, strange beauty potions  
Bronchial lozenges, Vaseline lotions  
Tinned Boric acid and throaty pastilles  
Glycerine, lemon and honey for ills

Senna for laxative, mineral waters  
Inhalers and soothers for croup-troubled daughters  
In the Victorian chemist, each cure  
Comes with a cost a full purse may procure

God's in a Bottle: Catholic Miners in Durham  
God's in a bottle, empty of whisky or medicine.

A delicate ladder, leans against a crucifix,  
The stairway to Heaven

The Irish Roman Catholic diaspora

Mining in County Durham

Fashioned these miniature Hope-scapes

Climbing from sooty hell, small step by step

A Tour of Durham

Wearhead, Annefield, Brancepeth, Binchester

Hartlepool, Egglestone, Staindrop, Lanchester

Barnard Castle, Romaldkirk, Sedgefield, Billingham

Guisborough, Middlesbrough, Coxhoe, Wolsingham

Newton Aycliffe, Raby Castle, Peterlee and Darlington

Bishop Auckland, Spennymuir, Stockton and Willington

Stanhope, Easington, Durham & Crimdon

Bowes, Crotks, Ushaw, Hardwick, Seaham

Wharton Park, Nettlesworth, Sniperley, Escomb

Frosterely, Killope and Palace Green

Shincliffe, Croxdale, Castle Eden Green

Cauldron Snout, High Force, Middleton-in-Teesdale

Chester-le-Street, Blackhall, Finchale & Weardale

Whistle-stop tour of an English shire

Faster than a zip-card with your pants on fire

Gladstone Bags

He sought fallen women by prowling the street

With all of the zeal of a stallion in heat

To save them, escorting them home for a treat

Gladstone, that upright reformer

Gladstone bags, Gladstone bags

What secrets they hold in their keeping

Gladstone bags, Gladstone bags

Used in India, Egypt and Worthing

Kings, at Easter

The high horse chestnut opens its umbrella

Cobbles clatter with the clump of feet

Under stone arches, clash of many tongues

Like mercury, minds meeting here at Kings  
Four Seasons swithering, a prelude to summer  
The library a great glacier, gleams  
Beneath the screech of gulls, the bleep of i-pads  
The university navigates new times

Sheena Blackhall

# Epiphany

After a timed access,  
A trip back to the country,  
The beast appeared.  
'A present from Dad, ' my son said.  
'I'm going to keep it.'  
A statement, not a plea.

It lay at the foot of the bag,  
A closed comma. Musky,  
The colour of honey  
Around the tail.

A grown ferret.  
The eyes, two hard pink nails  
Hammered the lid on its thought.  
Straight off as I lifted it  
It bit me down to the bone,  
A message from its master.

Spite carrier? Loss-stater? Pet?  
A ferret trilogy. It stayed.  
I fed it. Loved it even, in its red cage  
Where it raged at everything,  
Snapping at the mesh,  
A one-sided argument  
Behind the hum of the TV,  
The clatter of spoons,  
It haunted the city garden, breeding guilt  
I thought of cubs dragged from the den,  
Claws cut, teeth filed,  
The scent all wrong,  
The way to the woods bricked up.

Sheena Blackhall

# Epitaph For A Healer: For sall

God only likes nice girls and tidy boys,  
But you sat down with me, un-nice, no-good  
In a way that nobody's parents ever would.

Safe, to say the unsayable in that room,  
And oh the relief of dropping all pretences,  
Raising the drawbridge, lowering the defences!

Now I would walk through living coals to take  
Your hand in mine, kind ghost, for pity's sake  
Actions, more than epithets can tell  
You were a man who loved his fellows well  
Who'd guide them back from Misery's abyss  
To sweeter vistas, pin-stripe Theseus.

Sheena Blackhall

# Erik Satie, Eccentric

Erik Satie, eccentric  
Wrote weird piano pieces  
Strangely titled:

Cold rooms, air scare, dance wrong  
Three pieces in the shape of PEAR  
On a wall  
On a tree  
On a bridge

Unpleasant previews. Effrontery  
2 preludes for a dog  
Inside voice. Cynical Idyll  
Severe reprimand. Alone at home

Turkish Zipline. Embryos desiccated  
The one who talks too much  
The wearer of large stones  
Old sequins and old breastplates  
The Warrior of the King of the bean song  
Waltz of the chocolate almond

Market of the grand staircase  
Unwelcome peccadilloes  
The awakening of the bride  
The Octopus. Venomous obstacles  
Caress. The Dreamy Fish. Prelude in tapestry  
Unfortunate example. Nice desperation

The sullen prisoner. Rag Parade. Furniture music  
Tapestry in wrought iron  
Things seen on the right and left (without glasses)  
At a 'bistro'. A living room.

Ringtone to wake up the good big Monkey King  
Hi flag! Prelude for the death of Mr Fly  
Five grimaces to the dream of a summer night  
Hello Biqui, Hello!



The Hatter. Air of the rat  
American frog. Song of the cat  
The picador is dead. Air ghost  
Let's go Sissy. Marienbad (he was wearing a vest)  
PSST! Psst! The shirt.  
Dressed horse. Dawn to the fingers of rose

The composer wore seven identical, grey velvet corduroy suits  
Worn, (with no variation) , for 10 years.

He only ever ate food that was white.  
Sugar, shredded bones, the fat of animals

Consumed an omelette made from 30 eggs,  
Consumed 150 oysters all in one sitting

Went 30 years without a single visitor  
Was friends with Cocteau, Picasso and Diaghilev,  
Man Ray, Brancusi, Duchamp, Dadaists

He dragged his hair back from his shiny forehead,  
Tufts of hair at his ears,  
Eyes owl-open behind pince-nez

.  
His only girlfriend, the painter Valadon  
Fed two cats caviar on Friday nights

Wrote Vexations, repeated 840 times.  
Performed by a team of 11 pianists:  
Lasting 19 hours  
Used sirens and typewriters as instruments

Carried an umbrella under his coat when it rained, to keep it dry  
And a hammer from fear of attack  
□

Sheena Blackhall

# Facts You Never Knew About Piero Di Cosimo

A goldsmith's son. A loner

Piero Di Cosimo refused to sweep his room

His garden grew wild. His household was a midden

His fruit trees went unpruned, his fig trees rioted

He imagined scenes from walls where the sick spat glut

Designed a chariot for death in a carnival

He boiled up 50 eggs, while cooking glue

And ate them as he stood in his clutter and painted

And why was this man a loner? It's known that he:

Hated crying children of either gender

Hated coughing men they made his shudder

Hated thunder it made him shake and cower

Hated the pealing of bells, the chanting of friars

Shadows annoyed him deeply, as did flies

Found dead at the foot of his stairs, after a storm

Painting aside, some folk are best unborn

Sheena Blackhall

# Failure

I had pictures I wanted to paint  
Mind perfect and powerful  
They always stopped at the wrist  
Like my hand was a bloody stump  
It was hand-failure hateful

I punched the errant hand against a wall  
That hand pushed me over the edge  
(I swear I heard it laughing

Failure is building a house of cards in the teeth of a gale  
It's trying to trap the ocean in a pail

Failing your own child,  
To betray or abandon him  
By claiming you had to  
Watch out! Your sorrows will come home to roost  
Trust me, they'll haunt you

Sheena Blackhall

# Falcon

Kek-kek-kek-kiak Kek-kek-kek-kiak  
Sky-high on his cross of air,  
His war cry, a dry clack,  
Like an ack-ack gun.  
Canyons of cloud above my probing stare,  
The tiercel is circling the wood  
Like a steel trap, poised to snap.

I am drawn by his lure,  
Small tiger of the Heavens,  
Hook-beaked spitfire splitting  
The creamy silk of a summer's day,  
Slitting the wind,  
Winged scythe of a lightning fork  
His taloned gauntlets  
Spear through sheers of cloud,  
A break-neck stoop  
His guillotine swoop  
Swift as a hit-man's kill  
In down town world, New York.

Hedgerows are bulldozed.  
Cities nest in woods.  
Badger, and fox's home's a superstore.  
A mortgaged temple of glass and masonry  
Suburbs are serving writs through the peat bog door.

Habitats perish when mankind leads the pack  
Precious, the falcon's call, Kek-kek kiak

Sheena Blackhall

# Falling Asleep

Two drifting feathers,  
Eyelids of a child,  
Two moon-shaped sickles of repose  
Down-flutter dreams  
A snow white swan Armada  
Blown across the lake of infant consciousness  
A trembling Theban rose

Ah, but the adult variety!

Psyche's but a poisoned pool  
Hades-hot, celestial cool  
Crack the mirror surface see  
Bliss and bestiality

Sheena Blackhall

# Felucca Ride

We sit in the hold like fish,  
Squinting up through the sun  
As the white sails creak and flap.

This is slow-motion sailing,  
Snail-trailing over the tilting, drunken waves.

A donkey drinks from the Nile  
So close you count the whiskers on its muzzle.

The Nile is play, food, life  
Peasants and beasts drink free.  
A black dog sits on the bank  
Like a sphinx, too hot to blink,  
Nailed to its own shadow.

The crew is a father and son  
The father issues soft or wordless orders  
The boy is smoking, his curls like a young Pan.

A girl is gesturing on the shore,  
Hand to mouth, hand to mouth  
Mute mime of poverty

A hawk flies over an island  
A reed cutter loads his boat  
Waves froth like small volcanoes  
The noiseless collapse of bubbles  
Small boats sprout begging arms  
Like winter trees.

In the blue vault of the sky  
An egret pecks the air  
His white fez all a-jiggle.

A great Gomorrah of tourism floats on past  
A gleaming cruiser, trailing its own wake  
A minaret dwarfs the palms  
That splay like fans over a village lane.

My life has passed  
Like this white Nile felucca  
Slipping between time's banks  
With scarce a wake

Sheena Blackhall

## Ferlies (38 Scots Poems)

Mooch

Halflin gull, as big's its ma  
Moochin wi nae shame ava  
Peengin, peengin on the lum  
Girnin beak an speckled bum

Traivellers

'I'll hae a limousine, ' quo Sean.  
' I'll hae a plane, ' quo Jill.  
' A mansion, meat, fine claes, ' quo John  
' I'll hae a bank, ' quo Bill.

Niver eneuch' quo Anthony  
' Jist gie me mair, ' quo Ann  
'Mair siller, luck, celebrity,  
' Mair o it aa, ' quo Dan.

Possessions bring their ain consarns  
A box, a snib, a key,  
O thon, puir John, nae haein much  
Wis relatively free.

Auld Age dinged doon celebrity  
Ill Health fair soored the zest  
For gawdy gee-gaws, fantoosh hames  
Grim Daith chored as the rest.

The lawyer tuik the limousine  
Bi god, the breets are fly  
The unnertakker tuik the plane  
The bank, bi then, wis dry

Life laists a meenit, luiks as weel,  
It needs nae maisterplan  
Tae traivel lichtly ben the world  
Daein the best ye can



tis in the Burn

Aa day they'd biggit castles in the burn, touers o pebbles, moats,  
A makk-shift waukwey atween bank an puil  
The citizens, wee bandies, cercled the smaa Atlantis in the Ben  
Lilliputian fish ruled bi twa Gullivers

The castlemakkers' sire on a three day bender  
Lay heelstergowdie, tuggin at vodka's teat

Later, evenin cweeled the fires o day  
The bender straichtened oot, deid drunk in the swyte o the blin fu.  
Twa Gullivers washed an fed, lay wi their teds,  
Newsin o knights an dragons in the tent

Noo wis the time fur their dam tae cam intae her ain  
Intae the warld o shaddas, dwaums an quaet  
Aa day she'd wyted fur this Naiad's tryst  
A black flat rock, hauf wye alang the burn  
The burn, fulled bi strang shooers on the heich braes  
Ragin on ilkie side like Boudicca's shelts  
Their weet pelts straiked wi meenlicht.

There she micht lie like a sacrifice tae the meen  
Flat on the rock, the derk nicht on her face  
Deid tae as bit the rain that dreeped frae the trees  
Lettin the sappy souns o watter heal her.

es

Smaa pyramid, the metronome kept time  
Merkin the rhythm o the hoose's days  
Echoed the eident clock's metallic chime

A wheel cad roon the mangle fur the wash  
A smaaer turned the Singer, makkin claes  
The scuttle, tho, wis Oriental posh  
An aathin nott a key. Yetts, presses, kists  
Drink, siller, even linen sheets locked up

Wikkly accoonts war kept, an shoppin lists

Rhubarb wis stewed in the braisse berrypan  
A metal sieve saved fat tae licht the fire  
Waste wis a sin in thon domestic plan

Thrift inbred, gars me grue. Aathin is grist  
Tae the great mill o life that grinds us doon  
Re-heatin cauld kail, coontless joys I've missed

makk a Martyr

Takk ae patriot  
Separate him frae kintra, kin an airmy  
Croon him wi leaves like ony tattie-bogle  
Makk a radge o him an his beliefs

Add nae drap o human kindness, raither  
A scoosh o soor grapes, wersh as graveyaird bree  
Sprinkle a jeelip o heich wirds ower the proceedins

Wheep yer warrior, bleedin ben the streets  
Larded wi gobs an skaith  
Beat till nearhaun fooshionless  
Afore a fyauchie boorich o yer commons  
Hing on the gallows till hauf-smored an thrappled

Neist, remove yer patriot,  
Skewer an disembowel  
While yet alive... hate is a dish best hett

Fry his intimmers aneth his verra een  
Syne chop the lave an sen tae aa the airts  
Sae his puir pairts micht flegg aff similar craas  
Nailin oppression's colours tae life's brig

Sit back an wyte  
There's mair nur deid-flesh stewin

6. Far Ower the Forth: Tune: Burns Song

Far ower the Forth I bide in the North  
Nae an agent ava tween the Don and the Dee  
An we're telt naethin's selt unless it's Central belt  
Or it's screived bi a lion o the literatii

Whisky kinnles in the keg... is a poet best read  
Fin the buik wirms are chawin him posthumously?  
Dis the popular vote gyang tae stanzas he wrote  
Or his ootrageous ploys at some festival spree?

Gin ye screive tae succeed it's a fan group ye need  
Ye maun tour like a boy band... gie readins o fire  
An please dinna rhyme... it's a stylistic crime  
Be obscure or be randy, fowk warm tae desire.

Far ower the Forth I bide in the North  
Nae an agent ava tween the Don and the Dee  
An we're telt naethin's selt unless it's Central belt  
Or it's screived bi a lion o the literatii

Nicholas Kirkyaird

Doos commandeer the girse, the birds o lair an steen  
In the liverish sunlicht twa young luvvers smoorach

A boorich o boozers argy ahin a tomb  
Three Chinese towrists ett their Boots meal-deal  
Newsin heich an excited in fremmit spikk

Noon, the doon-toon traffic birrs on by.  
A skurrie skelps its Naval flippers flat  
Opens its beak an skreichs a bar o warnin  
Jeelin's a lichthoose in a nicht o haar  
Aroon it, trees like trimmlin pilgrims shoogle  
Seem in a briest tae coorie near the kirk.

endarroch

It's Sabbath in the dwaumy howe aneth.

The Darroch's Druid aiks uphaud the sky,  
Crummles o twig an acorn hap the path,  
Like horn cups, leaves full wi green doonbye.

The knowe shakks oot her skirts o fern an moss.  
Here, Sizzens slice ben cliffs like crusty breid  
Growth coddles rot. A chaffie bobs throwe smush,  
Auld aik trees wyve their wabs o timmer threid

The cushie doo sits croodlin on the brae  
Criss-crossed bi roads nae mortal's traivelled ower  
Lackin the erne's smeddum, squirrel's virr  
The swippertness o win tae jink the stoor

Yet I'm ane wi this microcosmic airt  
Sib tae the heather, kin tae burn an mist  
The hale is bit the sum o ilkie pairt  
Blythe simmer brakks the lid o Winter's kist

#### ack Whales

Humpback Whales hae muckle tails.  
Nae human-born land lubber  
Could munch the shoals they ett fur lunch,  
Sea restaurants o blubber!

#### Seal

I am a seal at the Brig o Don  
I lie in the dubs an pech  
Fur an oor or twa in the Autumn sun  
I rowe on my kyte an flech

I skelp ma tail in the sappy glaur  
As the traffic birrs on by  
I am a seal at the Brig o Don  
My world is waves an sky.

ng the Bees: for the late George McConnach, Birse, bee-keeper & farmer

I kent a gairden aince, perfumed an bra  
Simmer flooers wauchtit there, heich as the wa  
Bees bizzed frae skepps tae Ben, ryped heather bell  
Ferryin sweetness frae brae heid tae cell

I kent the maister fa hairstit their caimbs  
Creamy wax chaumers wi gowd in their wames  
Aa throw the winter, he kept the hive hale  
Syne in the simmer he brewed hinney ale

Toonsers supped seerip. His bairns on a plate  
Spreid rich dreepin nectar on breid that they ate  
Naebody telt them, wyce craiturs, bees kent  
Fit the weeds niver howked roon the blawn roses meant

Sic a deep seelence! Nae rikk in the lum  
Frae his winged servents, nae saft eident hum  
Nae need tae speir wis he cauld in his lair  
Teet in the gairden. The bee skepps war bare.

Lodger

The fishin fleet sails oot alang the sea  
Stars cut metallic diamonds in the nicht  
The bed-sit lodger shares immensity  
Wi table, tickin clock, the open door  
The stink o fish in ilkie neuk an crannie  
San shauchles saftly forrit tae explore  
Like a sea cave her chaumer, derkness fills

Marooned, she is a swatch o driftwid here  
Her landlord an his wife hae hidden gills  
Like twa auld crabs they squat aneth her room  
Their hauns like fower hinged pincers curled ower  
Their faimly Bible, black's the crack o Doom

Their drooned son brocht them different agonies  
Fur him, a sexless bed, fur her, an ache  
His waukin thochts, a mix o psalms an sleaze  
It's hett; the open door's ower still tae craik

He's nae yet tried tae rape her, bit he will  
The lodger that he watches aa the wikk

Odysseus wad niver anchor here  
The shoreline's slawly ground tae skin an bane  
The seaweed rings the herbour like a bier  
The fisher clachan wi the hairt o stane.

y

I aye preferred the Vulcan, Mr Spock  
Lang shanks, fey lugs, mind-mergin empathy  
Cweel as an ice cream cone  
Klingons keeched thirsels fm he cocked an ee

Bones wis a genteel gent  
Cud hae stept ooto a tent  
Far Custer steered his beans roon a mess tin

Captain Kirk's face cream wis clapt on thick  
His six pack bulgin oot his lycra sark  
A paper puppet sci- fi scripts wad yark

Scotty.. the future star ship's anchor man  
Wis stinch as granite howked frae Rubislaw Quarry  
Ye've niver heard the like in Cults or Tony?  
Doric's a pebble on the global shore  
Twill boldly gae far nae spikk's gaen afore

Cone, mess tin, face cream, anchor...  
O the fower. It's anchor men keep star ships tickin ower.

ni

Oor rabbit Houdini wis an escapologist.  
Tunnels war his forte, chawin ben cages.  
Naebody telt him rabbits arenae gurly  
It wis best tae side-step his rages.

Oor rabbit Houdini wis a tiger

A biter, a gurrler, a lowper  
He ett up neist door's carrots at ae go,  
Even a prize chrysanthemum  
They'd reared frae seed, fur show.

Ay, he wis a chorer, a worrit, a reiver  
Efter a nicht on the scraun  
Howkin up leeks ben the street  
We fand him teirin fur ooto his breist  
We pit it doon tae simmer's plottin heat.

He bigged a nest, turned broody, bedd at hame  
We war fair vexed. We missed his quanter warks  
Ae mornin, there they war  
Houdini's tribe, in fite an spotty sarks.

He wis a her. She tint the will to raik  
Stopped gurrin, sattled doon tae captive life  
Ett pellets. Foo we missed the reprobate!  
She hid tae be rechristened Rabbit Kate.

#### 15. Samantha Sook

Samantha Sook's a vampire  
Wi leather wings fur claes  
Ye'd think she wis a broolly  
Bi the wye she curls her taes

She's niver seen in daylight  
She comes oot efter derk  
Fin she's clartit on her lipstick  
Tae ponce about the park

She'll drain the pouer frae muggers  
Till they're fooshunless as jeely  
Syne cairt them aff tae jyle  
Afore they stert tae throw a feely

She'll oaxter up a burglar  
Makkin on she's really pally  
Syne sink her fangs inno his neck

Till he turns peely wally

Samantha Sook the vampire  
Anely comes oot wi the stars  
Tae lowp about at discos  
An tae saddle teenage wars

Sae dinna fyle yer boxters  
If ye catch her in a neuk  
She's a law-abidin vampire  
Super-bat, Samantha Sook

chy Mowdie Maister Sleuth

Mollochy Mowdie Maister Sleuth's  
An undercover spy  
He can watch ye frae yer gairden  
Cause he's affy affy fly

Thon's nae a daffy in yer yaird  
It's his new periscope  
Thon's nae a gun that's in his pooch  
It's Mollochy's microscope

He'll tag yer washin, chore yer mail  
He'll bug yer front door bell  
Fur Mollochy Mowdie Maister Sleuth's  
The Neeborhood watch frae Hell.

Farrabooter

The faistest bobby in the North is PC Farrabooter  
He wheechs about wi goggles on  
Abune a souped up scooter

It's 'Fa are ye?  
An 'Far ye gaun?  
An 'Fit's that bag ye hae? '

Gin burglars say 'Fit's it tae ye? '



They've really made his day

He disna skelp them roon the heid  
He disna need a shooter  
He chynes them tae his super-bike  
An zaps them wi his hooter.

It disnae toot nor cheep nur skirl  
It skytes oot seagull's keech  
The guff laists mair nur forty days...  
Nae punishment's as dreich  
As guffin like a herrin's dowp  
Left sax wikks doon a drain  
As Pc Farrabooter says  
'They dinna dae't again.'

e Clype

Gin ye dinna wint a ragin  
Bide awa frae Kelpie Clype  
She's an irritatin cuddy  
Wi a neb as lang's a pipe

Did ye scrat the fermer's tractor?  
Wis it ye that flegged the coo?  
Did ye chase it roon the midden  
Till it wisnae fit tae moo? ☐

Did ye zap the chukken's eggies  
Did ye peint them blue an black?  
Noo she thinks that they are aliens  
An winna takk them back

Wis it ye that let the yowes oot?  
Noo they've set aff up the lane  
Tae see the movie Rambo  
Nae a ticket tae their name

Kelpie Clype'll tell the fermer  
Unless ye keep her sweet  
Sae gie her chocolate smarties

Dinna argue noo... jist dee't!

Bowf

Bogle-Bowf is a minky ghaist  
He'll doss in a high rise flat  
Inside a kitchie rubbish bin  
Noo fit d'ye think o that!

Bogle Bowff he claiths himsel  
Frae orrals yer ma haives oot  
Wi tattie-parins fur a tie  
An moosewabs fur a suit

An fin he's scunnered o coontin stars  
Up heich in his stinky bed  
He dials a space-ship cab frae Mars  
An wheechs tae the planet Zed

He fits richt in at the aliens' club  
Wi hairy pink gorillas  
Wi horny-gollachs fur his grub  
An deep-fried armadillas

Sae gin yer wheelie bin luiks teem  
Wad this nae gar ye scunner?  
Bogle Bowf's bin dressin up  
In last nicht's pizza denner.

ethy McCrone

Abernethy McCrone lives on ice cream an chips  
He's as roon as a haggis on pegs  
He's got three double chins... he needs ten wheelie bins  
An I sweir he's got boddomless legs

Fa chored the vanilla fae thon big gorilla  
The bouncer at Boozy Café?  
Fa wheeched the flake affo skateboordin Jake  
As he skyted roon Bum-shoogle Bay?

Abernethy McCrone'd kill his cat fur a cone  
Fin he spies twa lime scoops in a buggy  
Afore the wee doo his the tongue oot its moo  
It's bin mugged. Sae's it's aunty, Big Aggie

At the whiff o a gang haudin chips he can scan  
He's like lichtenin at pinchin their stash  
Afore they can crawl, 'Fit's yer game? ' he's awa  
In a fleerich o chips an a flash

Supervillains like men hae their failins, ye ken  
Abernethy McCrone's is his greens  
Fur he losses his pouers if he's locked up fur oors  
In a roomful o veggies an beans.

tchie Quine

Cahootchie Quire's a moocher.  
She cud tap a steen fur bluid  
In the verra deid o Winter  
she wad chore a spurgie's breid

She will butter up a victim  
makkin on they're in cahoots  
Bit she'll steal their lad awa frae them..  
She likes forbidden fruits

Her buits war made bi Gucci,  
bit belang tae cousin Jess  
Her jumper is Armani  
(It lowped frae her sister's press)

Gin yer queuin fur a burger,  
she'll hae left her purse at hame  
At the dodgems, quick as lichtenin,  
she will say the same again `

Ye surely wadna grudge me  
a wee haun tae pye the bill? '  
She cud milk a brick fur siller

wi compassion overkill

If ye hear the hootchie cootchie  
performed tae a Ra Ra Ra  
It's her wye o celebratin  
in her skirt an wonderbra

Ay, Cahootchie is the leader  
in the cheer team o the schule  
Ilkie stitch she weirs is borraed  
an her mooto's Moochers rule

Sae if meet Cahootchie Quine  
be warned, she's on the mooch  
Keep yer screwtap on yer bottle  
an yer piece inside yer pooch!

the Yowe

Jess the Yowe likes knittin  
It gets things aff her chest  
An wi her knittin needle  
They turn intae a vest

Her boddom's babies booties  
Her lugs hae made a tie  
Her bum is a tea cosy  
An it's hingin oot tae dry

rless

Niver a wurd o the randy ram  
Fa scarce ava cam near it  
The thocht is as fur the affcast lamb  
An the mither fa cudna rear it

Yet growe it did, fur sturdy youth  
Has a hunger that maun be fed  
Mither or no, it'll climm the brae  
Tae the knowe o the future wed

There's umpteen mas an das in the world  
Kind, luvn, coorse, or tint  
For Fate that pens the plans o aa  
Whyles smudges the blueprint.

Shelt: Study 2

Nae Constable's cuddy,  
This is a stoot Welsh shelt

His kyte's a wechtit ark  
Humfed atween fower roch bearers

His nyaakit snoot is snocherin  
Pearls tae his fuskery mou

His wrunkled hochs are splytered  
Wi sharn an strae  
His neigh's a smiddy's bellas  
His gray dowp sproots a wheep  
O a yarkin tail

The stable's fyaachie green.  
Its yett's a lichen's cradle,  
Its porch is a kirn o dubs,  
A soss o pish an nettle.

Ivy's haudin the spars o its waas thegither  
The wid is sennin her saplins  
Inno the brukken bield o the winny steadin  
Far girse an dockens gently showdy-powd

For trees an shelts are sib, sit kind, thegither  
Unner the weety cloud  
I rax ma fingers forrit tae be sniffed

The sheltie cocks his heid.  
I hae forgotten the cherm o the horseman's wurd

The punk bumbazement o his mane's

A besom swypin the air, noddin at naethin  
Time, rins on its gird  
He gies me the bum's rush  
The cauld showder  
Syne swithers, unsteekin  
The midnicht purse o an ee  
The cream star on his face  
Lies warm tae ma haun

We staun in seelence  
Breet an wummin  
Lattin the bird o gloamin  
Full the air wi sang  
Lattin the dark rise roon us like a flood

ir Earthquake

Bairns lie stiff as new-sterched linen  
Laid in quate drawers  
Far classies kisted them.  
Stoor skenkles their hair  
An frost, that faas  
Ben cracks in pavements like their lives

The day, yird smashed its plates  
Made kinnlin o clachans  
Tint its merbles  
Cowpit an unripe crop  
Inno its derk winepress

Allah is merciful  
Here and yonner,  
A dall, a baa,  
Survives

n Paddock

The aipple tree in Autumn dis nae darg  
Neither dis she spin.  
Fruit chaps throwe

Her spinnly fingers, her leaves flichter  
Ower the shelt, noisily croppin the girse  
A knowe, like a floatin mosaic  
Pieces itsel thegither ahin bare branches

A tit squeezes a note frae its pod o feathers  
Conductin its ain solo  
The Sizzen's piebald coat  
Losses anither threid.

Nae Moses in yon seggs.  
The taed dwaums  
In the cauld dubs o the puil.

A dyeuk rins ower the water,  
A cartoon skreichin

Ilkie tree's a Narcisses.  
My lug's an orchid frost is turnin blae

### Snail's Trail

This foreneen 1 follaed the snail's trail  
Doon tae the tarn.

In its keekin-glaiss I wis a partan  
My world wis san.

I maun hae misread the sign  
I wis ettlin tae fin the place  
Far dog-roses growe frae rigs  
Far the deer kinnles the sunset  
In its cloud reef  
Far the torc worn bi the bog-man,  
Unsteeks his een.

than a Leaf

Less than a leaf, bit sae much mair  
The drap that hings abeen the puil  
A wattergaw growes in its side  
Yon drap hauds oceans at its core

day

A single rosebud rowed in foil  
An lacy paper, like a bride  
She gied me. I turned on the tap  
Tae keep the canker frae its side

An ransacked hauf a dizzen shops  
Tae fin a vase o porcelain  
Tae haud erect yon cherished bloom  
As the kirk caunle heists the flame

I peeled it frae its surplices  
Syne, foo my hurtit fancy bled!  
It didna weir a croon o thorns  
The rose wis plastic, ergo, deid.

Its yoam, a ferlie I'd made up  
Yet I confess, thon fake did shift  
My mood. The Rose inbye the rose  
Wis this: her giein o the gift.

in

The aik tree skreichs in its auncient anchors  
Its leaves faa singly doon tae the grun

Late October, the squirrel chitters  
Listen. Auld snibs slide `neth the lan.

Hyne awa in the lichtit city  
Autumn is firewirks in the park  
A joke. A pumpkin. A bairnie's lauchter  
A meenit's show in the peintit dark.



Naebody sees on the floodlit cassies  
Samhuin stride unner glitterin starns  
Sweengin a scythe that's keen an deidly  
Greater nor presidents or wars

e

I stride atween the skirlin bairns  
Fechts stop. An argy-bargy dwines  
I am the jannie. My wird's law  
A schuleyaird god in my size nines.

The teachers gie them Science, Art  
Gymnastics, cookin, the three Rs  
A wummin's wye..an oorglaiss day  
I steek their neives, their playgrun wars

The menfowk that they see at hame  
Pairt-timers, dossers on the mooch  
Heich upon hash, or booze, or baith  
Their haun stappt in their mither's pooch  
Is aa some ken. I tilt the scales  
Ay in command o my five senses  
I teach them men hae qualities  
That raxx ower past an tenses

Like Janus, back in auncient Rome  
I guaird their warld. Nane pass by me  
That seeks tae hairm, misfit or vex  
The littlins in my territory.

The teachers hae their tests tae set  
They educate, a wechty dreel  
I patch up windaes, see fair play  
I keep them warm, an safe an weel.

Goods

Aunt Belle wis kistit ae Friday, in blin drift, fite's her shroud

Alang wi twa choruses o Perfect Love she aywis sang at waddins  
An her wee cheena cup wi the gowden rim.  
Likewise, wis consigned tae the yird

The space ahin her ribs her hairt vacated efter her man deed,  
A pumice stane fur smeethin her hard heels,  
A pair o pink silk bloomers tae her knees  
(Kiln-crackit legs, a gusset double steekit) ,  
Five yorkie's hairs, a yoam o John Begg's fusky  
An ae resoundin: `Tyauch! I kent his faither!

rel

I turned richt inno the wids  
On a weet day, the leaves gane yalla

A leaf brukk aff, cam flichterin inno the puil  
Half a squirrel spied me  
Mid ben his helter-skelterin.

Slow as a meevin statue  
Settin each fit in the dubs  
I socht tae see him hale.

Squirrel-less, the great trees fullid wi mist

35.A Scottish Interactive Chant  
(each two verses, to be repeated twice, as in call and response)

Seagulls are a feartie species  
Yon's a lee

Veggie haggis is delicious  
Pigs can flee

My thon Heilan coo's got hair!  
Can it see?

I've a pyoke o drams an heavies  
Far's the spree?

There's anither twenty verses  
Dearie me!

in (2)

October rattles in my bane.  
Dwined tae a crochlie carlin wife  
I peer throwe Winter's windae pane

Unbairned, un-wad I staun alane  
Cut doon bi Fortune's prunin knife  
My mortal pouers are on the wane  
The world's a cyclical refrain  
Derk turns tae daylight.  
Peace meets strife  
My dragons sleep, aa passions, slain  
I am the spider in the rain  
Play up, Langshanks, wi drum an fife  
Age is a spinneret o pain

The lintie fled wi blythe Beltane  
The spring that lowped sae swack an lythe  
Crined tae a sheugh...an orra stain.  
Sae, as the sickle greets the grain  
We boo tae pye the kirkyaird's tithe

Smaa odds, tae mourn, or complain  
Samhuin approaches. Corbies mane  
I'm at the lees. Wersh, wersh is life  
The meen's a bride, the stars, her train  
My bridgetime's ower. I wad be gaen.

fice

I hae kent the wyes o kye  
I hae wyed my hairt  
Agin a shaif o sun  
An fand it wintin

Fan the deer-skinned Shaman's rattle  
Set my path apairt  
Fan he chose me as the ane  
Ah, it wis dauntin

Syne I myned on the hairst bull  
Foo its fite heid gied a start  
Foo we watched the reid bluid rin  
Ah, it was hauntin

Long Company: Gangrels.

Fit a begeck! I saw them, the gangrel bodies  
Argy-bargyin in the girsy sheuch  
Aneth the rowan. There, bi the gap in the hedge  
Ane o their ill-trickit loons  
Cam wi his young tyke, snufflin.

I took ma lammie up tae the hoose-park..  
We dinna trust incomers  
They'd stap their wymes wi onybody's grumphies,  
Though they can trim the hedge an clear the lang cuttins  
Ye'd be a gomerl nae tae steek the yett.

Sheena Blackhall

# Fidele Castro

Was Castro made of Teflon?  
Or a child of Superman?  
The CIA in America  
Couldn't make him kick the can

Here's how they didn't do it:  
They coated his clothing, once  
With thallium salts to encourage  
His hair to fall out in chunks

They sprayed his broadcasting studio  
With mind changing LSD  
Before a televised speech went out.  
Did it hit him? No sirree!

They poisoned a box of his favorite cigars  
With botulinus toxin  
They tried to make his cigar blow up  
But nothing they tried could fox him

They placed explosive seashells  
In his favourite diving spots.  
But under the waves was he worried?  
His hide was made of rocks

With a hypodermic needle  
They rigging his ballpoint pen  
To poison the leader's finger  
Another misfire again!

They doused his diving wetsuit  
With bacteria and mould spores  
With lethal chemical agents  
In his scuba diving drawers

They wet his hankies, coffee and tea  
With horrid bacteria  
They paid a former lover  
They engaged the Mafia

To poison an ice cream cone to kill  
Fidele by foul means  
He died at the age of 90  
Surviving all their schemes

And whether you loved or hated him  
He was made of stern stuff  
But ten years off his century  
It was time to cry 'Enough! '

Sheena Blackhall

# Field Furniture

A well upholstered cow  
Is a sofa for three bluebottles

In a cellar of the field  
A mole extends his carpet

Scarecrow acts as a stand  
For a plastic bag

Trees are in with the fittings  
The duck pond's a perfect mirror  
Clouds peer into it

Long runners of grain  
Climb the golden stairway of the hills

Sheena Blackhall

## Figurehead (11 Scots Poems)

ang

I wauk tae a neuk o the wids,  
Bird sang is thrang  
An the notes that lift the blossom  
Pu sorra's stang

Aa day my feathery neebors  
Flee on the wing  
Stappin their littlins' beaks,  
An still they sing.

The meen in her siller sheen  
She steeks their trill  
Nicht draws a velvet plaid  
Ower twig an bill

Deep in ma human hairt  
Their tune still rings  
Like a blessed bell that's struck  
An singin, swings

I dinna begrudge their rest  
Ilk bird, on its timmer reest  
Bit lang fur the dawn tae wyle  
The sang frae each tawny briest

Whale in the Ocean

Hae ye heard aboot the hostages held bi pirates?  
Scraped aff their boat like cheese frae a plooman's bap?  
The pirates set their compass for foreign siller  
Greed is a raxxed wyme an widenin een.

Meanwhile, the gallus whale  
Gaps its muckle mawe  
An sooks on the waves' teats.



Whyles, the yird shakks  
There's a quake, the grun opens  
Swallas fowk an hooses without a thocht

Is the shark as coorse as it's peintit?  
It fuels the steely motor o its sides  
Wi banes, bluid, onythin chaw-able  
Niver a please or thank-ee, jist a rift.

An fit about yer average pettit poodle?  
Foo lang dae ye think ye'd laist  
Deid, in yer ain locked hoose  
The doors an windaes steeked  
An the puir breet there  
Wi naethin tae ett bit buiks.....

Sharger o Fadlvdyke

The sharger bides in a rickle o stanes  
At the back o the tattie shed  
Her kittlins teet, wi their een like preens  
Frae the foun oa nettle bed

The ferm-fowk are happit snod  
Atween Faldie's linen sheets  
Neth a weel-lined reef, bi the Grace o God  
Warm-clad frae neb tae queats

The sharger's wyme is rummlin sair  
As she pads on feral paas  
Her shanks are lean an her pelt's threidbare  
An it's hunger sharpens her jaas

The ferm-fowk hae dined on fish  
Roast beef an curried rice  
On mango fruits frae a crystal dish  
Diced ham an cucumber slice

The wild cat's supper is gey hard won  
A rabbit, or eggs frae the doos  
For she maun eat tae full each teat

Wi milk fur her littlins' moos.

The ferm-fowk lie dwaumin quaet  
Their thrapples slockent wi wine  
The cattle drinks frae Auchreddie Burn  
Or a troch far the starnies shine

It's nae fur her the saucer o cream  
The hairth, twa threids an a thrum  
Her fit is thirled tae a different airt  
Tae the dunt o an aulder drum

Sib tae the Futterat in Faldie's wid  
A hunter frae hynyie-back  
The sharger's shadda mells wi the nicht  
On the moose an the rattens' track

in

Some fowk are aywis speirin.  
Fits the biggest mistak ye've made?  
Fit dae ye think o MacDiarmid  
Or the price o tea in Cheena?  
Far dae ye see yersel in ten years time?

I mak nae repon.  
I pynt tae the burn.  
The burnt rins forrit.  
The burn rins forrit.  
It dis fit a burn dis

It canna cheenge its coorse  
Gin ye dinna like weet feet  
Dinna wyde in the watter.

Wake for my Faither

Could I hae dressed ye at the last  
Green growe the birks o Dee  
Ye'd hae bin clad in honest tweed

The rochlin wave rins free

In yer richt haun, a heather sprig  
Frae lanely Bheinn a Bhuird  
An in yer left, a larick twig  
Three month in sna-bree smored

I wad hae bathed ye like a bairn  
Wi muckle wae an care  
Pit on yer back a linen sark  
As fite's the mountain hare

Ye wad hae bedd till beerial  
A guest, in yer ain hame  
I wad hae guairded ye three nichts  
As stinch as ony stane

An tho the mortal banes o ye  
Wi yird are happit weel  
Yer marra haunts the Builg Loch  
Tween Crathie an Gairnshiel

Dae-Aathing

Davie-Dae Aathin, far hae ye been?  
Yer smeddum is winted tae save Aiberdeen

The skurries are skreichin ower beach an ower toun  
They fecht for the orrals o faist-food haived doon

There's chuddy on cassies, there's halflins on drugs  
There's underpass muggers...Oh, preen back yer lugs

Davie Dae-Aathin, we're needin yer help.  
The tounsfowk are dowie, moral's taen a skelp

Fin the beggin bowl's rattled roon Holyrood's pend  
It's nae Aiberdeen that gets siller tae spend

Davie-Dae Aathin, we're prood o oor toun  
Bigg us oor bypass tae pump its bluid roon

An while yer about it...see ilkie teem shop  
Could ye convert it tae new hoosin stock?

e

There is said to be an old belief that if the corbies leave their roosting place in the trees of Union Terrace Gardens, Aberdeen will be plagued by a curse.

Corbie Haugh, Corbie Haugh,  
Gin aa the corbies flee awa  
Kelly's cat's surely faa,  
An dule an was beset us aa!

's Yer Doos?

Foo's yer doos?  
Ay peckin.  
Far ye gaun?  
Tae Ecclefeccan  
Fit tae dae there?  
Need ye speir!  
Tae wish them as  
A Gweed New Year!

teller in Embro: The Daft Days

The public gairdens war skinklin like Trowie's gee-gaws.  
I wis there fur  
The tellin o tales, tales risin frae the snaas  
O makkie-on, hale touns o ice  
That melt in the warm lug o listenin bairns  
Pittin frost-flaucht in their een

I dowpit doon in the muckle Shaman's cheer  
At the Netherbow, like Odin, slivverin  
Inoo his beard, about tae fleg  
The gargoyles fur a fee.

Ootbye, Embro chittered,  
A muckle aik coontin its auncient rings,

Wechtit doon wi spurgies an skitter-pot doos.

There wis the antrin storyteller yonner,  
Winnerin gin props or puppets, the dirl  
O a moothie wad gee-up the hale proceedins.

Eftirhan, on the derkened cassies,  
Teemed o the tales o ma trade  
I wis twa holes on a penny fussle  
The warld gaun wheechin throwe me.

At Waverely, fower gallus halfflins  
Strutted an skirled, thinkin thirsels a saga  
A bosyin Japanee couple spak Haiku love-spik.  
A Polish gangrel ettled tae sell the Big Issue,  
An epic naebody wintit, (nae titties nor TV sklaik) .

The bladder-wrack clouds o gloamin  
War pit-mirk blaik, the buses thrang wi fowk.  
I retraced ma shauchlin fitprents, ontae the train  
A wummin, nae the full shillin, speired  
Are ye a violinist? ' Her chikks war kiln-crackit,  
Like they'd bin wheeped bi nettles.  
Her moo wis thin's a razor-shell, gummy an blae

Rattlin ower the Forth, the Brig shanks sunk in the waves  
I glisked the shags' een glimmer in the nicht

On sic a nicht, an uncle crawled on his wyme  
On his hurtit wyme, lang miles tae save his brithers  
Ma grandsire keepit vigil at his bedside,  
Sang him safe frae the killin-clutch o the car,  
Music bein the medicine oor fowk thrive on  
Twa brithers, their tale skaled oot like bladdit ile.

to Migvie: Tune: By Cool Siloam's Shady Rill

Inbye this ancient Migvie Kirk  
The Past an Present jyne  
Far Pictish, Ogham, Celtic Prayer  
Are links in history's chyne

Wi the Welsh hound-lord Kentigern  
Roon Morven's stormy glen  
St Finan plantit Christian seeds  
In thochts o Druid men

Frae Seely Howe an Pressendye  
Frae ferms on Deskry-side  
Frae Melgum, Pronie, Corachree  
Stepped mony's a buskit bride

Bide quaet, an ye nicht hear it still  
A littlin's christenin greet  
The wechty sigh, as cairriet by  
A kist, on grievin feet.

Sae let us consecrate this haa  
Tae Future, Peace, an Calm  
Far lammies bleat an peesies cheep  
As sweet as ony psalm

11.A poem, freely owersett in Scots from Ovid's xiv Elegy: To his Coy Mistress,  
who contrary to his counsel, dyed her hair with noxious compositions and has  
nearly become bald.

Did I nae tell ye, Dinna dye yer hair?  
An noo ye hinna ony hair tae dye!  
I warned ye weel...ye turned yer heid aside  
O wash awa...there's naethin left tae dry!

A peety yer sae thrawn. It wis unmatched  
Fell tae yer knees like silk abune yer sark  
Twis neither blaik nor gowd, a mix o baith  
Braw as the cedar fin ye strip its bark

Sae soft, sae soople, it tuik mony styles  
Nae rugs nor toozles on the caimb's doonpress  
Yer servant lassie niver earned a skelp  
Nor preen-prick, fin she brushed thon sable tress

Whyles o a morning, on yer purple bed

Yer hair scaled ower the sheets, a bonnie sicht  
Like ony Bacchanal on the green girse  
Fair fooneret wi the tuilzies o the nicht

Syne did yer saft hair please...ye glekit quine  
Until I saw ye torture it wi iron  
I bad ye nae tae scorch yer hapless locks  
Did ye takk tent? Na faith, ye niver learn.

Gaen are the tresses ony God micht praise  
That nyaakit Dione micht hae held hersel  
Wi dreepin hauns, uprisin frae the faem  
Twis yer ain wyte. Ye caused the wreck yersel.

Sae dinna glower inbye thon keekin glaiss  
Ye gype, as if yer warld wis turned tae stoor  
An murn the hair that aince adored yer croon  
It wis yersel fa connached yer coiffure

Sheena Blackhall

# Fish On A Tree

I was a fish with seven lives.  
On Monday, I swam in the sea,  
On Tuesday, I drew near to land  
On Wednesday, I reached Galilee.

On Thursday, I ate up a psalm  
On Friday, my sorrows grew!  
On Saturday the knife was ground  
On Sunday, to heaven I flew

Sheena Blackhall



# Fishing Village

A Saltire blows on the breeze  
Blue ganzies flap in the wind

The sea rocks up on the shore  
Near white washed cottages  
Like an old grey hippie, kippered with fags  
Smoky and tangle haired

Smoke trails from a chimney  
Into a mackerel sky stretched out to drying  
A gate creaks on its hinges

The sea has no travel documents  
No passport no visa  
A salt bitten, see-through jellyfish  
Is landlocked on the shore  
Good riddance say heroic silver surfers

The tide froths in  
Like a slut's soiled bedding

Sheena Blackhall

# Fit Kinda Cheil Wis Rabbie Burns?

Fit kinda cheil wis Rabbie Burns?  
They speired in the kintra skweel  
'He wis a fermer an a poet  
Soul bared, wi nocht concealed.'

'An wis he kind or wis he coorse, '  
They speired o this plooman bard  
'He wis a cheil like aa the lave  
His life wis short bit hard.'

Sae mony quines he wooed an won  
Bit times were different then  
An lassies syne war easy bairned  
That were ower free wi men

'Fit wye is he mindit world wide  
Whyle ithers are forgotten? '  
'He spakk oot for the common man  
The puir an the misbegotten  
His sangs could gar the cauldest, thaw  
Till their chikks war aa begrutten'

Sheena Blackhall

# Fite Doo Black Crow (74 Scots Poems)

## 1. Gowd

Dwined till a dwaum yon moss-green kindly een,  
His sang that raise as a shout  
Fin his warld wis young, crined till a myowt  
Late, fin his reel ran deen.

The barfit loon that bedd in the auld man's skin  
Wid lowp like a bawd, clean mad tae rin  
Hyne back, swack fur a swippert morn  
Fin soun an taste an sicht,  
War green as brierin corn  
An friens war flesh an bluid,  
Nae thochts forlorn.

The airm aince braid's a branch  
Dweebled, a shakkin sheaf.  
The haun that gentled ma bairnhood,  
Drappit, a tummlit leaf.

I cudna kepp his step,  
Tho the road he wauked grew roch  
The burn maun rin its lane,  
Till it reests it the loch.

Fowk saw a gutterin caunle,  
Bauchled sheen an claes.  
I saw a guidin licht,  
Frae the bairntime o ma days  
Garrin me ken the wirth, o beauty in brae an cloud.  
I luiked on an auld deen man,  
An I saw gowd.

## IRST-HEIRSKIP

The baler rummles the strae  
Tirred, til a tousie oxterfu  
Bricht bourichs on the brae.  
Caff flees in gowden styew

As the bales dunt on the park  
In the hash an fash tae be throw  
Er the mochy glimmer o dark.  
The hairsters yark  
The strae, atop o the timmer cairt,  
Swyte-weet, back-bared i the sun  
Ah, sweet the time faas tee  
Fin the hairst's near won

Teemed o crap an fowk  
The plundered yird lies weet;  
The rigs are glaury smush  
That the rain wi'ts futterat's feet  
Kirns til a sypin soss.  
Widlan's a chittered gown,  
Mist mells wi the moss.

Forefaither's bluid lies laired  
Far the breem an the brae are paired;  
Happen ma gangrel fit, ilk divot o dirt  
Clings like a bairn  
Tae the tail o'ts mither's skirt.

The yird o the muir wid swallow a body hale  
For men are caff, an the fairm is a muckle flail;  
In the toun wi'ts tawdry trock  
Aa's gain, aa's get. Wauk twa steps back,  
Hairst-heirskip hauds me yet.

### 3. VIVA AIBERDEEN

Lovers cuddlin bi the sea  
Yon wid melt a slider  
Fit's yon paiddlin in ma tea?  
Gyad. A muckle spider.

Neive wi posies o ice cream  
Cones wi chocolate, tappit,  
Wi a beam as braid's yon deem,  
I wad keep it happit.

Strings o puddens neth the sun,  
Streakit roon the bay,

Weirin dookers roon their bums  
Ticht's a tourniquet.

Bowdie legs o grey grandames  
Hairy Harrys, toastin hams  
Greetin girners, dowed in prams;  
Seaside roundelay  
Les vacances on Cote d'Azur?  
Rarer sights at hame  
Rubislaw Den wi'oot its fur,  
Lowpin ben the faem.

Haute cuisine? A halesome rowie  
Yon's the best patisserie.  
Haud awa frae soor salami;  
Buckies, biled in Torry bree!  
Arab fez? Pittodrie tammie.  
Aiberdeen'll dae fur me

#### 4. MUIR o DINNET

Hard bi the heath, the loch-fowk lie  
In the raxxin reeds far peesies cry  
An the Culblean braes that ran wi reid  
Saw clash o arms, o the nameless deid  
Sit douce and snod;  
A brimmin bowl o hedder bree  
In the lap o God.

The yalla's teetin oot o the whins  
The wids are birrin wi birdie dins  
Bummers bizz a hinneyed hum  
Cryin 'Come lass, come.'

The burn is jinkin, bricht's a preen  
Leerie-licht o a brukken mune  
Waves are cuppit wi gowden shine  
The win is shudderin birk an pine  
An the muir-is mine.

ROUP.

The auctioneer held haimmer ower a bid;  
Heistin his eyebroos heich, as if tae speir  
Fit price a lifetime's hairst, ingaithered?  
The blatterin win, rattled the hard-won gear.

Aince, thon braes stude deep in gowden stooks,  
Reeshlin wi corn. Brambles wad entice  
Birds frae their nests, bumbees frae shady neuks  
A bairn's, and a futterat's paradise.

The rigs war kirked tae smush in the melee  
The byre, selt doon tae pails, kerfuffled towe.  
An antique dealer cocked a kennin ee-  
The ashets wad be pairtit frae the knowe.  
A roup's fur buyers. Kinsmen sudna bide.  
Fit price a simmer's day, an autumn nicht?  
Dowie, I turned ma fitstep frae its side,  
Yet, cudna lowse the tows that held me ticht.

-NA-CUIMHNE (Muster cairn of Clan Farquharson.)

Whaur sun's a blin an a blearie ee  
A well o licht, in a gurly sea  
An the Dee rins flat as a braid claymore  
The hips an haws that bluidy the shore  
Are hard as the studs o a clansman's shield  
The briar stauns guard-she'll niver yield  
The muster cairn, tae the furrowed lan  
For ilkie stane is a fallen man.

The barbs o fence, like dragons' teeth  
Ring fierce the cairn wi beards o fleece;  
Niver will craven yowes wauk here  
Through larick's grief, tae the warriors' bier

Bide bit a whyle, fur wi the mirk  
Secret an sair as a foeman's dirk  
Yon's niver the sough o win an rain  
Bit the waesome greet o loss an pain  
O faitherless bairns an unwed wives  
An the fiery cross, that burned mens' lives

Carn-na-cuimhne-the stanes spik bluid  
The name lives on- bit the men are deid

#### 7.A STANE B' THE ALLT DARRARIE, SPITTAL O GLEN MUICK

Bonnie muirlan stane,  
Egg nestled on the grun,  
A tear-drap neth the air,  
Salmon-speckled cone,  
Rarer nor ony pearl,  
Gin I cud unsteek ye,  
Keek at yer core,  
Whit ferlies wid be there?

Born o win an fire in the deid langsyne,  
Dung frae the derk intimmers o this birlin warld,  
Cweeled b' frichtsoms cauld,  
Ye've seen sic mervels- auld Hairsts o pathless pine,  
Crofts, yalla corn-lands dwined  
Doon til the bare peat. Ca'd nae man maister-  
Laird o the brae's beat.

Mormaers o Mar  
Were as a teuchit storm.  
Ye'vemail agin the hail o ony spate;  
Even Huntly, wi his tow-rag retinue.  
Ye gaed yer ain gate,  
Keepit yer ain estate, in the dowie dew.  
Passed, like a sma simmer,  
Drover, crofter, smuggler,  
Sodjer, that stude the shak o war,  
Blawn leaves, i' the win trimmer.

Bonnie muirlan stane,  
Shard o mountain's bane,  
Hid ye the tongue tae spik, the braith tae tell,  
I'd listen, till the crack o Doom itsel

#### 8. SNA

A silent sameness, happt wi caul,  
The sna devours the lan wi nae devaul.

Maks mockerie o milestanes,  
Soun faas thin.

I like the sna,  
Nae tracks that bide  
Ae shift o the win  
An aa's creation-clean  
As a braid tide.

#### 9. FIR WID for Jessie Kesson.

I like tae lie deep doon  
In a Scots fir wid. It disna sook, nor cling  
It's a phalanx o sword, wi adequate room fur manoeuvre

In the resin kingdom, a fir is dragon-green  
It is honed tae rescind  
Corruption, a timmer sanctuary.  
A fir is a Saint Sebastian. Scourged, it'll bleed in martyrdom,  
Withooten a sab, or a sigh.

Manly as ony Lysander;  
A column o Spartan virr  
Sae unlike the flummery cloud pomander o birk, wi its wummin's wyes That  
shifts an pairts the skies  
Whyles seen, whyles hid.

A trimmel o meevin grace  
Is a Scots fir wid

#### 10. PALETTE

Reid. Hips an haws. Hairt's bluid.  
Blue. Forget-me-not. Rue.  
Yalla. Coordy, gay. Breem spray.  
Green. Meevin girse.  
Black. Grievin, hearse.  
Broon. Peat burn, whummlin doon.  
Purple. Heather, thyme. Thon's mine.

#### 11. THE YIRD AN THE MEEN



She stude, a mystic mirror,  
A vauntie, siller queen  
The barren mistress o the derk  
The prood an preenin meen.

Alang the nicht, her moonbeams sped,  
They skinklet at her wurd  
Bit aa her lustrous glamourie  
Wis wastit on the yird.

Twa stranger-sisters, kept apairt,  
By Fate's meridian  
The lunar leddie niver rocks  
The cradle o the lan.

The meen's a daithly galleon,  
A cauld, celestial steen.  
The yird may rule the derk aneth,  
Niver the licht, abeen.

## 12. WINTER BURIAL, TULLICH

Wummin, licht, warmth. Aa are a birth token.  
Dowie, the derksome hills. Mither Eird lies open,  
Ugsome as a wound. The cycle o life is brukken.  
Winter furls eldritch, aroon.  
A kinsman's airm, steadies a boosed back.  
Branches, tap o the Dee,  
Tummel an droon.

The on-ding gars us grue,  
Like deer, flegged bi the cull  
We coorie close, i' the smirr.  
The river roars in ma lug;  
Kent landscapes blur,  
As mens' cauld hauns  
Set doon the lanely kist.

I chitter, bit nae wi caul.  
The Eird hoose, has ae door,  
An that door, steekit.  
Wechty wi grief,

Wi dule an flooers, theekit.

### 13. OF TRAVEL

Furreign destinations are fur fowk fa likes tae raik.  
Tae me, they're bit the harrigals - the puddens o a haik.  
Yet, set me doon b' Lochnagar, or twenty miles aroon  
It's as though I'd tint a bawbee, syne I'd pickit up a poun

Like a bowfin collie tykie, waggin umpteen cheerie tails  
Or an interceety speecial, turryumptin doon the rails  
Gie's a sma soupcon o heather, gie's a coup de grace o pine  
An the same auld magic hauds me, I'm a salmon, on the line

### 14. THE SWICK For Dr. & Mrs n, Skene.

If there be ain fa canna see  
The beauty o the North  
Fa canna hear the soundin geese  
That cry his fitsteps forth,  
He maun be blin-an deaf, forby,  
A kiln o crackit clay.  
There's nae a haa, be't biggit braw  
Can match a Heilan brae!

Far ilkie burn is wingin weet  
An ilkie win is fair  
I fain wad be, bit haud ma seat,  
A gyangin fit, nae mair.

The geese cry doon their muirlan spik  
-I ken that I maun bide  
Bit oh, my thochts they race like rikk  
Straucht fur a mountainside.

This fleshly shell is bit a swick  
The hairt o me's awa  
It's ower the Spittal o Glen Muick  
The mountains claim it aa

### 15. BALLATER BAIRNHOD

A pictur, bricht on the broo,  
O cantie streets, in the hap o a caller glen.  
Trig biggins, kirk, an green,  
A birn fur shops, stappit wi Celtic braws  
The warld steered throw, an ben.

Nichtly, a cracklin lowe  
Bankit wi peat an dross;  
Tossin, in touzelt bedclaes,  
The win, heich in the Pass  
Wad dirl in ma lug.

Aside the winnock-pane  
A stag, sherp-antlered,  
Glowered frae a frame.

A simmer storm... the gurly grue o thunner;  
Lichtnin's yalla fork ootflang the Dee.  
Ma cradle-soun, fur lullaby,  
The soople, breengin wave. A wheep-lashed tree...

I'd rise, tae yoam o new-made bakin breid  
An ilkie day an invite tae a ploy  
Fir-widded hidey-holes, deep, dookin puils  
Fit bairn wad speir a tawdry trashy toy  
Wi sic a rowth o airts tae splore alang?  
Sic bonnie roads, a gangrel geet cud gyang  
The barrack gate's ajee. The pibroch skirls.  
The guard's ahin the mace.  
The pipes, the Games, the challenge o the race  
We'd rin richt swippertly.

Aneth the rugged rocks o Lochnagar  
Best-loued o clachans, coories Ballater.

## 16. THE LECHT

Wis there iver sic a road as thon?  
The planner maun been fou  
It dings yer pech intil yer pooch  
Yer hairt intil yer mou

Divil 's Elbow? Divil's Oxter  
It's a rhyme wi'oot a rule  
It's a humfy-backit helter-skelter  
Baa o raivelt wool.

Ae meenit yer an eagle  
Wi an eyrie an a prayer  
(For yer hingin b' yer taenails  
Ower a cloud that isna there) .  
The neist, yer wheekit forrit,  
Yer the reek gaun up a lum  
Syne a dervish on the dander  
Duntin doon tae Kingdom Come.

A nippy, nesty, neukit road  
A road o rise an drap  
Wi a curse at ilkie corner  
Frae the boddom till the tap

#### 17. GANGREL'S SANG

At nicht fin the bairns are bedded doon  
The hash o the day set by  
I clim the stairs, as a wife maun dee  
An lie, far a wife maun lie.

Twa sleepers, close as braith itsel  
Rowed in the linen fine  
His een shut, peacefu, calm an quate  
The restless dark in mine.

Fain wad I slip till a braid, braid muir  
Wi the wins that hae nae hame  
Rin wi the stag, an the secret deer  
Far the settin sun's a flame.

Nae mist sae thick, bit love can pierce't  
An the cry o the geese rings free.  
Hearth an hoose are his hale delicht  
It's a far road beckons me.

Bound an wound b' a band o gowd

Twined- bit jined in nocht.  
He raxxes oot tae touch a wife-  
I turn, tae haud a thocht.

18. EMBRO TOUN for Tom Hubbard  
Salt on yer tail-she's a hotter in stew  
O the kent, the fremmit, the auld, the new  
The cassie-claik O the Embro hures  
Rikkin an rerr as Turkish flooers  
Fur coat frills on a bare bumbee,  
Is the show a stoater? Pye an see:

Clinkin thochts are a chinkin glaiss  
Wit is gowd, an pretension's braisse  
Dour an dozent, or sherp's a gleg  
Are they takkin the rise? Are they pullin yer leg?  
In howf, or close, or a wee stairheid  
Bards in the makkin, bards lang deid  
Shak doon wirds like a watter spoot  
Ideas fixes a cloot wrung oot

Haive yer havers heich on the pyre  
Gin ye'll nae thole heat-bide ooto the fire  
Embrou toun-yer a blacksmith's haimmer  
Scotia's anvil-strike ye limmer:

19. The Tattie  
Ane twa three fin I wis wee  
I eased tae ett a tattie  
Noo I'm fower I'm oot the door  
An aabodfy caas me fattie

20. HEILAN TOAST For the members of the Deeside Field Club

Some pledge a health wi usquebaugh  
An ithers, wi the wine.  
I'd mairry malt an watter  
Tae drink tae thee, an thine.

An wi the fire, I'd wed the ice  
Jine wi the dram, the Dee  
For peat an pleisur perfect blend

In cauld sna bree

-SANG For Dr sall.... and Yorkshire good sense.

Burn, a mountain teems brak-neck,  
Nerra mill-lade, breengin beck,  
Ilk an ivry tribut'ry,  
Sikks the sea's simplicity.

Inby oceans, aa is ane  
Skaith an tribble's dished, an dane,  
Doon the oyster 0 the deep  
Aa the morns, coddlit, sleep.

Bairn-claes 0 nestlin-new  
Mizzle-mornin brings the dew  
Rain-lift, wingin mirrors sma,  
Sycamore's a wattergaw

Vanity maun aye caress  
Glamourie 0 keekin-glaiss  
Lythe, the watter hauds a luik,  
Powk the pictur-bladd the buik.

Lapis Lazuli,0 OM  
Timeless as a metronome,  
Yon's the ocean, hale, complete,  
Far the jynin circles meet

22. Amo Amas (traditional, Migvie)

Amo amas I lued a lass  
An she wis tall an slender  
Amas amat she caad me flat  
An dang me ower the fender

23. THE WIN For Brian & Mary Wright, Prony Farm, Glen Gairn.

The win that shaks the trees this nicht  
Brings comfort in its lee, I ken it's roved by dark Ben A'n  
And skimmed the waves 0 Dee.

It cairries hinny in its airm  
o bog, an birk, an pine,

It is a balm upon the broo  
A sprig o' simmertime.

It's niver smored in hoose nor ha  
Whaur aa is close an cribbed  
Nor riven at a reeky waa  
Whaur ilkie door is snubbed

Nor scoored the stoury staney braes  
o' fairm toun or howe  
Whaur river is a drouthy ditch  
An tree's a blichtit bough.

The win that shaks the tree this nicht  
I claim it, fur ma ain  
An wi the eagle an the lark  
Wad choose it, fur a hame

#### 24. VANISHING ABERDEEN

Fin I wis wee, I chased the sea  
I caught it, syne it drookit me  
It made me cannie, hardy, thrawn,  
In short, an Aiberdonian

#### 25. WATTER For Charles & Vera King.

Gin wirds war watter,  
Oh the ploys I'd try  
I'd dook me, dyeuk-delichtfu,  
Drookit in puils o' the things:

Guddle fur oors,  
Doonin a fyew wee drams  
O' the real Mackay. Oh ay, I wadna waste wan dleep:  
I'm nae philosopher,  
Catchin' wirds in tumblers.

I'm nae scientist, Giein them tags an numbers  
Under a wee umbrella,  
Watchin them faa tae the grun.  
-I'm nae feart tae get weet.  
I'm the fish in the linn.  
Poetry's fun.

26. LINN O QUOICH For Mr James Forbes, The Square, Tarland.

War I a stane at Linn O Quoich,  
I'd rule like ony queen.  
The velvet win wad mantle me,  
The bonnie birk sae green,  
An fur my Royal vanities,  
The frost wad jewel my neck.  
The simmer sun wad gowd my heid  
The rain, my breist bedeck,  
An I'd be Lady O the mist  
An lord it ower the lave.  
A curlew'd gie me minstrelsie,  
Yon skimmer O the wave,  
My bard would be the salmon,  
He wad cheer me, near an far~  
An I wad be as vauntie, syne,  
As ony Earl O Mar~

27. THE AIN THAT GOT AWA

Fin fishy tales wir bandied, he wis keepit in his neuk  
For feint the fish he'd guddled, or inveiglet on his hook.  
Bit fowk got a stammygaster, fin the lad began tae craw  
For they'd niver heard the marra, O the ain that got awa.

The tale O this monstrosity held aabody enthralled  
Its mou wis that enormous twid hae swallowed Invercauld,  
An spikkin O its pectorals-he wisna gaun tae b1aw~  
They'd hae shei1ed the Lecht, nae bother, o a hunnerwecht o sna

Its scales wis hard an horny, like a muckle pleuin share.  
Fin it 1oupit up, the Dee drap't doon, a fifty feet n' mair  
An its een, twa flashin heid1ichts, wid hae petrifeed a craw  
Man-there wisnae ony haudin it -the ain that got awa.

I creepit doon tae spy it, far it lay aneth the puil  
It wadna filled a hanky, let alane a fishin reel  
Bit I'll keep his secret siccar tho his fabled fish is sma  
For we've aa a tale tae tell about the ain that got awa



Puddock

The puddock lowpit inno the puil  
The watter wis thrang wi flees  
He lay on his back an he snappit them up  
A puddock, takkin his ease

TRYST

I met Anither, b' the burnie's rim,  
A bairn, wi violets dauncin in her een  
An lauchter reamin there, sic joy  
As airches like a wattergaw, ben quate puils  
Puin the antrin buttercup, she wis, tae kepp the rain  
Rowed in her lamb-new war1d,  
Bairnie, an burnie, ain.

I met Anither, b' the burnie's rim,  
A quine, fa wished the burnie fur hersel,  
An wadna share the pleisur o its grace.  
The burnie rowed its lane.

I met Anither, b' the burnie's rim,  
A wummin, warld-ferfochan, castin her gley  
Aften an aften, far the ripples blent  
A perched oasis, sikkin nourishment.

The burnie catcht the pictur o aa three,  
The muckle keep, the keeper an the key.  
Three Russian dalls, bit fit wis cherished maist  
I's cudna ken, the watter ran sae faist

Ilk pictur wis masel, a three-in-ain Triptych  
O passin time. The rain began tae dwine,  
The pictur slipt frae sicht  
An aa wis watter, Leafiness,  
An licht.

IN

Delicht taks mony forms,  
Yet dookin in watter's the Prince o the gowden keys.  
The troot in me splurges gledsome,

Breengin up, in a Halloween 0 a bleeze  
o pleisur, warm as a sun-bolt,  
Piercin the bird-bricht, swippert,  
Licht-fit, reesh1in trees.

Dookin in watter is ridin the win  
on the wing 0 a whaup 0 will.  
Waves are the gangre1 geese  
Blawn doon frae the hyne-aff hill;  
They lap me roon, like a host,  
Greetin a frien lang-lost.

A droothy, dirt-dry deer,  
I steep ma step in yon life-giein tide  
Like a bar-fit cock-a-bendy,  
In the burn far aa watters meet—  
That kirn 0 shimmer an weet  
Poored frae the clouds,  
Frae the teemin horn 0 plenty...

Raindraps glimmer like grain,  
A sowin 0 watter's seed,  
Makkin a sweet refrain  
In ma salmon's bluid

Meetin the warld wi a fleerish, Ye are....  
A monkish illumination  
A hotterin, Hecate hiss  
A blaik italic scroll. A rigmarole  
As lang as a swippert Ganges,  
A Tiber, Euphrates,  
A san-slidderin, nerra Nile.  
A belt 0 a banner  
0 Birlin, burnished steel.

Adder,  
Unsheathed frae yon scabbard 0 scales,  
Ye are a glimsk in the glaur, o guile.  
A glimmer 0 gloamin glamourie.  
Ye are a nimbus 0 serpent cherm.

Unfurlin, ye sweesh ben the hedder  
A chieftain's gowden bracelet  
Wyvin alang an airm..  
Like a slithery vine  
Like a heelstergowdie gird,  
Like a pentit dauncin Salome  
Laigh, i' the dreichsome yird.  
Yer wee sherp tongue  
Powks the air like a forkit twig

Oh wisp 0 siller rikk  
Wi the speed 0 a whirligig,  
The sun-b1eeze heich in yer een  
Like a burnin lowe

Adder, Ye are an eldritch enchantress  
Spig 0 a Celtic priestess  
Queen 0 the warlock's knowe.

Tak ae wee leaf.  
A piper 0 thin notes  
In ony back-green symphony,  
Its widlan warld, thir1ed tae the hum 0 1eevin.  
Vibrancy 0 rain (Surely it wid reca)  
Aince glimmered alang its stem.

Yet, in dreichsome, deid December  
Fin the rime hings on the waa  
Ryped 0 its April dream  
It is onythin bit serene.

Blawn ower the snaw  
It furls an furls awa  
In visible antipathy.  
Is twal month auld,  
Is niver twal month young.  
A tapsalteerie crab,  
Wersh, catatonic, drab,  
It murns in the weety cauld  
Its mony sangs unsung, wi some abhorrence

Kennin the tune bi hairt;  
Swicked 0 repeat performance.

GOGH

Sunlicht kens nae bounds  
Nur yet the win, the ticht grip  
o haudin. Nae tetherin the towes 0 fancy  
That can slip reality  
As quick as simmer rain.

The yird may bind yon eident fingers,  
Mount its graissy guardians Ower his troubled heid  
That kent ower weel  
A rowth 0 wurdly pain.  
He pyed sair wages fur his skeeliness.  
Charon, sma's yer gain.  
Grun an the starny lift  
Foraye are sundered.

Yird's bit the keeper  
o the orra cloots 0 mortal man  
Flesh-framed fur blicht.  
Ower mony a Norlan nicht,  
The stars reflect the glimmer, aybydan,  
Particles, o yon gyte Dutchman's licht.

JOSEPH FARQUHARSON, R.A. LAIRD OF FINZEAN

An whau gaed ye the power, man?  
An whau gaed ye the airt?  
Tae catch the lowe 0 gloamin?  
Tae brak a body's hairt?

Whaur did ye learn, tae paint the win  
The sab,0 Autumn nicht?  
The eildrich mists 0 eventide  
The gossamer 0 licht?

o skeelie, skeelie wis the han  
That drew his native braes  
Wha kent the sadness,0 the lan  
On waesome, winter days...

An when he won awa, man  
They surely saved a space  
Aroon the table 0 the blessed  
The Laird 0' Finzean's place:

#### THE GALLERY ABERDEEN ARTIST'S 52ND EXHIBITION

Raws 0 windaes, picturs.  
Framed thocht,  
Spotlights umpteen interiors.  
Etchins are perjink,  
Best-tie-an-dickie,  
Cannily vrocht.

Action-stopper: Kamikazi colour  
Hollers a hulloo.  
There's a swatch 0 stane...  
I ettle tae stroke it,  
Thirled as ony lover

Lang octaves,  
Played on the Nor' East lan'scape  
Saft's a watergaw,  
Pink's a blush

They strum me vibrant;  
Leesome voices,  
0 lush Silence, the mony tongues 0 image  
Lick me a mockin gleam~  
In the gallery, I staun, a greivin Orpheus  
Murnin Eurydice.  
My sang unwinted,  
Wee, an teem.  
A wraith 0 grey  
Amangst the leevin green.

#### 36. PSYCHIATRIST

Cam richt oot wi't.  
'Stop slidin ben the waa, '  
He said. 'Cept he didna spik common  
On his pye, ye widna, wid ye?

'Haud yer heid up.  
Look the world in the face  
Like a fully-pensioned member  
o the human race.'

Nae fears. Nae me.  
Last time I looked, ken whit?  
It gobbed, richt in ma ee.  
'Jist let it aa oot, ' says he.  
Naethin. Mair naethin,  
Scots mist, missed.  
This is terrible, thinks I  
I'll mak somethin up.  
(Us social inadequates bein helluva fly) .  
Gie him the patter...  
'An whit's your assessment, my dear,  
The crux o the matter? '  
'Yon tree oot the windae's  
Timmer an sap  
Gin it rots, ye cut it doon  
Ye'll nae tap me  
I'm nae a bluidy tree.'  
'Oh, ah see, ' he says, 'Ah see '

Hodgin in his seat  
Straichtenin the tramlines  
On his intercity suit  
Samplin soor grapes  
An inferior brand o cairry-oot.

IMODO

The sweet rot o the bramble buss,  
Scratched entanglement o firs,  
Places o half licht,  
Are jungles o concealment.  
Shaddaes, lang i the sun,  
Cannibalised, amang a wab o jylers.

A wounded boar, riven wi spears

Will drag its dreepin spoor  
Alang the daithly puddock steel  
Far few daur gang.

I turn my spears, in their kent agonies  
Watchin them bleed in secret;  
Drag my Achilles heel,  
Disdainin calipers,  
The quasimodo hump, sae weel  
Attached, I canna lay it doon,  
An wid be tint wi'oot...

True Tammas, wi his honest tongue  
Sisyphus, wi his stane,  
The fykes an flecks  
O An ill load, culled,  
In the pebble wame,  
Oot-scalin O insanity.  
Cauld comfort,  
Wi the cosie name,  
o poetry.

### 38. TOUCH

Fingerens dreepit in rain, clay, dubs,  
(Yon primal mellin O yird an watter)  
It's jeelin, creatin a feelin  
In mouldable dust, mair eloquent, vital, potent  
Nor an air-bubble burst O wurd..  
Foo absurd is the teddy bear cosie  
Bairnie's bosie o smoorichan wastit on fur  
Tamed, stuffed, breet,  
Hard as a dummy's teat  
Close as a sticky burr

Fingerens strokit on silk  
On a comfy bowster  
Are warm as a mither's milk.  
Fingerens neist tae skin  
Can be jobby as whin  
Can be sair as sin...

Tae bairns, a wirm is a kittle  
A bummer's a sting.  
They are pairt o ilk weet an windy Spring

Anely bairnies an lovers touch  
It's fear, tae be here, an felt,  
Tae hae, is tae haud.  
The game 0 catchie's  
The brierin 0 fleggin

Niver be catched an kepped  
Niver be preened an nailed  
On a cross 0 anither's settin.  
Touch can be devastatin.

### 39. INSTINCT for James Michie, Director of Education

The umbilical cord's nae cut,  
Bit, nuzzlin, guzzlin, sookin  
Pure, warm, soothin pleisur  
The new-born kens the richt road  
Natural as breathin.  
A grippit pencil fittit.  
Seemed my fingers war  
Fashioned fur it

A hale page,  
Fite's a whisper  
Eggin ye on.  
Willin ye

Come on then,  
Cheenge me.  
Mak yer mark.  
Willin ye  
Shape me,  
Set something doon~

Lang teem vase,  
Thirsty fur watter.  
Natural as breathin.



#### 40. AIR RAID SHELTER

At the siren's wail,  
At the first sign 0 trouble,  
Ah dinnae rin for an air raid shelter.  
Ah'm nae an ostrich,  
Nae san here,  
Could ye nae jist pictir an ostrich,  
Wi' a dubby heid?

At the siren's wail,  
At the first sign 0 trouble,  
Ah dinnae rin for the pub,  
Sweel doon beer,  
Till the bottle's deid.  
At the siren's wail,  
At the first sign 0 trouble,  
Ah'm an oddity  
Ah write poetry.

Louis Aragon died on Christmas Eve, 1982, aged 85. 'Buts an Bens' is a resetting in Scots of his poem, *Les Chambres*, (1969)

AN BENS For Dr. Asso & Jenny de Alwis, Brantford, Ontario  
Aa the rooms 0 ma life  
Wull hae thrappled me wi their waas.  
Yonner, the mummlin's smored  
The screichs brak aff.  
Thonner I bed alane  
Wi muckle teem strides  
Thonner,  
They keepit their auld ghaists  
The rooms 0 indifference.  
The rooms 0 grue, an the ane set richt trig, the better tae dee in't, cauldly,  
Brocht pleisur, fey nichts.

There's rooms far bonnier than the stoonds 0 love,  
There's rooms that YE'D think naethin by-ordnar,  
There's rooms 0 seekin,  
Rooms 0 blearie licht,  
Rooms ready fur onythin bit gledness.

There's rooms for aye ma ain, wi ma bluid Spleutered.

Inby ilk room, a morn daws that a body  
Flays hissel hale...  
That he draps tull his knees in, priggin fur mercy  
That he hubbers, an teems hissel in, like a glaiss  
Tholin the damned-dreid sairs 0 the times

Slaw Dervish, the time is roon, that turns on him,  
Fa owerluiks  
The quarterin 0 his weird  
An the laich sough, 0 du1e, afore the Oors, the halves  
I niver ken gin it's gaun tae strik ma daith

Ilk rooms a judgement-coort  
In whi1k I ken ma meisur, an the keekin-glaiss  
Disna forgie me.

Aa rooms, at the hinner-en, fin I steeked ma een  
Hae cast ower me a skaith 0 widden-dremes  
Till I cudna say fit's waur,  
Dwaumin, or 1eevin.

#### 42. THE OPEN YETT for the members 0 the Scots Language Society

There's a yett that aye bides open,  
There's a gean that's iver green,  
There's a gledsome cup that's brimmin,  
Tho aathin else be teem;

There's a far, far road that's windin  
A stair frae a cellar dark  
That leads till a bud-fu gairden  
An a cloud, that kens nae mark.

Finiver I feel ferfochan,  
Finiver the warld is blae,  
Like a caunlelicht in the gloamin  
Like the sun that taps the day,  
I kick the stoor 0 trauchle, o wretchedness aside  
An rin, a loose-lowsed sheltie,

Far the dwaums o bairnhood bide.

An there, a spleet-new craitur  
Wi'ts innocent-open een  
I find a bield an a benison  
In the memries 0 yestreen.  
Nae trauchle iver enters  
Nae dreich, or waesome thocht  
For yon's tha lan' 0 Paradise  
Its yett, unyirdly-vrocht.

A brierin swatch 0 happiness,  
A skirp 0 the gowden whin,  
Tho aa aroon be naethingness  
The grey grey nicht, abune.

43. Amo Amas (traditional)

Amo amas I lued a lass  
An she wis tall an slender  
Amas amat she caad me flat  
An dang me ower the fender

44. DORIC for Robbie Shepherd

Soft, Suddron spik, that iles the converse  
o a fremmit lan  
Will ay be the rib 0 Cain  
Tae the stinch, roch wirds  
Quarried frae centuries, we ain.

Smeddum's a wurd'll thole  
Thin hairsts, the blatter 0 reivin sizzens.  
Aybydan, thrawn.  
Yon merks wir Nor East Scots—  
A tongue baith braid, an braw,  
Nae a Joseph's coat, fur polyglots.

Ye speir, gin Doric's deid?  
A cannie tod, I'll nae deny  
It whyles ducks its heid  
Rinnin tae grun

Afore the antrin dominie,  
(A wid-be Edward, haimmer in haun,  
Cockin his Judas-gun)

Ye may keep yer Suddron rose,  
Kittle, an coy, an smert  
The nettle I wid grip,  
Is the Nor East Airt

#### 45. SECUNT BIRTH

Weel-faired as a fresco bi Raphael, 'Madonna and Son'  
A bonnielike basket, bucklet thegither,  
A buckie, sookin the pap 0 the boun'less sea  
Man-babe, an its mither.

She wis his meal an ale,  
His bield, in onchancy widder  
Sic weirds she wad wyve on her wab  
A tapestry blythe fur her bairn,  
0 vouchsafed pleisur~

The littlin becam a loon,  
Sweir tae daunder his lane, shuggily aroon the foun  
His powe wis a corbie's wing, happin an opal broo.  
Warm wis the neb 0 him, noozlin,  
Pleisunt his moo, nyum-nyumin,  
Lichtsomes his threep, curmurrin,  
The smaaest fleg caad n,  
Up tae her cradlin bosie;  
The guff 0 him, kent an cosie.  
His warld grew braider  
He turned on her, traitor,  
The knap 0 his tyrant fit  
Gart the waas 0 Jericho cowp  
Her regency doon on its dowp.

He strode frae the nursery, a Titan  
In a rive 0 thunner an storm,  
His selfhood wis born.  
Ilkie knell 0 rebellion,  
Scrattit her matriarch hairt-

Wylin her princelin awa,  
In that secunt birth,  
They war finally,  
Torn apairt.

#### WHISKY

Tears staun thistle-jobby, in his een.  
Ae dunt wad shak them doon,  
A mill-lade, brakken;  
The dam-rush efter the drooth.  
Dinna deny the chiel his feelins~  
They're a hunner per cent proof~

Vauntie's a cockerel's croon,  
His Nancy's a bitter brew  
She sits him up, anely tae caa him doon  
The morn, she'll gar him grue.

#### 47. MA DEARIE

Gien her aathin. Best years 0 ma life.  
Cooker, fridge, TV. Indoor lavvy.  
Niver bashed her aince,  
In siller or skint.  
Fit mair cud a wummin wint?

Doon the boozer,  
Ah'm Action man  
Wi a ring-pull can.  
She's at hame  
Aa her lane  
Hoose like a midden.  
Is she affrontit?  
Deil the grain~  
Armageddon~

Doon the boozer, I'm dynamite.  
Come hame fleein  
Heich as a kite

That cheerie  
Luiks at me  
Like a daud 0 shite.  
Ma dearie.

#### 48. DELINQUENT'S SANG

I am 0 Clottie's kin,  
I am the rib 0 Cain.  
I gaed tae ma mither fur breid,  
Fur breid, an she gied me a stane.

I am the scud and the skelp,  
The heid bang, the snot on the face.  
I am the slash. I'm the whelp,  
Shunted frae ilkie place.

I am the spit on the slab,  
King 0 the strut. Haud ower~  
I gaed tae ma Da fur a kiss,  
A kiss, an he gied me a cloor.

Write me doon on the waa,  
Doon as a snappin breet,  
Doon as a hoodie craw,  
Doon as a mushroom geet.

Crucifeed, I will bleed  
Reid, as the hunger 0 hate.  
Fa will unlock ma neive?  
Polis, or shrink, or state?

See me, in gutter an gang,  
Ootlined in ilkie toon.  
I am the scapegoat 0 aa,  
Weirin the thorned croon.  
I am yer brither. Haud me.  
Haud me, or cut me doon.

## 49. BRIDE

Seed, brierin, growth.  
Syne comes the hairst.  
The corn afore the scythe's a bride,  
A rowan blossom, in a man's lapel  
Shakkin the bough, he pu's the floer itsel.

Toasts teemed, an blessins said,  
Kirk-coupled, spukken fur, an preed,  
The warm stramash 0 life ripe in her bluid,  
She lies, a stook fur shearin,  
In the fite rig 0 the merriege bed.

A birlin ring, the sizzens furl aroon,  
Anither lass pits on the weddin gown  
Bride's bairn's a wife,  
Neist wheek,0 the sweengin scythe.

## E

Auld age an dalliance are ill begun.  
Nae teuchit I, bit teuchsom coq au vin  
Gin ye wid grip a tiger bi the tail  
Mak unca sure it disna ett ye hale.

'Gae back, gae back' quo I, wi thrawnness crooned.  
The tide cam in, of coorse, an I wis drooned.

## TENT

Tak tent~  
Houghmagandie's addictive  
The stoon o a stob,  
The tidal sook,  
0 a Fingal's cave, agog.  
Lichtnin, forkin a cloud,  
Horn, beeriet in bog,  
Pestle, thuddit in mortar,  
A noose, thrapplin a log,

Bee, nuzzlin nectar,  
An erle, plumpt in a puil.  
Furlin a roller coaster,  
Ivy, birlin aroon a tree,  
A tichtenin spanner,  
Grapes, i' the press,  
A slubber 0 crowdie  
A lowe, birsslin a coal,  
A yird-howkin mowdie,  
Fuskey, mellin wi cream.  
Yon's houghmagandie.

A wummlin viper,  
A pearl doon a well,  
The sickle meen,  
A balloon hallooin,  
A lasso lowpin,  
A bell, pealin victory,  
A nip 0 Napoleon brandy,  
Yon's houghmagandie.

Fyles, it's a  
Hoolet huntin,  
A futterat lunterin,  
A smiddy's haimmer,  
Icicle, drapped in a  
Hotterin, spleuterin bree  
That havvers the knot  
o senses taut, maist eidently.  
Frae the warld, and its warsles,  
Heist-o-the-hurdies free,  
Yon's houghmagandie~

Turn the peat  
Mask the tea  
Dicht the greet  
Frae a bairnie's ee.  
Kepp the kye  
Shear the sheep



Sell an buy  
Sow an reap  
Hack the coal  
Fae the pitheid waa.  
Lay the strae  
In the stirkie's staa  
Preen an darn  
Spin an weave  
Fecht, or pray,  
Clap, or grieve.  
Twa guid friens  
Twa servants, baith  
Rock the cradle  
Dig the grave.

### 53.SIDE-SHOW

Shelts pirouette their peintit timmer hooves  
Like widden-dreams, in weel-accustomed grooves.  
A circlin dwaum 0 skyrie speed they furl,  
Wud deevilicks, weird dervishes, they birl,  
Reid agin derk....the music in the air's  
A faistenin pulse. Girse, in a kintra fair's,  
A smushed, crushed, trodden guff, that dicht's  
The fitsteps green. The roon, hairst, meen,  
Is harness bricht. The win's a rearin meer,

Quine, creepin sleekit frae the nicht's minneer  
In cotton dress, the willows warn ye back.  
Yon track ye thochtless tak, is dangerfu.  
Yer tinker lad's a fiery pimpernel.  
Cannie~ Le jeu n'en vaut pas la chandelle~

### SEASONS' SOIREE

Spring wis a wallfloor-she sat in a neuk,  
Ower young fur the ithers tae heed  
A skin like a peach-wi the antrin plook,  
A book, naebody winted tae read.  
Simmer wis plottin, fair pechin wi swat

Ower girthy wi growth tae be flirty,  
It wisna the fashion fur fowk tae be fat  
She'd the over-abundance 0 thirty.

Autumn wis comely-but quanter, an soor  
As burnished, an brazen as braiss  
Bit widn't'ye girn, an look crabbit an dour  
Wi twa thirds 0 yer san' doon the glaiss?

Winter pyochered, an hoasted, an rubbit his sairs  
Mair sense than the rest pit thegither  
Bit fit wis the guid 0 an erudite heid  
Amangst weemin that winted tae blether?

Thinkin soirees a crime, auld misanthropist time  
Chappit twalve, wi the heel 0 his staff  
At the witchery oor, in a fleerich 0 stoor  
The fower Seasons tuik fleg, an ran aff~

#### 54. BIRD'S EYE VIEW For the Buchan Heritage Society

Gin ye pit knowledge in a tree,  
Ye'd fairly fire the thicket~  
Fit shelter wad a willow gie,  
Familiarised wi' cricket?  
Wi' a degree in forestry,  
The wid wad stump the wicket~

Fit rose wad lift its heid sae wee, forewarned, its neck ye'd thraw?  
A stirkie wi' a . wad up-tail and awa:

I wadna be a rose, a tree,  
A stirkie in a park~  
An yet, fyle they are sleepin..  
Me? I'm warslin wi' the dark.

The spurgle biggs his hoosie  
Wi' the meenit's threids an thrums  
I'll pree yon bird's philosophy,  
'The morn niver comes'.

## 55. AS ITHERS SEE US

Peat-broon, a wing-beat  
Drappin alang avenues 0 air  
Lichtsme as thistle-web  
A pulse 0 dauchled pouer,  
The eagle commandeers wir awed attention.  
(His eyrie, sticks an banes  
Ower-strewn wi chittered fur,  
We winna mention.)

Gyte boomerang, on lichtly lowpin legs,  
The hare, wi win-caimbed fur that ripples like the sea,  
Dowps doon in ony lair  
A scrapit bowl 0 girse  
Wi nae pretension.

We like tae study ither beasts at play  
Dae they watch us, wi similar intention?  
The owl cud he bit spik, fit wid he say  
About wir customs, habits, an convention?

He'd likely note, a heistie up wi men  
Comes nae bi fit ye dae, bit fa ye ken  
An foo wi meisure wirth is mair agley  
It isna fit ye are, it's fit ye hae~

## 56. THE CRICKET AN THE ANT for Phyllis Goodall, &the members of the Banffshire Field Club

I ken a chiel wha's pleisur's a straucht furrow,  
A trig byre, a fat beast,  
A weel-aired semmit on a Setterday nicht,  
A guid-gyan dram.  
Gie him a yowe tae clip, a bale tae bigg,  
He's blythe's a gleg ower sharn.

I ken anither fa's pleisur's wirds.  
A kirn 0 gollachs, wi a sting in ilkie tail.  
He'll wide ben nettles efter a wee fite rose,

Syne press't on a preintit page  
He'd rather peint a park nur ploo it.  
He'd playa reel, afore he'd dae rale wirk  
Sing ye a sang, raither nur tirr his sark.

The same auld rant. We need them baith, the cricket an the ant  
This life, sae hard, wid be byordnar teuch  
Wioot the cricket, cheepin i' the sheugh.

## UNCA GUID

There wis a calvinistic cat  
Sat snod, in sabbath braws  
He dainty dined on spurgies  
Bit coored awa frae craws.

A veritable paragon,  
His clooks wis' lang an sure  
At powkin fallen carrion,  
The godless and impure.

Noo ither cats may hotch an heeze,  
Wi' flechs amangst their fur,  
Bit deil the moch tormentit him  
It widna even daur.

The felines fairly jambooried  
Fin wird broke oot he'd deid  
For yon's the price he pyed, ye see  
For bein unca guid.

## 58.SIT SICCARs

Sit siccars hae a spik-a place fur aathin, aathin in its place.  
A puir ootluik,0 sma gumption.

Nae fur me the tyke that coors frae its ain gurl.  
Raither, the bikk that tackles the hurly burl  
o life. Dreids nae dreid. Yowls fur the meen.  
Winna be bocht b' a clap, or a bare been.

It's the challenge 0 the chase  
Quickens the hound's bluid til a reid race.

Fa's niver supped the bitter brew,  
Fa fears tae grip the blade  
Is bit a sluggard in the dew,  
A bonnie tune, unplayed.

#### ID AN EVIL

Fower-feet patterin the futterat rins,  
Lowpin ark, wi a sickle's sheen  
Coorse quick killer, ahin the whins  
Een half-gyte, an a hairt 0 steen.

Saft an creashie, the doo wings doon  
Mild as milk, an as meek's a lamb  
Quaker wife, in a modest gown  
Mim's a maid, an as guid's a psalm

.  
A rose grows reid, a cornflower blue,  
A thrissle heid, by a lily, grew.  
Guid an Evil's, in man's bluid  
Fa faddoms the growth 0 Adam's seed?

Bird 0 Paradise,  
Spirk 0 Original sin,  
An efterthocht.  
A rib 0 the yird

Rowed up in a cutty claith,  
A wanton, a limmer,  
The hurly-gush 0 the river's  
Nae fur ye

Strae-dallie, a peach, a leech,  
Ye're the stank 0 a gairden puil~

Quine, ye're a chaip bawbee  
A vessel, a vassal haudin the Wine  
O yer Lord's creation.

Spunk, that kinnelt temptation  
Ye war framed fur the fire,  
Fur the Fa'  
Frae the verra first.  
Ye an the serpent→  
Scapegoats. Baith accurst.

## 61.NICHT VISITOR

Weird as a warlock's curse, the nicht  
Maister, may I gyang hame?  
Ah, bit the reeds they grip me ticht.  
Cauld is the watter's wame~

It's I wad keep a lover's tryst  
Far mist an lochan mell  
I pledge ye, bi the grace O Christ  
I'll nae tell far we dwell.

My een he kissed sae wantonly,  
Are abrim wi the lochan's glaur.  
My veins rin wi the puddock bree,  
Sae bide, I dinna daur.

Fur sud he see his ain true love  
Efter the first cock craw,  
Oh, bi the Beltane O the year  
His hairt wad brak in twa.

An sud he see his ain true love  
Efter the cock craws neist,  
T'wid be a dagger in his saul,  
An aيدر, in his breist.

An sud he see his ain true love  
Efter the cock craws thrice,  
He maun foresweir forivermair

The bliss 0 Paradise~

## 62. NICHT DRIVIN

The hierarchy 0 metal, far newest is best,  
A grandiose Gran -Prix stooshie o winner-taks-aa,  
Has ayewis, a deid-en Honda,  
A black Avenger. A Jaguar purrs at a Lotus Elite  
Bummin, replete wi the heidy  
Adrenalin bizz 0 success.

A continent-lowpin Sierra (Knight 0 the motor-chess)  
Proodly declares, 'I traivel'  
The world is a birrin causey  
Aggressively, tyres strikk graivel.  
At noon, each snod Saloon  
Is stounin wi pouer. The law 0 the road is a jungle law,  
Meeve ower, meeve ower.

Sae I'd far leifer drive at nicht,  
Fin fowks' status-symbols 0 cars  
Are happit an smored bi dark.  
Are clipt 0 their ego-particular.  
The hoolet's chime's,  
Reductive, tae things vehicular~

## 63. COAL

Fossils 0 muck1e beasts  
That gart trees styter,  
That walked the world  
In a sypin swee1 0 plyter,  
Their scrauchin, like their girth, Gargantuan,  
Lie obsolete, in the ribs  
o a 1ang-1ummed, yirdy mine.  
Boxed in by glaur  
The boddom 0 a pit...

I'd nae devau1 doon there  
Whar dane men pyocher

Faither an son wirk-weariet  
Hyne frae the halesome air,  
Alive, bit beeriet. Daylicht's a shift awa,  
A chink in the laft.  
Doon, in the gunnels o the dark's  
The midnicht foun o a shaft.

Fa'd sic tae howk  
In the grave-yaird fug o a hole?  
Nae me, by God, nae me.  
A coorse thing, coal.

64. LUE THY NEIBOUR (Love Thy Neighbour, to Jean Rousselot, by Max Jacob...here reset in Scots)

Hae ye seen the taed, crossin the street?  
He's a wee mannikie, wee-er nur a dall.  
He's hunkerin, grovellin. He's shamed, ye say?  
Na. It's rheumatics. Ae leg's trailin. He rugs it forrit.  
Far's he gaun like yon? He's cam ooto the drain, puir gowk.

Naebody heeded me, in the street.  
Noo, the bairns nyatter at ma yalla star.  
Lucky taed~ Ye hinna a yalla star.

65. THE HOAST

A kittlie hoast can be a sair dement,  
As if ye'd chokkit on a kirn o thistles.  
The win gaes rochlin roon aboot yer chest  
For a the world like a kist o whussles.

Ah, this damnt climate can be coorse indeed,  
Malagarosin ony ceevil body.  
Within this girt, grey sklyter o a NorIan toun  
Fowk tak the auld remeid  
Haud on the toddy.

66. POSTMAN'S KNOCK



Here comes Hermes. The rain's stottin aff his hat.  
His wings are pooched, or happit neth his breeks.  
A herald wi a hoast. Nae mair gallavantin ben the clouds.  
The van's the thing fur post.

A dog's denner, postie's dowp. Ae gurr'll gar him lowp,  
Heicher nur ony tree.  
Is yon the electricity accoont?  
Tak ae bite oot fur me~

## ISTMAS BLUES

Chap the tatties, bree the neeps,  
Gie the broth a steer,  
Dicht the bairnie's faces,  
Christmas denner's here~

Cloutie dumplin in the pan,  
Hotterin up an doon,  
Fairy lichts gyang 'Plunk' again~  
Haun the tangies roon.

Birsled bubbly jock fur wiks  
Halflins scalin beer  
Balloons that winna bide up  
An sotter on the fleer~

Faither squar-eed watchin sport,  
Littlins wint cartoons.  
They've riven oot the aerial.  
Fa inventit loons?

Still, it's anely aince a year,  
Fit's that, I hear ye say?  
Clear the table 0 mineer  
Roll on Hogmanay? ?

## HEIRESS

A hoose is a byre, gin the mistress be roch  
Wi mainners an habits tae scunner a tink,  
Far etiquette's wintin-a table's a troch  
Bit nae wi Jean Foubister-she wis perjink.

She'd the cream o fowks' complements-shoddy genteel  
An invisible darn, wi a thrift in her threid.  
A sma boddom drawer, bit a wye wi a chiel  
That gart him think, mebbe she'd butter his breid.

She niver wid mairry: Ower mean tae be mated  
(A wealthy aunt's legacy, sune tae be read)  
Bit oh the begeck, as in cauld print 'twis stated  
'Tae Jeannie, ma favourite, the auld double bed'.

Anely Francie left single: O suitors, the midden  
Bit Jean didna dauchle-she wed him wi haste  
Wist the gift-or the man set her hairt on a weddin?  
She winna twa face ye...she cudna thole waste.

#### 69. LANG-LEGGED TAM

A hudderie~heidit, tattie-bogle tyke  
Wis lang-legged, whusslin Tam,  
The bik aye bowfin at his back,  
Herdin his black-faced yowes  
An the muckle ram.  
Drivin his hung-tee tractor  
(He caa'd it a hotterin hoor)  
Thirled tae the lan';

His jaicket, wallop in wide, aye knipin on  
Jug-Iuggit, bool-eed  
Wi a saft, sappy grin.  
Through the rigs o the dark, ye wad hear it,  
His whusslin, whusslin  
Nae thocht in his noddle that didna cry 'baa',  
His pucklie yowes, an his bik  
Wis the sum o it aa.

Coorse grun he fairmed,

A byword for skyllich an heather,  
His ramshackle toon  
Bore the brunt, an the dunt 0 the weather,  
Faar only the muir-girse wid thrive,  
The ploo neither rug nor rive,  
The rodden mair deid than alive.

His steadin half-beeried in breem,  
Aye ahin wi his work,  
He wad lowse by the licht 0 the meen.

'Twis the bik that bowfed the news—  
A lang skirl that jeeled i the win  
Its maister, forsakin his flock,  
Tied the tow neth his chin,  
Syne, lang-legged, jug-luggit Tam,  
Threw ower his staff, and his stock,  
Wi a whussle, a spit, and a damn,  
Takkin leave 0 them aa, like a lamb.

#### 70. LAIK-WAIK LAMENT for my father.

A worn, ferfochan eagle,  
Dinged, ooto the lift,  
His neive, a fierce clook, clawin,  
Hungersome, fur the derk  
Moo, steek't, een, snibbit. Cauld's  
A midnight tarn,  
Strang, in contempt fur weakness,  
Ma faither-fooshunless, an sterk.  
The dwine,0 smeddum,0 virr,  
Wis a wurd he hated sair. Sae, like an eagle,  
Sudden, he soared nae mair.  
His skin is fite's a meen  
His nails, blaiken in daith.  
Tae honour the honoured deid  
Nae rite wull I leave undane~  
Mensefu, I drap the yird,  
On ma faither's heid, ilk divot, a stang 0' skaith~  
Nae kinsman daur dae less

Sud there be sic an ane  
May there be nane tae bless  
His unmurned passin  
Lang may his banes lie bare  
In the winter's mawe,  
In the cauld an the keenin air.

Sae, mool, receive thy dust~  
Nae needs fur dule, ower a life baith lang, an just.  
Yet fa can turn frae the grave, wi'oot a scar?  
The warmth,0 a faither's Love,  
Lies happ't in glaur.

#### 71. FOR GEORGE BRUCE

Gurly the wave, that's gray wi the grue 0 storm,  
Eastlin the win, frae the mirlygo, blae Nor' Sea,  
O'erswack the faem, Fauvist in virr, in form  
Rattlin fou wi the touzlet ocean's bree  
Gleg is the man, fa's easel is sic an airt.

Bruce satts the tail 0 prood fantoosherie~  
A wirdy Rembrandt, imagin plooks an aa  
Upcasts the 'Nicht-Watch' fowk, yon hale Clamjampfrey,  
As a Brocher nails a craw  
Ever the foe,0 feels, an their flim-flammery.

#### 72. JEAN; BUCHAN WARD, CORNHILL

A doo, plunked in a docket, Jean cud be  
Ony young mither, hashin the bairns tae schule  
Bletherin on-gauns ower a cup 0 tea  
About her Joe or Harry, Dauvit, Frank or Sam,  
Until her bonnie mou (framed perfectly fur spik)  
Lat oot the rikk 0 Babel, styte 0 Bedlam.

I wulled her on a leper colony,  
Haudit in Hades; hickled aff tae Mars.  
Takkin the air, wi Bonaparte on Elba.  
Fear,0 the clean-gyte quine, bred cruelty.

The ghaisties 0 her thochts hung on a barren loom  
Like eildritch tentacles...like tenants dispossessed,  
Evicted frae a room; naewye fur them tae flit.  
A guillotine hid drapped inbye her heid  
Aroon her, dottled deems began tae knit.  
Her wandrin wirds led tae a mirey bog  
Far nane daur follow. Nane cud enter it.

She gript some sounless dreid agin her breist,  
A bladdit bairn, it sooklit on her bluid.  
Her een gaed wide wi grue,  
Twa moosies, fleggit bi a craw's baloo.  
Some inner sunlicht shone,  
Syne Jean grew mirky....glided, like a swan.

I cudna haud her glower,  
Feart, that her widden-dreams, micht skail ootower  
Micht mount their meers, an leave her castle haa  
Herry ma ain mind-keep, And gar it faa.

BOUNDARIE....

Hinney is hedder, bizz is bee  
Pollen an bummer mell thegither  
A reeshlin win's a trimmlin tree  
Nae boundaries-ane wads wi tither.

A burn's a tummlit cloud 0 weet  
A Ben is bit a heistit drap,  
A lover's lauch's, a bairn's greet,  
A haimmered pain, is pleisur's chap.

Singer is sang, an dauncer, daunce  
United, indivisible. The timmer is the lowe's advance  
Abstract becam accessible.

Yuletide an simmer, age an youth  
In daith is birth, in laich is heicht  
Wing is in win, in lee is truth,  
Derk's bit the kimmer 0 the licht.

Watter is troot, an tiger, yowe  
Inbye is ootbye, up is doon,  
Raxxin or dwinin reet is bough  
As north is sooth, as keckle's froon

The muckle ocean feeds the lan  
Nae void, nae void, a growthy grain  
Girds yird an lift, a linkit haun  
Drooth 0' yestreen's, the morn's rain.

Far be the boundaries in yon?  
Naewye, fur Natur hates a waa~  
Dyew-daiggliit meendraps straik the dawn  
An buttercups frae starlichts faa.

Man biggs a hoose wioot a door,  
Doom 0 a tomb that wints a key,  
Howkin the mools, himsel tae smore  
Maks him a jyle, an caas it 'Me'.

Yon puny sel', erects wi care  
Defensive dykes tae kepp it in  
Merkin a boundarie,0 air  
Coorin ahin a shell 0 skin

An caas this fortress 'I' an 'mine'.  
Skulkin aneth a tent 0 dreid,  
A shady turtle, asinine,  
Fa winners far the sunlicht gaed~

#### 74. HAUD GAUN

Nae eagle braks a win in cosmic motion,  
Nae Ben betacks a gangrel toosht 0 strae.  
Nae fisherlad hauls in the wishless ocean,  
Nae tod hunts doon the dwinin 0 the day.  
Nae tinchel ties a sunbeam til a neuk,  
Nae chappit nail steeks widder til a mast.  
Progress-the turnin pages 0 a buik  
Nae haun restrains-the new beeries the past.

Snaw haps the lan asleep. Spring yokes tae grow,  
Syne yestreen's yird is blossom on the bough,  
The morn's stag is beddit in the fawn  
A raxxin randy, lowpin intil dawn.

Wechty, bune aa, the trauchled traiveller's load  
Far memory's forgainst the forrit road.  
An open biggin needna be afeard  
Far grief's the door-sneck, bitter is the weird~

Be as the showdin snawdrap i the dyew  
The steers 0 love, stramash 0 dule, sweesh throw  
Fur stobs that seek tae scart as on the wye  
Teir sairest, fin ticht-gript. Wir frailty  
Vrochts us ticht shackles wippit roon the shank  
An slaws wir steps wi dreich forebodins rank.

Live in the Noo, the Present's aybydan.  
Thrawn, Set yer fit upon the path. Haud gaun~

Sheena Blackhall

# Fitting The Moment/Bolton Wanderers(The Trotters Versus Raith Rovers)

And here we are today to watch The Trotters  
Taking to the pitch to confront Raith Rovers

The Rovers are trained to play in their space machines  
Which should give them an advantage over the Trotters,  
But the Wanderers are led by Moses, man of the moment  
Centre forward, with the power to dismember rocks.

And Moses is off, a herd of pigs in tow,  
In an over-the-top response to a Rovers penalty  
Passionate, uninhibited and a bit weird for football fans everywhere

The Rovers are very tired now, their fuel source  
Drained by Moses' celestial powers  
A foul in any man's language.

Oh no! Unbelievable!  
One of the Trotters thunderous right hooves  
Has done the unthinkable.  
Unbalanced a Rover in mid flight  
Tipped its pilot into the stand.  
The Rover's pilot is barely able to talk for several minutes.  
But here's Moses leading his Trotters racing towards the goal

There's a tremendous cheer from the crowd  
As a big hairy boar from the Black Forest hoofs a winner  
Slam into the back of the net!

The trophy is solid gold,  
But Moses hands it over to the other team  
Saying it's against his principles  
To accept a false idol

I feel everything welling up and think  
'Christ, I'm going to burst into tears'  
Somehow it fits the moment.





## Flashback (Barn Door Fadlydyke)

Forkit lichtnin cracks the Heivens in twa  
Lichtin the pit-mirk ferm, celestial fire  
Aa nicht the storm dinged on...a hard doonfaa  
Ram stam the rain, stottin aff barn-cum byre

Flashback, afore the snawy hoolet skreighed  
Laird o the teem derk crannies o the barn  
Afore the chaumer rikk deed in the lum  
Far jackdaas reest noo, sentinels o sharn

Here, creashie nowt aince chawed their hey an neeps  
Neth Andra Watt's reid coo, milk sookers shone  
Vrocht inno cheese bi his gleg, eident wife  
A bonnie wumman Kate, ay kneipin on

Slaw crap o granbairns grew up on this ferm  
The barn door kent them aa, rang wi their ploys  
Time has etten the blistered brods o the door  
Peeled back the peint...blawn chaff, like littlins' toys

Nae mair the bowf o dug, the miewt o cat  
A rabbit lowps ahin a roosty ploo  
A birdie's forkit taes has pampered tracks  
Far coortyird dubs lie broon an settled noo

Star, the muckle shelt wi hirplin hoch  
That made a tcyauve o plooin in reverse  
Langsyne is stoor, wi dyeuks that thronged the troch  
Anely the trees remain, the craps, the girse

The terrier Michael sneekin rattens' heids  
Like thrissles as oot frae the rucks they skaled  
He's noo a memory, in his maister's heid  
Like tatties rogued, an like the strae he baled

Sheena Blackhall

# Flight Paths

This is the parting time, for daughter, father  
The moment flights are called and father leaves.  
This ends the time that they will spend together.  
The moment flights are called and father leaves.  
He strokes her face, his lips press on her brow  
She frowns a little, for a moment, grieves

This ends the time that they will spend together  
Their short goodbyes speak of abandonment  
Outside grey clouds are tipping down their rain

He strokes her face, his lips press on her brow  
She curls her toes, inside her sandals, tightening  
He is her sunshine. She's his little lark

Outside grey clouds are tipping down their rain  
Suddenly they're marooned, the day seems stark  
A desolation that they have no words for

He is her sunshine. She's his little lark  
Together they have made a memory store  
This is the parting time for daughter, father  
A desolation that they have no words for  
This ends the time that they will spend together

Sheena Blackhall

# Floating Leaf

The willow leaf is like a yellow boat  
Floating upon the loch's impassive face

And one by one to earth bright tumblers race  
Where solitary squirrel hides a cone  
And insects nibble leaves like Flemish lace

The frosty moon is a white marble stone  
The dying flights of small blue butterflies  
Founder in woodland in some gloomy zone

A fox peers round with burning ember eyes  
A badger bares his teeth at skittish dog  
This is the witching season of strange skies

Now streams run cold enough to freeze the dead  
And sunset stains each evening cloud blood red

Sheena Blackhall

# Flodden: Dialogue Of The Dead

Can you hear the dialogue of the dead?

Tell us the cause was worth it. Tell us you'll not forget  
We are the dead, we only live as long as memory lasts  
Here in the quern and crush of reductive time'

Great War lords fell like leaves,  
Into the marsh, its clammy, slug-cold burn  
Their sinuous, glory banners kissed the mud

The dying breath of a defeated army  
Gave up its ghosts to hang in the dreich air

A forest of ancient families  
Uprooted like oaks in storm, had perished utterly  
This battle sucked the smeddum from a nation

After the hot rage of war, the salt tears of grief  
Death entered Scotland's gardens, plucked its roses  
The field of Flodden fed on Scottish blood

Thistles, sliced asunder by the ploughshare  
Driven into the sodden, clinging bog,  
The bleak, scabbed earth,

Here is a corpse's opened, leprous cheek,  
Crow-pecked like carrion, near a burnished shield  
There, a gralloched page boy moves with maggots  
A lover's gentling hand welds to a sword

Armour and clothing, flit like will o' the wisps  
Rich pickings for the après battle looters  
Horses and masters mingle in corruption

Tell us the cause was worth it. Tell us you'll not forget  
We are the dead, we only live as long as memory lasts  
Here in the quern and crush of reductive time



# Folk Of The Cherokee Nation

Old Tassel, Little Turtle, Johnny Depp  
Hanging Mawe, Burt Reynolds, Raven Mocker  
Johnny Cash, Jack Dempsey, Elvis Presley,  
Kevin Costner, Garner, and Pathkiller

Their alphabet is called the talking leaves  
Jimi Hendrix, Dolly Parton, Cher  
Sir Winston Churchill, part blood Cherokees

They may not all have walked the trail of tears  
But history's been made from such as these

Sheena Blackhall

# Fool's Gold, Belgium 2014

He was not whistling cattle up the lane  
With his border collie, Flash,  
Slinking along like a wraith

He was not jingling his change  
In his moleskin jacket, at the bar of the village pub

Those times he kept like gems in a locked chest  
Every fresh attack turned one to paste.

His finger pulled the trigger mechanically,  
Like a bird scarer,  
A pigeon firing at hawks

When the mortar blew the next man's head away  
He pissed himself  
An ordinary man who knew himself destructible  
He missed clean water, linen, new baked bread  
The homely comforts

Around him, thousands perished, swift or slow  
Stupidly, fearfully, doing the barbed wire jig

Years later a Belgian farmer ploughed him up  
Too late for him to feel the warming sun

Sheena Blackhall



# For My First-Born, Dead

390,000 babies were born  
Along with you on that Saturday

I floated above the birthing bed  
On pethidine wings  
The scalpel opened my crack  
Like a wizard's sleeve  
The iron jaws of the forceps  
Prized you out

After, I slept  
A snapped guitar string  
Bankrupt of energy, a stalled car

Oh, we were a pair!  
Novice mother with novice son  
All fingers and thumbs  
You were perfect, bewildered, lovely  
An unmarked page

Circumstances change.  
I signed you into care  
Made you a desert of storms  
A pyre of possibilities  
Trashed your trust

It was a give-a-way  
Care-less...butterfingers  
An heirloom dropped and smashed  
Beyond care and repair

We were finding our way  
Back to the loving times  
When I opened that door

You were beached on the couch, alone  
Curled like a dark prawn  
Your skin like a swelling drum  
As if your soul had been desperate to escape

That you had come to this!  
40 summers old and not one taste of bliss  
From a nearby syringe I heard the dragon hiss  
Ochone mo chridhe,  
No hug, no parting kiss  
Flies buzzing on the edge of the abyss

Where is the hair shirt  
The lash for self mortification?

The heavy portcullis of time  
Dropped before I could atone

On your death-day the radio played  
'My Final Song'  
'Please won't you wait? Won't you stay?  
At least until the sun goes down.'

The clouds ask, 'Why are you still alive?  
When your child has gone?  
Your moon, your stars, your son  
Your abandoned one?

I dream of a midnight pool  
A drowning swan

Sheena Blackhall

# For People Who Hate Maths

? + ? = The Eiffel Tower

20% + 1,999 = A line of Washing

66% x 975 = Mohammed Ali's boxer shorts

36+703-3 = Orange peel

(a+b) x 90%= An earth closet

(137.09 x ?) = Nettle soup

Sheena Blackhall

# Fordlandia

Nature takes care of its own  
The jungle reclaims Fordlândia

Decomposing cars rust in derelict workshops  
Already the Amazon jungle has swamped the Winding Brook Golf Course.  
Floods have eaten the cemetery, stockpiling crosses.

The 100-bed hospital, beautifully designed  
Lies plundered and perished, a travesty of itself

Ford's magnificent homes on Palm Avenue.  
Is occupied now by squatters.  
The furniture, doorknobs, interiors,  
Carted away by predators, human and insect

Here farmers, former plantation workers  
Live in the crumbling wreck of Ford's Utopia  
The American dream turned nightmare

Streetlamps creak over mouldering sidewalks.  
Dance halls disintegrate, warehouses rot away

Ford, the stern teetotaler, banned alcohol  
Advocated gardening and square dancing (in Rumba land)  
And poetry readings of dry American poets  
His sanitation squads destroyed stray dogs,  
His operatives drained pools of stagnant water  
To counter the deadly challenge of mosquitoes  
His employees were vetted for V.D.

The complex mushroomed into a golf course,  
Tennis courts, a movie theatre,  
Swimming pools and road for his famous cars  
Where paths are quickly churned to steaming mud

Ford left his project, signed it back to Brazil  
Now, zebu cattle graze there, manioc grows

As quickly as they arrived, the Americans left

Some, via nervous breakdowns, others ravaged by fever  
The jungle came back stealthy, reclaimed its birthright

Sheena Blackhall

# Four

Four men digging peats on the moor  
Iain, Hamilton, Findlay, Neil  
Cutting them neat with their flauchter spades  
Pushing and lifting, hand and heel

Iain will die by a stranger's car  
(Oh how narrow the roads, and bent)  
Under a sky of stars and rain  
And a sickle moon in the firmament

Hamilton, he'll have a living death  
Dotted and rambling, thoughts awry  
Pity the man of sense bereft  
Like a grey scarecrow hung out to dry

Findlay, he'll take a walk with drink  
Down, down, down, into beggar's lane  
One more thing for the skip to shift  
Dead in a night of snow and pain

Neil will die by a surgeon's knife  
Quick and easy he'll quit his place  
With three grown strapping sons behind  
To fill his space in the human race

Sheena Blackhall

# Four Callander Poems & A Highland Games

## Chanticleer's Comb

Chanticleer's comb is fiery red  
Sixteen wives he takes to bed  
Sixteen wives, each one with egg  
Chanticleer is a small sperm keg

## Summer

A lolloping dog, all flappy ears and tail  
Zigzags its bounding way through ferns and leaves  
The sleepy river slides its glassy way  
Under the emerald canopy of trees

The clouds, like tumbleweed, roll overhead  
The sunbeams weave their dimpling interplay  
Of leaf and light a woodland Jacob's coat  
High summer. Time of warmth and turning hay

## Highland Games

A tented city: dancers changing  
From over the globe, spectators ranging  
Round the park where strongmen flex  
Muscles and caber-flinging pecs,  
Kilts and quaichs and bungee jumps  
Dancers knotting their Highland pumps.  
Pipers piping. Chief's Glengarry  
Calum, Alasdair, Shannon, Mhairi  
Gordon Highlanders, puppet play  
Seagulls snatching the scraps away  
Climbing walls and Scotty dogs  
Sculptor carving out totem logs  
Cheerleaders and tug of war  
Waltzers, burgers, wheeling car  
Showers of rain. A trampoline  
Balloons and sporrans, chips, ice cream  
Drummers marching trampled grass  
Birds of prey where the punters pass

Tattoos, face paints, a police pipe band  
Wheelie bins with debris crammed  
Bouncy castles, pick'n'mix  
Stiltwalkers with legs of sticks  
Mediaeval stocks and mace  
Buggies, whisky, the children's race  
Cameras clicking, ceilidh song  
Giggling schoolgirls from old Hong Kong  
Queues for venison in a bun  
Highland games are a load o fun!

's Pool

Bee on a buttercup's busy as a monkey  
Picking fleas from a sibling monkey's back  
Little dappled pool, so sun-blink lively  
Flap-jack frogs go fumbling over your reeds  
All fingers and thumbs. A tiny jade green beetle  
Abseils down a leaf where a bummer hums  
Swallows spill from their ivied nests above  
Like beakers overfilled with a tide of wings  
Moments like these are rare as nectar-crumbs

r to Port & Starboard

Port & Starboard are two Wellsummer hens, living in hen paradise with Ian King and Sally Evans. Their hen-clan features on Kellogg's cornflake boxes.

Dear Port & Starboard,

Please accept my thanks for your excellent gift today.  
I think you swallowed the sun.  
Your eggs melted on my mouth like a warm kiss  
The packaging was particularly fine,  
Burnt sienna flecked with caramel freckles

How delicately you strut, how most precisely  
Hoisting each yellow foot like a well-oiled crane  
Gingerly placing it down as if walking on eggshells

You burble together like two slow boiling kettles  
Your terracotta combs all red and jiggling



Your eyes like pressed studs in a provost's shirt  
May you lay long and prosper, feathery virgins!

Sheena Blackhall

# Four Glasgow Poems

## 1. The Gory Bells (Gorbals)

Folk shunned the lepers, at their coming, fled,  
Hearing the ringing of the gory bells  
When those poor creatures walked like the undead

From their pollution, healthy people sped,  
Who'd want to touch the hands that rang the bells?  
Who'd stand in their shoes, the accursed undead?

In cut-off colonies, they made their bed  
Nothing brought solace... prayers, nor pills, nor spells  
Their stumps of limbs brought terror, horror, dread

Forced to seek alms, by scraps and pity fed  
To drink from puddles or from sour wells  
This blight struck down both high-born and low-bred

The Bruce himself was leprous, so men said.  
Who knows what curse or perverse different hells  
Unleashed when Comyn at the Altar bled?

Many would chose a quicker death, instead  
Of leprosy, its sores, blind eye that swells  
Better a dagger, poison, bullet to the head  
Than tottering forward, with a feeble tread  
Knowing the dreadful fate that lies ahead

## 2. Glasgow Rap

Tolbooth steeple: Art, The Burrell  
Drouthy's Bar: Hampden Roar  
Lettuce Eat: Buchanan Street  
Armadillo: The New Hydro  
The Botanics: ferns, organics  
Curlers' Rest: Tennent's best  
The Style Mile: round Argyle  
James Kelman: River Kelvin  
Orange order: Rangers Banner  
Steamie Days: George Galloway

: Rob Coltrane  
Gartnavel: Manny Shinwell  
Eddie Morgan: Gritty Govan  
Gorbals Patter: Doon the Watter  
Strathbungo: St Mungo  
Nitshill Craws: Pollockshaws  
Broomielaw: Parkheid baa  
Bearsden: Rutherglen  
Sauchiehaa: Barras staa  
Heilan Lilt: Castlemilk  
Drumchapel Close: Easterhouse  
Sighthill Scheme: Rangers team  
Alasdair Gray: Milngavie  
Benno Schotz: Clydesdale docks  
Thomas Lipton: n  
R34: Donald Dewar  
Merchant city: Irish ditty  
Stanley Baxter: Jack Webster  
Gordon Ramsay: Lorraine Kelly  
Joseph Lister: Gregor Fisher  
Liz Lohead: Kennishead  
James McAvoy: Tom Docherty  
Panopticon: Criterion  
Babbity Bowster: Firewater  
Bar Gandolfi: Booly Mardi  
Maggie May: Brass Monkey  
Glasgow City: gallus, witty!

3. Organ Recital at Kelvingrove Museum  
Her hair's dyed Tom-Thumb red  
Her slide is a trapped earwig in its strands  
She waves to giggling friends  
Deaf to the fanfare and processional  
Continuing a crescendo full of chatter

Wagner's accompanied by speak of baby's buggies  
Picnics, a rotund tourist swathed in pseudo-plaid  
She texts, she films, she snaps.  
'Look, I am here, listening to a wonderful recital'

Another place, another day, another organ

My brother poured music into you  
Till you swam in its dark juices  
Pulling out all the stops

#### 4. The Floating Heads (Kelvingrove Museum)

Maybe they smoked clay pipes, ploughed fields,  
Kissed babies. Combed black hair or fair  
They twirl, sad and happy, foolish and wise  
Like white stars, high, disembodied heads  
Look up to the roof where they hang in silent limbo  
Clouds of faces like swinging cathedral bells  
Did music issue from those severed heads?  
Were they seamen, senators, showmen?

No laughter's heard from the grinning, silent, mouth  
Its past and its walls have dissolved  
There is no sound but the patter of feet below  
Or the hum of the night thermometers

Solitary, bewildered, they have forgotten what they were  
Memories have spilled like sand from their skulls' cavities

They revolve in silence, white, grotesque and grave,  
Unable to weep or scream. They haunt the museum,  
Unearthly as unicorns stepping between black trees

In these back-lit faces gyrating like Sufi mystics  
Do day-dreams bubble up, visions and oracles?

Where were their childhoods?  
Which hearse bore them away?

Their souls remain to unsettle us  
High in their strange universe  
Hanging like rare and translucent fruits  
In their airy space.

Mind and body have gone their separate ways,  
Like chopped aristo heads in gory baskets

5. The Macnab (Kelvingrove Museum)

Six feet three, with debts as huge as himself  
Francis Mor was a gambler, drinker,  
Lover of women and life. His still  
Produced a whisky, fiery, strong,  
Drunk from a massive jug he called 'The Bachelor'.

A humourist, he kept a dummy  
Hanging from a tree, to frighten  
Would-be creditors away

His bastard children overran the glen  
Once, he proposed to a lady with the promise  
Of the finest burial lair in all of Scotland  
At Innes Bhuide. His suit was declined.

He governs the canvas, bold as  
A capercailzie, his badger sporran  
Fierce on his fertile loins

Sheena Blackhall

# Four Small Ducklings Enter An Equation

H<sub>2</sub>O plus 6 equals quackery:  
Diagonally into the equation of the pool,  
Four ducklings traverse a circle

Mr and Mrs Drake  
Square them off from the weir,  
Lasso them in the oval of their paddling,  
The lowest common denominator's this:  
Ducklings must be protected from every angle  
Till, each fraction made whole,  
Ducklings and ducks divide,  
Becoming a new problem.

Sheena Blackhall

# Four War Poems

y, July 1940

A couple started enjoying a small aperitif  
Pre-lunch sherry in Aberdeen's Canal Terrace  
The glasses shook as the blast blew up their garden  
Their piano entered their sitting room, uninvited

The Heinkel bomber above them  
Flew like a bat out of hell, Spitfires in hot pursuit  
As it jettisoned a part of its deadly cargo.

Hall Russell's shipyard workers on their break  
Unwrapped their lunch, their rowies, or baps of spam  
Or stood to down a pint in the Neptune Bar  
Choosing a horse to back, a joke to tell  
Killed in droves as the bomber thundered on  
Ploughing into the Ice Rink near the river.

The astonished dead were shipped by horse and cart  
Along the Denburn up to Woolmanhill  
A strange cortege of shoppers, children, fellow workers  
Witnessed their passing  
Death in July come swiftly, out of a clear sky.

Side WW2

Fittie beachfront lined with ack-ack guns  
Rolls of barbed wire menacing the waves  
German sea mines washed ashore on the tide

A wrecked flour mill, grain mixed with iron nuts  
A severed finger lying in the rubble.

On Union Street, limbless & blind  
The veteran heroes of the last Great War  
Sat in the cold and wet  
Selling their matches, laces,  
Pleading for coppers to fill their daily plate.

,1943

The death planes came from Denmark, south west Norway  
Searchlights strafed the city's darkening skies  
The drone of German planes, stutter of guns  
These were the childrens' wartime lullabies

An ARP girl warden stood and screamed  
'The planes are coming! Hear the sirens' noise!  
Miss Spicer lay beneath her primary school  
Her blackboard, desks, tossed round like playground toys

Pregnant women hugged their precious bellies  
Bombed churchyards brought the hidden into sight  
A ghastly dance of death, strange resurrection  
When skeletons rose up to join the night

uke Franz Ferdinand of Austria  
Hair like a frightened badger  
Sad eyed moustached Franz  
Visited Sarajevo with his wife

The Black Hand terror group had planned his killing  
The first two bottled out, armed to the teeth

The third one lobbed a bomb, which bounced and missed  
Wounding twenty unintended victims

The bomber, Cabrinovic, swallowed cyanide  
Jumped in the river Miljacka to die  
The poison made him vomit, and the river  
Was just four inches deep and almost dry

Reaching the Town Hall, Franz called for his speech  
Wet with the blood of others, yet he read it.  
The tour continued onwards, as was planned.

Gavrilo Princip stepped out from the crowd  
A teenage murderer, a young fanatic  
Too young too hang, too young to think of mercy  
And coolly fired his pistol into the car



Hit in the jugular, Franz sat bolt upright  
His plumed hat tumbled off, green feathers falling  
His stricken wife, slumped with a belly of lead  
'It is nothing, it is nothing, it is nothing, ' he said

And then, the death rattle,  
The sound that plunged a whole world into war  
Albert from Brighton, George and Fred from Troon  
Millions who thought black hands were miners' trademarks  
Millions who'd never heard of Sarajevo

Sheena Blackhall

# Francis Bacon's Studio

William Blake's head  
Rears through the chaos

There is a photo of a Zebra carcass,  
Gracefully rotting on the floor

There are brushes,  
Plonked in jars like dried, splayed, flowers

There are paint rags, rainbowed trays,  
Mammoth brushes eager to be up and doing  
A ceramic bowl as a palette

7,000 items, all exactly transplanted  
Suspended animation of a painter's life space  
Including:

570 artist books and catalogues

100 slashed canvases

1,300 leaves torn from books

2,000 artist materials

70 drawings

Correspondence, magazines

Paint spattered furniture

Vinyl records. The walls, doubling as palettes

And an untitled unfinished self portrait

Found on the easel after Bacon's death

A canvas holds a circular outline

Made by a dustbin lid

Bare light bulbs hang from sinister flexes

No shades, glaring, stark

Sinister echoes of the Furies

Daemons, Disaster, Drink

His father's grooms horsewhipped him as a child  
For being different, dressing in woman's clothes

He grew to love rough trade and burglars,  
The fringe men of Society

No wonder his Pope screamed  
Popes should scream against  
The victimization of the not-the-same

Sheena Blackhall

# Fridge

In the black kitchen  
Midnight is two red dots In a square clock.

I hum quietly  
Little fridgy tunes;  
Cuddle my marg in frost, Crystal by crystal  
Converting milk to ice.

Sheena Blackhall

# Frog Orgy In Forress

A multi-storey frog menage a trois  
(Erotic reptilian sandwich)  
Squats on the sand,  
Locked in a Dionysian mystery.  
Three sets of gold black eyes, slits lit in ecstasy.  
Top of the heap,  
A mounted male's throat-throb Is the only indication he's alive.  
Three khaki heads, wrinkled's Methuselah  
Their temples, parchment thin  
As tearable as tissue,  
Face the pond.

The female hugely sits  
On her squashed blond belly  
A clamped and clammy love cushion,  
Sagging beneath the weight Of a double whammy.  
Her piggy-back partner  
Rifts a monstrous croak,  
And off she hobbles, slow as a Rajah's elephant  
Under a heavy houdah.  
Her procreating cargo, perched precarious.  
Life, and the hunger for life  
With frogs, is emphatically gregarious

Sheena Blackhall

# Fruit Of Paradise

I remember the garden, the snake,  
The curse of disease & death  
The Exodus.

Leaving Eden, the hot wind whipping my hair,  
I stumbled into the desert with the Man  
My soft feet torn by thorns and jagged stones

Even the cacti shriveled before our touch  
our happiness overthrown, our life uncertain

In my hand, I carried the pomegranate  
Pomme-grenade, the fruit of seed and blood

I hurled it into a stream in a deep valley  
Alone in that virgin space, to sink or swim

Traders plucked it, taught it the Silk Road route  
This fruit I loved, stolen from God's own garden  
This refugee from the very gates of Paradise

Each morning I turn my lips to its crimson flesh  
Sweet in my mouth as the tongue of my latest lover

In the moonlight, under the olives  
I drink its juice. No-knowledge sweeps me along  
Into the little death that some call sleep

Sheena Blackhall

# Gabh Mo Leith Sceal/Excuse Me

Gabh mo leith scéal/ Excuse me  
Drawn by the sanctuary of a warm pew  
I escaped from the drizzling rain  
In the old parish church of Knock.

The votive statues were soulful,  
The epitome of compassion  
Carved in caring, conducive to meditation  
Uplifting, the candles glowing like fireflies

A woman sidled up  
Hands folded together like napkins  
Mouth like the Mona Lisa, enigmatic  
'Excuse me, ' she whispered  
Pressing a card in my palm  
'Please. I am Bosnian. I have two children  
Give me your change.'  
The smile, unmelting.

But this was no laughing matter  
Who'd expect in the name of all that's Holy  
Someone begging inside a church?

Is nothing sacred? I thought  
And left, confused, as if the girl had struck me  
Or spilled dirt on the alter cloth

Much later, the pennies dropped,  
The coins I hadn't given, benevolence blocked.

Sheena Blackhall

## Gallery Prints (15 Scots Poems)

ie Jamesone, peinter, Aiberdeen  
Self-Portrait — George Jamesone

Schuled bi Rubens in Antwerp toun  
(Burnt sienna an emerald green)  
Peintit fowk fae the monarch doon,  
Jamesone, artist, Aiberdeen.

Fin cannon thunnert an weemin skirled,  
As Covenanters wi gun an pike  
Grimly merched wi their flags unfurled,  
Far wis Geordie, the Scots van Dyke?

Bluid wis scaled in the toun's defence  
Daith bi sword at the Brig o Dee  
War is dearer nur pounds an pence  
Geordie Jamesone... Far war ye?

Shiprow, Gallowgate, Justice Street,  
Upperkirkgate an Futtie Wynd,  
Netherkirkgate, the war drums beat,  
Till deid war delled and the victors dined.

Ruff an mower an forkit beard,  
Geordie Jamesone wisna blate  
Tae catch on canvas the heich Montrose  
Anither notch fae the Heids o State.

Geordie Jamesone, foo'd we ken  
Wioot yer skill or yer peinter's ee  
Fit mainner or makk o Kings an men  
Gart cannons thunner an tounsfowk flee?

in Jock  
An Idyll — Giovanni Segatini

Fussle, fussle Jocky,  
An I'll gie ye a flooer.



Fit guid is sic a giftie?  
Twid wither in an oor!

Fussle, fussle Jocky  
An I'll gie ye ma sheen.  
Fit guid is sic a giftie?  
They're bauchled an they're dane.

Fussle, fussle Jocky  
An I'll gie ye a kiss.  
Cauld kail hett again  
Fur ye 're a wanton Miss.

Fussle, fussle Jocky  
I'll rowe ye in ma plaid  
Feech, an that ye winna  
Fur twinty there ye've laid.

Flood

Flood in the Highlands – Sir Edward Landseer

The derkenin cloud. The spit o rain. The burnie bigger growes.  
The lichtenin teirs the lift in twa, the larick boos an soughs.

The Heivins teem. The lochans ream. The coerin yowies bleat  
A broken gate's a burn in spate, a warlock, wud an weet.

The Spring that treetled doon the brae is noo a roarin linn  
Wi ragin kelpies gaun afore, the horned Deil ahin.

Flood in the Heilins! See the craft wi watter at its croon!  
A Heicher Haun than mortal man dings ae wee faimily doon.

An bits o gear that they haud dear, claes, gee-gaws o the best  
The risin tide casts aa aside like plooshares throwe a nest.

The worsit plaid wi'ts tartan braid. The greetin littlin's cradle  
Are heelstergowdie on the reef wi chitterin tyke, an table.

The riven blanket in the win is torn tae threids an thrums  
Like a bodhran in warrior's haun the thunnerin doonpish drums.

Aa draigit in the dubby glaur, a precious christenin gown  
A mither's snawy petticoats, bumshayvelt, heid tae foun.

Buik, buit an pan, the hale jing bang gyang furlin ben the wave  
In smithereens fine crystal speens sink tae a stormy grave.

The heichest lum, the stoutest waa, rich herds o milkin kye  
Are bit as nocht, fin as unsocht, Misfortune cries inbye.

Herring Fleet

The Herring Fleet Leaving the Dee, Aberdeen — David Farquharson

Far are ye gyaun, min?  
Fishin, fishin.

Fit are ye efter?  
Herrin, herrin.

Fit are ye thinkin?  
Wishin, wishin  
Oor nets will rise fu  
Fin they're pu'd fae the ocean

ge  
Our Village – Sir Hubert von Herkomer

Oor village has twa wee howfs an a kirk,  
A burn, a brig an a Heilan stirk,  
That stauns in its park an nivver says boo...  
A douce like beast fur a Heilan coo.

Oor village has ae sma shop an a skweel,  
A curlin pond an a paiddlin pull,  
An naebody here thinks much o the toun  
Wi its traffic jams that wad weir ye doon.

We dinna ging farrer than back an fore,  
Frae shop, tae kirk, tae oor ain front door,  
Bit we ken aabody in an oot,

Foo they butter their rowie, or guddle a troot.

Nae robber wid get verra far wi us,  
Fur we ken each face that cams affo the bus,  
An twenty een at the back o yer heid  
Are watchin ye, lad. Sae ye'd better be gweed.

mmmer

Midsummer, East Fife – James McIntosh Patrick

Oh I can see the shaddas shift,  
An I can smell the hey,  
Fresh cuttit in the simmer park  
New-rochled up tae dry.

Noo, ilkie leaf on ilkie bough  
Showds in the simmer win,  
An I can hear the teuchat's sang  
Ayont the yalla whin.

In yon blue sky abeen the lea  
Nae pick o cloud nor rain  
Time hauds its braith, the meadow-puil  
Is clear's a windae pane.

The moosie creeps, the birdie cheeps,  
An aa the world is weel,  
Midsimmer, fan the sizzen's cairt  
Turns easy on the wheel.

Herd

To Pastures New – Sir James Guthrie

Nippit wing, clippit wing  
Short's their bit dauder  
Tethered bi unseen string  
Goose-herd and gander.

Nae soarin lift fur them  
Skirlin an skreichin

She'll be a bide-at-hame  
Nae furreign traikin.

Niver tae feel the cloud  
On each bird-showder!  
She'll hae a scrubbit face  
Bare o fine pooder.

Nae sun-blink in their een  
Anely fairm stoor  
Wirk like a muckle steen  
Will keep her soor.

Nippit wing, clippit wing  
Short's their bit daunder  
Tethered bi unseen string  
Goose-herd an gander.

Queen o Sheba  
The Burn, Catterline – Joan Eardley

The Queen o Sheba bathed in milk,  
Yestreen I dooked in flooers.  
The aipple sprinkled ower ma heid  
A petal-fa o shooers.

An like a sea-horse in the lift  
Cloud shook its snawy mane,  
An heistit up a wattergaw  
Wi pearls on ilkie rein.

Forget-me-nots wagged in the wave  
Wi bandies in each turn  
The choicest meenits e'er I spent  
Were by thon Deeside burn!

Lang Road Hame  
Maternite — George Hitchcock

She humphs a muckle wechty pack,

A littlin in her airms,  
Twa dooncast een,  
Twa trauchelt sheen  
A pathie teem o cherms.

A weariet deem. Afore her een,  
Her shadda raxxes, black.  
A wee fitfa,  
In stirkie's staa  
The laddie at her back.

An neither spikks, fur spikk is by  
They haik the stoory road  
That as maun wauk  
Frae first day-brakk  
Each, wi his different load.

Wi some deep wrang, her thochts are thrang  
Her bairn wid like tae climm  
Intae her briest. Anither reists  
Far aince she bosied him.

A mither's as the risin sun  
She smiles, the bairn rins weel  
Bit fin she's wae, it soors his day  
And dowie is his dreel.

A meenit's rest wad cheer the bairn,  
Fa hyters on clean-deen,  
The mither seeks a langer sleep...  
The wyvin girss abeen.

Reflects at the Fruit Counter

Triptych: Cherries, Forbidden Fruit & Pear in Landscape — Alison Watt

Geans grow fat in Simmer  
Raither, their flooers I'd pree  
Than the stane wi the reid flesh roon it  
Heich on the wrunkled tree.

Pears fur a Spanish lady

Wi' hochs like a Rubens' quine  
Micht suit on a grandee's table  
They winna dae fur mine.

Forbidden fruit tastes sweetest  
The aipples ahin the waa  
At the hairt o anither's orchard  
Ae shog wid gar it faa!

e Drinker

Gallowgate Lard 1995-6 — Ken Currie

Far bairns' buggies shoogle ower the cassies  
Dirdin aff tae playscheme, granny, creche

Far druggies dwaum wi smack deep in their beens  
Their faces teem tae sunsheen or regret  
He pykes a zig zag line atween the gravesteens  
Fleggin the doos that screun the toun fur meat

His chooks are raw's a newly scrubbit doorstep  
Wee piggies een. Neb, like a grumphie's snoot

Thin lips drawn back in slavers at the neuk  
Like side o beef, bluid dreepin frae the heuk

Buck teeth. Yoam mertit unner ivery nail  
A scabby broo. Hair grizzled like a brock

The traffic wardens ken him, medics tee  
A hameless, drunken, feekie-drinkin vratch

Nae family tae ain or claim, or wint him  
He dosses doon in pee-stained shoppie doors

Waukenin, his first thocht's tae slake his drooth  
Fin every sinew craves reid Middy plonk

A human suitcase aabody leaves ahin  
Wi nae address, belangins, stitchin lowse.

eps

Welcome Footsteps(detail) – Marcus Stone

The yoam o the evening meal  
Tatties mashed, mince broon  
The sklyter o bairns' buits  
Droonin the TV soun  
Fitsteps

Birr o security bell  
Lowpin the stairs like a bawd  
Takkin the steep stairwell  
Love pits wings on a lad  
Fitsteps

Cream o a clinic waa  
Reeshle o magazine  
Lirks on a worriet broo  
Sooch o a nurses sheen  
Fitsteps

Blin-eed shauchlin gait  
Bauchlin, trauchlin alang  
Even the lowe burns quaet  
Eyne o an auld sang  
Fitsteps

.  
Widda Antoinette  
Antoinette — John Bellany

Her heid is hudderie. Nae lipstick ava  
Her man wis blawn tae smush in the North Sea  
She bides alane doon far the skurries caa

An ilkie nicht in sleep she mynes it aa  
The TV picturs, burnin ocean bree  
The skirlin crew wheeched aff in a fireba.

She tuik daith in, bit coerin it wis slaw  
Bare thirty-three, nae age fur him tae dee  
Left her a widda wi a littlin, smaa

The unnertakker cam, a hoodie craw  
Reporters heezed... a whiplash media spree  
The service that the toun gaed, tho, wis braw

This world's fur couples, nae fur hauf a twa  
Feart that she'd turn an amatory ee  
On husbands, freens wad hurry past her waa

She bides alane doon far the Nor wins blaa  
The widda Antoinette. Aa she can see  
Fin nicht brings desolation in its mawe's  
The Hounds o Hell that stole her love awa.

Typhoid Summer (Tune: The Corncraik)  
Bonjour Professor Caine – John Bellany

Oh Aiberdeen's a bonnie toun aside the grey North Sea  
It's granite clad fae tap tae foun, the pearl o Don an Dee  
It is the Dallas o the North, ile herbour bi the tide  
Bit nae in nineteen saxty fower fm typhoid cam tae bide.

Nae since the plague won throwe its yetts did aa its commerce fail;  
A city unner siege, teem trains stude ghaistly on the rail  
A stricken toun, its beaches teemed. Sent frae the Argentine,  
Contamination on a plate... ill fare on which tae dine

Ten thoosan fowk a wikk at William Low's wad buy their meat  
Bit sickness an debility's nae fit ye'd choose tae eat  
Hale families they war ferried aff an kept in quarantine  
A present frae across the waves, a blicht in the food chyne.

As ilkie school an meetin place telt fowk tae bide awa  
Hotels an supermairkets baith saw monthly profits faa  
The sun shone ower the hospitals that fowk wad scarce gae near  
The Summer that oor bonnie toun becam a place o fear

Oh Aiberdeen's a bonnie toun aside the grey North Sea



It's granite clad fae tap tae foun, the pearl o Don an Dee  
It is the Dallas o the North, ile herbour bi the tide  
Bit nae in nineteen saxty fower fm typhoid cam tae bide.

o Aiberdeen

View of Aberdeen – William Mossman

Nae multistoreys, traffic jams in sicht!  
An age o brandy, shelts, sedans an tea  
Quay – toon, green kintra lappin roon her sides  
An skies that kent nae ither wings bit birds.  
A pygmy placie, weety-cauld an stinch  
Win-cairdit bi the soochin o the sea.

Braid brush strokes smeeth the water flat's a bap.  
Twa Jacobite rebellions didna mar  
This peinter's idyll, nur the orra trade  
In human flesh, the slavers' currency  
Onchancy times – yet aa's as smeeth as glaiss  
Staun still, breath deep, ye near can smell the girss  
Cam wachtin fae the pictur in a yoam.

Weel-seen the artist learned his darg in Rome.  
The centuries hae grown... sae has the toon  
Twa universities noo weir the gown  
O academe. Nae whaling noo, bit ile.  
Langsyne the Tolbooth nocht anither jyle.

In maisonette, bedsit, wee upstairs flat  
Tenement, hostel, hospital or Hame,  
In Tilly, Seaton, Cults or Desswid Place  
The view o this braif toon, is't as the same?  
A full glaiss, or a teem? Throwe ither's een  
In mosque, kirk, howf, fit view o Aiberdeen?

Sheena Blackhall

# Gassed Ww1

A line of stumbling snails with eyes bound up  
They stagger over dead men, blinded youths  
Whose comrades rot into the Belgian mud  
Rat fodder, stepping stones for blind friends' boots

Never to see another summer's day  
Nor watch the wild geese flying, line by line  
All sight now sealed within the skull's black cage  
The horror film of shell, gun fire, and slime

A wheezy world is theirs, breath snagged and seared  
Caught in the chest and drowning frothy green  
Their future now shrunk back to touch, taste, smell  
Each civi-soldier shrunk. Tomorrow, lean.

Sheena Blackhall

# Gates Of St. Machar Cathedral

I am standing in the queue waiting to die, quite near the front.  
Not rushing, shuffling forward.  
Not anxious, neither impetuous nor slow I shall not be sorry to go  
I shall be nothing. The thought is quite exciting.  
I shall enter into the quiet mouth of the earth like a whisper.  
So inviting  
To slide below the soil, a weary sleeper,  
Drawing the grave-mould covers above my head,  
The fathomless void... a black and a pleasant bed.  
Folk say, there's no discourse amongst the dead.

I shall go like a fly to the waiting spider's lair,  
I shall lay my hollow cheek by the winding worm,  
I shall spill like an hourglass, breath turned empty air,  
I shall be one with the yew and the granite urn.  
Slowly the queue moves. Light gives way to black.  
Nihil. The place where none come tell-tale back.

Sheena Blackhall

# George Harrison (1943-2001) (Minor Planet 4149harrison)

A Catholic mother with Irish roots  
Babe in the womb with an Indian view  
Sitar, tablas, tambura drum  
Heard in a terraced house with outside loo

Pandit Ravi Shankar in Srinagar  
On the tranquil Dal of cool Kashmir  
Teaching the Sitar to a Liverpool man  
Tuning its music to a Western ear

One tour of Europe, seven, UK,  
Three in America, world celebrity  
Club dates, radio, TV shows  
Ashram of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

Status brought horror and a knife attack  
Forty stab wounds What price fame?  
To the Quiet Beatle, the gardening man  
Evil frequently stalks acclaim

Norwegian Wood- this Bird has Flown  
Cancer claimed him, turned to ash  
Given to the Ganges and Yanuma waves  
Hare Krishna: All things must pass

Sheena Blackhall

# Georges Simenon

A crooked log delivers a straight flame  
Belgian's pipe-smoking spectacled writer  
Bedded 10,000 women  
With the sexual drive of a dozen Errol Flynn's  
The Netherlands Casanova in all but name

This human powerhouse wrote near 400 novels  
Took 10 days to finish a book  
Always wearing his lucky shirt, in his chosen nook  
An Abercrombie and Fitch sports top  
Always after cleaning and plugging 12 of his 300 pipes  
Tobacco, fuelled his thoughts  
Ever augmenting his cash, with a string of noughts  
Always having fed the typewriter a fresh new ribbon  
Always having 48 pencils, and paper ready to write on

Wrote his Maigret novels in a trance  
Names, characters, descriptions  
Scribbled on an outsize envelope, nothing left to chance  
Then off like an Aintree runner of verve and polish  
Surmounting ciphers, murders, corpses, motives  
Fingertips and forensics, blazing round the bends  
For a furious finish!

Such quirky rituals! Awake from a dreamy fog  
Coffee pot filled, cup waiting  
Then up at dawn.90 words per minute  
Rat-at-at like machine gun fire  
The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog

850 million sales around the world  
Not bad for an altar-boy, a bed-jumping Belgian wanderer  
Like a flea, like a grasshopper, leaping round 33 homes,  
Chewing up continents, crashing time zones  
Who else would ride a pure white stallion to market  
And keep pet wolves, which ate up one pet cat?  
Monsieur Simenon, of course, the man in the hat!



## German Interlude (With Detours) 23 Poems

iler Cemetery

The leitmotif of my childhood's  
Peeling stucco. The adults  
I knew are as stuffed parrots now  
Alive in memory only  
How quick are the dead forgotten!

In the graveyard in Ahrweiler,  
Two gravediggers siesta in their van  
The lemon sun, strong on their workman's caps  
A pile of fresh dug soil's on the tarpaulin  
Near to the van's left wheel

Heinrich, Jakob, Carl, Hubert, Otto  
Lie under low black crosses labelled 'soldat'  
1914-18's inhuman harvest

Ludwig & Fritz, two rows across the grass  
Culled, like the Johns and Jacks across the sea  
War makes comrades of enemies in the dust

t Town (Ahrweiler)  
From the sluggish stream of shoppers,  
Women nibble at bargains like rising trout

A ponderous carp of a Fraulein  
Tugs at a belt, nudging a motley trail  
Of scarves aside.

A pike of a German farmer  
With ponderous white whiskers  
Circles the shoes, then drifts away uncaught

Children, out in a party,  
Are a feeding frenzy of tiddlers  
Snap swallowing chips and pasties  
Weighed in the scales of wanting versus needing  
Cuckoo clocks perform their pop-go trick

Candles flare 'Buy now...repent at leisure.'

lands

Hobbema-like, tall avenues of cypress trees  
Are framing a still canal, . a silent farm

A goat, a horse, a donkey, share a paddock  
Two fields away a herd of Friesians graze

In the parallel world of the high-speed motorway  
Night falls like a Van Gogh sky  
Brilliant stars of traffic endlessly pouring

Otto's Proverbs

Take heed of friendly enemies  
Barking dogs don't bite  
One log doesn't burn alone

Old foxes are hard to trap  
Good swimmers often drown  
A steady drip carves stone

Just as one calls to the forest  
So it echoes back  
Deep calls to deep, ochone

Don't sell the bear's fur  
Before it has been killed  
Sweep first, your door at home

sh Inn

Four steps up from the road,  
Vine leaves hang from the roof, a god's bandana

Within, crossed halberds,  
Pinned to a white washed wall

Heavy clumsy, ancient, wooden carvings  
Oil paintings rough in theme and execution



By plodding craftsmen taught by a lesser muse

Under the beams, ten German painted beer mugs  
Recall calamitous tragedies, love tales, battles  
Four hundred years of history  
Nobody here remembers.

In the corner, a sheaf of sticks  
A witch's broom? A harvest ritual?  
It's open to conjecture. Why would you ask?

Vintage customers, their noses sherry red  
Sit brittle as last night's frost  
Watching a flickering candle wick burn down

A waitress, apple-strudel fresh and sweet  
Plonks down four foaming pints like a Roman offering

Night drips from darkening hills  
A home-made waterfall dribbles in a pool  
Watched by a baleful frog on a stone ball  
A rotting wine-press leans on rusty legs

A sliver of amber liquid, pools on the table  
Complicit in the ancient rites of Bacchus

Ten fat pigs sprawl sleeping  
Drumskins of stretched pink skin

Their nipples are seams of tight rose buds  
Their long white lashes are sealed  
Dreaming of porcine idylls  
Forests of acorns  
Fabulous boars with tusks like corkscrews  
Could rip a man's soft belly with one thrust

r to a Dead Father  
Brambles sweeten the ditch  
Dying wasps put the sting

In summer's fox-fire tail  
Moss thatches rooves and paths  
Round ancient lawns.

Clouds lie like ships at anchor  
The season has tuned the first page of October  
Shorn rowans rattle crimson shriven berries  
Yellow horse chestnut leaves  
Hide conkers polished deep  
As the shining lids of classical grand pianos

Two blanketed horses graze  
In a pool of sun, their breath  
Like mist, rising from steaming nostrils  
The Bens are showing petticoats of grey

Dead father,  
This is the land that begat you  
Here, speech was set in tracks  
For Gaelic carriages

That train long gone, the lilt  
In your voice remained  
Keeping the tongue in the groove  
Scots with a Highland burr

Trip, Stirling-Callander  
This mild day of September in the Trossachs  
A youngster with a chest as big's a skip  
Dreadlocks pinned like crampons up the Eiger  
Yatters in Yardie to her blinged-up beau

A workman's raining chips across the pavement  
Too tired to cup the cardboard box together

Two mingers kiss and cuddle on a wall  
Proving beyond all doubt that love is blind

Chantelle, Leanne and Kylie whoop and giggle  
Their fingernails are sparkled pink and green

The sun comes sneaking low past thunder skies  
Dunged Ayrshires nuzzle clover, flick flies off

The burnished corn, circles a resting combine  
On cloudy braes, far off, a wind farm turns

A wood lies felled, raped like the Sabine women  
Its resin bleeding on the forest floor

Sheep, white as bleach stand sheepishly together  
First frost has lit a fire amongst the rowans

9. In a Handbag, Darkly

A very plebeian vole with no credentials

An aspadrille from a phone booth

A cellophane love heart

Three grapes from a Delft dinnerplate

A right old Pussy Riot

A farewell gesture

A rusting precentor

Three guffawing toads

A phalanx of chewing gums

An extinct harmonica

A Freudian Chinese urn

An ancestral larynx

A nest of tongues

A very excited avocado

A Byzantine penis

A processional of bedbugs

A clarinettist's jockstrap

A mother of pearl urinal

Five Confucian slippers

A buzzard's Rhapsody

A republican seagull

Death, dressed as a cucumber

A necklace of wasp stings

The scent of a plastic daisy

A dried turd on a horseshoe

The sound of two hens clucking

A horizon of hyenas from Troon

The tattoo from a barmaid's breast

A rag-mat in progress  
Three hairs from a spiritual cat  
A counterfeit catkin

Cabinet of Curiosities  
A derailed train carriage  
Two rooks in parenthesis  
One grass wellington  
The shutter-click of a snuff movie

A Cornish conundrum  
A colt revolver purchased by a horse  
Chopin's favourite teddy  
An ampersand's love story  
The bed socks of a serial monogamist  
Charlotte Bronte's keyhole  
A figurine of Keats as the Infanta's dwarf

Suetonius's spittoon  
A slice of Scythian lamb  
Montezuma's underpants  
A mermaid's scratchcard

The fall of the World Trade Centre  
Brought one particular Scot to early dust  
A Lewis man who'd studied at St Andrews,  
Classics, philosophy, not politics  
Intelligent, funny, loving an argument  
He liked the American life, its spirit of optimism  
The tragedy being he nearly survived the attack

Six weeks after, his body was identified  
On the second floor of the building,  
Along with some New York fire fighters,  
Killed by falling masonry

Three days before he died  
He called a friend, to tell her of his wedding  
Excited, looking forward to settling down

The marriage planned for October  
A date he'd never keep

His funeral was held back home in Lewis  
Where Gaelic and English meet under windswept skies  
And Eagles live alongside gleaming otters

Here, in the summer months, folk still cut the peats  
Sundays remain a very special day  
For centuries in the sands of this quiet island  
Walrus ivory chessmen lay at rest  
Pawns in the Viking power games of the past  
Where church towers toppled, licked by flames of hate

Lark Person  
I'm a morning person.

When others rise with their tongues all fur  
And curse and stumble and grunt and gurr  
With fallen arches and brewer's droop  
As snappy's a bite of shark's fin soup  
I'm up with the lark, unbearably bright  
Having slept the sleep of the just all night

But after work, when the daylight's done  
And others jig on the party run  
I'm scratchy, crotchety, limp, half dead  
Let the world go hang! I'm off to bed!

r  
A white umbrella-shaped cloud  
You floated over my childhood

Occasionally, you became a stallion's back  
Charging me off to whinnyings of joy

At night, you were a ball of unravelling wool  
My fingers tangled up in, keeping me safe

At the last, I could not hold you back

From your rendezvous with our ancestors

Now I repeat your lessons  
Like catechisms, father's runes for being

Panky  
Hanky panky, slap and tickle  
Bertie the Prince was fat and fickle  
He had a room in La Chabanais  
The bawdy house for that old roué  
The prince had a tub where he'd often pour  
Prime champagne on his favourite whore  
And a love seat built for his weight and girth  
To rest the buttocks of Royal birth

The rooms were designed like Old Pompeii  
Moorish and Indian, Japanee  
Where the famous came to get in lather  
And pay for a session of 'how's your father'

Dali the artist, bought that tub  
From Madame Kelly's most infamous club  
Where the dwarf, Lautrec and Maupassant  
Were often among the frolicking throng

Dietrich, Bogart and Goring came  
To visit this house of dubious fame  
Hanky panky, slap and tickle  
Mony's a mickle makks a muckle

15. What the Dickens  
My childhood memories all belong in books  
Charles Dickens' world of orphans, heroes, crooks  
Dombey and Son, Bleak House, The Haunted Man  
Scrooge, Fagan, Little Nell, Miss Havisham

The Uncommercial Traveller, Little Dorrit  
Barnaby Rudge and Martin Chuzzlewit  
Oliver Twist and Nich'las Nickleby  
A Christmas Carol, Pictures from Italy

The Cricket on the Hearth, Pickwick, The Chimes

Tale of Two Cities, Household Words, Hard Times  
Mystery of Edwin Drood, Our Mutual Friend  
Great Expectations...Treasures without End

All the Year Round, Old Curiosity Shop  
Adventures for a lonely child non-stop  
With David Copperfield, Uriah Heep  
Mr Micawber made me laugh and weep

Bill Sykes and Mr Gradgrind, Magwitch too  
The poor, the rich, sketched vividly and true  
These creatures stepping from Charles Dickens'days  
They are my oldest childhood memories

er Journey

The sun, forgotten friend, beams bright and high  
Over the rain-sogged fields where Friesians graze  
In their spilt shadows. Swirls of starlings fly  
Through ragged storm clouds. A heraldic blaze  
Of pheasant, postures, pegged on wooden gate  
A badger gruff-grunts off into herbage  
Behind Dinwoodie Mains on grassy knoll  
Sheep crop the grass in their short span of life  
Each brute face black and wizened as a troll  
On a tree's veins, cow and his sooty wife  
Enjoy small nests of sun blinks on bare boughs  
The wind has stripped elm clean's a carving knife  
The rain returns, pit pattering, parts the leaves  
Wetting the crimson leaves on ancient eaves

ort Holland

The shipping lane's a float of fairy lights  
Strung out along the Channel's chilly waves  
The Pride of Rotterdam flings Shetland shawls  
Of delicate white foam beneath her bows

I am out of my element,  
Trying my sea legs briefly.

Europe's lights are studs of steely stars

Where Hans and Pierre, Monique and Ludwick  
Rise to begin the grinding round of work

We pass the Cosco, silent sullen city  
Its seamen sleeping under crates of tin  
It ploughs a steady furrow to our stern  
Cranes like tall giraffes await its cargo

Inexorably, the ship slides into berth  
Wind turbines wheels in giant chorus lines

And then, a desolation of machines  
Apocalyptic landscape bare of life  
A building site of mud, the bones of roads  
A landscape bleak as any battlefield  
Of cranes and giant silent storage tanks

ny  
Forest and copse and glade and dell  
Germany grows them and grows them well  
Motorways, pathways, lined by trees  
Traffic and trade, with boughs and leaves

Strongest muscle in Europe's arm  
Lacking in Greek or Spanish charm  
The old, old tale of cricket and ant  
Germany prospers where others can't.

Fenceless fields, no waste, no muddle  
Efficiency breeds in every puddle

#### 19.A Proverbial Poem

He could tie the devil to a pillow  
Though that herring does not fry here  
He who eats fire, craps sparks  
But to sit on hot coals, how queer!

An old roof needs much patching up  
Like pissing against the moon  
A fool will gnaw on a single bone



Cracked walls must fall down soon

He'll bang his head against a wall  
And find the dog in the pot  
If blind leads blind both fall in the ditch  
Fear makes old women trot

Where the carcass is, there's always crows  
To the wind you should hold your cloak  
Leave at least one egg in the nest  
Warm yourself at another's smoke

What is the good of a beautiful plate  
When there is nothing on it?  
Horse droppings are not figs, nor are  
Two fools beneath one bonnet

the Rheine  
A hare, meticulous as a Durer drawing  
Whiskers twitching German puppet-like  
Savours the Northern breeze, its pulses tingling

Trains, precision-timed, shoulder  
Processions of cars, a long death rattle

Cormorants' round dark eyes seem unable to pierce  
The impenetrable rolling currents of the Rheine,  
Hanging their shaggy wings out wide to dry  
On perilous rocks mid-stream, in khaki water

Ferries glide unmolested past shops of cuckoo clocks  
Cafes serving bread, cakes, goulash, soups  
Castles rise like ghosts from morning mist  
Leaves are burgundy, cinnamon, lemon, coffee coloured

A lorry with its carapace of steel veers off to Ludwigshafen  
The ubiquitous graffiti is edgy  
Like tattoos on the hips of flyovers

Suburban streets are drenched in plane and linden leaves  
Statues wear speckles of rain  
Sycamores launch their peaceful parachutes

Dawn dissipates down gullies drenched with dark  
A eucalyptus bares its brittle bark

Cattle raise their heads from nonchalant chewing  
Day goes rollicking off to beer gardens, a ganglion of grapes

The shores are invaded by tourists, loose cannons  
Eyeing Gothic script, Lutheran churches  
Firing off euros with guttural schoolboy phrases  
Dobermans bark sharp as pistol shots

Like broken angel bones white pebbles roll in the water

The roiling Rheine roisters between the mountains  
Rough rocked, gold seamed in the sun

On the ferry, a baby squeals, three louts  
Spit into the waves. Stiff jointed grandparents  
Watch ducks skitter over the current

Sturdy taciturn bargees tether their boats  
Vineyards arise each side like an amphitheatre  
Dizzying slopes, where the goat's-foot pickers toil

At night the sun will sink like a concert hall  
Grown quiet at the end of a Wagner opera

## 21. Ferry

Philippino workers toil in teams  
Dispensing coffee, butter, jams and creams  
Channelling chaos to an ordered queue  
Of folk plate-piling past, now one, now two  
Just one seat madam, what no friend with you?  
Sit by the window then, where there's a view!  
Passengers press drinks from hissing pipes  
Arthritic, apoplectic, thrifty types  
The perishable cargo, humankind  
Must watch the sea by thick portholes confined  
Thus fewer suicides jump off the boat  
Less paperwork, a castle with no moat

The cabin door shuts tight, a coffin lid  
Dishevelled guests from peeping toms are hid  
The tidal swell rolls over, high and wide  
The ship, tilting the world from side to side

## 22. Moselle

Rapunzel Castles loosen their hair of mist  
Goat-nimble workers tend steep terraced vines  
Sheer as dry-ski slopes, the wine rich hills

The Goethe on the khaki coloured Rheine  
A paddle steamer follows a coal-barge wake

Winningen's timbered houses circle the  
Wine-witch fountain. A dusting of thin rain  
Sprinkles unfolding umbrellas. Clouds increase

Near Alken, two swans and four pigeons  
Nuzzle the waves. A jetty cormorant  
Plunges into the tumult of the water  
Bobbing up behind the rocking ferry

Echoes of Brothers Grimm are in the air  
The rocks, gigantic, gnarled trees, enchanted.

## 23. Gretna

At Gretna, the anvil of trade is white hot  
Fingers palm out pounds  
Crowds pick over bargains

A squint eyed cat blinks  
From the scrap stuffed bin  
On its plinth of trodden cheese  
And smears of gravy

Here comes Scotland, eyes  
Peeled to the main chance  
The right side of a bawbee

Coaches slide in and out  
Sighing like shuddering whales  
Disgorging loads of Jonahs

From Perth to Pittenweem

Sheena Blackhall

# Ghaist-Spikk

Fit dae ye dae in the eftirlife  
Ma darlin son, ma lammie  
I keep night-watch in the ghaistie-fowk  
That's fit I dae, ma mammy

Fa dae ye tryst wi in the derk  
Ma darlin son, ma lammie  
I tryst wi the deid fowk bi the kirk  
They're ma friens noo, ma mammy

Fan micht I jyne ye in the mools  
Ma darlin son, ma lammie  
Fin ye've larned the wirth o human jewels  
Fin ye've larned their wirth, ma lammie

Can ye forgie me ma mistaks  
Ma darlin son, ma lammie?  
It's your mistaks caused ma hertbrakks  
Ower late wi her tears, ma mammy

Sheena Blackhall

# Girl Cupping Her Breast

Breasts get fatter with age. They sag, grow nipple hair  
Wrinkle, point in opposite directions  
Two million American women  
Have breast implants- go under the knife  
A big-boobed silicon wife

Jogging and aerobics makes them bounce  
Implants cost as much as a mini car  
And only guaranteed five years. To leak, or not to leak?

Do you want the teardropp shape, or rounder?  
The risks are minimal...blood clots, migration, deflation  
But worth it! Look at me upon my plinth  
My breasts so pert, as bouncy as two puppies.

I cup my hand in case they drop  
Not that they would. Magnificent mammary specimens  
Don't you think?

Sheena Blackhall

# Glasgow Rap

Tolbooth steeple: Art, The Burrell  
Drouthy's Bar: Hampden Roar  
Lettuce Eat: Buchanan Street  
Armadillo: The New Hydro  
The Botanics: ferns, organics  
Curlers' Rest: Tennent's best  
The Style Mile: round Argyle  
James Kelman: River Kelvin  
Orange order: Rangers Banner  
Steamie Days: George Galloway  
: Robbie Coltrane  
Gartnavel: Manny Shinwell  
Eddie Morgan: Gritty Govan  
Gorbals Patter: Doon the Watter  
Strathbungo: St Mungo  
Nitshill Crows: Pollockshaws  
Broomielaw: Parkheid baa  
Kinning Park: staffy's bark  
Bearsden: Rutherglen  
Sauchiehaa: Barras staa  
Heilan Lilt: Castlemilk  
Drumchapel Close: Easterhouse  
Sighthill Scheme: Rangers team  
Alasdair Gray: Milngavie  
Benno Schotz: Clydesdale docks  
Thomas Lipton: n  
R34: Donald Dewar  
Merchant city: Irish ditty  
Stanley Baxter: Jack Webster  
Gordon Ramsay: Lorraine Kelly  
Joseph Lister: Gregor Fisher  
Liz Lohead: Kennishead  
James McAvoy: Tom Docherty  
Panopticon: Criterion  
Babbity Bowster: Firewater  
Bar Gandolfi: Booly Mardi  
Maggie May: Brass Monkey  
Glasgow City: gallus, witty!





# Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin

High walls and watchtowers loom around the place  
This cemetery once needed guards with guns  
To keep the dead safe from the body snatchers  
Bloodhounds protected Dublin's buried sons

A graveyard guide leads punters in a party  
Telling them tales of bard and patriot  
Their stormy lives in Ireland's chequered history  
The dead meanwhile, say nothing, mutely rot

The names trip off his tongue, a martial drumroll  
Parnell, Maude Gonne, MacBride, Dan O'Connell  
Griffith, De Valera, Casement, Barry,  
The Countess Markievicz and Ó Domhnaill

The mass grave of forgotten 'fallen women'  
A Magdalene laundry treated with disdain  
Exhumed, cremated, re-interred together  
In death, at last they have shrugged off their shame

The Angels' Plot's the home of stillborn babies  
A place of trees, space for each tiny soul  
And the Alone space, free of charge for paupers  
For homeless, luckless, drifters on the dole

Glasnevin is James Joyce's set for Hades  
Look in his Ulysses, you'll find it there  
The last address of poets and politicians  
Musicians, labourers, priests, a fitting lair

The Visitor Centre downstairs hosts a film show  
Enjoy it, but behind you row, on row  
Stacked up, from floor to ceiling oaken coffins  
Reminders of the way all flesh must go

Acres of Grecian Urns and Celtic crosses  
Egyptian obelisks, best coin can buy  
Sarcophagi, slate, wood & hardy granite  
Cold mausoleum, beneath a weeping sky

See Arthur Griffith's headstone. It's unfinished  
To stay like that, till all Ireland is one  
Séan Foster, caught up in the Easter Rising  
The blanket from his pram, his dying gown

In Death is Life, the Tower Café's busy  
Scones, sandwiches and cake. The coffee sold's  
Organic, Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance  
With Irish soda bread, and Kerrygold

The shop tills ching with Druid craft and pottery  
Keyrings, magnets, Book of Kells silk wraps  
A Sláinte sign. A shamrock patterned tea towel  
With posters, pop -up fairies, baseball caps

There's vouchers for each Season's floral workshops  
There's flowers in heart shapes, cellophane and sprays  
A suite of laptops tapping into archives  
Irish diaspora hunt through it, lost strays

What's so macabre in this great Necropolis?  
In Life is Death, it's where we all go down  
Here like a million toppled dominoes  
The pieces of the Past, in Dublin town

Sheena Blackhall

# Glencoe Ghosts

Mountains, snow-swept mountains of Arctic grandeur  
Where no sweet bird finds rest in Winter's thrall  
Your streams should run with blood for a thousand aeons  
You watched and did not hinder Clan Donald's fall

Glenlyon's Argyll men, to the glen came trekking  
Like red-backed hounds to seek MacIain's lair  
Where were your blizzards then, that could have saved him?  
Your corries turned a hiding place to a bier

Buachaille Etive Mor of the Glen of Weeping  
Were you deaf to your dying children's cries?  
Why could you not have blocked the Devil's staircase  
Or opened the Sgur-mam-Fiann where Fingal lies?

Mountains, snow swept mountains of Arctic grandeur  
Where ghostly wraiths of the murdered families flit  
The wail of the caoineag still keeps out a warning  
You care for the fate of mortals not a whit

Sheena Blackhall

# Glong Glong: 3 Gaelic Poems With Translations

## GAELIC

### 1a. AN T'EARRACH(2)

Tha e blàth/ fuar/ fiadhaich  
Tha e mosach/ bÒidheach/ gaothach  
Tha smùid-uisg, reodhadh, agus grian  
A' coinneachadh  
Tha na fèidh a' ruith  
Tha neoil ag itealaich  
Tha an saoghal a' dùsgath

### 1b. SPRING(2)

It's warm/ cold/ wild  
It's damp/ beautiful/ windy  
Fine rain, frost, & sun  
Are meeting  
The deer are running  
The clouds are flying  
The world's waking

## GAELIC

### 2a. PISEAG

Tha piseag a 'cluich  
Ball cloimhreach  
Le na spuiean  
A' leum,  
A' sabaid.

## ENGLISH

### 2b. KITTEN

The kitten's playing  
A wooly ball  
With claws.  
A jump,  
Fighting

## GAELIC

### 3a. LEANABH A' MHONAI DH

Mo chÒta.....an ceÒ  
Mo bhrÒgan.....an coineach  
Mo bhonaid..... an t-uisge  
Mo eaglais.....an gleann  
Mo bhrathar..... an damh

ENGLISH

3b. CHILD OF THE MOOR

My coat.....the mist  
My shoes.....the moss  
My bonnet.....the rain  
My church.....the glen  
My brother....the stag

Sheena Blackhall

# Glong Glong: 4 Gaelic Poems With Translations

GAELIC

1a. SMUAINTEAN

Ann an druma-seice

Na h-inntinn

Bidh smuainean a' cnapadh

Mar dhÒrnan cnagte

ENGLISH

HTS

On the drum skin

Of the mind

Thoughts tap

Like rapping fists

GAELIC

2a.OITEAG AIRD-THIR

Braon

A' Crith-criothnaich

Ann an cathan-aodaich

An uiseag

Anns an sgàthan

Aig lochan

ENGLISH

2b HIGHLAND BREEZE

A dewdrop

Trembling

In a web.

The crease

In the mirror

Of a lochan

GAELIC

INN NAN CIOCHAN

Dorch, a sgàilean  
Ag èirigh àrd as a cheò  
A' bristeadh an speur  
Tua e a crochadh  
Anns na neamhan  
Dealrach Cromadh  
Mar bhradan aig leum

ENGLISH

3b. LOCHNAGAR

Dark, his shadows  
Rising out of the mist  
Breaching the sky  
He hangs  
In the Heavens  
Shining.  
Bowed  
Like a salmon's leap

GAELIC

4a. CÙIMHNE

Chaneil i bàdhte  
Ach falaichte  
Mar a' chlach  
A' thilg mi aon sàmhradh  
A steach a Loch Builg

ENGLISH

4b. MEMORY

Not drowned  
But hidden  
Like the stone  
I threw one summer  
Into Loch Builg

Sheena Blackhall

# Glong Glong: 7 Gaelic Poems & Translations

GAELIC

1a. PÒSADH

Barr ciste-mharbh

Air a' buaileadh sìos le ord

Air criadh bheod

Dà ghiomach

Ann an ciabh

Le cuan, mór agus magail

Air an tràghadh air falbh

ENGLISH

1b MARRIAGE

A coffin-lid

Nailed onto

Living clay

Two lobsters

In a creel

The ocean, broad & mocking

Ebbed away

GAELIC

2a. OBAR-DHEATHAIN

Dè' m faileadh tha sin?

Na h-eisg

Dè' m fuaim a tha sin?

Trafaig

De' n dath a tha sin?

Glas

A bheil e glè fhuar?

Tha

ENGLISH

2b. ABERDEEN

What's that smell?

Fish!

What's that noise?



Traffic!  
What's that colour?  
Gray!  
Is it very cold?  
Yes!

#### GAELIC

##### 3a. MO THEAGHLACH

Allt na Giuthsaich  
Allt an t-Sneachda  
Allt a' Choire Bhòidhich  
Càrn an Daimh  
A' Chuithe Chrom  
Beinn nan Ciòchan  
Feumaidh mi falbh

A choinneachadh ri  
Mo Luaidhean

#### ENGLISH

##### 3b. MY FAMILY

Pine Wood Brook  
Snowy Brook  
Brook of the Beautiful Corrie  
Stag's Cairn  
Crooked Snow-Drift  
Lochnagar  
I must go  
To meet with  
My Beloveds

#### GAELIC

##### 4a. BAILE TRANG

Baile trang  
Clachan  
A' fàs  
Mar fheur

#### ENGLISH

##### 4b. BUSY TOWN

Busy town

Stones  
Are sprouting  
Like grass

GAELIC

N-ALLAIDH DUBH

Damhan-allaidh dubh

A'sniÒmh

A'sniÒmh

A'sniÒmh

Cladh.□

ENGLISH

SPIDER

Black spider

Weaving

Weaving

Weaving

A churchyard

GAELIC

RACH

S' fhad

Bho bha teine

A' gabhail

Anns a chagailt fhuaraidh sin

ENGLISH

6b. WIDOW

It's long since

A fire was burning

in that cold hearth

GAELIC

7b AN T-EARRACH

An t-earrach....

Uan air

Chasan

Critheanach

ENGLISH

7b SPRING

Spring

A lamb

On

Trembling

Legs

Sheena Blackhall

# Glong Glong: A Gaelic Poem With Translation

GAELIC

1a. AN DAOLAG DHEARG BHREAC

Peiteag bhreac  
Na sgiathan aig daolg  
A' stòladh  
Far an crochadh  
Currac-na-cuthaig  
An daolag dhearg bhreac  
Mar an nìban  
Tha thu mar driog  
De fhuil sgiathach

Glong glong

sìos bidh thu a tuiteam  
A'stòIadh, gu 'ailleasach  
Air a' bhalla

ENGLISH

1b: LADYBIRD

Spotted vest  
Bug's wings  
Resting  
Where the bluebell  
Hangs

Ladybird,  
Ruby-red  
You 're a drop  
Of flying blood

Pitter-patter  
Down you fall  
Settling, dainty  
On the wall.

Sheena Blackhall

# Glong Glong: Gaelic Poems (Four) With Translations

Gaelic

1a TILLEADH

AN AOIGH NEO-THAITNEACH

Direach nuair smaoinich sinn

Gun robh e air a'ruigeadh

UISTE

Mar sùithe, a'seideadh

Sìos an luidheir

ENGLISH

1b RETURN

OF AN UNWANTED GUEST

Just when we thought

He'd gone

WHOOSH

Back he came

Like soot blown

Down the chimney

Gaelic

2a. PARANTAN

Ceannrùisgte agus cas rùisgte

Mise agus m'athair

Choisich sin gu sunntach

Air a' mhointich

Ah! Leithid a dh'fhuasgladh!

Dh'fuirich mo mhàthair aig an taigh

B' fhearr leatha adan

Agus brogan, agus ballachan

Ah! Leithid a choibhroch!

ENGLISH

2b PARENTS

Bareheaded & barefoot

Father & I

Walked joyful

On the moor

Such liberation!

Mother stayed at home  
Preferring hats  
And shoes, & walls  
Such limitation!

GAELIC

3a. SONAS

Anns a 'mhòintich  
Tha na h-eoin a' seinn  
Beanntan arda  
Gleanntan purpaidh  
Chaneil mi glanadh  
Chaneil mi nigh  
Chaneil mi sgùradh  
Chaneil mi sgabadh  
Tha a chlann aig an taigh  
Mise air a' mhòintich  
Sonas! □

ENGLISH

3b HAPPINESS

On the moor  
Birds are singing  
High mountains  
Purple valleys  
I'm not cleaning  
I'm not washing  
I'm not scrubbing  
I'm not sweeping  
The children are at the house  
I myself am on the moor  
Happiness!

GAELIC □

4a. CHAN ESAN MO MHAC

Chan esan mo mhac

Is an duine trang  
Am mac agamsa  
Le dochasan mòra mar skyscraper  
Cha bhi e a 'grotadh  
Aig cèarnan sràidean  
Mar chlàd glacte  
Air chruaidh-theud bhiorach

Chan esan mo mhac  
Bidh mo mhac a' cadal  
Le nighean a' baile-beag  
Tha e mathasach agus subhach  
Na leannanachd  
Cha bhi e a' siòlachadh  
Mar chu ann an caol-sràid  
Le siùrsachean salach a 'bhaile

Chan esan mo mhac  
Tha e dubh, 's bÒidheach  
Am mac agamsa  
Chaneil aodann mar chlaigeann  
Le sùilean

Mar dà pholl chadalach a' spleucadh  
Bho sluic craicinn

Chan esan mo mhac  
Bidh a chùislean a' ruith  
Am mac agamsa  
Le fion dearg, Ian spionnaidh  
Chaneil iad sàth le agus sracte  
Leis na fiaclan fuathasach geal  
Aig an dràgon, heroin  
Chan esan mo mhac.

ENGLISH

4b HE IS NOT MY SON

He is not my son

My son is a busy man



With prospects high as a skyscraper  
He does not rot at street corners like a rag

He is not my son  
My son sleeps  
With a village girl  
It is kind and joyful  
Their lovemaking  
He does not couple  
Like a dog in an alley  
With dirty city whores

He is not my son  
He is dark and handsome my son  
His face is not a skull  
With eyes, two stagnant pools  
Staring from hollows of skin

He is not my son  
My son's veins run  
With the red wine of vigour  
They are not stabbed and torn  
By the terrible white teeth  
Of the dragon, heroin  
He is not my son

Sheena Blackhall

# Gloves

Gloves

Blue gloves approach  
Legs in the stirrups, baring all for birth  
The udder-like fingers probe  
Explore, expand  
Like grappling octopus tentacles  
Round the foetus

Blue gloves approach  
Brandish a metal phallus  
'Just a little nick'  
Smear whipped away, with dignity,  
Blue Gloves retreat

Blue gloves approach  
The mozzie whine of modern dentistry  
Descends, and with it  
Memories of horror,  
Drool, discomfort, agony.

Blue gloves approach the dead man on the slab  
Somebody's brother, father, uncle, friend  
Like something foul as carrion or disease

I dream of blue gloves laughing  
Menacing, at night

White gloves of satin, lace or friendly cotton  
Formal, sophisticated, elegant and chic  
Cotton's for handling priceless manuscripts  
Waiters wear them at high class events

Brides wear them, blotting out tattoos  
Like Tina loves Big Bartek, how unfit  
To drape around a partner christened Dan

Sheena Blackhall

# Goat

A Pan-horned goat  
Lifts up the weird  
Triangle of his face.

His neat packed teeth  
An octave of tiny notes beneath  
The elegant curving slits of his wet nose.

His beard's a puff  
Of thinly curling smoke;  
His arcane eyes are eloquent as Satan,  
Mournful as King Lear.

It seems he's been rooted to this place  
A thousand years;  
His neck fur is a Spanish grandee's ruff.

Sheena Blackhall

# Goat Steps

Returning, I reinhabit my goat steps  
The small leaps learned as a child  
Who grew with mountains  
Zig-zag goat holds  
Against slither drops  
Anchoring goat holds  
Against bone-break, sheer-back stones  
The unpredictable scree of the unknown

Sheena Blackhall

# Goosebumps For Beginners (17 Scots Poems)

The merle singin in the tree  
Kens mair o ecstasy nor me

Wi braw coo's lick an wings sae swift  
I'd like tae be a peesie hen  
I'd cheep an birl in the lift

Owersett in Scots: the Guest Hoose

This bein human is a guesthouse  
Ilkie mornin a new arrival

A blitheness, a dowieness, a coorseness  
Some teenie kennin comes  
As a begeck o a veesitor  
Welcome an hish them inbye  
Even gin they're a boorich o waes  
Fa forecy-like swipe yer hoose  
Teem o its gear  
Nae maitter, treat ilkie guest wi honour  
He nicht be scoorin ye clean  
For a new delicht

The derk thocht, the blaik affront, the wrangness  
Meet them at the yet, lauchin  
An hish them inbye

Be grateful for faiver comes  
For ilkie ane has bin sent  
As a guide frae the ayont

3.A Scots owersett o the poem Lost, bi Czeslaw Milosz (translatit frae the Polish  
bi hissel)

Love means tae larn tae luik at yersel

The wye a body luiks at hyne aff ferlies  
For ye are anely ae ferlie mangst mony  
An faiver sees thon wye, heals his hairt  
Wioot kenning it, frae a rowth o sairs  
A birdie an a tree say tae him Frien

Syne he wints tae use hissel an ferlies  
Sae they staun in the glamourize o ripeness  
It disnae matter whether he kens fit he serves  
Fa serves best disnae aye unnerstaun

4.A Scots Owersett of The Guid news, bi Thich Nhat Hanh translatit frae the  
Vietnamese bi the poet hissel, in Plum Village 1992

They dinna prent the guid news  
The guyed news is prentit bi oorsels  
We hae a special edition ilkie meenit  
An we need ye tae read it

The guid news is yer leevin  
An the linden trees aye yonner  
Staunin stinch in the coorse winter

The guid news is that ye hae winnerfu een  
Tae touch the blue lift

The guid news is that yer bairn is there afore ye  
An yer airms are wytin  
Bosies are possible

They anely prent fit's wrang  
Luik at ane o oor special editions  
We aywis offer the ferlies that arenae wrang  
We ettle for ye tae gain frae them  
An gie them a bield

The pee-the-bed is yonner in the sheugh  
Smiling her winnerfu smile  
Lippen tilt! Ye hae lugs tae hear it  
Boo yer heid  
Lippen tilt!

Leave ahin the warld o waers an worries  
Free yersel  
The guid news is  
Ye can dae it

#### 5.A Scots Owersett o the poem Hunger, bi Jane Hirshfield

A reid shelt chaws girse  
A blaik craw  
Howks hornygollachs frae a midden  
A wumman watches in envy, fit's sae easy

#### Owersett o Optimistic Wee Poem bi Hans Magnus Enzensberger,

Whyles, it happens  
Somebody skirls for help  
Some ither body lowps in at aince  
An aa fur free

Here in the mids o the greediest capitalism  
Roon the neuk cams the sheenin fire brigade  
An dowses, or o a suddenty  
There's siller in the beggar's bunnet

Foreneens, the streets are stappit  
Wi fowk hashin back an forrit wioot  
Dirks in their hauns, friendly-like  
Eftir milk or radishes  
Like twis a time o deepest peace  
A gran sicht!

#### 7.A Scots Owersett o the poem Local bi Henrik Norbrandt,

Twa o the kintras that share a border wi this ane  
Are fechtin ane anither

Ma radio, that I've pit  
In the shadda o the oleander buss  
Tells me fit airts are noo bein bombed

An fit weapons they're makkin eese o

Nae till the morn will the picturs cam  
Thon o the wrack  
Thon o the deid

Mony o them war leevin anely yestreen  
Mony are anely hauf as auld's masel

Fin I ettle tae tune in ma radio station  
Wi classical music  
I think foo hard it is  
Tae get eased wi the local fags.

8.A Scot Owersett o the Poem Gairden Fragrance bi Lam Thi My Da,

Last nicht a bomb explodit in the porch  
Bit souns o birdies sweeten the yird this morning  
I hear the scentit trees, teet in the gairden  
Fin twa seelent boorichs o ripe guavas

9.A When Owersetts inno Scots o English Translations bi Sam Hamill O Journey  
to the Interior bi Basho

Etten alive bi  
Flechs an flees  
Noo the cuddy pees  
Aside ma bowster

Trimme, ma mools  
Betimes ma greets will be  
Anely this Autumn win

Screivit on the Tada Shrine  
Peetifu- aneth  
A great sodjer's teem helmet  
A girselowper sings

I sclimmed inno air  
Heich abeen the peesies



Tap o a Ben

The yalla rose  
Petals – ane bi ane-  
Gae doon the roarin linns

Och, buss birdies!  
Noo ye've keeched aa ower  
Ma rice cake on the porch

The stert o Culture  
Frae the hairt o the kintra  
Rice-plantin sangs

The banana tree  
Blawn bi wins  
Poors raindrops inoo the pail

Rowin dumplins  
In bamboo leaves  
Wi ae finger she redds up her hair

Thon's ma saké cup!  
Dinna be draps dubs in yonner  
Reestin spurgies!

In the fish market  
Frae amang wee shrimps  
Girselowper sings

In the auld byre  
Dwaumy souns o mozzies  
Simmer heat bides on

Thon winter shoosers-  
Even the puggie  
Raxxes fur a raincoat

A satted sea-bream  
Its moo luiks jeeled  
At the seafood shoppie

A tattie leaf  
Awytes the hairst meen  
In a brunt clachan park

I wid like tae weir  
Thon tattiebogle's orra duddies  
In the cranreuch o midnight

Suppit frae ma hauns  
Jeelin spring watter  
Bumbazes ma stoonin teeth

Fit wye, jist this Autumn  
Hae I grown auld o a suddenty  
A birdie in the lift

A tummlin cloud, like  
A rinnin tyke, pissin  
Coorse winter shooers

A snawy mornin  
Dowpit alane wi dried salmon  
Chaain awa

Basho's Daith Poem

Seek on ma traivels  
Anely ma dreams will stravaig  
Thon dowie muirs

er

Na. Yer nae getting in  
Ye micht hae orra habits  
Mebbe yer face winna fit. Mebbe mine'll cheenge  
Forbye, there's private neuks inbye  
That I keep steekit

Fit's that? Ye war wintin tae step ower the yett  
Tae be ma frien?

An fit's a frien onywe?  
Jist turnin up wioot a bye yer leave!

I dinna like begecks  
They gie me the dry boak  
Sikkin a sub or twa fin times is hard...

I'm anely the Bank o Mither, nae the world  
Awa an chap on somebody else's door

I keep ma roose in a kist  
It's nae hoose-trained  
It disna ken fan tae stop

Gin I daured tae open the lid  
A Mister Punch wi neives  
Wad likely pop

Ma roose wid fleg the polis, cause a stooshie  
A richt radgy roose it is

It wid skelp ye on the lug as quick as stink

Its buits ettlin tae blooter yer shins  
It's aywise kept in a kist, tho  
An I hae swallaed the key

Simmer

The birk leaves skinkle like new minted coins  
A flee reests on a thrissle's spike-tapped hair  
Aneth the larick's oxters, drappit heids  
O dwinin rhododendrons sweets the air

A rowth o trippers wheech along the lift  
Happit bit heard the rummle o a plane  
Nae traffic left or richt, straicht tae the loch

Girse path, far fowk wauk up an doon again

The crinin bluebell floers boo dowie doon  
A humfy backit snailie sliders by  
A broon baguette, the larick's crackit trunk  
Raxes tae reach the Heivens hyne upbye

The anely soun's the widlan's reeshlin spikk  
The antrin birdie chitterin ower the sheuch  
Fit needs a roweth o siller, claith or gear  
Here's aa a chiel cud sikk, mair nor eneuch

### 13. Ma Faither's scarf an the Dalai Llama

The Dalai Llama's coort cam tae ma toon  
'A fite scarf is the giftie that's maist fit'  
They telt me an (nae ane tae lat fowk doon)

I fan ma faither's daunce scarf...sic a boon  
Twis 50 years sin he hid worn it  
The thirties fashion...ma, in her ball goon

Like Fred Astaire. My da wad birl her roon  
An full her heid wi stars, the kyn that flit  
Ooto the luv sangs that he liked tae croon

Shakkin the moch baas frae its silken foun  
Cannie, in siller paper I rowed it  
Thon hist-ye-back frae age o ragtime tune

I winner fyles, fin incense furls aroon  
An He in meditation deep, should sit  
If faither's jigging scarf is wippit roon  
His thrapple, an dis it tae quaet, submit?

### I Snap Shots

The poppy's pit on her brawest frock  
For the blythness o bein  
Up a city close

A junkie sooks her sap  
For the pleisur o deein

A stane at Callanish stauns quaet  
Wintin nae glory forbye's the sun's warm touch

A littlin lauchs in a dub in Jaipur's stoor  
Smilin ooto a moo o twa fite teeth  
Nyaakit bar aa bit a thread aroon its shooder  
Rowed in the grace o youth, a halo o hudderie hair  
Brunt yird its pooder

es Table Watchin

The table is circled bi birdies watchin fowk ett  
This gars the birdies chitter an coo  
Watchin humans pykin frae ashets an bowls

'Luik at thon creashie clort hammin intae a heeze o pink wirms'  
Quo the spurgie.

'Thon pykit luikin shargeret peely wally should get far mair o the deinties, '  
The muckle scurrie jelooses.

The whaup an the gled are slaverin at the sicht o French snailies. Ane bi ane the  
fowk rise up an gae.

'Fit'll be happenin neist? ' speirs the yalla yeitie.

'Weel, ' the mavis repons, 'they'll awa tae their hotel chaumers, for a birze, a fag  
or a sklaik on thon wee sheeny squar ferlies.'

'Bit they'll miss the sun gaun doon an the meen risin, ' quo the cushie doo

'Och, humans are far ower important tae gee thirsels about thon, ' the hoolet  
hooted, fleein awa tae the wid.

16. Auld Shelt

He stude wi a nicher

His roch blaik mane on the lang shute o his heid  
Lyn atween his een, like a hudderie breem buss  
His yalla teeth, the colour o new-cut neep  
His hooves, stricken the cassies like flint  
His hochs wi thon sheltie-guff yoamin aff him  
His pechin gey near founert  
Luikin doon tae the grun  
The warld oot blinkered

Aroon him, cars tooted, larries roared  
Him staunin straicht like he'd stepped  
Frae a century hyne back

His maister, the veggie man had the skin  
O a cyard, like he'd bin steepit in tannin  
His bunnet iled blaik bi swyte an yird  
His fingers like puddens, hackit, tabbie-stained

Mither stude at the cairt tail  
Pyin fur leeks an ingins wi florins an bawbees  
The smush that wis oor siller in ma bairnhood

Gin the auld shelt srappit his broon aipples o dung  
Fowk ran wi their shovels an pails  
Ingaitherin the keech like it wis gowd  
The better tae grow the rhubarb in their gairdens

Even then I kent its days wis numbered  
Noo, I staun in thebstreet whyles,  
Pechin, gey near founert,  
Luikin doon tae the grun  
The warld ootblinkered

Owersett in Scots o Baby Lift by Nguyen Phan Que Mai

Heistit up, haived inno anither warld  
Anither kintra, anither bosie  
Thon wis the weird o the dumfounert bairns  
Their skin still guffin frae the lowes o their evacuation

The dy cam hame, their hair nae blond

Their skin naae fite  
Their leid nae Vietnames  
Bit nae diet o milk an butter  
Can answer thon 35 year auld speirin  
Fa am I?

Nae adoptit airms can replace their ain fowk's bosie  
Nae DNA test can jyne them wi their beginnins  
An blaik hair canna think in Vietnamese

Baby lift, ower twal thoosan days o tears  
Ower thirtyfive years o pain  
An aye the questions hae their een gapit wide

Sheena Blackhall

# Grandmother

She'd a laugh that bubbled like berries in the pan  
She'd whalebone stays with salmon-gusset bloomers  
She'd a smile as bright's the sun on a copper kettle  
She prodded a mouth in the fire till it told stories  
She wore her long grey hair in a pleated circle  
She fashioned a spider web of a lacy shawl  
She wore grey silken stockings, swish and stately  
She wore horn combs and a brooch of mother of pearl  
She only ever spoke with a strong Scots burr  
She folded her two soft hands to say 'Amen'  
She drank black tea, with a pour of Scotch, at night  
She sewed a garden of flowers on a cloth of linen  
She was a wall no nightmare could climb over  
There wasn't a finer woman walked the land  
And when she died, the hearth chilled in the family  
And every man put on the mourning band

Sheena Blackhall



# Grass The Leveller

High rises, scaffolding, concrete steel and glass  
Stare from inhuman eyries around the world

Grass, the leveller, invites you to walk, to greet it  
Its neighbour, Water, reflects the traffic of clouds  
The languid loops of birds

Pools lie like lotus petals, still and calm  
Drink them in with your eyes  
Yin/Yang of liquid

Press your feet onto the tread of nature  
How very large the lawn is!  
How small your steps, that leave no mark in passing!

Here, you have moved out of the norms of existence  
The tinny underground, cram-crushed, angst-ridden

Slow your pace. There are no deadlines here  
Walk steadily, breathing easy as the wind

Your thoughts, desires and needs are passing storms  
In café teacups. Time will rinse them out

The one you married, you only have on loan  
Your house, your job, are clothes too soon discarded

Here is a sanctuary, a place of peace  
Free of the madhouse chatter of technology

Feel your worries float away like leaves  
Grass, the leveller, invites you to walk, to greet it

Sheena Blackhall

# Greenhouse

Summer goes swimmingly  
In the greenhouse the fug of growth is stifling

The garden's a fleet in flight  
Warm winds ruffle the flounces of the ferns  
Lilies dip like feluccas, floating on air

Thyme foams over the rockery  
High water mark of June in a Balquhadder glen

Sheena Blackhall

# Grey Matter (17 Scots Poems)

Daddies

Yer da's awa, wee man  
He follaes the sodjer's trade  
Bang bang, yer deid! Lie doon!  
Thon's foo a corpse is made

Fit dis he fecht for? Ah!  
He maunna speir ower far  
As lang as there's life, there's strife  
As lang as there's bluid, there's war

Fit are the richts an wrangs?  
The usual, religion an siller  
Drugs, politics, hate an fear  
Whyles, aa rummelt thegither

Dinna forget yer da,  
Littlin, he lues ye true  
Here is his photy, kiss it  
Flat daddy, he's real for noo

k

Fa's the chauncer screived this styte?  
Fit's his angle? Fit's his gripe?  
Fit mair damage micht he dee?  
Fit's that? It micht be a SHE?

Thon's mair like it. Weemin slaik.  
Aa their tongues can dae is claik  
Gin I find this nesty hissie  
She will claw far she's nae yokie  
I will stop her clishmaclavers  
Damn her een! I'm spittin feathers!

Sheila Douglas

A Yorkshire lass on her mither's side,  
An Ayrshire cheil, her faither  
Aften at sea, as an engineer  
In gurlu an peacefu weather

At 5 she crossed the border tae bide  
In Scotland, in Renfrewshire  
An she sang like a liltin lintie there  
In the Paisley Grammar choir

She merriet an moved tae the toun o Perth  
Far ben in the TMSA  
Belle Stewart the traiveller wis her frien  
An mony's the tune they'd play

The seeds war sown for a wechty hairst  
Her buiks, her sangs, won praise  
Bit sair wis the weird that stole her voice  
An bladdet her hinmaist days

Gin ghaists cam back frae the warld ayont  
She'll appear as a cheery sang  
That the gaun about fowk will takk up  
Tae chant as they wauk alang

gowrie in Mey

Far's the berries?  
Far's the jams?  
Far's the traivellers singin sangs?

Shops wi geegaws geylike pricey  
Traffic crossins unca dicey  
Cheese n' chips tae cairryoot  
Hungeret gull: g'wa ye brute!

chry in Mey

Pitlochree! Piloohree!

Cherges 30 pence tae pee  
Gweed fur plays....fresh air is great.  
Average age is saxty eight

Aa sheep really dae is ett  
An growe a coat tae keep them hett  
An syne they're shorn o aa their oo  
An resurrect as mutton stew

: Ballater- Braemar

The bonnie larick's elfin green  
The brassy stauns o daffs are blawin  
The parks are happt wi infant craps  
Fite flooers upon the gean tree's shawin  
The lambs are hardy billies noo  
Bricht pee the beds an gowans thrive  
Saft wins heist up the furlin craa  
The bees heeze oot frae hilltap hive

Anither layer o lichen creeps  
Abune the gravesteens frae the mools  
Swans drift like snaa abeen the loch  
Their een like skinklin ebon jewels

Broon mowdie humphs, like raaas o scones  
Brunt crisp, stretch oot alang the stoor  
The antrin lum still blaws oot rikk  
The Glen Muick kirk bell chimes the oor

Stravaigers, climmers, raik oot buits  
Cauld clachans open shoppie doors  
A puckle towrists thrang the streets  
Reid squirrel's teemed her winter stores

The Bens that glower tae Coilacreich  
Are like braidclaith, patched ower wi sna  
The burns that breenge aroon Braemar

Are reamin wi the Sizzen's thaa

o Dee

There's a twist in the thrapple o Linn o Dee  
Like a bubblyjock's deid thraa  
Sae watch yer step...wi a skyte an a whoosh  
Like stoor, ye'd be wheeched awa

Doon at the foun, wee saplins wyde  
In the watter, sae heich it rins  
An the furlpuils deep far the kelpies sleep  
Are birlin widdershins

The braes aroon are burgundy  
The lift abune is blae  
An the mist wyves moosewabs ower the heath  
O this neuk far the ernes play

#### 9. The Fit-washin o Tam Mishanter

Aa men o wirth maun sikk a wife  
A bidie-in tae share their life  
An sae, decidit Tam Mishanter  
Leavin ahin the bawdy banter  
O gallus chiels fa gied hee-haw  
Tae Tam's ain dearie, Mysie Law  
Doon on ae knee he fell tae speir  
That they'd be wad wi'in the year

Bit unbekent tae glekit Tam  
On Facebuik, Twitter, tae a man  
His friens had organised a pairty  
For Mysie'd traivalled frae Rosehairty  
Tae her hen-do in Lanzarote  
Spray-tanned bricht orange. Fit a hottie!  
The invitation sune went viral  
An sae began Tam's doonwird spiral

Fin Tam wis in his boxers dowpit

Afore TV he quickly lowpit  
Fin near twa hunner guests poored in  
Tae a guid auld Scots fitwashin  
They clartit him wi superglue  
Stuck feathers ower his airms an broo  
They tarred his todger, steeped his feet  
In tractor ile and sileage weet  
They tuik his pet pot-bellied grumphie  
An gart it daunce the Reel o Stumpie

They biled his sat nav in the soup  
Force-fed him peels for brewer's droop  
A when Hell's Angels frae Dundee  
Crashed his Subaru in a tree  
His Glenmorangie they drank doon  
An fit they scaled, wi Mysie's gown  
They dichtit up, while houghmagandie  
Tween Mairi, Calum, Keith an Sandy  
Ahin the sofa, on the fleer  
Tuik place on ilkie bed an cheer

Syne twenty gays frae East Kilbride  
Ten rappers up frae Kelvinside  
Wi drums an guitars gied it laldy  
Wi bagpipers up frae Kirkcaldy  
They caad the hoose tae crockanation  
Blootered Tam's i-pod an play station  
Hett chocolate haived ower Mysie's drawers  
Teemed oot the pantry's tins an jars  
On her fite sheepskin rug, sic cowkin!  
Wi pish near ilkie carpet bowfin

Tam's neebors, stinch an godly-kind  
Near deaved tae daith an ooto mind  
Sune telt the polis o this stooshie  
There's limits tae a local hoolie  
Tam's drink wis spiked, it mashed his heid  
He roared an lowped wi unca speed  
The polis cam, bit Tam wis vauntie  
They tazered him ahin the chunty  
While helicopters, SAS  
Added tae the puir chiel's distress

He rummled doon the rubbish shute  
An Tam wis sounly knockit oot.

An noo tae casualty he birled  
Unconscious. Nichtmares roon him furled  
He dreamt he faced Big Jock McGraw  
Cage fechter wi an iron jaw  
An aa nicht syne in A an E  
Tam spent the time in Purgat'ry  
Wi stammach pumps, supposat'ries  
Tae keep him clear o the DTs

Neist eftirneen, in sheriff coort  
He pyed the price for ithers sport  
Tagged, fined an peely wally, Tam  
Gaed hame tae face a nookie ban  
For Mysie on her hett hen-do  
Had fand a Spanish chiel tae lue

#### 10. Tell-Tale Tits

Peepin Toms  
In their lang johns  
Cannae get a wumman  
They watch ithers' cairry-ons

Tell tale tit  
Yer mammy cannae knit  
Yer daddy cannae gae tae bed  
Wioot a dummy tit

Peepin Toms  
In their lang johns  
Cannae get a wumman  
They watch ithers' cairry-ons

e's Ruck

Back o the byre in the meenlicht  
The ruck skinkles like sharn



A strae toll-hoose, stappit wi rottens an squeaks  
Stackit an thackit bi skeelie cottar's hauns

A Van Gogh swirl o starnies owerluiks  
This corn-hoose, dwaumin in derk

In the mids o the byre, chynes clank,  
As the penned heifers chaa their dubby neeps  
Whylst frae the reef tree abeen them  
The fite-faced hoolet, Auld Snaaie  
Flichters ghaistly oot on his nichtly hunt

## 12. Ghaists on a Dyke, Glen Gairn

Risin ooto the muir on an Autumn nicht  
The ghaist o a tod wheechs by like an eildritch mist  
The wraith o a pheasant, ripples ower the stanes  
Like the licht o a wattergaw, frae a warlock's kist  
A hoolet raxxes the shade o his soochin wings  
Tho his corp in the mill o daith is poodered grist

A Highlander, rins wud frae Culloden's grun  
Back tae the Glen far a coorse Laird gart him list

Fermers, cuddies an ferlies sikk tae bide  
Bi the auld stane dyke, stinch bield bi the Gairn's side  
For aathin teemed frae the pooch o Life gyangs back  
Tae the mools, the seed bed's wyme, secret an black

## 13. Girse

Fusper fusper girses  
Fit's yer story noo?  
Did ye see the ferm quine  
Steppin ben the dyew?

Did ye see fa caught her  
Fa gaed her airm a yark?  
Fa cowpit her, fa kittlet her  
Fa heistit up her sark?

Fusper fusper girses  
See her belly swell  
Will she drap the littlin  
Doon Hillie's wall?

#### 14. Neanderthal's Valentine

Gruntin an pechin, the Neanderthal  
Flang his dearie's Valentine doon afore her

First chaa at the bluidy hairt  
O a sabre tooth tiger.

Spikk:

Ash:

I am the bow an the spear  
Growin in Haly wells  
Ma berries in bairnies' cradles  
Pruif agin changelin spells

Elder:

I am the damp cramp bark  
Bringin succour tae weemins' sairs  
Ma berries like menstrual bluid  
Bring balm tae female cares

Ash:

I am the yggdrasil  
The muckle Norse Tree o the World  
A waukin stick fur the auld  
Yule log tae the snaa fire thirled

Elder:

I am fussle an chanter an pipe  
Fey music sae slicht an slee  
On Samhuin, aneth ma leafy boughs  
The Elf King's fowk ride free

Ash:

Cleave me tae hel a bairn  
Passed nyaakit atween ma cleaf  
Bound, I will quickle cure  
Aa mainner o newborns' skaith

Elder:

Ma seerip is richtly famed  
Tae cure auld bodies o ague  
It hauds the witches awa  
Pits the hems on the warlock plague

Court Hoose Windae Box

Peem McAndrew, hoosebrakker frae Fersochs  
Gien eichteen months community service  
Stubs his fag oot in a sweet violet's face  
Sweirs an aiths spew ooto his sewer mou

Donnie McAllister, guiltly o connin auld bodachs  
Ooto their life savins. Five hunner pun fine.  
Pues a pansy ooto the box fur his lapel  
Pammers ower the cassies, on the hunt for his neist gowk

Toya Dunnoble, caught wi a bra fu o crack  
Lowsed, pendin reports, boos tae sniff a petunia  
Toya still guffs o fish in wikk-auld undies  
Aff tae pick the bairn up frae her ma  
Its face a clart o sweeties, bogies, dirt

I glower inno the frost's fite physog  
A Scots owerset o a poem bi Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938)

Alane I glower inno the frost's fite physog.  
It's gaun naewye, an I—frae naewye.  
Aathin ironed flat, pleated wioot a lirk:  
Merveillous the breathin plain.

Betimes, the sun gleys at this sterched puirtith—  
The gley itsel satisfed, peacefu...

The ten-fauld wids nearhaun the same...  
An snaa crunches in the een, bairnlike, like clean breid.

Sheena Blackhall

## Growing Down

I loved to hear him gasp with scared delight  
Safe in my grasp, as we slid down the peat  
Between the fir tree branches, low with cones  
Close to the thundering Falls on angled feet

His tumbled toddler knees were brown with bark  
Behind my skirts, he'd bounce and wave for fun  
A wingless fledgling, golden in the light  
Greeting the waters haloed by the sun

Now he's the human crutch I lean against  
As, roles reversed, we slide towards the Falls  
Watching them plunge into their own demise  
Far and away, a wheeling buzzard calls.

Sheena Blackhall

# Guernica

Most of the men off fighting in Civil War  
Our women and children haggling over bargains.  
And then three hours bombardment from the skies  
Like a place of card, our town, stamped on by giants

Those who hid in the fields were soon machine gunned.  
The wooden walls of our homes, a red inferno

Wives wailed over the dead, blown up by shrapnel  
Horses and bulls lay crushed by masonry.

Doves flew in all directions, panic-stricken.  
I ran wildly ahead towards a bomb hole  
Dived inside the churned up, muddy crater.

Bullets ricocheted, and cars exploded  
Riddled corpses leaked blood on the streets

Children huddled round a parish priest  
Too shocked to speak. In tatters, every one

The Plaza was a wall of living flame,  
All that was left, a church, a tree, a factory

Charred bodies will forever haunt my dreams.  
And this was how war came to Guernica

Sheena Blackhall

# Guide To The Cu Chi Tunnels

Mister Kong the guide  
Is the primary teacher from hell

How many people living in Saigon?  
You not know mister? Madam?  
Guess! I ask you all!  
But no-one knows so Mister Kong must tell.

On he goes, pedantic drone  
As we bounce on the rickety potholes

I save foreign coins for my collection.  
You give me some small change please,  
From your homeland? Will make me very happy  
I very handsome. No?  
I tell a joke

It fails to cross the international barriers, this joke  
No one claps or laughs

Untipped at tour-end, Mr Kong looks sad  
Packs up his joke and melts  
Into the seething cauldron that's Saigon

Sheena Blackhall

# Guiding Light

As King Robert the Bruce lay dying in 1329 he asked Sir James Douglas to take his heart on crusade against the enemies of Christ. Douglas carried Bruce's heart into battle against the Moors in Spain before it was returned to Scotland and finally buried at Melrose Abbey. In the 1990s a team from Historic Scotland investigated a lead casket containing an embalmed heart found at Melrose Abbey. A stone plaque bearing the words 'A noble hart may have nane ease gif freedom failye' marks the spot where the heart was reburied.

The Bruce's Heart, no greater and no less  
Than any other man's, can still express  
Brave heart, the common mortal's will to fight  
When freedom is suppressed by tyrant's might

And still, across the world, wrong smothers right  
Beats down the poor, the refugee, the slight  
And feeble women, shot because they seek  
For education, denied to the meek  
By powerful bigots and misguided laws  
Lacking a guiding light to plead their cause

Sheena Blackhall



# Guilt

Have you ever been tossed on the horns of the black bull Guilt?  
You're bruised and broken, but no blood's ever spilt...

No final goring is going to let you get off lightly  
The black bull roars and rages and rends you nightly

No matador will dance that demon away  
With a swirl of the cape. Guilt is one long replay

Sheena Blackhall

# Gull

Gull's yellow smile splits open;  
He is standing in a little pool of sunshine,  
Wrinkly stockings of skin droop round his ankles  
Like a harbour whore at the end of a busy shift.

His shriek presses the pay-off button:  
Three oranges and three lemons  
Line up below a gratuitous peal of bells.

Sheena Blackhall

# Gull's Picnic

Ms Gull is not a fastidious feeder:  
Her food can come from a lightweight backpack overspill  
a simple lunch box,  
a sumptuous hamper,  
any variety of cool packs, baskets and bags..

Her picnic spot is a tree-lined churchyard  
with the hint of damp moss and tobacco  
a leafy sanctuary in the city's midst

friends chat, dispense gull-alms freely  
children scampering after her  
lack the wings to catch her  
lovers sharing a rug  
toss a magnanimous crumb

Eating outdoors  
makes the meal that much more memorable.  
Gull's snack can be a very impromptu affair  
or planned by stalking and painstaking surveillance  
Alfresco meals can be lavish fresh air feasts,

There requires no nest cleaning before or after  
the neighbours complain about noise  
but space is no problem for large numbers  
no difficulties with parking outsize flippers  
the burble of human speech  
flows in the background,  
a river of munch and chatter

The mighty trees, grave stones  
Give cooling shade

Sheena Blackhall

# Hae Ye Lain In A Barn On A Swatch O Hye? (Scots Poem)

Hae ye lain in a barn on a swatch o hye  
An watched throw the wide laft door  
The meen rise ower a sleepin ferm?  
Thon's a sicht tae hunger for!

The yoam o the lan is girssy green  
As the Meen frae her starnie riddle  
Skitters the dyew along the grun  
Bricht pearls in a luvver's idyll

Hae ye lain in a barn on a swatch o hye?  
Nae bed afore or since  
Wis iver as braw, far the saft wins blaw  
Fit bield for a royal prince

Sheena Blackhall

## Haiku (9) Written In Balquiddher Glen

ng the melon  
So mouth-watering, so juicy,  
The small piece is yours

dist urine  
By being alcohol free  
Once prized by weavers

bottle in snow  
The silver lid has risen  
A dairy Jesus

creeps up the walls  
Forest reclaims the hut  
Green, begetting green

pee circles a post  
The animal as anarchist  
Frowning the aphids

et sings in the grass  
Stone is deaf to sound  
But leaf is trembling

pie and hopscotch  
The stinging bite of the tawse  
A Scottish childhood

iring exhaust  
An Irish tutor shaking  
Troubles' legacy

9.A bandage for Death?  
That's no way to mourn a friend  
Air your wounds and howl

Sheena Blackhall

# Half Empty/Half Full

Peacemakers outnumber warmongers  
But warmongers have sharper teeth

Some tree barks are smooth, others are gnarled  
The lunatic moon shines also down on lovers

Why should the badger worry about what the owl thinks?

Does it matter what symbol a flag carries?  
It is only a square of cloth at the wind's mercy!

Sheena Blackhall

## Halloween (13)

Midnight lies with its head over the edge of the moon  
Like a ghostly balloon

It has caught the sickness of un-ease  
Poisoning the twiggy woods

Owls like pale chrysanthemums  
Peep from the purdah of trees

Faded footprints melt like rain in a cloudburst  
My forebears are lost for words  
In the straitjacket of their graves

From the corner of my eye I see an aunt  
Blue lipped in her cornflower shroud  
Like wool unravelling in the eiderdown of earth

Sheena Blackhall

# Hamedrauchtit (42 Scots Poems)

- Drauchtit

There's waur-aff fowk;  
I've a hoose, an a rikkin lum,  
I've meat in ma wame,  
An a puckle o years tae come;  
Bit lang's the unquate nicht  
Fin the clash o the day is deen.  
An oh, it's a sair-made dyke, T  
hat beeries a rollin stane.

Hame is a settin compass, pintin west,  
Nae curlew saddles weel in a spurgie's nest,  
Nae rodden blooms in the airm o the larick tree,  
An tribble's a passin cloud, in ma ain countrie.

Infauldin, furlin Dee,  
Far the hairse grouse cries an cries  
An the roads are sure an sma,  
The winter wave is a cailleach  
Shakkin a shawl o snaw,  
Fir feather fleece;  
Are the neebours the hillmen ken  
Wi scarce a steadin ava, i' the gap o a Ben  
An the stag is forkit lichtenin,  
King o the misty glen.

Gin the girse grows thick,  
The heather winna thrive.  
In a drouthy ditch  
There's niver the troot alive.  
Foriver an ay it's the same auld, hauntin rug,  
The yammerin Norlan geese, in a Heilan lug.

Ye may tell me the girse is sweet —  
I say it's druchtit!  
My airt's far the hills rin weet —  
Hame-drawn, hame-drauchtit



Muick i' the Mither Tongue

The skies drift doon — a dreepin blur  
That maks o Ben an brae a shroud.  
As if grown weary o the lan,  
The mountain coories i' the cloud

An naething steers within this warld  
O stormy lift, an troubled tarn,  
Bit drooned reflection o the hills  
As lang as Time, as bricht as starn.

In ilkie crag's a favoured face,  
In ilkie burn's a frien,  
An as the days we've bin apairt  
Are as they'd niver been.

agar in Autumn

D'ye see yon lowrin Ben  
Broon as the brackened grun,  
Lordin the hale o the glen,  
Darklin oot the sun?

Its burns come whummlin doon,  
Croonin their ain lament,  
Wheepin their wee bit tune  
Wi the gowd o the gloamin in't.

Gaither its scent tae yer hairt,  
Man, fur yer oor is short:  
A wearisome road is thine,  
Wi little tae show for't.

Darrarie...Burn of the Stunning Noise, Glen Muick

Slaverin, slubberin, gibberin, gabberin,  
Roon wi a wallop, a slyter, a sweel,  
Yonder's the burn, in its bairnhood, it's blabberin

Heich-lowpin puddock, wi virr in its heel!  
Bellied an dauchlin, it's tashed an it's trauchlin,  
Beached in a bog, like a Biblical whale;  
Hashin an dashin, it's up an it's clashin,  
Skelpit an skytin, like chaff frae the flail.  
Come the fey nicht, fin the gloamin is glysterie,  
Lang as a note on a tenuous string;  
Black as a swan o immaculate mystery.  
Doon rowes the burn, on a sang an a wing.  
Dulcet as Chopin, Menuhin, Beethoven,  
Jinkie's Stravinsky, as breengin as Bach.  
Syne, wid I bide b' it, thirled an tied tae it,  
Drink o its music a strang willie-waucht!

an-t-Sneachda...The Snowy Burn, Glen Muick

Cauld as the cawin o a craw,  
Deid-thraa o Sorra...Winter's loun  
Lays on its broo, the skirps o snaw,  
Black widow-weeds, its gown.

In Spring, it's lowpin like a bawd,  
Giddy an gypit; deil-may-care;  
As faint an fickle as a jaad,  
The ice bree in its hair.

A peesie in the Simmer sun,  
It's rinnin feart, a brukken wing,  
Sma boukit, coorin near the grun,  
The licht amang the ling.

In Autumn, it's a lanely tune,  
The gangrel, wi the cripple fit.  
Its sang, an ay-returnin croon,  
An as my thocht taen up wi it.

\*(There is a Gaelic lullaby entitled 'Dream Angus', where  
carrier is represented as an old cripple man of the moors.)

Salmon

Oh tae be a salmon, comin skelpin doon the Dee!  
Simmer scalin ower ma tail,  
Lowpin through the linns,  
Wummlin ower the rapids, i' the cauld, snaw bree,  
An jinkin as the fishers wi ma fins.

I widna dauchle b' the banks,  
Hob-nobbin wi the glegs,  
Or coorie i' the puils abeen Braemar  
I'd come breengin up oot-ower the whins  
Like forty thoosan flegs;  
Jist a skeely, skyty limmer,  
Wi the shimmer o a star!

Syne, I'd turn aroon an up again  
(I canna bide awa frae the bonnie wafter  
Birlin neth ma wame)

A salmon in its element, the heather an the faem,  
A contermashious salmon winnin hame.

## Images

There's eloquence in watter,  
The swack-tongued element... A gushin Babylon,  
Screivin lang langamachies in puils

There's danger in keekin.  
Frae a heich altar  
The water thunners doon a sermon.  
Bubbles are spectacted bodies, y,  
Thoombin a livin buik.

Naethin' hauds the waves, Nae tether nur crook;  
Wild horses, brakkin the halter.  
A greetin knight lies ferfochen  
On the burn's fleer,  
Droonin an auld disgrace.  
His shield's his bier:  
See it shine, grey on broon!

There's a bronze necklet happen his face;  
An eel bindin his croon.

### Journey

A caller skelp o stane an storm,  
Braeriach's sides are tempest-torn;  
An in yon weety, derksome wame,  
Whaur win is ice an sun's a flame,  
The birlin Dee is born.

A sna-brig haps her growin tide, -  
Till, breengin up wi kittled pride,  
She's heelstergowdie ower a crag!  
A frichtsomen drap — this wafter-hag  
Cowps doon a corrie's bride.

Three lochs, disjaskit, dreich as dule,  
She lies neth blearie Cairn Toul,  
Till, necklet o the Norlan bree  
She's glintin ower the Chest o Dee  
A jimp an jibblin jewel.

Syne reemin on intil the linn,  
Whaur warrior crags rise sterk abune,  
An at their foun, an in aneth  
Wi feint the whisper o a braith  
O win, aa's dreepin, deep as daith,  
As seenister as sin.

Ayont the gallows tree o Mar  
She's lowsed an liltin fur Braemar  
An ilkie burn, on ilkie Ben,  
Will jink its cloudy, Heilan den  
Tae jine her near an far.

Wi widded hills at ilkie gait  
An salmon slidderin doon the spate,  
She wallops neth a winsome brig,  
Her waves, wud meers afore a gig,  
Lowp up in touslie fete.

Atap her faem the kelpies ride,  
The deer an eaglet rin astride  
Till, pitten on a hamely gown,  
She weary-wins a muckle toun  
An, fair ferfochen, saddles doon  
Tae coost her brows aside.

trie's Men

[for Captain A.A.C. Farquharson, Invercauld

As I cam doon the Pinkie Brae  
An ben the rodden den,  
I thocht I heard the trampin  
O' Monaltrie's Heilanmen...

'Twis jist the rattle o the breem,  
The reeshle o the whin,  
Yet I'd sweir I felt their passin,  
In the pairtin o the win.

A yalla yeitie bobbit oot  
An wheeplit ower the lan,  
The Crag o Darroch whispered,  
'Tis the bonnie Baron Ban! '

The snaw lay safe on Beinn a Bhuid  
Fin he cried oot the clan,  
Bit fa wid spurn the fife cockade  
An caa himsel a man?

Ballochbuie, Lui, Dui,  
B' the Gallows tree o Mar,  
Men o Gairn, an Muick, an Tullich,  
Aa the wylins o Cromar,  
Laid by the coulter an the crook,  
An took the road tae war.

Then 'twis bracken at the guns,  
The bravest bore the cross,  
Oh cry aloud the/coronach,

For bitter wis wir loss!  
The floer o Monaltrie's men  
Lie beddit in the moss.

An helpless wis the hameless faun  
That felt the frost o fear;  
An reekin cruel, the bluidy haun  
That slew the rinnin deer.

The Shiels are teem ower Shenval,  
The braes are bare on Glack,  
A yalla yeitie piped them oot —  
A corbie played them back.

verie

[for Dr. Cuthbert Graham]

Heich upon muirlan girse they lie,  
A linkit chine o fitenin stanes  
Aybydan neth a shiftin sky;  
Weird as a boorichie o banes.

The bluebells ring the girssy puil,  
The nichts a-dirl wi whaup an gull  
Lair'd on the seely braes o Coull,  
The castle waa — a sichtless skull —  
Stauns open, nyaakit, tae the whin,  
The clash o day draps till a lull,  
The yalla ragwirt tholes the win,  
Rig-widdie Davan's dreich an dull.

Whaur sunlicht slips ahin the east  
Stauns Morven, lichtit like a lowe,  
Ower gentle Gellan, munelicht's reist,  
The chill o gloamin cweels the howe.

I've seen the mist, unhaily wraith,  
Ging jinkin Tomnaverie roon,  
Fleerichan, eildrich ower the heath,  
A will o wicked frae the tomb.

Whaun hoodies howl an hoolets mane,  
Let them step blythely there wha may,  
I'd leave yon sleepers weel alane —  
Unyirdly fowk o yesterday.

r Scot

I live,  
Anely as pairt o this braid Ian,  
This knottit neive o cliff an furlin gull  
Staunin atween the neep parks an the sea.

I luik,  
Anely as pairt o the raven lift,  
Gadhelic widden-dreme,  
O a tummelt starn,  
Washed in on a snell, cauld ocean,  
Fashed wi fish, a plethora o storm.

I am becam  
A beaker o monie ferlies.  
Born as teem's the grave,  
I hae grown tae a wummin's skin,  
A cave o images,  
A chalice o dark bog.

Ingaitherer o stane an the aybydan win;  
I am thirled tae the North.

I wad be  
Gleg as a gad.  
I wad stretch me, simmer-swift,  
As a rinnin deer  
Fetchin a scoop o wirds,  
Fillin wi praise,  
The fairm-howes lyin near  
Close us a pulse.

Sae, tae that en, I wad bend  
My hunter's wing frae the lanely corrie,

Hover abeen the yird, the cloud, the faem —  
The mirl o the yet-tae-cam  
An the aa-that's-gaen...  
Bedded wi'in ma grain  
Is the teuchit's wheep,  
The hoodie's eerie mane,  
An in ma bluid,  
The green, primordial dulse.

Time.1914-1918

[For Private William Middleton, Gellan, Coull]

I'm telt ye threw yer watch  
Ootower the kirk. The hinmaist  
Thing ye did on the wye tae war.  
Prood o yon time-piece,  
Feart it wad be bladdit.

Did it stop fin it struck the grun?  
Yer first watch, Willie, an yer last;  
Flung frae ye like yer bairnhood,  
In the drapt fit o the mairch past.

Fairm-sodjer-bairn,  
In the ower-big uniform  
(Onythin' dis tae dee in)  
Someither-body merriet yer quine,  
As the war tae en' as wars  
Gaed mairchin ooto mine,  
Wi nae hugger-muggery;  
The loon fa tint his watch,  
Wis blawn tae buggery.

Gaitherin, Birse

Hill-girt; the storm's stramash:  
A hoolet's myowt. The skelp o rain  
Dancin a hoolichan on the fairm pane.

Kerfuffled bed claes, bairns whisperin:



'Gin the morn's fine, we gaiter peat.'  
Tongues quate, een steeked,  
Twa corbies drappin intil sleep.

Sheets wallop on the line;  
The yalla cream  
Sweels ower parridge bowls  
O yoamin steam.  
The kitchie birrs wi steer,  
I shak a blearie heid,  
A latchy fit, jeels on the lino fleer.

Amber hinney's clapped on buttered breid,  
Bowf-bowfin rins the tyke,  
A hotterin tractor dauchles b' the dyke  
Set fur a track as auld's the hills o Birse  
Far hardy heather connachs dweeble girse.

A weel stocked library,  
The peats are haundit doon,  
Sun-biggitt histories  
O tangy, leather'd, broon  
Commas o heather reet on ilkie page,  
A grummlin grouse gaes gallivantin roon  
Pluffin his wings wi rage.

Threidbare in patches,  
The braidclaith o the hill.  
We cairry, cairt, an stack,  
Liftin the warmth in swatches  
Frae her back.

Hyne an awa the slender lum-rik risin,  
The fairm-fire waitin on the reid horizon.

Twa Views o Glen Gairn

Licht o Love

'A fleerich o moosies' backs are the knowes o Mar,  
Fleein the raven's wing o Lochnagar.'

'Oh, bit yer wrang; it's the airm o the muckle Ben,  
The shepherd o hind an hare, takkin care o its ain.'

'The mist faas grey, on the hingin heid o Gairn,  
The win's as wae as the greet o a grievin bairn.'

'Yon's bit the croon that the gloamin gies the nicht;  
A gangrel, cooryin doon, wi'ts plaid grippit ticht.'

'The aik, wi its torn nails, wad teir the lift...  
Feart am I i' the wid an I fain wad shift.'

'Bide still! Bide still!  
It's nocht bit the antlered stag, wha means nae ill.'

'At ilkie turn there's derk an the chunnerin cauld;  
A hoodie's hump is the burn, an the birk hings bauld...'

'Oh, bit the drift is the breist o a snaw-fite dove,  
Fur aathing's braw fin it's seen wi the licht o love.'

Gairn from Gairnshiel

A bummer, pollen-pugglit wi delicht,  
I winged amang the heather o Glen Gairn:  
A life ago, fin as the world wis new,  
Sae short a flicht, the dauchlin o a bairn!

The posie held a sting; I didna ken,  
For wint o its perfume, that I wad dwine.  
I plundered as the hinney frae its hairt;  
Lang-pairtit noo, Glen Gairn plunders mine.

Blate

The gangrel kittlin's feart tae raxx an purr  
In perfect warmth afore the forkit flame  
An sae bides ootlinned-neuked, bedraiggled fur,  
Nur winna steer the reid hearth-heat tae claim.

The table's laden — yet I daurna dine.  
I am the tod wha's niver tasted bluid;  
He is the breid o plenty, winted wine.  
Tho I be famishin, I mauna feed.

Oh gin he war a lintie, I the cloud,  
I wad enfold him an nae think it sin!  
War he a stane I'd brook him lang an loud,  
Braver nur ony linn.

Gin he war bracken I wad be the snake,  
His ilkie road my glimmerin coils wad gang.  
For, as the meen is nocht wi'oot the nicht,  
There's nae the woman born bit covets man.

I keep my wheesht, a tongue o jyled pearl  
Snibbed in a shell, far frae the licht o day.  
A frostit snawdrop, teetin ower the warld,  
A Norlan' Spring that Winter's keepit blae.

Nae hinney in my hairt — a herriet byke  
I wish I hadna felt, nur thocht, nur seen.  
I wish the corbies, crawin ben the dyke  
Hid pyked his verra image frae ma een!

I am a silent sang wha's tint its tune;  
I am the burn that whummles derk an quate;  
I am the bud that niver braks in bloom,  
An ay the skirlin curlew mocks, `Ower blate.'

#### Slichtit Lassie's Sang

Hard an sudden, as the huntsman's shot  
Sinks i' the saftness o the snawy dove,  
Deep as the dirk on its derk business quests,  
I' the gralloch o the stag,  
Sae wad I loue ye, love.

I'd mak my skin as firm's a coral bed  
Whaur on fite flesh ye'd slip like ony eel,

I'd be the sea anemone, wha's poised  
Tae clook, an claw, an steal  
The smaaest pleisur, frae the gangrel faem.  
Till Lang an slow the shuddrin tide draws back  
A sated eagle, gluttet o her prey,  
Syne wad my talons slack.

I'd be the yird, an ye wad be the tree,  
Sae straucht an siccar, raxxin fur the lift.  
The cloud may haud the leaf — an I'd agree  
Tae grip the reet, sae ticht ye'd niver shift.

Gin thochts be lochan's waves, it's hairmless thinkin  
The watter seeks the san, an haps it roon.  
The fish may loup the linn, as swack as jinkin,  
An niver droon.

Bit ay I wauken, like a hungry ghaist  
Wha's traivelled ower a brae o barren stane,  
Kent anely consummation o the mist,  
Swickit o warmth, ma bonnie lover gaen.

ny

My bairns walk blythely on the open muir —  
Their path is straucht an sunny. Mine is blae.  
They min rejoicin; I maun hirple, sweir,  
I fear the howes o derksome Destiny.

She sits an spins the thrums an threids o life —  
I saw her likeness aince — the bairns saw nocht.  
I saw her twice — a drumly carlin wife.  
I spukk wi Fate — a fykey favour socht.

'The heichest hope I haud, I'll pledge tae thee  
This beatin hairt, an ilkie thocht sae sweet  
If ye, in yer omnipotence, wid 'gree  
Tae guard an guide my littlins' gangrel feet.'

Her pleated hair hung lang, a hingin noose,  
Her heid, turned slowly roon, wis faceless, boss:

'Fit guid's yer hope tae me? I'm sittin crouse,  
Yer puny dwaums are anely eeseless dross,  
Yer sweetest thocht is soored, an tribble-torn,  
Wi aisse I smored yon beatin hairt langsyne.  
I mak or mar ilk mortal thing that's born —  
Ye gomeril — ye canna pledge fit's mine! '

g in Cromar

Spring in Cromar is an open yett,  
Wi the heich rigs turned an black,  
Whaur the creepie-crawlle tractor climms  
Frae the ploo-cuts at its back.

The meltin muir is rinnin weet,  
A hare in an ermine coat,  
An Lochnagar, thro' the pearlin sleet,  
Is the glimsk o a winter stoat.

The puddock's eggs are preen-prick-sma  
An deid-wid-dry's the breem,  
Whaur the corbies craw b' the peat-reet-wa,  
Is the Tod wi the sleekit een.

The kinnel't whin is a coorse carlin  
Wi her lang hair flamin reid,  
An the racin rick, that's furlin thick,  
Is the mane o her elfin steed.

Spring in Cromar — snaw, sun, an rain,  
It's the sweet in the wid-wasp's byke,  
For there's aye a sting in a Nor' East Spring,  
Wild cat, wi its teeth bared fite!

's End

The bonnie birds are winged an gaen,  
Yowes hug the dykes like driven sna:  
The anely cry that rings the rigs,  
The brukken caa'in o the craw.

An cauldly cruel's the win that cuts  
The birks sae barely dreepin.  
Its wail's as waesome as a wake,  
As if the Ian itsel wis greetin.  
A door on creakin hinges set,  
The auld an New Year's meetin.

Syne simmer days an simmer thochts  
Are deid leaves blawn an dwined,  
As Life an Daith, thimsels they mirl,  
Foriver intertwined.  
Future's unkent; the Past is past;  
Bit sairly present till the mind.

Like Birth itsel we canna tell  
If hairst will follow breirin,  
The winter smore that furls the door  
Is fite as hope, as dark as leavin.  
The young fowk blythely forrit step,  
The auld anes, latchy, grievin.

Step, by Tullich, overlooking the Coyles

There's nae a finer sicht in the world:  
Than the last step nearest hame.  
There's nae a burn, bit I ken its turn  
An its roarin road's my ain.

Quate they lie neth the shiftin sky,  
Yon hills i' the smirry rain,  
Like a lad cast aff — wi the last, lang lauch,  
Ye've thocht on jist the same.

They'll greet ye ay, in a mither's wye,  
Like a prodigal bairn she's tint,  
For ilkie stane cries sair as pain:  
'Did niver ye feel wir wint? '

An yon's the Ben that the Dee-fowk ken,  
The star on the evenin's croon,  
A Lord o War, it's Lochnagar, Wha dings as ithers doon!

Oh wait, wait, wait, fur I'm comin yet —  
An fain wid I rest ma ee,  
Far the watters cowp, like a salmon's lowp,  
In the breist o the birlin Dee.

There's nae a finer sicht in the warld,  
Far anely the sib may sit,  
Than the last step hame  
An the place yer ain,  
The balm fur a weary fit!

### Bonnie Banks o Dee

Tho Springtime gars the sna-bree rin  
An sweet's the day, wi blossom bricht,  
Oh yatterin peesie haud yer wheesht,  
For as tae me is constant nicht.

Tho simmer turn the barley broon,  
The sonsie heids I canna see,  
For, thinkin on the braes o hame,  
The brimmin tearlicht blins the ee.

Oh Autumn, hap yer winsome face,  
An dinna shine yer favours here,  
Till my fit's firm upon the heath,  
Aa's waesome, dreich an drear.

The Shiftin Seasons are as ain,  
Cauld Winter iver follows me,  
Fur Simmer is the ae dear place,  
The bonnie banks o Dee.

### Back o Beyond, Linn o Quoich

Fit div ye dae at the Back o Beyond?  
'Twid tak me a year tae tell!  
As weel coont gowd in a goblin's crock  
Or steek the sea-in a shell.

Ye may lizard-lie on a lazy rock,  
A sprig o an Alan Breck,  
Cockin a snoot at the frichtit grouse,  
That cries: 'Go beck, go beck! '

Columbus-lan', it's a manless map  
Wi crannies he'd niver ken,  
Fur Clunie's cave is the buzzard's nest,  
Rob Roy's in the fox's den.

In Crusoe creek ye may trap the troot,  
As swippert's a broon Mohican,  
Dook at dawn far the muir-moth dips,  
A dusky-skinned Tahitan:  
Rule the heath as a cateran chief,  
Far the trackless stag's a fleetin.

The tap-sail o a rodden branch,  
A craw's-nest bird on the keek,  
Ye're spyin the Norsemen, horned and fierce,  
A flock o the black-faced sheep.

Fit div ye dae at the Back o Beyond  
Far nocht bit the salmon go?  
Fit div ye dae at the Back o Beyond?  
Fit div ye nae dae, though!

ter Bairnhood

Rage they did till their tongues were lair -  
Faith — nettle's a gey short sting.  
A skelpit dowp an a grumphin glower,  
Ne'er clippit a lintie's wing.

I niver cared, dell nur docken,  
They nicht grummel, an curse, an bann,  
Fur I'd jeloused far the kelpie hides,  
Far the peesie wheeps, an the bandie bides,  
An the silken birk in the gloamin glides,  
An the rabbit roadies gang.



For ilkie teir on a torn frock  
Wis a tree I'd shinned alang...  
'Twis a stand o velvet trumpeters,  
The foxgloves played me a sang.  
Them an a choir o bluebells  
That keepit me oot sae lang.

An aabody kens that the reidest rasps  
Are clasped in the sherpest thorn,  
Far the daddylanglegs cried me in —  
His wyte that ma claes wis torn.

The pirlid hose, an the scrattit legs?  
'Twis heather that caad them dane,  
'Twis birk an win' on a body's skin  
(For aabody kens that a bairn maun climm)  
That bladdit ma Sabbath sheen.

I'd try the patience o Job, says you,  
Yer wishin I'd niver bin born...  
I'll catch ye a salmon —wait an see  
The bosker o beezers lowpin the Dee,  
Jist dicht the froun far the smile sud be,  
I'll be aabody's frien the morn!

r

Raither than rainin cats an dug,  
Whit if it rained doon fowk insteid?  
Dreichdoms o dominies;  
Lochans o artists;  
Puddles o Civil Servants  
Pitterin ower yer held?  
A muckle, great, clorty sea;  
O fractious, bestial, battlin,  
Scunnerin, dreepin humanity?

Wid it gar ye grue,  
If dribblin doon yer flue  
Wis a clash o cooncillors,  
Argyin as nicht through?

Wid ye bile yer tea  
Wi a gang o swytin roaders  
Haived in the bree?

Nae John the Baptist's heid on a platter—  
The hale jing-bang o human matter,  
Nyitter-nyatterin...claik an clatter,  
Ye'd learn tae appreciate  
Guid clean wafter!

Poacher

The meen wis a scythe new-sherpened,  
The burn wis a feerin black;  
The poacher socht him a harvest,  
Whaur the rinnin waves lie slack.

The meen played tig wi the gloamin,  
Ben hidey-holes o pine,  
Whaur currents gleam, in a coil o cream,  
Coy as a coortit quine.

There, where the waves are mirkest,  
The burn is a kelpie's curse;  
The puil is a Baron robber,  
Salmon wechtin his purse.  
The poacher cast the snigger  
Tae the foun o the kelpie's den,  
Sliddery, sliddery, ower the bank,  
Haulin the harvest hame.

Wist the meen that gart him turn?  
She wis blae as a beggared bride,  
Half ower, like a salmon lowpin,  
Wi a hook in her tilted side...  
Turn, an hyter, an tummel,  
Tummel an fa, an drap,  
Wi nane tae hinner or help him,  
Whaur the hungry wafters lap

Oh watter's a slokin pleisur,  
The half o a trystin kiss  
Wi the hale o a wummin's venom,  
Gin ye haunle it amiss.

Fowk cried his name b' the corrie,  
The corrie cried it back,  
An the lang-airmed weepin willow,  
Loot doon her airms an grat.

Bit the watter reeshled rarely,  
Anointin his sightless een;  
Pleased wi its new-won ferlie,  
A prize fur the salmon queen.

it Doon

Granfaither. Neat-caimbed mowser.  
Fair the swell In yer Masonic apron. I've bin telt,  
Fin ye gaed on the spree,  
The anely thing left staunin wis the shelt.

Aa weemin saften till a handsome body,  
Menfowk respeck a skeely judge o cuddy.  
Ye'd a big funeral — weel attended.

I didna ken ye? Tcyauch! I ken ye weel.  
Yer nae as deid's they think. Real  
Short o pech, bit ay the braith tae blether  
Wi a cronie...sae the stories ging.  
Ay likit a lang tether  
An man, bit ye cud sing!

Fate, like a quine, wis quanter,  
Swallin the pibroch,  
Grippt the win i the chanter,  
Blessed ye wi bairns — Nae twa-three, bit a dizzen.  
Ye took it kindly, Ane fur ilkie sizzen,  
Sae Fate withheld yer health  
An gin ye hinna that, Then fit price wealth?

Ye've a guid view o the cricket, an the Games,  
Doon far yer lyin noo.  
I'll sweir it warms yer banes  
Tae hear the tink, up till the same high jinks —  
Fair's fair — they niver gaed ye tribble,  
Grazed their horse on yer girse,  
Yer braid neive kept them civil.

Twa-three generations on  
(Lang rin the reets o bluid)  
Fin tint o braith, I aften bann yer name,  
Syne stop. I've bairns o my ain  
Ane's scarce o pech hersel. Ae day  
She'll winner...wist my wyte?  
Fa did ye blame?

## Games

Noo — nae anither hurl on yon,  
I'm tellin ye — ca-cannie,  
Ye'd think the siller grew on trees!  
Oh — there's thon affa mannie;  
It's 'Ye'll dae this, ' an 'Yell dae yon':  
(He's jist a perfeck scunner,  
A sax month on the commattee  
It seems mair like a hunner!)

Fa's thon, that's drapt the caber noo?  
Yon drochle o a chiel?  
He's nae frae hereabouts ye say...  
By God, it's jist as weel!

Mebbe McFadden's gaun aboot —  
I mine on him, langsyne,  
As weel set up a brosie lad  
As iver graced Abyne.  
It's watter doon the burn, that aince,  
His name wis linked wi mine.

Yons niver him!

Oh, damn the bit!  
His bunnet's aa skweejee...  
His sgian-dubh is aa askew,  
An loshty, sae is he!  
Aathing considered,  
Lord be thanked,  
He didna mairry me.

### Twa Chiels

Tam luiked at Chae, an saw a gype...  
Bit Jock said, 'Na — he's shy,  
He's eeseless, harmless, scuttery,  
Bit och, it's jist his wye.'

Jean luiked at Chae, an thocht him dreich,  
Nae tuned fur love's sonatas,  
Bit Janet, wi a soundin hairt,  
Thocht Chae the cat's pyjamas!

His mither, wi a mither's ee,  
Thocht Chae her pride an glory.  
(I've heard it said the meenister  
Wid tell anither story...)

Bit Chae's jist Chae, ye read the buik  
An niver heed the bindin:  
An fit's the soup wi'oot the spice?  
I tak fowk as I find them!

### Self-Made Man

Sklaik held that he'd a ferret's sense,  
Fur bargains at a roup;  
He'd lined his nest at fowk's expense,  
A creel that wadna cowp.

Auld-farrant, eident, thrifty, smairt,

He'd then the horseman's wird,  
He'd kittled deems as easy  
As he'd coortit gowd frae yird.

A self-made man, he laced the buits  
That nane war fit tae tie,  
Fur ay there's mair tae winnin on  
Than rainbows i' the sky.

Breeks waurna bettered, wis his spik,  
B' sittin on their dowp.  
He weel deserves the siller speen  
Fa supped the sowen's stoup!

Will

Half-seas-ower wis his hoose  
Like a dleep on the drap,  
A tummelt-doon dyke  
Wi a lum at its tap.

There wis stew on the mantlepice  
Strae on the rug  
An the lino wis near as moth-etten's the dug.

Its maister, auld Will, hid the face o a rat  
His jaiket wis chattered — as mildew'd the mat —  
Ye kent whaur ye stude, in the hairt o the man,  
B' the size o yer glaiss, as he poored oot a dram.

If the biggin wis bauchelt, the dug it wis waur,  
Cross-eed wi a coat that wis taigit wi glaur  
It fleched, an it boasted, an thumpit its tail,  
Faith — there wisna wan teeth in its heid that wis hale!

There wis jist the ae thing drave the dug frae its seat,  
The smaaest suspicion a bikk wis in heat.  
It took efter its maister — auld Will, in his prime,  
Gaed heels-ower tip at the thocht o a quine.  
He'd beeriet twa wives — an it micht hae bin richt,  
In his hay-day, he boasted, he ne'er missed a nicht!

Frae the time that their nuptials wis chimed on the steeple,  
He'd keepit them happy's a blaik amang treacle.  
Dug, maister, an hoose,  
Cockin squar till the weather,  
Three auld farrant cronies  
Gaun doonhill thegither.

### Cuckoo Clock

Miss Hardie grippit inno a flooery peenie,  
The stoor o her chalk gaun screichin in pluffs o virr,  
Wi the chuffie-cheeks o a post-war Mussolini,  
Kept 40 bairns in a state o perpetual birr.

A gran an mighty thing is education;  
It dings the uppity doon tae taste the dung,  
Apocryphal whiff o ink an determination;  
Miss Hardie gart ye listen, an haud yer tongue.

A cuckoo clock that bedd on the waa as simmer,  
Her voice as tart's a rodden, as soor's a plum,  
Her wurd wis jobby — the stang o a big heid-bummer,  
She beetled awa frae dawn tae Kingdom come.

The globe furls on — bit Miss Hardie's stoppit birlin:  
The brukken cuckoo clock wis a lanely gowk  
Fa kent ae note, an that note gruff an gurlin,  
An niver learned tae open her hairt tae fowk.  
David3001

### A Dauner Ben Eden

#### Tree o Life

Through sna an sun the spurgies cheep.  
Hame-haudin birds their flicht is sma  
An ay a cheery ootluik keep,  
Their plain concerns a watergaw.

Wing heicher up the Tree o Life

The corbie, wi far-seein een,  
Whas hams are honed — a kittle knife,  
Craws on the derk side o the meen.

The spurgie's thochts are brisk an wee,  
Wi as its tribe in unison:  
The corbie, wi its bitter dree,  
Micht haud sic thochts a benison.

## Creation

Gin God hid been a scientist  
Whit wid ye be? Whit wid ye be?  
A tippeny toot o a roosty can,  
Sib tae the bomb, an the fryin pan,  
Gin God hid been a scientist  
Steerin the cosmic bree.

Bit yer bluid's a linn,  
An yer moo's the dew.  
Wi a heid whaur thochts,  
Like the troots, sweem through.

Yer hairt's a loch, an yer soul's the starns,  
Ye've grace, an symmetry, tapped wi harns.  
Sae aren't ye gled, frae the verra start,  
God, the Creator, wis guid at Art?

n

Fin asked, fit is a yeitie?  
Ane wid describe its class, t'ither, its mak  
Its station in the hierarchy o birds,  
Its dietary fads, an reproduction.

Nae me; a yalla yeitie's soun,  
A simmer cheepin in the lug  
That connachs wirds.

An fit's a larick wid?



A widsmán widna dauchle in the tellin...  
Timmer, rosit, an trunk, A quick faa, a keen aix,  
A pun in the pooch, fur fellin.

Nae tae me — a wid's a hantle mair:  
A green win — a reeshle i' the air,  
A lane stag, bellin...

Sae gin ye'd speir,  
Fit think I o this body, or anither,  
I canna weel conceive an answer  
B' the wirkins o the mind,  
Een may deceive.  
The hawk, sae spruce, refined,  
Is bred tae reive  
An sae is aften sit, tae humankind.

•  
I ken fowk as the strummin o a harp,  
They either strik accord or strik a sharp!

tergowdie

[Suggested by 'The Third Day of Creation' the closed wings of The Garden of Earthly Delights triptych, by Hieronymus Bosch.]

On the heidy bield o the hill,  
Sib tae the glaissy starns,  
Catchin their shine in yer haun  
(Thon brukken spars o Infinity)  
Ye staun, fishin the lift  
For the eident meen:  
An ant, assumin a mantle o micht,  
Lochans blink, cats' een In the windy derk,  
An Icarus-thocht taks flicht;  
The mineer o the warld  
Seen frae the faddomless void,  
O near-as-can-be's-Eternity  
Is Lilliput, gawpin at Gulliver,  
A giant braith  
In a fug o littleness.  
Whaur aa's uncertainty  
An Time is a sang

In the throat o the corrie's yawnin.

Man, ye cud rowe hale knowes,  
Like bools,  
Ding the sun frae the clouds,  
A stottin baa  
In heelstergowdie Ian'.

Far, far, doon  
Daith watches cannily.  
I maun creep back,  
Clay-fittit, intil the cauld yird.  
In the swaith o the lad  
Wi the hoary powe,  
The sickle smile,  
An the noiseless wurd.

Alpha an Omega

till the Unborn Bairn

Ye slippit aneth ma breist,  
Murmerin thrum o life,  
Soomin in secret wafter  
Kittle an blythe.

I maun cairry an keep ye,  
Bairn i' the bane,  
Trimmlin sap i' the leaf,  
Wecht i' the wame.

Ye are the lichtenin faa,  
Stag-bolt deep i' the derk;  
The lowe that ma laddie gaed me,  
The reid man-sperk.  
Ye are a lightsome creel,  
The pledge he canna brak,  
A brierin seed i' the dreel,  
He'll nae win back!

's Frien

Daith lowsed the snib on a baillie's yett,  
Stap-fu wi a rowth o gear;  
It's easy kent, b' the braisse name-plate,  
Adversity's ill-liked here.'

He'd puckles o calls tae mak yon day,  
Bit damned, wid the baillie dee!  
Did Daith nae ken he wis due at ten,  
Fur gowf, wi the commattee?

'Ye'll dee as yer telt fur aince, ' quo Daith  
Like a dentist pullin teeth.  
At ilkie rug in his lang black lug  
The baillie screiched oot 'Thief!

I've ten years owin me yet, ' he cried,  
'I've friens at the verra tap! '  
'An ye'll be needin them aa, ' quo Daith,  
An swallaed him, neck an crap.

Daith dimmed the stair o a gangrel chiel  
On neebourly terms wi wint,  
Wha's life wis bare as a tinker's pooch  
Wi the cauldribe win ahint. `

Yer welcome man, fur I've waited lang  
This day, an the hale year roon.'  
An Daith an the gangrel, linkin airms,  
Gaed whusslin through the toun.

[Fur William Blake]

Whaun day's a closin curtain,  
Sun's a slippin band o reid,  
Ilkie flooer's a snibbit petal,  
Ilkie bird's a happit heid,

Syne silence, in a stately gown,

Walks siller-grey on green,  
An will o wisps are gaitherin,  
The caunle-rikk o dream.

In sleep ye's walk a slender road,  
Whaur aathing tint, an tyned,  
May rise, the perfume o a rose,  
The ferlies o the mind.

An ye's may see a belted knight,  
A hawk upon his glove:  
The darg o day's a corbie cruel  
That dines foriver on the dove.

A road tae traivel at yer will,  
A Jacob's laidder far an fey,  
Whaur silken spirits cast aside  
The cloots o puir mortality.

A bonnie road, an elfin road,  
That rins frae gloam till dawn,  
A watergaw across the nicht,  
The gledsome lan o dwaum.

ix

A misanthropic meenister. A black shag.  
His pulpit-pouer bigged heich  
On a Satanic crag.

I coored frae his gown that flapped,  
Wide as the wings o Hell,  
A pinioned, fledglin bairn.

Bumbazed, on penitent pews, His God-forsaken brood  
War gart tae learn,  
That Art's the Divil's lure,  
That aathin blythe an bonnie wis impure:

He gaed us guilt fur praise.  
His seenistry o sermons war drooned spires,

That wid impale me yet, infernal ministry!  
A skeletal-cloak o hatefu Lazarus,  
Grave-guff, that's ill tae lay  
Yon cruel, nerra creed.  
Wersh baptism, whar ilkie fat misdeed  
Wis indexed, coonted, wyed.

A pitiless faith,  
I weir the scrats o't yet,  
The hett scauld o its skaith.

The early fowk, wha luiked oot-ower this Ian,  
Held aa the warld a mervel.  
Livin seed, a blessin,  
Loued the sun  
An cast nae stane upon their brither man.  
Gled, in their Celtic Avalon.

I flap ma wings, a latchy Phoenix,  
Rise frae the aisse o kirk-inflicted Purgatory,  
Graceless bit gratefu,  
In a re-birth, sairly won,  
Freed frae the caliboose;  
The spectral girn o Calvin's charnel-hoose!

asmagoria [for sall]

The ghaistly dancers starred abeen  
The crescent o the sickle meen,  
Slide sounless roun a seamless cave,  
Swingin their lanterns ower the lave.

Flickerin patterns on a waa,  
Ilk solitary, birlin baa,  
The Nocturne-spheres glide silently,  
A Life-in-Daith periphery.

Thon chalk-faced pierrots, aybydan,  
Maun furl the wheel they hae bin set;  
Sae ilkie microcosmic man,  
Sma star, does ape the heavens yet.

Betimes we meet, betimes we pairt,  
Phantasmagoria o bluid;  
Ilk individual mind an hairt,  
Grows separately, as a reed  
That makks a music o the air,  
Narcissus-like, an ay maun fear  
The sangless win, ascendent stair,  
The void o unity draw near;  
An winna ain the river's course,  
Rins iver sweetest at its source.

'Le Roman Inacheve', Love which is not a word, by Louis Aragon [Freely reset in Scots]. Fur Rene Magritte.

Ye fan me, like a stane scauned frae the shore,  
Like a tint, fremmit ferlie, o unkent design,  
Like dulse on a sextent, scaled frae the tide,  
Like the haar at the windae; sikkin inbye  
A day efter the circus, 'mang the filed soss o the fete,  
A gangrel, wi nae ticket, on the railroad,  
A burn on the grun, ootlined b' aa,  
A widlan craitur, caughted in the car's heidlichts,  
Like a nicht watchie, traivellin hame in a blae foreneen,  
Like a dwaum in the derk jyle-gloam,  
Like a fleggit birdie, snibbit in a hoose,  
Like the reid mark o a ring, on the finger o an affcast lover,  
A connached car, in the mids o naewye.  
Like a letter, chittered, an coost tae the cassie's win's,  
Like gear, doonpitten in transit, on a station,  
Like a door in the hairt, like a tree whaur the lichtenin's fa'n,  
A stane in a ditch, markin a thing lang-gaen,  
Like the eeseless toot o a boatie, hyne oot at sea,  
Like the scrat o a knife, lang efter, in the flesh,  
Like a shelt, tint, suppin wafter frae an orra puil,  
Like a bowster, kerfuffed wi a nightmare dwaum,  
Like a back-spik tae the sun, wi the stew in yer een,  
Like risin birsse, ay kennin that naething cheenges aneth the lift,  
Ye fan me in the nicht, like a tint wird,  
Like a tink wha's cooried doon in an oot-hoose,  
Like a tyke weirin a collar wi anither's name on't,

A chiel o yesterday fu' o soun an spit.

Sheena Blackhall

# Hanging Out In A High Rise

Fly-by-nights hang out their smalls in the clouds  
Socks and vests, wallop on high rise verandas  
Interrupting the wind on its legitimate business

An unidentified bird, most possibly alien,  
Hops above a dog three storeys high

The bird has questions which the dog can't answer.  
Are there provisions in place for resettling birds?  
The day's so large that even the gulls are lost

The bird's still full of questions. The dog has left.  
A rainbow pretends it's a bridge for sky to slide down  
Far below, stick children kick a dot.

Sheena Blackhall



# Hare

A child of the moon  
Sovereign lord in the revels of wood and glen  
Drinker of stars floating in midnight pools

Hare is happiest with fireflies, dewdrops  
An eye moist as a grape

He dances over the quilted fields  
Lithe as a porpoise, an acrobat of the grass

His whiskers are slim moustaches  
Dabbled with wet. Inscrutable hare  
Lord of the leap and the elusive air

Long shanked drummer of the brae  
He melts in diaphanous dawn

Jaunty, boisterous, voyager through the moss  
Always kicking away his trailing shadow

Up he springs wherever you least expect him  
A streak of fur, trying to be a cloud  
Fast as a hawk, a panther,  
Swallowing strides of corn in high delight

Alone, obscure, eccentric in his ways  
His ears drink down the sonorous notes of nightjars  
He's a four legged fable, untamed, in love with flight

He's the blur in the chiaroscuro of winter twigs  
Goblin swift, set fair for hidden pastures

A whim, a whimsy, he soars like a juggler's ball  
Up tilting nose savouring the blown dog rose  
Tasting the sacrament of silken grasses

He is the spirit of the corn, the backdrop of dreams  
His element is the wind that salts his tail

Haphazardly he lives by fits and starts  
And at the end, his requiem's  
Sky burial, the crows bring transformation

Ah, then the cricket will not wake him  
Clacking its castonets

Nor the owl with its harlequin face  
Hooting his funeral rites

Sheena Blackhall

# Hare's Foot: 5 Scots Poems

Sough o Yule

The sough o Yule is jeelin  
A braith o the mools

A yowl like nane ither,  
Dowie, drumly, dreich□  
The nyaakit banes o Hunger  
Cryin a coronach

Alang the cauld corp roads  
Win, in her Cailleach's weeds,  
Wheeps snaa like packs o wolves  
Oot frae forgotten wids

The communal skirl o Winter  
Drives aa inbye, haudin the hairth o hame

Kirkyaird

Aside the Deveron river  
Cercled bi parks an the soochin wheech o trees  
A lang, straicht wye gies access tae the kirk  
East o the graves a steep drap doon tae the watter  
Faas frae each dubby lair

Twa natural puils in the river  
Blissed bi St Wallach langsyne  
War veesited for sainin sairs

Gin yird pigs feast on the deid  
Nae doot sic unca breets  
Maun need their share

Bruce's Hairt

The Bruce's hairt's aneth a sanstane merker  
In the auncient chapter hoose o a ruined Abbey  
Melrose, first an last in the king's affections

The merker stane is cuttit stoot an strang  
Risin abune the grun richt stinch an bravely  
Carved wi a hairt run throwe bi a Scottish saltire

It weirs the leal wirds liftit frae Barbour's poem:  
'A noble hart may have nane ease. Gif freedom failye.'

ie

Cheep cheep spurgie, stottin ben the stoor  
Blythe baa o feathers, yer onythin bit dour

Cheep cheep spurgie, hardly ony left  
Far are ye gaun tae? The world wad be bereft  
O muckle simple pleisur, should ye aa flee awa  
Blythe baa o feathers, foo could we wave ta-ta?

eon

Boorich o prods, wee nut-broon bowster o preens  
Wi yer pyntit snoot ye hae the auld-farrant luik  
O a widlan fey. Yer wyme is happit wi fur  
It is stappit wi hornygollachs, wirms an emerteens  
Ye snocher an grunt like a grumphie  
5,000 spines on yer back raised up complete  
As Wallace's battle schiltrons  
Aa fur defence, wee feartie, jobby breet!

A craitur o the nicht,  
Hauf blin, recluse, wannerin the warld alane  
Ye coorie awa frae sicht  
A left-ower frae a mediaeval tapestry

Boorich o prods, sib tae the shrew,

Wids, nicht an meen, blent in yer pedigree  
Weel acquaint wi henwives, chermes,  
Rare herbs, tint wyes, the pysonous henbane

Sheena Blackhall

# Hare's Foot: 6 English Poems

## 1. We'll Meet Where there's no more sorrow

We'll meet where there's no more sorrow  
My child, where all dreams start  
In the fertile rigs of tomorrow  
Where the lark sings out its heart

We'll meet where there's no more sorrow  
Where the hound lies down with the hart  
And there's never a need to borrow  
For there's gold on the cloud's rampart

We'll meet where there's no more sorrow  
Atop of a hay wain cart  
Where dark deeds cannot follow  
Where wind makes the ripe sheaves part

We'll meet where there's no more sorrow  
Where the hound lies down with the hart  
And there's never a need to borrow  
For there's gold on the cloud's rampart

## Loch

The loch's a crucible  
Running down to the alchemy of water  
Melted frost-blood,  
Mercury shot with green.

Its one eye stares at the luminous sky  
A sky of sheer mountains,  
Wreathed by silken mists  
Threadbare and aged  
A faded tapestry of wolf hunts

An erne like a diviner's rod  
Quivers over the fossil-fathoms  
Its visionary eyes alight on a silver salmon

It aches to eat the knowledge of the fish's flesh  
In the Holy act of survival

st Board of Outer Mingossian: new destination added to catalogue: Earth, a small planet overrun by humanoids

- Press the triangle to hear this description in Earth Speak
- Note the wall fetish, designed to stop entire populations from leaving
- Half of the peoples can be distinguished by the pattern of their rib cages
- The other half appear to have no rib cages, but several chins and bellies
- This is a dying planet, heavily polluted. Make your visit brief
- Most of them use pacifiers, tablet shaped. They rub and talk to them.
- There are many 4-legged species. Some people eat them, others pet them
- Humans recycle their wee before they drink it
- Be alert in populated areas, some humanoids are violent, blow things up
- For total safety opt for a virtual visit

taste of Xmas

The turkey lies, a bulimic  
Whore in its loosened basque

With a faint crinkle  
A dry leaf drops from a rose

r wheel

In the hot Chinese noon  
The prayer wheel spun from my palm

A sparrow chirruped  
Near to the sandaled foot of a monk

Temple roofs rose red and gold,  
Like Imperial dragons  
Breathing clouds in the sky

t Master

Heels drum idly on the skin of the elephant's side  
Horn hard from strolling through bazaars  
In the crippling heat,

The elephant's hide is dusty,  
Grey, wrinkled as a walnut  
His cargo of Saga tourists  
Are grey and wrinkled too

This human load's alarmed by the froth of poverty  
Leaping in waves around the elephant's haunches  
A frenzy of marigold and poppy coloured saris  
Hung upon stick-thin arms like rainbows drying on twigs

Under the watchful gaze of the puppet master  
The girls are vending Kathputli, bright string puppets,  
Legless marionettes with heads of mango wood.  
The legs are lightweight pleated coloured skirts,  
Hands stuffed with cloth and cotton, yanked by an ancient tune

They dance to the tune of need, of desperation  
Always with strings attached

ach

24/7 they lived their illness out  
Or their illness outlived them

The nurses dressed the patients,  
Plumped cushions behind them  
Led them out to the freezing veranda air  
Wrapped in rugs their charges  
Were helped into deckchairs  
To stare at the wintry sun



They coughed and shuddered  
Searched for blood on their hankies

Fate was indiscriminate  
No favourites, rich and poor

Nothing of a deadly illness is fair  
A long slow death is generous only in time  
For anguish, rage, corrosive contemplation

Three invalid meals per day  
Rest, exercise, and the hot-house of  
Scandals and quarrels in too- close quarters  
With others whose presence may grate

A useless un-life, bickering, fretting, decline  
Nothing to do but watch the snow  
Tumble from clouds above the Scottish hills

Swaddled in blankets and furs  
(With the occasional hearse to break the ice)  
For some, came cure,  
For others consumption came galloping in  
On the pale horse of the apocalypse

24/7 they lived their illness out  
Or their illness outlived them

Sheena Blackhall

# Harvest Of Death: Gettysburg

Slowly, the mist of morning rose on the silent fields  
The sodden dead of armies lay drenched in the rain  
Stripped of their shoes which marched away with the living

Some bodies were dumped in the nooks of Devil's Den.  
Wounded lay groaning, too many to count or be cared for

Orchards and woods were raw from the cannons' firestorm  
The roots of the trees, drank blood that drained and spilled  
From bodies smashed to rubble, by fences burning

In the Trostles' farm, dinner left untouched on the table  
Belongings looted or trashed...collateral damage  
Sixteen dead battery horses stinking out the yard  
And over a hundred more across the fields

Acres of wheat and corn, flattened, destroyed  
Cows, pigs and chickens carried away as spoils  
And 15 barrels of flour unpaid, gone AWOL

The farmer himself, insane in a world gone mad  
And over all, the terrible clusters of flies

Sheena Blackhall

# Hats

Hang onto your hat, be it towering or flat  
A topper, a trilby, a shtreimel  
A bearskin, a beret, biretto or fez  
Be it furry or leather or vinyl

Never go cap in hand, keep your bearing erect  
In a mitre a homburg a busby  
A sombrero, montera, a Stetson, a crown  
Or a panama shaped like a frisby

A deerstalker hat has a je ne sais quoi  
A slouch hat, or wild Tam o Shanter  
Will look good...or a mortar board, wig or toupee  
When you're punting though, borrow a boater

There are conical hats...but for Rene Magritte  
The best was a business-like bowler  
A baseball's better, if you're a go-getter  
Out pushing a child in a stroller

Whatever you wear, hats are sure to declare  
What you're like.... Dunces' caps or tricornes  
But it's not a good look, if your wife has forsook  
You and leaves you to wear cuckold's horns!

Sheena Blackhall

# Head Massage: Shirasa Taila Vimardhana Ayurveda Massage

The brass pot is suspended overhead  
I must lie still, beneath the scented oil  
A neck stand is supplied, a towelled bed

It's guaranteed all worries to erase  
Hitting my temples in a steady stream  
Of oil, kept running through the punctured base.

There's not a breath of wind. All here is calm  
The pot's swayed back and fore by the masseuse  
Across my brow, the oil a constant balm

Treat for the brain, lady, to let it rest  
I'm drifting in and out of a light sleep  
Being anointed feels like being blest

I see a young mahout as I walk out  
His elephant, stretched lazy in the river  
Bathing its sides with water from a spout

It shuts its eyes, as stroking its old skin  
Its master tries to smooth away its aches  
Like making silver from a rusty tin  
There's not a breath of wind. All here is calm  
And gentle, as the hum of an old psalm.

Sheena Blackhall

# Heavenly Cow Of Thebes (21 Poems In Scots)

Museum

Horus & Hathor, Nut, Bastet & Neth;  
Sobek & Nephrys, Neferteri, Amun;  
Atum, Thoth, Khapri, Mut, Khepri and Seth,  
Isis, Osiris, Anubis & Khnum.

Howked frae the past, staun the gods on their plinths  
Each ane a castaway, unner the lichts  
Rugged frae their meanin, their warld an their time  
Nae preservation can show us the sights  
They saw, afore Moses wis fand in the Nile  
Fit mysteries, ecstasies, lie yont each smile?

## 2. Ozymandias Revisited

There aince wis a poem about fame  
Writ by Percy....noo fit wis his name?  
Tourists heeze by the score  
Ramses' works tae adore  
Denigration's a sliddery game.

## 3. Queen Hatshepsut.

Flashback (based on an eyewitness report)

Aince fountains filled this avenue, an myrrh,  
(Ten gunmen cam tae a temple nearby Luxor  
I think oor guides kent straicht aff there wis tribble)  
Importit frankincense, Queen Hatshepsut's delicht.  
(Twa guairds war killt, their bluid byled on the san)  
Cut in the Theban hills, sic pouer, sic grace!  
(Ae group drew near the heezin temple steps)  
Thon auncient Queen, could she be o the race  
O Sheba, best-lued quine o Solomon?  
(We fled inno the temple. We war trapped.  
A secunt group o gunmen turned an fired)  
Foo straicht an wide the steps, foo cweel the tomb!

(Some polis ran an stertit firin back.  
There wis a rowth o gunfire...rowth o soun)  
Foo fine, tae breath the styew o history!  
(Though they war frichtit they were sent wi pistols  
Inno the knowes tae snuff the gunmen oot)  
This is the aff-peak sizzen, hett bit quate  
It maun be pandemonium at its wirst.

#### 4. The Crocodile God: Sobek

The ultimate in doonricht dehydration,  
Crocodile mummy in the sanny wame o the derk  
Flash bulbs pit flame in yer een

I hauf expeck ye tae slidder inno the Nile  
By sugar cane an corn  
Like a lit touch-paper

Fishermen worshipped ye,  
Killer o their kind.  
Made friens wi the enemy.  
Lued him, even.  
Daith, wi the green back,  
The glentin teeth.

#### 5. Aga Khan (Aga Khan III 1877-1957)

The desert sans are hett's a lowe  
The desert sun's a flame  
An naethin steers bit poodered yird  
An bits o birssled bane

Yet in this lan far naethin growes  
There wis an unca thing  
A single rose that ilkie day  
Floored on a beeriet king

At gloamin time, the rosebud dwined  
At dawn, twis fair an fresh  
As wis the love that wattered it

Sae constant untae Daith.

## 6. Hathor

Hymn to Hathor, giver of love, embodiment of passion  
(owersett in Scots from a translation by John L. Foster in Hymns, Prayers & Songs, Society of Biblical Lit.1995)

Let me worship the gowden ane  
Let me reese oot the queen of Heiven  
Let me gie praise tae Hathor  
An sing in blytheness tae her celestial sel.

I prig her tae lippen tae ma plea  
That she sen me ma mistress noo  
An she hersel come tae see me.

Sic ferlies fin last thon happent!  
I wis jocose, I wis blessed, I wis vauntie  
Frae the meenit fowk quo, 'Tak tent o her!  
See, here she comes, garrin the young lads boo  
Throwe their muckle passion fur her! '

Let me offer ma braith tae the goddess  
That she gie me ma love as a giftie.

It is fower days noo I hae prayed in her name  
Let her be wi me the day.

## Philae: The Pearl of Egypt

At Philae in the lichtsme breeze  
Acacia, eucalyptus, date  
Scarce gee ava the simmer heat  
Far tourist guides warssle tae sate  
The swytin hordes that trail ahin  
Them reivin skirps o Isis lear  
They canna get eneuch it seems,  
O Egypt's loves an Egypt's dreams

Queen Isis, on yer temple's sides  
Godfrey Levinge, R. Langton, Mure  
Hae hackit oot their nochtie names  
On column, plaque and sacred flair  
Foo wad some peely-wally nyaff  
(Frae Acton, London, says the rock)  
Connach a shrine, a sanctuary...?  
Wis his life sic a bore, puir stock?

A war memorial fur Sudan  
By order o the British State  
Is here, in biggins vrocht fur love  
Names that nae pharoah cud translate

Bit Fred, or Bert, or Mike or Phil  
Are aywis wytin in the wings  
Tae scrat their wirthless monikers  
Upon the gowden robes o kings

#### 8. Cleopatra (69-30BC)

Priestess o Isis, seed o kings  
Born tae a croun, by servants fanned  
Frailty, her strength. She could makk aa  
Boo tae the Queen o Love's command

Rowed in a cairpet as a gift, she  
Conquered the Caesar in her lan  
Made the great Roman General  
Boo tae the Queen o Love's command

Romans despised her. Fan her lord  
Dee'd, as the happed assassins planned,  
Beauty wis eeseless. Nane wad noo  
Boo tae the Queen o Love's command

See her in barge wi gowden stern  
Purple sails by her broon quines, manned,  
Perfumed – noo wad Mark Antony  
Boo tae the Queen o Love's command



Wakken the asp an milk its fang  
Hither, Anubis, pairt the san  
Open the yetts nae mortal sees  
Boo tae the Queen o Love's command

#### 9. Touchin Doon

Touchin doon, the langed-fur Nor East cweel  
Wis absent. We'd flown frae the fryin pan  
Inno the fire. The hetttest simmer in a hunner years

While we'd bin in Luxor, citizens anon,  
Israel hid made war on Lebanon

Onythin tae declare? the customs speired  
Sabah al ishtar...mornin o cream tae ye  
I thocht, bit kept ma tongue atween ma teeth

#### 10. The Time Travellers' Convention

Bring a pairtner tae the Ceilidh  
Dress informal, the invite stated  
At the time traivellers' convention.

Mary Queen o Scots arrived hersel  
Signed up fur speed-datin.  
Said she wis a romantic,  
Cud lose her heid ower the richt chiel.

The sheik in the tartan troosers  
Turned oot tae be Rabbe Burns  
Wi a bevy o beauties he'd gaithered  
On his traivels.

John Knox tuik charge o the raffle  
The kirk being eesed tae collectin  
Naebody socht him fur a lady's choice.

Lord Byron niver missed a single dance  
In the Gay Gordons. He wis last tae leave.

The Loch Ness Monster, playin watter music,  
Last seen wis reelin roon bi Ailsa Crag  
Wi thirteen kelpies and a Shetlan silkie.

Feedback suggests they'll aa be back neist year  
Dig

The rich or pouerfu are beeriet inby this kirk.  
The dig is a lanscape o lanterns  
A catacomb of timmer planks an pits. The stoor is grey.  
Sticky wi swyte, archeologists dunt centuries inno trays  
Barin brittle banes frae their cloots o clay.

Grave robbers maun weir masks.  
Disturbin the deid hauds dangers  
Spores, lang sleepin, steered bi the win nicht blaa  
Cholera, leprosy, rickets, consumption, ague  
Whetted the scythe that swypt hale streets awa.

A teenage Covenanter, deid o the pox,  
A surgeon, deid o the plague,  
A medieval pilgrim, weirin a pilgrim's badge  
Oor Lady o Peety...fa didnae intercede  
Tae challenge the smit that ett her disciple's limbs;  
A cheil o fifty, a siller hairt in his ribs,  
A wumman's brooch...his mistress? dother? wife?  
Naebody kens. It his ootlived his passion an his love.  
A bairn in a kist, its heid on a stane pillow,  
Laired here afore the first kirk iver rose.

Skeletons mortally woundit in duel or battle  
A magistrate, fas wirds nae langer prattle  
A rake. His pride is noo a poodered pestle.  
Lairds an dignitaries surface, lees o a past Zeitgeist  
Skirps o lace on their baney wrists an shanks  
Clay pipes haudin tobaccay. Bane buttons, a fine silk hat,  
A loon's marble...a pair of yirdy dice.  
Fishbanes, frae midden or feast.

The rich or powerful war beeriet inbye this kirk  
They hae gane the wye o its auncient, sonorous bells –

St Nicholas, St Mary an Auld Lowrie –  
Crashin inno the nicht, wi aisse an flames.

Five hunner years thon bells rang ower oor toun  
Foo mony citizens noo myne their names?

### East Toun

Stars skinkle ower a parkin lot  
Hubcaps an bonnets shine wi frost  
Like mowdies, weariet shoppers skail  
Oot frae the mall, bood doon bi copst  
O stappin stammachs, heatin hames.  
Twa bats gae flichterin fae the trees  
Raggety cloots o hungered wames.

Ice surfs the waves. Black spires luik doon  
Icicle kirks in this cauld toon  
An hoasts hack deeper in the briest  
O fowk fa thole the cauld the least  
Slipt somehou frae the shelterin gown  
O him fa wore the thorny croun?

### Rug

I am swypin the rug I bocht last wikk in toun.  
It is indestructible. It is the colour o reid clay.  
It will spen oors here, possibly years  
Watchin my skin dwine tae the colour o perchment.  
I could growe tae resent it, this ferlie, this nae-body  
Secure in its ain boundaries,  
Impervious tae rot.  
The March Past

Yestreen, buits merched up the street  
Stoppit the pulse o the toun  
Battalions paraded,  
Cogs in the war machine  
An they were oors,  
Receivin the toun's freedom.

Doos coed an flichtered. The provost spakk.  
A loon saluted wi a bairn's solemnity  
Tae naebody in particular, tint in his ain fecht  
As if a sheathed sword lay on a bed o roses  
Tae be feted, aa petals an perfume  
Nae bluid an thorns tae stain the civic meenit.

14. Six Owersetts frae Cien sonetos de amor (100 love sonnets) by Pablo Neruda, 1986, University of Texas Press

IV

Ye'll myne thon lowpin burn  
Far sweet yoams raise an trimmlit  
An whyles a birdie, weirin watter  
An slowness...its yuletide feathers.

Ye'll myne thon gifts frae the yird  
Scents foraye gowd glaur,  
Weeds in the sheugh an reets apley,  
Eildritch thorns like swords.

Ye'll myne thon posie ye wiled  
Shadda an watter's seelence  
Posie like a foam-happit stane.

Yon time wis like niver an like foraye  
Sae we gyang there, far naethin's wytin  
We fin aathin wytin yonner

V1

Tint in the wids, I brukk aff a derk twig  
An hystit its fuser tae ma droothy mou  
Mebbe it wis the soun o rain, greetin  
A brukken bell, or a riven hairt.

A hyne-aff ferlie it seemed  
Deep an secret tae me, hapt bi the the yird  
A skreich smored bi muckle autumns  
Bi the sappy derkness o hauf-opened leaves

Waukenin frae the dwaumin widlans yonner, the hazel-sprig  
Sang aneth ma tongue...its wauchtit sweetness  
Climmed up ben ma harns.

As if o a suddenty, the reets I'd left ahin  
Cried oot tae me, the lan I'd tint wi ma bairntime  
An I devauled, scoored bi the traivellin scent.

XXIV

Luv, luv, the clouds gaed up the touer o the lift  
Like bigsy washerweemin – an it aa  
Glimmered in blue like the ae starnie  
The sea, the boatie, the day aa exiled thegither.

Come, teet at the geans o the watter in the weather  
The roon key tae the Aa that is sae quick:  
Come, touch the lowe o this teet-bo blue  
Afore its petals dwine.

There's naethin here bit licht, pucklies, boorichs  
Space caad ajee bi the graces o the win  
Till it gies upo the hinmaist secret o the faem.

Amang sae mony blues...blues o Heiven, drooned blues  
Oor een are a thochtie raivelled: they can scarce makk oot  
The pouers o the air, the keys tae the seas in the secrets.

XXIX

Ye came frae poverty, frae the hooses o the sooth  
Frae the roch landscapes o cauld an o yird's mishanter  
That gied us – efter thon gods hid tummelt  
Tae their daiths – the lear o life, vrocht in glaur.

Ye are a wee sheltie o black glaur, a kiss  
O derk dubs, ma dearie, a poppy o glaur  
Doo o the gloamin that flew alang the roads  
Piggy-bank o tears frae oor puir bairntime.

Wee body, ye've keepit the hairt o poverty in ye

Yer feet eased tae sherp rocks  
Yer moo that didna aye hae breid or sweeties.

Ye cam frae the puir Sooth, far ma soul wis seedit  
In thon heich lift yer mither's ay washin claes  
Wi ma mither. Thon's foo I chose ye, best lued.

XXXVIII

Yer hoose souns like the train at noon.  
Bees bizz, pots sing,  
The linn tells fit the soft rain did.  
Yer lauch reels oot its trill like a palm tree

Comes like a kintra loon wi a singin telegram  
The blue licht o the waa claiks wi the rocks, an yonner –  
Climmin the knowe, atween twa fig trees wi the green voice –  
Comes Homer in his quaet sheen.

Anely here the toun has nae voice, nae moo, naethin sae  
Forcey, nae sonatas, skirls or car toots: here,  
Insteid, a quaet foregaiterin o linns an lions

An ye – fa rises, sings, rins, wauks, boos  
Plants, shews, cooks, haimmers, screives – comes back –  
Or hae ye left? (Syne I'd ken the Winter hid stertit.)

LXXXVII

Three birds o the sea, three sun-glisks, three shears  
Crossed the cauld lift fur Antofagasta:  
Yon's foo the air wis left trimmlin  
Foo aathin trimmlet like a hurtit flag.

Alaneness, gie me the sign o yer eynless birth-stangs  
The path – scarce even thon – o the coorse birds  
The hairt-flichter that aywis comes  
Afore hinney, music, the sea, a birth

(Alaneness held gaun bi the ae physog-  
Like a quet, slaw floer aywis ootraxed-  
Till it wins tae the sma heezin boorichs o the lift)

Cauld wings o the sea, o the archipelago, gaed  
Fleein aff tae the sans o nor-east Chile.  
The nicht yarked tee its heivenly snib.

#### 15. The Bonnieness o Trees

I hae discovert the bonnieness o trees  
Foo they meeve like watter ben the tides o air  
The birk like a faist jaad shakkin doon her hair  
The larick that showds, auld man in a creakin cheer

Trees growe far they faa, their weird has decreed it sae  
A bield alike fur nightingale an craa.

#### 16. A Letter tae Julius Caesar frae the Provinces

Ye hae yer warships, Caesar, breistin the faem wi their prows  
Reid wi bluid as the flames o Vulcan's bellows.

Stang o a kittlit viper, we hae oor coracles, bobbin burn tae burn  
They cairry Daith frae clan tae clan as weel as ony galley.

I'm telt yer senators shroud thirsels in togas  
Gie the hee-haw tae oor hame-spun worsit, oor skins o wolf an deer.

Craw on – yer claith cuts nae ice ower here  
Nae toga haps the hide agin cranreuch cauld.

Yer weemin? Feech! A puckle peintit hoors  
Ower prood tae skivvy fur their weddit men.  
Oor wives can brew oor ale an bake bere breid  
Can stap the cradle fu o warriors  
Smeddum an sweirity's in their breist milk  
They cry the coronach abeen oor deid.

Mithras? We wish him weel. We hae Cernunnos  
He's hauf cheil, hauf stag, greater nur ony Pan.

Yestreen aneth the meen in the starn-cercle

The Druids saw yer Empire caad tae smush  
Yer Senate hummlit in the hurlygush  
Yer statue cowped like ony rotten log  
Banned frae the Crack o Doom frae Tir-nan-Og  
Whilst we survive, bairns o the mist, the bog.

s Fugit(ii)

Foxglove hings its dwinin heid  
Blossoms wauchtin aff the tree  
Nettles fiery in the sheugh  
Aathin fair or foul maun dee.

Here's a ram in Simmer's warmth  
Jaw an backbeen cad ajee  
Een are teem o starnie-licht  
Aathin fair or foul maun dee.

Jade bluebottle, drappit gem  
Bonnie tho her colours be  
Flicht will fail an wing will fauld  
Aathin fair or foul maun dee.

Mavis wheeplin in the birk  
Mistress o sweet minstrelsie  
Even sic a sang will eyn  
Aathin fair or foul maun dee

See the chunnerin kirkyaird wirm  
Crawlin ben the blackie's ee  
Dwinin as the sizzens birl  
Aathin fair or foul maun dee.

-Mandala

I hae left a lan o haar tae enter a lan o mist.  
Ahin, the ghaistly masts o fremmit boats  
Moored bi the herbour waa, showdin like anchored isles.

The spires o my cauld toon climm inno their airy lair



Tae disappear like spindrift in faddomless cloud.

Mist is eildritch, a state o possibilities  
Here bide the three weird sisters in their airt  
The rain's an incantation, the licht's bit  
Schmoodrachs o watter, glentin aff drookit leaves.

Haar haps oor kennin o the fowk aroon.  
Relationships, like roads ye wauk on bye  
Nae seein the wids fur the trees  
Or seein them, daurna explore fur fear o cliffs  
That micht or michtna lead us tae oor doom  
Wer're aa o's blin men tappin sightless forrit.  
19. Thomas Blake Glover: The Scottish Samurai

Scottish Samurai,  
Heich pine amang the Bonsai  
Swappit scones fur sushi  
Japan's adopted hero,  
Ben mushroom clouds an efter.

## 20. Chez Nous

I didnae cheenge the front. Same cooncil door  
The gairden's minimal ... girse, ivy, trees  
Deliberately a soss, sae nae tae tease  
The burglar inno sikkin tae explore.

Ten years syne it luikit ower the river.  
Reid tods slipped like sodjers aff the leash;  
Noo, supermarket chynes hae found their niche  
Health Club's arrived, a bigsie biggit neebour.

The traffic thunnars forrit, thunnars back  
My bairns left, for traivel, wirk or lover  
The hoose sank inno cauld an disregard.  
Noo ane's returned, his life in ane rucksack  
Tae soothe wiout the lullaby is hard.

## 21. May Journey tae the Broch

A coo stauns in a puil o its ain shadda  
The sea's an ice rink sliddery wi shine  
A corbie beats the back o tides o air.

A Saltire's flyin in this bare domain  
Dykes an fences steek a quaker's quilt  
A sheugh o saffron saris, breem's a riot.

Tarmac veins are ticht wi whizzin wheels  
Byres an barns hae internet connections  
Yowes humph their taiglit fleece atween fower shanks.

A tattie-bogle weirs a Texan Stetson.  
Mintlaa's a merriematanzie cars birl roon.  
A reaper roosts, doonpitten in a neuk.  
Dung smuchters unner aipple blossom spray  
Strichen's a kirk that isn't yet a pub  
Young mas wauk by, wringin their ringless hauns.  
A lifebelt's propped aside a navy door  
The air grows satty near the Nor Sea's faddoms  
An syne the Broch, its anchor still the herbours.

Sheena Blackhall

# Hedgehog

Hedgehog, the mouse-eared prickle-back breaks cover  
His ploughshare nose sheers through the silky grass  
His hog-snout scoops up nosegays of the wood  
Mould, moistness, mushrooms, drops of moon-made dew.

Prod him. He'll turn to a mouse  
Retreat inside his house, a ball of bristles  
A small brown ball of fear. A fist of thistles.

Sheena Blackhall

# Hen Utopia (17 Scots Poems)

the Scots Wird Ceilidh

Stammygasters war hoochin wi clishmaclavers  
Stooshies war fechtin wi scunners  
Blethers war breengin wi heelstergowdies  
Gollachs war lowpin bi hunners

Peeliewallies war bosyin tapsalteeries  
Chorers war drinkin wi drochles  
An wee Willie Wallicky turned up late  
In his semmit an granminnie's bauchles

Skirlers war birlin wi scutters an footers  
A bizzim wis oxterin a craa  
A fat whigmaleerie wis blooterred's a peerie  
The polis arrested them aa

in Bairn for Jessica

Fin I watch the littlin sleepin  
She's like a swan on the saftest cloud in the world  
I ettle tae jyne her,  
Fariver bairnies gyang fin they steek their een

Her lips lirk in a smile. Nae monsters derken her dwaum  
Mebbe wee siller bells tinkle on a faraway sphere  
Far it's dawn an the dyew is sweet

Her braith cams in an oot as licht as feathers  
Douce and bonnie, her sowl 's like new faan snaa

McGlynn: tune Brian O'Lynn (traditional)

Magi MacGlynn has a pair o blue een  
An a kilt roon his hurdies that the win blaws atween  
He's a wispy moustache an a beard roon his chin  
An he sings like a lintie does Magi McGlynn□

Magi McGlynn biggt a hoose in Balquidder  
Wi branches an stanes an a shakk doon o heather  
Whaur the anely soun heard is the burn's merry din  
'It's the music o watter, ' says Magi McGlynn.

Magi McGlynn humphs an Irish bodhran  
He can drum up a storm wi ae flick o his haun  
If ye happen tae miss him, yer glekit or blin  
He's a luik o distinction has Magi McGlynn

Magi McGlynn in his bender o stanes  
Coories doon in the firelicht tae warm his banes  
He's a bard o the roads, ain o Ossian's kin  
He's a chiel for aa Sizzens is Magi McGlynn

Magi McGlynn has braw stories tae tell  
Tae see him, ye'd think he wis Rob Roy himself  
He's as swack as a troot wi a dun-speckled skin  
He'd the pride o Balquidder is Magi McGlynn

Michty Finn

Finn stravaigs the gairden  
He's vauntie as a laird  
He's gallus an he's cocky  
Wi his muckle tail up-aired

He swaggers ower the flag stanes  
That edge his maister's girse  
Syne clenches ticht his dowp-chikks  
Like a miser's steekit purse

An syne, he licks his hurdies  
Ae shank ahin his heid  
The Michty Finn, contortionist  
The feline's fiercest breed!

pped.

Young Peter Williamson wis sent  
Fae Hirnlay intae Aiberdeen  
Tae bide there wi his city aunt  
Fa let him play nearby the Green

Doon on the quey stood Captain Ragg  
Twa crewmen wi him strang an stoot  
They cairried him tae Aedie's Hoose  
A piper drooned his skirlin oot

The voyage tae Americay  
Wis hard, the waves an gales war great  
The boat, The Planter, wis shipwracked  
The crewmen left him tae his fate

Bit wi the daybrakk, rescue cam  
A roup held in a nearby toon  
Hugh Wilson bid...Peter wis bocht  
The dealer brocht the haimmer doon.  
Hugh deid, an left him aa his gear  
His saiddle, shelt, his hinneybees  
His luck hid changed...bit for the waur  
The Indians caughted him in the trees

Twa times a slave! Bit he escaped  
Sailed hame, dressed as an Indian chief  
An traivelled back tae Aiberdeen  
Bit frae his trials fand nae relief

They banished him, bit Peter focht  
For compensation for his past  
An bocht a howf in Edinbro  
An lived a happy chiel at last!

Holy Guaird

The Green wis common lan for aa  
Tae graze their goats, their yowes, their kye  
And later, madder yairds war biggt  
Far claith, new-made, wis dyed doonbye

Aince, William's Royal Palace stood  
Doon in the Sooth side o the Green  
Fan saxty years had passed an gane  
The White Friars cam tae Aberdeen  
An far the Lion o the Scots  
Had bedd, they biggt their friary  
The Carmelites, fa cam tae teach  
Tae gairden, heal, tae kneel an pray

Nigh on three hunner years, the Green  
Wis hame tae caunle, bell an buik  
An shady orchard o the friars  
A haly an a peacefu neuk

But syne reformers cam tae wrakk  
Tae loot an spulzie, kill each friar  
Fin brither Francis stood alane  
They stabbed, syne tossed him on the fire

An orra ploy. An yet, this day  
Fin starnies flicker on the Green  
The hooded Brither Francis guairds  
His ghaistly home in Aiberdeen

Sacrist

The Marischal College students hid  
A gleg ee'd sacrist, legends say  
Caad Downie. He'd clype on their fauts  
An hae them fined near ilkie day

Medical students! His great hate!  
He herried them..a nesty blicht  
Till seeven met inbye the quad  
Tae ponder foo tae set things richt

The plot wis hatched. Tae Downie cam  
An invitation tae atten  
A meetin at a nearby howf  
At rooms, a pleisunt time tae spen

The sacrist rigged himsel wi care  
An set aff tae be wined an dined  
Bit at the howf, the students raise  
Wi blinfauld, gag, an towes tae bind

'We are baith judge an jury here  
We've met tae try ye for yer life  
An if a guilty verdict's fand  
An axeman's here, wi shairpened knife

Guilty o discipline ower harsh! '  
The students held their fae in check  
They gart him kneel, an smilin, ane  
Skelped a weet flannel on his neck.

Wi a queer sigh the sacrist fell  
'It's jist a jest. We've lowsed yer bans'  
Bit Downie lay, baith stiff an cauld  
He'd deid o terror at their hauns

An gin ye pass the Marischal gate  
An hear an eildritch, gurly mane  
It's nae the students. They ran aff  
It's Downie, frae his ghaistly hame

## 8.Incomin

I'm saxty three years auld. It's Februar  
Snell wins an blin-drift's forecast, roch an coorse,  
Wi icy roads an peely-wally sun,  
Somelike a slice o lemon, weety, wersh

The gairden's crined, the floers hae dwined awa  
The haar rowes up the river frae the sea  
Fin I wis wee, the fog-horn eased tae blaw  
A maen as dreich's the deid-thraa o a bull.

My laddie's in the hoose, expectant faither  
His wife is near her time, the bairn is kickin  
She's wabbit, deintie craitur, hyne awa  
Frae scents an sights o Saigon, silks an rice



Chinee New Year's jist by, nae temple gongs  
Or firecrackers brichten up her day  
She trauchles back an fore, a faithfu wife  
Chappin the veg I canna even name

She'll nae forget the time her first-born cam  
The howdie roarin English in her lug  
Her bairn will haud twa cultures in each neive

I mynd ma ain first born's sair doon drappin  
Booin ma back inby the jizzen bed  
Watter, swyte an bluid his first libation.

Sae short a whylie back, this lassie's merriege  
Rose petals skittered fur her passin feet  
Noo she's bin pued an wheeched ootower the ocean  
Intae the trauchle o the wifely darg  
Her een are calm an smilin like Auld Asia  
Born tae thole fitiver weird she'll dree.

-time

The meen abeen the ferm hings hauf skweejee  
Hunkerin doon hoch-heich in dyewy girse  
That swyes along the ley, a reeshlin sea

The byre an barn are twa blaik beeny breets  
The stoor o day has sattled deep in corn  
The teenie violet steeks its purple ee

Fowk lie abed, the sheets pued roon their nebs  
Lattin the oors o wark sype aff like swyte.  
In wids, wee moosies steer far hoolets flee

Tod's hungered littlins in the den maun wyte  
For patterin paws tae bring them bluidy gifts  
The meen's the time fur lovers, an the gyte.

A shooser o rain pit-pitters aff the reef  
In cars parked far up laybys, couples birze

For houghmagandie's sweetest mangst the trees  
The scentit aipple an the rosit firs

Hues o Flooers

The yalla daffs an pee-the-beds are skyrie  
Drappit suns, lichtenin the girssy sheugh  
Bricht stammygasters in Spring's hurly-burly

Heather is purple, kingly, its hairt beat  
Its empire takkin in hale Bens an glens  
Merchin along the corries, laired in peat

A rose is crammosie's a corbie's beak  
Powkin amang some deid bawd's raw intimmers  
Wi thorns as jobby as a kittlin's teeth

Blue's the forget-me-not aneth the whin  
Ryped frae a lift wi feint the cloud in sicht  
Like the new veins aneth a newborn's skin

Snawdrops are pearlins on the lug o cauld  
Booed ower like some auld carlin-wife, twa-fauld.

Singin Sycamore, Fadlydyke

John Constable wad hae lued this ferm  
Wi its neuks o leaf an sky  
Far a singin sycamore fills wi sang  
Bi the side o a sheugh ootbye

The ferm cat's fat as a butter baa  
A pyoke o pieces an purrs  
Streaked oot on her side, wi limbs ootraxed  
Like a Hollywid star, on furs

A rabbit sits wi its lugs straicht up  
Een fu o the myxi blicht  
A mavis cheeps on the bar o a fence  
A warble o tune an licht

The rose hips fatten in sheugh an brae  
A wasp crawls ben a booer  
A buzzard hings like a gibbet's airm  
Tensed up for the killin clooer

A moch the size o a finger nail  
Gaes flichterin ower the brummils  
Syne faulds its wings an dauchles a while  
An catches its pech, an trimmles

Blink-bonnie day wi a lift o blue  
Sae warm, ye cud tirr yer sark  
Clouds drap doon frae the heivens abune  
Tae reest on a Buchan park

Tractor wheels wi their coats o glaur  
Dwaum near-haun cattle trochs  
An a bawd gaes breengin amangst the corn  
Wi the sun on its hairy hochs

The rooks like seety washin pegs  
Are stung on the telegraph wires  
An the moosewabs threidin the skirps o strae  
Climm wannerin willes' spires

The singin sycamore's hidden birds  
Cheep up tae the sun abeen  
Bit the fite-faced hoolet's oorrie hoot  
Is a sang tae the derk an meen

es

According to the tinkers 'Burkers' were doctors who were helped by medical students called 'Noddies.'

Fa could forget Auld Donald, his neb like a beet  
Sweyin hard, the wirthless sot, bi the medical college  
Shakkin his beggin bowl?

He didna believe the killin tales  
O fowk snatched aff the road bi student sawbeens,

Donald, fa sang like an angel  
Through a moo o brukken teeth,  
Donald wi his lucky siller saxpence in his buit,  
Aywis a rumour hingin aff his lip  
Naebody else wad wirk the college stance.

Vanished, he did, in the deid o winter  
Wheeched awa bi anatomy men  
His siller saxpence spent in a student howf

The doctors' coach gaed saftly roon thon neuk  
The soun o the cuddies' hooves smored wi paddin  
Efter they passed, nae hide nor hair o Donald  
Anely a wee trail dreepin reid on the snaa

John Stewart swore it stank like a butcher's shop,  
Thon fiendish coach, its fleer aa punched wi holes  
Tae let the bluid escape, an keep things tidy-like

Hare-lip Mary fa cleaned the fires at the howf  
Said that the wheels dug wechty in the snaa  
Though the driver chiel vowed sair the coach wis teem

It saved the toun the cost o a pauper's kistin  
The fowk agreed. Forbye,  
A sawbeen's got to learn his trade on somebody.

### 13. The Cailleach's Sang

I had twa brithers, noo I hae nane  
I sit in the greenwid aa alane  
Heedrum hodrum the mist furls roon  
Makkin the threids o an auld wife's gown

I had twa lips that war vrocht tae kiss  
Little eneuch they kent o bliss  
Heedrum hodrum the mist furls roon  
Makkin the threids o an auld wife's gown

The flax is green, the flax is weet

That growes tae wyve my wyndin sheet  
Heedrum hodrum the mist furls roon  
Makkin the threids o an auld wife's gown

in

oo-raivellin	cloak raxxin	moose-keppin	bird-knellin
milk-suppin	cassie-breengin	waa-lowpin	tree-scrattin
claith-clookin	sun-dwaumin	hoch-flechin	tail-yarkin
spurgie-eein	threid-jummlin	luv-lowsin	plate-peengin
wauk-queenin	wids-reengin	nicht-skreichin	fusker-trimmlin
lino-pykin	dug-blooterin	wyme-stappin	KITTLIN

### Willie's Report Card

Work habits are improving: Your Wullie is a lazy vratch  
Eager to share in classroom discussions: Blethers aa the time  
Spirited at the cost of accuracy: Gypes aboot. Screives like a hen scrattin  
Does well when he focuses on task: Needs a minder tae haud him doon  
With encouragement, socialises well: Spens playtime in the heidie's office  
Has difficulty transitioning from outdoor activities: Like a flech on speed  
Finds classroom routines problematic: A back-spikkin wee scanner  
Could benefit from greater home support: A hett dowp wadnae gyang amiss  
William has yet to reach his full potential: Glekit an din-raisin footer

### Speckled Cauldron (Corryvreckan)

The hag o Winter, Cailleach Bheur  
Steered up the waves tae wash her plaid  
The speckled cauldron o the sea  
A whirlpuil feared bi man an maid

The Norse Prince Breakan socht tae woo  
A Princess o the Western Isles  
Her faither socht tae keep her hame  
Bi stratagem an cunning wyles  
Tae win the lassie for his bride  
The Prince maun brave the whirlpuil's rage  
Three days an nichts tae anchor, in

The fiercest maelstrom o the age

Back hame tae Norroway he sailed  
An vrocht three cables strang an ticht  
O hemp, an oo, an vergins' hair  
Frae lassies pure as Heiven's licht□

On the first day the hemp towe snapped  
The oo upon the secunt, brakk  
On the third day, the maidens' hair  
Sindered. The boat cowped on its back.  
An roon an roon aneth the waves  
The prince, his faithful dug an crew  
Furled roon. Ae sailor an a dug  
Survived the hellish cauldron's brew

On Jura syne the grey dug searched  
On Scarba tae, his maister socht  
He tried tae cross the watery strait  
Tae Lunga...bit aa cam tae nocht

Lowpin tae reach a hauf-wye isle  
He slippit in the ragin tide  
Faithfu as iver tae the eyn  
In daith, he won the Prince's side

In Norroway the ladies grat  
Ae stran o thon fair-cuttit pleat  
Cam frae a quine impure in wyes  
A limmer, free wi favours sweet

The Princess o the Western Isles  
Fand her true luv upon the stran  
An in the king's cave beeriet him  
A stranger in thon savage lan

An there he lies. On stormy nichts  
Fin Cailleach Bheur wheeps up a storm  
Ye'll see a grey dug in the lift  
An hear Prince Breakan's huntin horn

with Dead Canary: Jean-Baptiste Greuze

Luik at the quine wi the deid canary!

Fit is the bird's obituary?

Stuffed tae daith wi sweeties an treats

An smored in the depths o lassie's breists

Sheena Blackhall

# Highland Cow

The cello slits on her nose release a melodious moo.  
Her copper pelt is soft as a maidenhair.  
Spittle sits in the silky folds of her mouth,  
Like seeds of milky dew.

Through the heavy fringe at her eyes  
A bovine Boadicea, horned and hairy  
She watches me, unblinking,  
Turns the rump of her rudder  
Snorts and leaves, ponderous as a liner  
Slipping out of a narrow harbour  
The brown tow of her tail  
Swinging medallions of dung.

Sheena Blackhall



# Highland Village

Tourists ask the way in phrase book speak,  
Gaelic words creak peeling on a gate,  
A young deaf woman walks the world in silence,  
Two sheets hang dead. Loud insects swim the heat.

Gaelic words creak peeling on a gate,  
A throaty stream is gargling over stones,  
Two sheets hang dead. Loud insects swim the heat,  
Bus convoys crawl up roadways built for goats.

A throaty stream is gargling over stones,  
In breezy corries bluebells almost tinkle  
Bus convoys crawl up roadways built for goats  
Foraging ducks quack hungrily for food.

In breezy corries bluebells almost tinkle,  
Tourists ask the way in phrase book speak,  
Foraging ducks quack hungrily for food,  
A young deaf woman walks the world in silence.

Sheena Blackhall

# Highways

Highways grow like a gash here  
The gash grows labia of buildings, wall by wall  
Blocks of industrial premises  
Slabs of malls  
Fulfilling the human greed  
Its need to sprawl

Highways grow like a gash here  
The tarmac shudders when juggernauts thrust down  
Grunting their oily puffs and sweats of movement  
Blackening the trees  
Pollution's ghastly spawn

Sheena Blackhall

# Hinkum-Clinkum (30 Scots Poems)

## Wee Caulifloer

I wish I wis a caulifloer  
I wadna wash my lugs  
I'd be as lazy as I liked  
An blether wi the bugs

## 2My Wee Sister

I hae a wee sister, she burst ma fitba  
I wish the tooth fairy wid takk her awa  
She burst ma fitba an she blamed it on me  
I wish that a monster wad hae her fur tea

## Greens Please

Please gie us greens for denner  
We think that greens are braw  
Wi salad for oor brakkfaist  
An celery tae chaw

Let us hae sproots an parsley  
Kail, piz an rinner beans  
An dinna skimp on lettuce  
Us rubbits luv oor greens

## er the Whale

Fin Flapper the whale sets aff for school  
He wallops his tail an blaws his tap  
He staps his bag wi crisps an juice  
An aff he sweems wi a flappety flap

## 's Da

I like tae watch the boaties  
An play alang the shore  
I like tae look fur partens  
An watch the seagulls soar

I like tae bigg sancastles  
I'm a cheery kinna lad  
I've jist a teenie problem  
Far did I beery dad?

it Dick

The measles cam tae veesit  
Dick's happit heid tae tail  
There's five on his bihoochie  
Nae winner he looks pale

He looks jist like a cheetah  
His skin is fu o spots  
Bit fin he's really scunnerd  
He jist jyns up the dots

r

Fower burgers, fower coffees  
Some sauce ye can squeeze  
Here comes the waiter  
Gies some chips please!

An while yer about it  
A dollop o mustard  
Fower ice creams in cones  
An a platie o custard

Register

Far's Maisie Finlay?  
Aff wi a hoast  
Far's Sunita Ranjeev?

Chokit on her toast  
Far's Nimi Munzah?  
His face is fu o plooks  
Far's Abdul Sharnam?  
Paiddlin wi the dyeuks

the Scunner

Billy's a scunner, he spits an he rages  
I've seen nicer tigers in zoos an in cages  
He farts an he rifts, he'll nae dae fit he's telt  
Bit ye'll hae tae excuse him, for Billy's a shelt

y's Pet

I'm gaun tae ma grunny the morn  
She'll caa me her favourite quine  
I'll hae sweeties faniver I wint them  
Wi jeely an aathin that's fine

Bit I'll jist bide a day an a denner  
I'd niver laist oot fur a wikk  
Atween jeelies an cookies an puddens  
Bi the time I ging hame I'll be seek

11. Ma Brither

Ma brither pits wirms in ma bath tub  
Ma brither pits slugs doon ma back  
Ae day tae the recyclin centre  
Ma brither I'd willinly takk

An maybe instead o a brither  
They'd recycle him as a bike  
I'd dae wheelies on him in the gairden  
Noo thon is a brither I'd like!

Blues

I dinna wint a baby.  
I'd raither hae a ba  
A tortoise or a ubbit.  
Dinna hae a baby ma

Hae a budgie or a goldfish  
Baby's makk an affa noise  
Willy Duthie's got a baby  
An it pinches aa his toys

### 13. Neighbors

The fowk next door keep duggs that gurr  
A spittin cat wi taigit fur  
An auld wrecked car in the backie there  
An a muckle bogle aneth the stair

### 14. Mister Minger

Mister Minger's got leathery skin  
A baldie heid an a stibbly chin  
He etts fajitas an chaws the plate  
An I think Mister Minger's great

### 15. Mr Ted

Fin I pit on my jammies  
An climm the stairs tae bed,  
I ken that he'll be wytin,  
My frien caad Mr Ted.

An fin I coorie doon tae sleep  
I haud him in my bosie....  
He's made o fur  
He disna gurr  
He's affa, affa cosie!

## 16. Doctor

Sen fur the doctor  
My kyte's churnin  
Sen fur the doctor  
My chikk's burnin  
I will takk a mixture  
Or a great big peel  
Sen fur the doctor  
Cause I'm nae weel!

His stethoscope is wummly  
As a big black eel  
Bit sen fur the doctor  
Cause I'm nae weel!

## 17. Dentist

Dentist, dentist,  
My tooth's sweet  
Will I need a fillin  
Fin I'm sittin in yer seat?  
If I pass yer check up  
I promise that I'll eat  
An aipple or a tangie  
Fur a treat, treat, treat.

I'll clean ma teeth each evenin  
Finiver darkness comes  
Tae stop the germs wi clarty buits  
Fae dauncin on ma gums!

## 18. Hoolet

Hoolet bides in an auld aik tree,  
Aathin that moves can hoolet see,  
His een are sherp an his neb can catch  
Moosies that move in his leafy patch  
Rin, rin moosie, he's comin noo  
Can ye hear him cryin Tu-whit tu-woo?

## 19. Lollipop

A sweetie that's a lollipop's  
A baa upon a stick.  
A crossin that's a lollipop  
Can stop the traffic quick.

Sae if there's nae a zebra  
Or a mannie green an flashin,  
Look oot fur the lollipop  
That stops the traffic hashin.

An if there's nae a frienly face  
Far road an pavement meet,  
Look left, look richt, look left again  
Afore ye cross the street.

## 20. Molly Emslie's Dug

Molly Emslie's got a dug  
He keeps her safe fae hairm  
He sleeps aside her in her bed  
Tae keep her duvet warm.

## 21. Neep

Halloween! Wee neep in the park,  
We'll teem yer belly,  
We'll save yer sark,  
Pit caunles inno yer twa neep een  
Fur a ghaistie-licht at Halloween!

## 22. Octopus

An octopus's oxters  
Are dichtit eence a day  
He soaps them wi a sea sponge



Afore he gings tae play,  
At fitbaa wi a mermaid  
A labster an a sole:  
Bit every kick he catches,  
They can niver score a goal!

### 23. Pärten

First a crannie,  
Syne a thoomb  
Snip, snap, snip  
The parten wytes  
Aneth a steen  
Fur tasty taes tae nip.

### 24. Pincil

Leid pincil, leid pincil, makk me a letter  
Jyne't wi anither an it'll be better,  
Jyne't wi a puckle an I'll hae a tale  
As wee as a bandy or as big as a whale.

### 25. Pöstie

Dunt gings the letterbox  
My, fit a thrill!  
I got a letter  
Mither got a bill.

Granny got her pension  
Granda got a pack  
Sae aabody got somethin  
Fae the pyoke on postie's back!

### 26. Røpies

CAA CAA THE ROPIE  
YER MAA'S AWA TAE THE SHOPPIE

TAE BUY A CAKE O SOAPIE  
TAE DICHT YER LITTLE DOCKIE (trad)

I hae a ropie, I hae twa  
Caa the ropie ower an ower  
Skip up, skip doon an dinna faa  
Caa the ropie ower an ower.

I hae a kite wi a tail sae lang  
Caa the ropie, ower an ower  
It daunces up far the birdies gang  
Caa the ropie, ower an ower.

Leave the shute, lowp aff the swings  
Caa the ropie ower an ower  
I hae a bike wi a bell that rings!  
Caa the ropie ower an ower

I hae a drum an a tooteroo  
Caa the ropie, ower an ower  
An a wee toy bear fae the Embro zoo  
Caa the ropie ower an ower.

I hae a yo yo, I hae a bat  
Ca the ropie, ower an ower  
I hae a fussle an a witchie's hat  
Ca the ropie ow'er an ower

## 27. Shailie

Slivvery, slivvery, bubbly snoot  
I am the snail fae the watter spoot  
I cairry ma hoosie upon ma back  
An draa in ma heid  
Fin the skies are black.

## 28. Taxi Driver

Taxi driver far's yer fare?  
Hurlin fowk fae here tae there

Taxi driver, if yer late  
Plane an pilot winna wait!

### 29. The Teacher

Teacher's got a fite boord  
Teacher's got a black boord  
Teacher's got a stick o chakk  
Computer an a pen  
Teacher's got a heidache- Teacher needs a teabreak  
Davie Buchan's fechtin Jimmy Patterson again!

### 30. The Coorse Robbers

Late last nicht in the Safewyes store  
Ten coorse robbers creepit in the door  
The first coorse robber he chored an aipple pie  
The second coorse robber he chored a tasty fry  
The third coorse robber he chored a side o ham  
The fourth coorse robber he chored a leg o lamb  
The fifth coorse robber tuik fleg an ran awa  
I phoned the police an they caughted them aa!

Sheena Blackhall

# Holiday Romance

'I remember how we walked  
Avoiding the hawkers'  
The voice in the airport murmured

'The wine was dry. The shish kebab was fiery.  
But why should I bother to learn a new language?

After that day I totally lost all interest  
Too much clinging and promises  
Kisses to make you drown

And did I really care?  
I sent on all her belongings  
Including the straw hat from Ephesus.'

She will weep and wait in the village  
A thin white sheet still folded  
Over the foot of the bed.

Sheena Blackhall

# Holocaust

Mothers and fathers, children, babies too  
Gone in a blink into the empty sky  
Their simple crime was being born a Jew.

Hard to believe whole countries never knew.  
Too terrified, perhaps, to even try  
Imagine what a Fascist world might do.

Wives, youngsters, husbands, all with a tattoo  
Unless it was decreed that they should die -  
Shuffling towards the showers in a queue.

All their tomorrows up some Nazi flue.  
And still men jib at facts, and would deny  
That millions walked into the shower's adieu.

Those cattle trucks from Europe thundered through  
Whole towns where no-one heard each ghetto's cry  
The moral compass shattered, all askew.

Go visit Auschwitz. Learn that this is true,  
Feel the despair of those who here passed by  
Vast evil out of racial hatred grew,  
Live for today, but give the dead their due.

Sheena Blackhall

# Homage To The Ancestors

Many wombs opened before my coming;  
In Catholic Normandy, flat Flanders,  
The past turns in its coils,  
Blood of my tribe, spent rubies in its eyes.  
Dutch, French and Spanish,  
Pounded into the gritty bread of Scots.

I was an old man's child,  
Singer of songs, as all his village knew,  
Who made the short walk to the grass  
In a warm winter,  
Grief and joy like sword-cuts on his brow.

One brother sleeps by the maple,  
Another fills the bellies of Inca worms.

My mother, a withered gourd  
Came late to the birth-bed;  
Her christening present to me was a thorn.

Many wombs opened before my coming,  
Quiet doors in the spirit house on the moor.  
Grandmother's ghost is weaving a wooden cradle  
So she may nurse my bones.

Sheena Blackhall

# Honeymoon Sweet

In a borrowed wedding dress,  
Charity shoes and a masochistic corset  
The brand new bride examines her future prospects

Her groom snores on the bed, vomit, stuck to his lips  
The years ahead, yawn like a dug grave  
The box marked 'His n' Hers' awaits her.

Heads or tails? How simple to walk away  
To rub the matter out like an aberration  
To nip the union out like a snuffed candle

The coin drops, tails.  
For better or worse, a marriage goes ahead

Sheena Blackhall

# Honing In

I am honing in on my poem  
Should I rhyme it?  
Should it be written in Scots or English?

In the kitchen, some fish has gone off  
A crane fly is banging its legs off the wall  
Like an insect giraffe

The air conditioning rattles in its cage  
A rapper on speed

The washing tangles and whirls  
A soapy octopus, with rainbow legs

All day I write this poem and I grow older  
I do not watch the children play in the street  
Little explosive Catherine wheels, whooping and wild

The triangular geometry of my bottom  
Fills the computer seat

I am honing in on my poem  
Who knows if anyone will read it?

Sheena Blackhall



# Horse

It is easy to love a horse.  
Affectionate exchanges  
Are straightforward.

He is not jealous,  
He does not demand more  
Than his due;  
When you walk away,  
He does not taunt,  
Whine or grovel.

If you step aside  
To clap a passing dog,  
He does not complain  
Pettily or bitterly.  
It is easy to love a horse.

His eyes are perfect almonds  
Filled with pools of moonlight,  
Fringed by lashes, bulrush-black  
And exquisitely formed.

When you stroke his flank  
His eyes slip shut in ecstasy.  
Run your cool palm  
Down the warm chute of his face  
And he will tilt his head  
Into your side like a tired lover  
Nudging you to stay.

Flaring delicate nostrils,  
He draws up  
The skin curtain of his lips,  
Nichering softly.

His mane smells of the wind -  
I breath him in.  
Like a struck tuning fork,  
I resonate with

Echoes of barns,  
Sun-hot meadows of hay -  
He has me harnessed.  
Almost, I neigh with happiness.

Sheena Blackhall

## Hotel Advice: Vietnam

This is the nation that beat the Mongol hordes of Kublai Khan.  
It is wedged between Laos, China, Cambodia, and the sea.  
It has been occupied by China, France, Japan,  
And bombed by tons of bombs from the USA

When crossing roads,  
Walk swiftly through the scooters  
Stop, and it's likely  
They may knock you down

When visiting hotels,  
Firearms, weapons, poisons,  
Explosive devices,  
Must be deposited with the management

No animals or birds to be kept in room  
No Durian or offensive smelling plant  
Allowed on premises.

Credit cards or cash are most acceptable  
Avoid tap water and refuse the ice  
We pleased to see you. Have a lovely time.

Sheena Blackhall

# House

Dust-dry dung, small wisps of broken straw  
Had blown and settled into the cracked green door,  
Where wood grain deepened like the wrinkled skin  
Of some old hand held out against intruders.  
The handle rattled, job-lot plastic, cheap;  
Odd screws secured it insecurely.

Mice slipped easily into this afterthought of a house  
Tagged on to the creaking farmhouse gable –  
Outpost of a farmer's rustic empire.  
Ivy spread its small green roofs of leaves on every stone;  
Fee'd men like seasons flitted through its rooms.

Entering was stepping into  
Smells of matchsticked logs  
Oozing their sticky sap beside the hearth;  
And human smells of sweat and drying clothes,  
Of muddy boots, baking like tarry dough beside the fire;  
The rug's far corner nibbled by tiny teeth.

Odd mugs, odd plates, odd seats;  
Two armchairs patched and peeling:  
A junk-shop squirrel-hoard of shoddiness.

One unused room, half-walled by glass, lay bare,  
Facing the silent fields of clammy wetness  
Carved by the slicing blade of the ruthless plough;  
One glass-eyed wall, firm and sullen,  
Facing the low, dark hill with its huddled cattle.

Within the house's heart, near to the spitting fire,  
My husband would talk and talk.  
We were new to marriage, as shop shoes  
Not fitting quite, not twelve months wed.

Pretending to feed the cat,  
Connecting door agape, a pool of light  
Flung down like a yellow stain,  
I sat, through in the glass-walled room

That separate, silent chamber, cool and distant,  
Barely aware of his mutterings of the day:  
The tractor that stuck in the nether park,  
The saw that broke on Easter Ordie's oak,  
The pheasant that he'd winged by Leezie's loch.

I hardly heard his munchings and unwindings,  
Like a run-down clock  
Wearied out with the nuts and bolts of labour;  
His clatterings of cutlery, his rustlings of paper,  
The small domestic noises of a home.

Through in the glass-wall room,  
I sat, listening with the corn's ear  
For the grasses' whispering,  
Watching the dykeside bushes move in the moonlight,  
Watching the white oats stirring in the field.

At night the stars walked into that unlit room  
Hard on the heels of gloaming: hushed guests  
Each bearing a tiny glimmering candle.  
For here the distance from the sky, the woods, the land  
Was wafer-thin, a lamina where real and unreal met.  
The neighbouring heavens pressed  
Against the window's brittle panes, impatient to get in.

I spread my arms to catch a shard of moon;  
My husband broke a stick to feed the fire.

Sheena Blackhall

# How Many Times Can The Heart Break?

It is hard to be human.

When I was young I followed a flowery road  
A riot of colour and paint. I loved it deeply and well  
And then it was blocked, my Eden, my lovely future□  
Its dreams, thrown out with the trash.  
That was a long bleeding, a running sore that leaves  
Its weeping scars to this very day

It is hard to be human.

Once I birthed a dead love. I blew and blew into its mouth  
I willed. I prayed it to live. It lay there all limp and white  
A guilt, a despair

It is hard to be human

When they dug my grandmother into the sod  
Like a rotten potato, it rained like Heaven was crying  
That first night without her, I lay for long in the dark  
Thinking of her in the cold,  
The warmth of her touch, a-missing.

It is hard to be human

To know when to close a door  
When to say 'Enough'  
When others are in the room  
The word will damage.

Consider the insect trapped beneath a stone  
Consider the fish, marooned in a shrinking pond  
How Many Times Can the Heart Break?

It is hard to be human.

Sheena Blackhall

# How To Speak To A Cat-Woman

Do not speak too soon, or too often  
Hum a little....Mmmmm.... dum dum  
Pour yourself into a nearby space  
Like water into a jug  
And let me settle,  
A dropped bangle, rolling

I do not respond to endearments,  
Cajoling or stalking

I loll in the sun, not feeling the urge  
To knead your ego like dough

On silken paws, I slither round confrontation  
Hum a little...Mmmmm....de dum dum dum  
You may intrigue me

Sheena Blackhall

## Howdie(Scots)

Yon chiel wi the parchment skin, mou like a thin bruise,  
Fa'd hae thocht he'd worn a Maori Mask,  
Mendit multi-storey lifts?  
Daunced tae a Thai's queer pipe?

An her in the neuk, the littlin wi tubes in her wyme,  
Shaved heid an feart-like een, ainns like twa wee spurtles...  
Gowden butterflees that's prentit on her tights  
Flee roon her crib at nicht gin she jist wills them.  
A winnerfu ferlie!

I ken because they tell me. I am the howdie.  
I am the listenin lug Tae the blate, the slichtit, the fleggit,  
Aa them fa keep their stories deep inbye  
Like beeriet treisur happit ower wi stoor.  
I am the story-howdie.

My darg's tae ease the birth o ithers' tales,  
Haudin on praise, hett towels o words,  
Helpin tae lift the new-born oot, tae skelp life intae't  
By settin it doon on the page. By screivin it.  
Oh winnerfu tae hear sic tales takk life,  
Oh hummlin, tae be hauns-on at the birthin.

Sheena Blackhall



# Hugo

Piebald boar.

Two jug-sized, bristly ears,  
Jet pupils set in amber eyes  
Like two black flies in resin,  
A shovel of a snout,  
A Glasgow docker's throat  
Gruff-grunting his amours.  
Brisk tick-tocking tail,  
Two mud-caked buttocks  
Smear'd by the clay-kiln yard.  
This glorious tub of lard,  
This randy wallower,  
Sires split-new squirming piglets,  
Small hot ovens  
That I raise and hold  
And momentarily cradle  
Like two rough coconuts;  
Round, sun-warmed seeds of pig.

Sheena Blackhall

# I Am An Image In A Ball Of Glass

I stare across the expanse of white  
An image in a ball of glass  
I hear it groaning in the night  
The earth where shuffling footsteps pass

Pale generations straight from school  
Feeling the pressure to succeed  
Reckless of cost, ransack the world  
Ravage its forests. Make them bleed

I stare across the expanse of white  
Cloud-struck. A blink and I could be  
The star- pricked sky the linnet's wing  
A sun-speck in immensity

Pity our fractured ball of glass  
This splintered sphere men call The World  
Into its oceans, dredged by nets  
Foul trackless poisons now are swirled

I hear it groaning in the night  
As poles recede and boundaries shift  
Jungles abort, birth desert dunes  
As mighty glaciers crack and lift

I stare across the expanse of glass  
I can remember when the air  
I breathed was meadow sweet with hay  
And grass wore clover in her hair

Sheena Blackhall

# I Believe

The sun will rise each morning, I believe  
It is the only certainty I know  
And in the cool of evening it will leave.

The hours are short; there is no time to grieve  
Some minutes go so fast and others, slow  
There is no turning back. There's no reprieve.

The moon is constant. It will not deceive  
The stars above, the safe brown earth below.  
What's fixed and whole has no need to achieve.

Our human hopes are mainly make-believe  
Like paper boats the wind blows to and fro  
Like cheap-jack baubles any jay may thief

There is more pain on earth than you'd conceive  
Of. Step aside and let it come and go  
Like the free air that you unthinking breath.

There is no turning back, there's no reprieve  
This is the only certainty I know  
That with the evening the great sun will leave  
That after Autumn's apples, comes the snow.

Sheena Blackhall

# I Cried A Mississippi

I cried a Mississippi when he died  
Of all mankind he was so very fine  
It left a doughnut hole inside my heart  
Where Crow, the Sorrow-bird sat down to dine

And people say time heals, that hoary lie  
You just improve at smothering the sigh

Sheena Blackhall

# I Feel Your Absence

I feel your absence when the crickets chirp  
When thrushes trill their woody serenade

I feel your absence when the larches creak  
And fox steps secret through the mossy glade

I feel your absence like a fallen oak  
A not-there presence in my fractured now  
For Death has stolen the rose's lovely scent  
And grief hangs bleeding from the yew tree's bough

Sheena Blackhall

# I Had A Colonoscopy

I had a colonoscopy,  
Nothing did it bear  
But a cherry pippin polyp  
Atop the anal stair

I had a colonoscopy  
Nothing did I see  
But pouches in the colon  
Where faeces frolicked free

I had a colonoscopy  
How weird to see my bum  
From the outside looking inside  
All the way to kingdom come

Sheena Blackhall

# I Spent An Hour With Sylvia Plath

I spent an hour with Sylvia Plath  
Beside her grave, but she was dumb  
No voice cut through the heavy clods  
The words lay buried on her tongue

I thought how marriage falls apart  
How madness finds the smallest crack  
How kisses twist from honey drops  
To hornet stings, from Hell and back

A thrush speared worms with its sharp beak  
Where mushrooms rose from their dank spoor  
Like tumours from the graveyard's heart  
Her poems, undead, live on, secure

Sheena Blackhall

# I Wandered Lonely As A Frog

I wandered lonely as a frog  
That hops on two arthritic legs  
When all at once I saw a line  
Of pants, pinned up with plastic pegs  
Colourful undies in the breeze  
Cast off from some Dryad's striptease

And now, when on my couch I lie  
The telly's crap. I'm in a mood  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which often gets up to no good

And memory with pleasure fills  
(For once, I fitted such small frills)

Sheena Blackhall



# Iain Banks Rip

Beard, leather jacket, hair like a blown hen's nest  
Bespectacled socialist, grey-beard-sprouting Banks

Some visited his interstellar anarchic-communist world  
He called 'The Culture'. Others were stung by The Wasp factory.

His grandfather, trades union activist  
Gave him his gritty gene, his skating mother  
Supplied the facility to flow into bizarre regions

Boy Banks produced homemade explosives  
While little peers played with toy cars

After uni he hitched round Europe  
Jobbing as clerk, porter, dustman  
Wrote of murder, mutilation, insanity, sadism  
A charnel house of very Gothic Horrors

Consider Phlebas, walk down Espedair Street  
Join the Player of Games, sail with Canal Dreams  
Decipher Feersum Endjinn, its Scots and textspeak.  
Look to the Windward with Whit,  
Open your mind to the Song of Stone and the Business  
Dead Air on the steep approach to Garbadale

He always knew that the State of the Art  
Would end in the Crow Road,  
Where all men go, against a Dark Background.

Complicity with humbug was never one of his faults  
He escaped the Calvinist smit, a lifelong Humanist  
Graduated from cocaine to whisky, Raw Spirit of his forebears.

From Banks's Grey Matter attend to Surface  
Transition, which is certain to happen  
What form it will take, he already knows the answer  
Keeping us in the dark till our own ending.



# Ice Cream

Ice cream is cool  
As liquid moon  
It's lazy food,  
With no sharp bits to vex.  
Let it slip  
Off the spoon  
Over the small hot hammock  
Of the tongue.

Let it slide in  
Like sex.

Sheena Blackhall

# If I Was A Wealthy Man

If I was a wealthy man  
She would not have nagged me  
Like a terrier with a bone  
About money, or rather, the lack of it

My strangler's hands now hold  
A breast shaped cup. Its lip is silent

A heart of chocolate on my cappuccino

Sheena Blackhall

# Immigrant

I can't imagine dying in this land.  
The neighbours here have doors graffiti-red  
'Why are you brown?' another pupil asked  
'I think because my folks are brown,' I said

Out on our landing, someone's dumped a bed  
I dream in Hindi. I don't understand  
The baby words in English in my school book  
At games, or dancing, no one takes my hand

I miss the smells of curry, frangipani,  
The steaming chai at Delhi's teeming stalls  
The cooking fires. I even miss the sewers  
The thieving monkeys with their chattering calls

I miss the temple incense, the bright saris  
In this new country, ma wears layers of coats  
I miss the beggars, hawkers, the snake charmers  
The rickshaws and the tattered rupee notes

You won't have seen a cripple on a skateboard  
Or a blind boy, with both his eyes gouged out  
That's what it feels to leave behind your country  
A picture with the best bits scissored out

Sheena Blackhall

## Impossible Gifties (3 Poems In Scots)

Dragon

In a dark neuk o Embro toun  
A thochtie aff the Canongate  
A dragon's egg, jade green an roon  
Hatched oot a thoosan years ower late

The craitur hodged an raxxed its wings  
Syne kittled up an set its mind  
Tae scor the cassies, wynds an stairs  
In search o ithers o its kind

Tae Embro castle first it flew  
Inbye St Margaret's chapel bouer  
Caunles an sancts in peintit glaiss  
War aa that held the dragon's glower

It hirplit ower the castle hill  
An dowpit bi the witches' well  
The warlocks, knichts an ghaists war gaen  
Nae hint o cantrip, imp nor spell

Bi Brodie's Close, St Giles' kirk  
Traffic an towrist hashed on by  
The Street o Sorras, tae, wis teem  
O aa bit History's daith-cry

It lowped tae Mary's palace syne  
Thinkin it auld eneuch tae be  
A bield for fabled, mythic breets  
Bit nocht wis there bit statuary

The World's Eyn. The dragon stopped  
Deid in its tracks an drappit doon  
It wis inveesible tae aa  
The waukers in the modern toun

A steer ower at the Netherbow  
Gart the young dragon lift its een  
It pressed its snoot agin the peens

An caught the glamo'rie o yestreen

Intae a thoosan sangs an tales  
It stepped. They bad the dragon bide  
For fit's a world without the fey?  
As wae's a groom wiout his bride!

2. In ma Uncle's Cornpark

In ma uncle's cornpark fin the hairst wis stoked  
I hid in a shaif, a shaif fu o fusers an mysteries  
Wi a craa as ma ain familiar

The sun daunced ben the cornfloers  
As I cocked on my stibble throne

Whyles, a moosie squeaked, kennin me  
A princess in borraed claes  
Wyvers spun tales o knichts an hidden treisur

An auld tattie bogle, leanin ower the dyke  
Keckled deep in its thrapple like a warlock.

and Gloves

I wad gie a cloak o the wud bee's fur  
The wings frae a jenny wren  
Tae shakk the mools frae the yirdy kist  
That's happen the neist step ben

I wad sow the grun wi the norlan stars  
Reap waves far the burnies shift  
Gin I cud boo at the moo o daith  
Thon dark kist lid tae lift

For jist ae teet at fit's lyin there  
Ayont the world's sairs  
I'd rype the reid frae the robin's breist  
Beard cats in their Heilan lairs

Thon kist... is't stappit wi kith an kin  
An the joy at the eyn o wytin?

Or is it teem... an the mools a swick  
An daith bit a new braith kythin?

Sheena Blackhall



# Impossible Gifties (3 Scots Poems)

## 1. The Dragon

In a dark neuk o Embro toun  
A thochtie aff the Canongate  
A dragon's egg, jade green an roon  
Hatched oot a thoosan years ower late

The craitur hodged an raxxed its wings  
Syne kittled up an set its mind  
Tae scoor the cassies, wynds an stairs  
In search o ithers o its kind

Tae Embro castle first it flew  
Inbye St Margaret's chapel bouer  
Caunles an sancts in peintit glaiss  
War aa that held the dragon's glower

It hirplit ower the castle hill  
An dowpit bi the witches' well  
The warlocks, knichts an ghaists war gaen  
Nae hint o cantrip, imp nor spell

Bi Brodie's Close, St Giles' kirk  
Traffic an towrist hashed on by  
The Street o Sorras, tae, wis teem  
O aa bit History's daith-cry

It lowped tae Mary's palace syne  
Thinkin it auld eneuch tae be  
A bield for fabled, mythic breets  
Bit nocht wis there bit statuary

The World's Eyn. The dragon stopped  
Deid in its tracks an drappit doon  
It wis inveesible tae aa  
The waukers in the modern toun

A steer ower at the Netherbow  
Gart the young dragon lift its een

It pressed its snoot agin the peens  
An caught the glamo'rie o yestreen

Intae a thoosan sangs an tales  
It stepped. They bad the dragon bide  
For fit's a world withoot the fey?  
As wae's a groom wioot his bride!

## 2. ma Uncle's Cornpark

In ma uncle's cornpark fin the hairst wis stooked  
I hid in a shaif, a shaif fu o fuspers an mysteries  
Wi a craa as ma ain familiar

The sun daunced ben the cornfloors  
As I cocked in my stibble throne

Whyles, a moosie squeaked, kennin me  
A princess in borraed claes  
Wyvers spun tales o knichts an hidden treisur

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es

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The wings frae a jenny wren  
Tae shakk the mools frae the yirdy kist  
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Reap waves far the burnies shift  
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An the joy at the eyn o wytin?  
Or is it teem..an the mools a swick  
An daith bit a new braith kythin?

Sheena Blackhall

## In Barnardo's Window

Mrs Buddenheim's blouse  
Hangs with Mr Johnstone's shirt  
In Barnardo's window.

Mrs Buddenheim ceased to require it  
Last July when the fat peony pump  
That sat like a crimson spider  
Amidst its empire of threads  
Suddenly malfunctioned.  
A full-on heart-attack

Mr Johnstone met his maker, whistling *The Roving Ploughboy*, Courtesy of a bus  
which skidded to avoid a cat.

Mrs Buddenheim's blouse  
Is hanging with Mr Johnstone's shirt  
In Barnardo's window.  
They'd make a lovely couple.  
Maybe some day they'll move in together  
And share a double wardrobe.

Sheena Blackhall

# In Faldy's Wood (18 Scots Poems)

## Hen an the Rain

A hen luiked ooto her pen ae day  
The meat in her dish near turned tae smush  
I think I'll bide at hame, quo she  
The rain dreeps doon like a hurlygush

A hen luiked ooto her pen ae day  
Her feathery dowp gaed swishety swish  
I winna ging oot tae scrat the yird  
Aa turns tae dubs in a richt doonpish

A hen luiked ooto her pen ae day  
The rain dreeped ower her fathers braw  
It syt the flooers, the reefs, the trees  
Ach weel, quo she, it isnae snaw

A hen luiked ooto her pen ae day  
A lochan formed like a castle moat  
Ochone, quo she, it's the world's eyn  
As she watched her dish rise up an float

## Brock

The brock gaes snocherin neth the yird  
Deep doon in his secret sett  
He's cantie an crouse in his clorty hoose  
A breem buss for a yett

He'll dine on a hennickie's new laid eggs  
He'll dine on the hen hersel  
For a brock maun ett if he's nae tae dee  
Gin he's hungeret, the same's yersel

The brock creeps oot in the starny nicht  
Tae daunce bi the licht o the meen  
He's weel acquaint wi the witichin oor  
The warlock o yird an breem

n Parks

Buchan parks are teem o fowk  
Gaen, the kitchie deems an baillies  
Gaen, the horsemen, orra loons  
Gaen the grieves an bothy billies

Bare o clatter, sang an claik  
Bare o bairns an houghmagandie  
Buchan parks are teem o fowk  
Knicky tams an worsit ganzie

Tractors, combines, dinna fleg  
Breets..beef nowt are turnin wud  
Anely yowes are peaceful yet  
Chawin cannie at the cwid

Dawn tae dusk the quaet parks  
Niver see a human body  
Buchan parks are teem o fowk  
Makk a bonnie still-life study

Noo the tod cams creepin back  
Hawk's on heich wi talons ready  
Buchan parks are teem o fowk  
Frae New Deer up tae Auchreddie

Buchan Jackdaa

I'm black an I'm braw, I'm a Buchan jackdaa  
An ma reest is the tap o a lum  
It's snug an it's warm an a pairt o its charm  
Is the updraacht that flees up ma bum

Whyles I turn tae the Sooth, scan the weather for drooth  
Whyles I turn tae the Wast for a nap  
Syne I furl tae the East wi the win on ma briest  
Fin I gie ma nest strae a bit chap

Noo it's back tae the North (there's a storm ower Philorth)  
Fegs, it's nicht an I'm hearin moose- squeaks  
Sae I'd best saddle doon wi ma wing ower ma croon  
Or the morn'll be here in teem breeks

## 5. Three Scots Owersetts of Poems by John Clare

### In Hilly's Wid (In Hilly Wood)

Foo rare tae coorie cosy deep in boughs,  
Upon the bowster o a faan ash tree  
Slichtly I heard the ploomen at their ploos,  
Bit nae an ee can fin its wye tae me.  
The sunflauchts hardly steer me wi a smile,  
Sae thrang the leafy armies gaither roon;  
An far they dae, the breeze blows cweel the while,  
Their leafy shaddas dauncin on the grun.  
Fu mony a flooer, tae, sikkin tae be seen,  
Heists up its heid the happin girse atween.-  
In mids o this wid's quet, fu sweet tae be;  
Far aa the stooshies, that on peace intrude,  
Cams frae the girselowper, the bird an bee,  
Fa's sangs hae chairms tae sweeten solitude.

### Simmer Gloamin (Summer Evening)

The fleggitt puddock lowps along the path  
A moosikie that leaves its neuk at eve  
Pammers wi fearie dreid aneth the girse;  
My reeshlin steps awhile their joys deceive,  
Till by, an syne girselowper sings mair strang,  
An girselowpers in blyhesome mood still weir  
The short nicht weariet wi their raspin sang.  
Up frae ahin the mowdie's hame, the hare,  
Rins frae his chosen bed, an frae the bank  
The yalla yeitie flichters in short fears  
Frae aff its nest hapt bi the girses rank,  
An draps again fin nae mair soun it hears.  
Sae Natur's human link an eynless thraa,  
Prood man, ay seems the enemy o aa.

## Hornygollachs (Insects)

These hingers-on upon the barley's beard,  
An blythesome nippicks o muckle herd  
O play-fiers, that the lauchin Simmer brings,  
Mockin the sinshine on their glimmin wings,  
Foo cantie-like they creep, an run, and flee!  
Nae sib are they tae hard-wirk's drudgery,  
Smeethin the rose in sheugh, by dyke, by fen  
An far they flee for denner naeb'dy kens-  
Thy dinna sup the dyew-draps - love the shine  
O noon, fas suns may bring them gowden wine  
Aa day they're playin in their Sabbath dress -  
Fin nicht reposes, they can dae nae less;  
Syne, tae the heather's purple hood they flee,  
An like tae princes slumber merrily,  
Guairdit frae rain, an drappin dyews, an aa,  
In silken beds an roomy peinted haa.  
Sae blythe they spen ilk bonnie simmer-day,  
Noo in the corn-parks, noo in new-mown hey.  
Ane nearly fancies that sic happy things,  
Wi coloured hoods an brawly burnished wings,  
Are o the Sidh, in fairy biggins reared  
Disguised, as if o mortal fowk afeard,  
Keepin their secret ploys a mystery still,  
Lest glowerin day should dae thon secrets ill.

## 6. Wish List for Scotland

I wish fur sky-trains like Bangkok  
An eyn tae buyin eeseless trock  
Despite sic wishes, ay I mynd  
The future's yet tae be designed.

As ice poles thaw an scale their bree  
I wish for touns aneth the sea  
As space rins oot, an hames are tyned  
The future's yet tae be designed.



We've reived the lan frae breet an bird  
I wish fur a protective gird  
A bield tae save Auld Clootie's kind\*  
The future's yet tae be designed.

Skyscrapers tae the Heivens shoot  
Like Beijing, steid o sprauchlin oot  
Toun plannin projecks be confined  
The future's yet tae be designed.

I wish aa rubbish wad degrade  
On cassies, fermes an everglade  
Litter, tae history be consigned  
The future's yet tae be designed.  
An oor's peace tae aa I'd gie  
Tae meditate, or simply be  
A family, hamely ties tae bind  
The future's yet tae be designed.

Aa ethnic clans should strive tae meet  
In civic friendship on the street  
Despite sic wishes, ay I mynd  
The future's yet tae be designed.

## 7. Lang John on A Deid Man's Chest

The starnies up abune leave weel alane  
I reenge the Muckle Furth in search o gowd  
I skelp aff ithers' heids wi ma swack blade  
Gie ilkie bluidy corp a wattery shroud

Foo is it that ma blaik hairt lowps an stoons  
At clink o siller, glisk o gems an pearls  
An gars me hunt until the world's eyn  
Aa treisur? At its touch, each finger dirls  
Fa kens? Some fowk contentit, bide at hame  
Bake breid, clip claith. I hae a derker goal  
Ma weird's tae sail aneth a reiver's flag  
For I hae fire an brimsteen in ma soul

Sae here I staun, the bairnie's bogieman

Lang John, wi parrot an a cripple's stick  
Castin a shadda derk as puddock bree  
Wi bling an scars, hale pirate's rickmatick

An wis I bred tae be Auld Cloutie's fier?  
Or wis't a soorness in ma mither's wyme?  
Wis't Chance or Fate, or Natur grew me coorse?  
I neither ken nor care, I'm thirled tae crime!

Ian

Niverlan's far the bladded bide,  
Trapped in their youth foraye  
Ower fear tae step intae the licht  
In the Big Fowk's world ootbye

Condemned tae dwell in the hynie back  
Far crocodiles snap an rear  
Fit malagaroozin spyled their weird  
In the mists o yesteryear?

Ower feart tae raxx oot o the cage  
Is't better the hurt they ken  
Than the fear o somethin waur than coorse  
In the hames o grown up men?

Sarks

Cutty sarks are aa the go  
Cutty sarks an skirties skimpit  
Cutty sarks wi aa on show  
Lassies on the randan, primpit

Cutty sarks an jeely wymes  
Wummlin ower a belt that's nippit  
Quines stravaig doon city streets  
Far the win can teir peint strippit

Cutty sarks an hurdies creash  
Hunkit inno jeans an g-string

Tattooed like a swyty tar  
Ilkie finger thrang wi gowd bling

Cutty sarks an boozer's drooth  
Sinkin cocktails till they're steamin  
Niver heed yer witch's breem  
Doonin drams till they are fleein!

Cutty sarks are aa the go  
Cutty sarks in ony weather  
Snaa may faa an snaa may thaw  
Cutty sarks are worn fitiver!

ed Doon

Whan littlins coorie doon at nicht  
Tae dream o whistlebinkies  
An steek their trauchelt eenies ticht  
An sook their thooms an pinkies

In shaddalan, the dwaums are thrang  
Wi gee-gaws bricht an skinklin  
Wi pirates, coos, an skelps o ships  
Wi feys throw lamplicht winkin

An whan the shaddas merch aroon  
Dumb sodjers in the nicht  
The littlins hunker doon like tykes  
An huddle ooto sicht

Syne mornin cams, it's time tae rise  
They lowp up hudderie heidit  
Bit watch them play... uneirdly fiers  
Frae nicht are roon them spreidit

A bairn alane has friens unseen  
Ye're ower auld tae meet  
Fur Bairnhood is the seelie time  
The World's at their feet!

## 11. The Chinese Mither's Lullaby

A Scots Oersettin o frae the Irish poem bi Biddy Jenkinson

Pu in yer feeties, ma dearie,  
sae I can kiss yer wee piggies  
whylst I fauld unner a tae  
an anither aneth.

I boo a wee piggie.  
I boo anither wee piggie  
Heh- keek at thon ill tricket wee piggie  
that is aye cockin out.

Noo, noo, ma doo,  
There's wirk tae be dane here.  
Yer taes like feys' thummles,  
the flooers o the foxglove.

Like a calfie that's spancelled  
or a hobble on a chucken,  
there'll be wippins o silk  
on the feeties o ma dearie.

That ma dother noo skirls  
like a banshee disnae maitter,  
she'll swey in the Future  
like a bamboo on a winny day  
or like a saugh saplin.  
Sae I boo unner the muckle tae  
an anither tae eftir  
tae shape a fit like a lotus  
about tae brier.

Puir Kirsty has flat feeties.  
Mhairi has muckle baps.  
Peggy's are like spaads  
an Nell's like twa spinnles.

Jist bide at peace ma dearie,  
whilst I tichten yer bindins.  
I'm anely yer mither  
daein ma verra best fur yer guid

h Kitty Rankine, the Witch o Abergeldie

They tuik her tae the tap o Craig Nam Ban  
Its laricks an pines swyin like bairnies' cradles  
At the heicht o her beauty, a braw an skeely quine  
An aa for daein her leddyship's biddin  
Fur settin a curse on the laird's boat takkin him hame  
Reward fur his perfidy wi the hoors o France

An wis't her wyte she wis blessed wi the secunt sicht?  
An wis't her wyte she wis steeped in the Blaik Airts?  
An wis't her wyte she cud takk the form o a bawd  
A futterat, a kittlin, an rin wi the coven, her derk hair  
Whyles a puff o rikk or a cloud?

An at the hinnereyn, this puir French maid  
Thirled tae the service o the vauntie Lady Gordon  
Drew the wages o daith fur dealin wi chermis

Her banes cracked an spat in the birslin flames  
Like rotten sticks, her skirls in Agony's thraa  
Jeelin the verra marra o her persecuters  
Neebor fowk an fermers, jealous o this fremmit incomer  
This Norman lassie wi her eildtrich wyes

Doon the centuries, on Halloween or Beltane,  
Her skreichs wad flegg the deid, wad gar  
The leevin pammer by like frichtit moosies

an

Nae bairns war born, tho they war ten years wed  
Deirdre an Glen, a cantie, luvin pair  
Syne they adoptit, frae the jizzen bed  
Lachlan, a sonsie loon wi yalla hair

A gey ill-trickit littlin, up he grew  
The aipple o his mither's ee, her joys  
War thirled tae him, tho his vertues war few

Ill tricks cheenged inno coorser kinno ploys

The polis cam tae ken his yett ower weel  
Glen turned sikk an dwined afor his time  
A boozing, birssin, gey carnaptious deil  
Lachlan, ye nicht jealouse, wis bred tae crime

His bluid-sire wis a merriet surgeon chiel  
His bluid-mither a nurse, douce an genteel  
Sae wis it jist his weird tae be sae gallus?  
Puzzlin thon oot wad takk a Nostradamus

14. The Philosopher: tune Tramps & Hawkers

Inspired by 'The Philosopher', carved from a single piece of apple wood by the sculptor Sandy Petrie

The aipple tree stood at the gairden foun  
Throw sun an the antrin shooer  
An hauf o its fruit wis sweet tae eat  
And hauf o its fruit wis soor  
The mavis biggit her nestie there  
The blackie sang sae braw  
An the hawthorn hedge tae the east an sooth  
Wis the spurgies' thorny haa

An sic a tree tae a bairn at nicht  
As it stude in the meenlicht there  
Fin the winter sna blew saft an sma  
Could aa her secrets share  
In spring its blossom wis fitey pink  
In june, neth its boughs she played  
In autumn doon the aipples fell  
An jeelies an tarts they made

Bit lang years eftir, a stormy nicht  
Gart thon sweet tree faa doon  
An on the grun in the girse an weet  
It humbly laid its croon  
A widsman cuttit it up for clogs  
Tae gie his hairth a bleeze  
Bit a sculpture chiel wi a cannie ee

Saw wirth in thon best o trees

He turned it roon an roon aboot  
An wyed its timmer sark  
An mony's an oor he pondered ower  
Fit lay aneth the bark  
In the mids o its scentit, mossy hairt  
He fand the truth he socht  
An ooto a life o Licht an Derk  
The Philosopher wis vrocht

Dr George Philp, founder o Scotsoun

Ye've slippit awa tae the Lan o the Leal  
Faith Geordie, ye'll kittle them there, man  
For ye'll aye hae a ploy on the hotter or byle  
Ye war niver a chiel tae be still, man!

I jelouse ye'll be claikin wi Barbour an Burns  
Wi Fergusson, Dunbar an Morgan  
An garrin St Peter play reels an strathspeys  
On the trump, or His Halyship's organ

I've a notion ye'll dowp on the lip o a cloud  
Playin Scotsoun recordins abeen  
Wi Soutar an Annand baith cockin their lugs  
Fair bumbazed bi their poems o yestreen

Ye've slippit awa tae the Lan o the Leal  
Bit ye've left us a heich-biggit barra  
Stap-fu wi yer wylins o makars an bards  
An there's nane left amang's wha's yer marra!

Dragon an the Rabbit

We hae a rabbit in oor hoose  
She's frienly, thrang wi toys  
She twines her faither roon her thoom  
Wi aa her rabbit ploys

An fin she's raged, she steeks her een  
Makks on she isna there  
A nickum o a rabbitie  
Wi ribbons in her hair

A Dragon's come tae jyne her  
Fa's like an unread buik  
She likes a showdie powdie  
Or a bosie, an a sook

They turn the sofa inside oot  
(the livin room's the same)  
It wis a hoose afore they cam  
Bit noo, it's caad a hame.

Laddie caad Hector

There aince wis a laddie caad Hector  
Wi a tongue biggt for sookin oot nectar  
In his big furry sark, he grew wings in the park  
Tho his da wis a railway inspector.

18. The Lassie caad Lucy  
A lassie caad Lucy wis born  
Wi a neb like a muckle brass horn  
Her snot fin she sneezed  
Brocht grown men tae their knees  
An could flatten a park fu o corn

Sheena Blackhall



# In Faldy's Wood (9 Poems)

## In Faldy's Wood

The little tree in Faldy's wood  
Holds up its waving arms  
For morning with its pearls of dew  
To string with water charms

At dusk amongst the quiet fields  
Where rabbits trim the grass  
It watches owl, a flying cloud  
Across the meadows pass

The little tree in Faldy's wood  
Has mosses at its feet  
And birdsong echoes round its head  
Like bells that tinkle sweet

## Fadlydyke New Year

Wind here can be bitter  
Turning chaff brittle and sharp  
Draining the earth of warmth

It carries within it  
The smell of growth, of seasons

Night has opened its doors  
Letting the stars stream out

How many harvest moons have watched  
The fields churned to mud  
The fields dunged by the patient, heavy cattle?

Wind snags in the thorn bush,  
Listens to the shenanigans of cats  
Fighting and coupling under the webby rafters

No-one is out there, now

In the lamb-shorn farm  
Just the soil, the steadings, the trees  
Holding it all together

Wind rushing and sighing  
Rushing and sighing  
Like a mouse's breath  
The fox, steps through the floating mist  
Rising up from the fields, as the earth exhales  
Like a sleeping, pleased woman

Cropped, polled, lopped and scythed,  
The acres, sweet and fertile  
Lie beautiful, arranged like a table set for guests  
Preparing the raw ingredients  
The moon's cold fingers, making the crystal sparkle

Pine

You weave the tales of the sky  
A seannachie, calling the deer  
To tryst and shelter  
Under your blue-green boughs.

Your trunk's a caber,  
Cracked like new-baked bread  
Each branch is a sabre.  
Your roots strike deeply down  
Capercaillie crusty  
Skin of leveret brown.

Twinned greenlings,  
Your needles cling  
To a sinewy, brawny arm  
A-sway with infant cones  
That bob, cork-like on the breeze  
A maze of candles  
Eighteen months a-ripening  
A timber Witan  
(Squirrel-red at the core)  
Afloat amongst pine-wood trees.

Each cone holds a charcoal shadow  
At its mooring  
Each small, dry granary  
Splits and opens its doorway  
Wide as a wing.  
The wind's a ferry  
Transporting each tight seedling.  
Your castaways meet the ground  
Like a shower of bodkins  
Pine, you are rough to touch  
As an unshaved cheek  
With rhythms taut and true  
As a fiddler's bow  
You smell of cloudy moorland  
Dark and mist and snow  
Ochon ochrie, it's sad I am  
To be far from you this night.  
I would never change you  
Not for a thousand willows

The Cabbage Song:

Tune: If it wisna for the Wark o the Weavers

Chorus:

Cabbages are vegetables you grow them in the ground  
They're cheap and they're nutritious and they're very easy found  
And lots of healthy vitamins they give you for a pound  
And around the world they're used in many dishes

In Korea there is Kimchi, in Romania Sarmala  
In Germany there's sauerkraut, as well as coleslaw  
In Poland there's golumpi made with relish by your ma  
Oh the caggage is as good as loaves and fishes

There's bubble and squeak in Britain, there's soups and casseroles  
There's German Borscht and stir fry and salad strips in bowls  
The worms they really love them and they chew them into holes  
Oh the cabbage that's as good as loaves and fishes

There's Drumhead, Greyhound, Promasa and Wivoy

There's Meteor and Ruby Ball, Salarite and Savoy  
There's Grenadier and Charmant and there's Tai-sai, boy o boy!  
They're the cabbages as good as loaves and fishes

Oh the cabbages have cousins, you must know them very well  
They're the Brussel sprouts, the broccoli, the cauliflower and kail  
They're very rich in vitamins, low in in cholesterol  
Oh the cabbage is as good as loaves and fishes

In history the cabbage was a cure for many things  
For headaches and for heartburn for nipple pain and stings  
And folk with constipation claim that quick relief it brings  
For the cabbage that's as good as loaves and fishes

### Winter-Time

Tune: Oats & Beans and Barley Grow

Doremice, hedgehogs shut their eyes  
And sleep till flowers begin to rise

### Chorus:

Winter time brings cold and snow  
When some birds come and others go

Ladybirds and toads are found  
To sleep when frost is on the ground

### Chorus

Curling, skiing, skates that glide  
All is white the country wide

### Chorus

Hats & scarves and boots and coats  
Coughs and sneezes, tickly throats

### Chorus

Roads that freeze and schools that close  
Snow drifts where the blizzard blows

## Chorus

### The Deepest Rest

Slip and Slide and slither  
To work on roads of ice  
Slip and slide and slither  
The world's in Winter's vice

Up on a bough, a robin  
Is wearing a snowy crest  
And frost's in the wicker circle  
Of his chilly, homespun nest

Now old age is felt keenly  
When life is nearly done  
Slip and slide and slither  
Towards the setting sun

Down to the ancient mystery  
The Holy Grail of the quest  
Down to the grave's seclusion  
To Death, the deepest rest

### Winter Landscape

(Detail) Winter Landscape painting by Hendrick Avercamp 1585-1634)

Three men with hats like chimney pots  
(One with an emerald feather light as a plume of smoke)  
Stare at the ice where a golf ball rests in its shadow

All three wear ruffs like surgical neck braces  
Stiff, white, starched hard  
As washing after one night's frost

Their pantaloons are thick, their gauntlets tight  
Their feet encased in buckled leather shoes

Their golf ball is the focus of attention

'I won that round, me, Hans van Eyck  
Best cheese maker in all the Netherlands.'

Two skaters gawp, their cheeks fired by the cold  
While one young sledger stares  
Beyond the group

'Poor Hendrick Avercamp' the skaters said  
'Deaf mute and a recluse. His father  
Was a pharmacist, you know  
Hendrick was trained in Amsterdam  
By Pieter Isaacs, one of Holland's best

Such a gift! How sad he'll never hear  
The swallows in the spring  
Or sing for joy, like Jan the baker's boy.'

Yet he immortalised this frozen waterway  
This cameo of Dutch society  
Long after Jan the baker's son was toast

#### Sea-Gift

The first box struck the shore  
Whisky! It sat in the foam and spray  
A Hebridean rhapsody from Fortune  
From sea's lamentable brine,  
A given luxury.

Meanwhile, Neptune stretched out on a reef  
Scratching his scaly thigh.  
'They are due a smidgeon of pleasure,  
What with the rain that never ceases  
Pounding their chilly acres.'

Crofters came hurtling through the tide  
Wizened or young, with the great thirst on them

Even the scrunts of bushes, the sodden sheep  
Looked up from their pious immersion in the hum-drum  
Saying, 'ochone, there will come a day of reckoning

Mark well, there is no pleasure without pain  
Tè mhòr le beagan uisge  
A large measure of whisky with a little water  
There will be the Devil to pay e'r this day's done.'

Sheena Blackhall

# In Flanders Fields Museum, Ieper (Ypres) 2014

All day a poem's been following me about  
Poems are everywhere here  
Hanging on banners, hiding in books  
Marching from installation

One poem weeps to see the ravaged countryside  
A charnel house of mud and rats and bones

Another poem's struck dumb  
Before the Flanders' quagmire, its abyss  
Before the blind eyes of the gassed and shelled

And here are the shells themselves  
All present and correct  
All new as ninepence

The poem sickens to see that artefacts survive  
While dead men's sperm's unborn  
Spent in the tombs that riddle battlefields

Sheena Blackhall



# In Memoriam, Manjusvara

Supper

That Monday, swallows  
Scissored the threads of evening  
The sun lay warm on the wall.  
He suppered with friends  
A poem sweet on his speech  
Talked with his hands as usual  
As if sifting semi-quavers  
Or drawing a woman of mist

A thunderclap of an eagle  
Gate crashed the gathering  
Opened its terrible talons  
Bore him off in a blink

No time to pack  
Friends, books, all left behind,  
Travelling beyond  
The phrase  
The word  
The breath

Tara's Son: Tune The Parting Glass

There was a man went to the north  
Walked merry under the nesting eaves  
Brown frogs were hatching in the pond  
The evening, crowned by laurel leaves

And there was summer all around  
And peace of the low humming kind  
With bird and beast he was at ease  
And he was dark and quick of mind

But there appeared silver trout  
That sprang from some forgotten well  
And took him in its shining mouth  
Beyond the sound of bird or bell

And where green Tara's son had gone  
The rising moon she would not say  
The ferns bowed down a little while  
The lochan's waves rolled clean away

### 3.A Different Midwife

What you love most  
The gods will take away  
They took his hearing first  
The door to music closing, inch by inch  
His friend sat with him at the hospital  
As is the way at childbirth  
But this was leaving.

Drips descended tubes  
The brain turned traitor  
Anointed itself with blood

Replacing the hearing aids  
The friend said mantras  
Held the slack hand in his firm one

That final push  
Requires a different midwife

### 4.Impermanence

Woods close ranks. The towns are scything nearer  
Star shine, light years dead, illuminates  
Ghetto moorlands, enclaves of harebells  
Diminishing islands of meadows

The death watch beetle nibbles at the heart of oaks  
Maypole ribbons are held by dancing skeletons  
Corpses pour their features into flowers

From the alarming heavens, angels daily plunge into extinction  
Like drugged flies, dropping past oblivious office windows

Along the Nile, Arabs play backgammon,  
Their curls like liquorice swirls on sticky brows  
Each self will burst like bubbles  
Boiling up in the hubba bubba pipe

The searing sun falls from the scorching skies  
Bleaches the shifting sands of human bones  
Crushed by the might of mountains  
Doomed to crack and shudder into stones

Bird Man in the Willow

The bird man in the willow  
Looks down from his mossy perch

His tune is the flute sob  
His breath is as reed bamboo

Agile's a mountain goat  
He nests outside of the box  
A moon-watcher  
A skimmer of lakes  
Courting the full attention  
Of wren and chaffinch

ng

Under the porch of the kirk  
The step is spattered with droppings  
Seven fledglings cheep in a nest  
The birds claim sanctuary by right of breeding

The mother swoops with food  
Seven mouths like stars ajar  
A hungry generation and all need feeding

In the long grass a pocket of skin  
Has emptied out its bones  
A tiny hatchling, its hold on the earth receding

I think of the sons of egg, drunk by the crow  
Of fox's furtive visits

Of feathers, splayed and bleeding

The loss of youth upsets the natural order  
Only the old should die. They are ripe for gleaning

e

Change is the face of a child hard-slapped  
Genocide ovens where people bake  
The crack of a twig with its resin sapped

Change is the chime of a bell soft-tapped  
The hangman's noose & the burning stake  
Rain forest deaths with their routes unmapped

Change is Winter, when lips are chapped  
The blackboard sky and the chalky flake  
When to survive all things adapt

Change is a man in irons strapped  
A juggernaut making a city shake  
A rearing boat with its rudder snapped

Change is cream by a kitten lapped  
The churned mud round a trampled lake  
Change is a mountain, glacier capped

Change is a lone performance, clapped  
Raising the hood of the ego-snake  
A racing horse with the bit unstrapped

Change is a stone that's ivy-wrapped  
Grass that can cause cement to break  
Change is a corpse that's carrion-flapped  
A stag's bright eye that's maggot-cake

Sheena Blackhall

# In Potma Prison(Based On Survivors' Testimony)

The struggle against the cold is never ending  
All my warm belongings have been removed  
It's dog cold in the solitary wing  
Only a blanket between you and freezing  
Even the birds here croak as opposed to sing

Wake, when they bang on the bars  
Stand when an officer's present  
Don't toast bread, brew coffee that's a crime.  
Barked orders. Indoctrination. Everything jars

Kept alive on a diet of starch and water  
Letters disappear both going and coming  
And always the cold,  
Pervasive, deadly, numbing

The Major in solitary  
Bans all toilet paper  
Prisoners must clean themselves  
By hand and finger

To answer back, speak up  
May bring a beating  
Or worse, retrial... the weary years stretched out  
All hope of freedom fleeting  
Be like the three wise monkeys  
Dumb and Deaf and Blind  
Or you can kiss your liberty goodbye  
In prison, out of sight and out of mind

Sheena Blackhall

# In Praise Of Liam Neeson, Elizabeth Taylor, Orangey Etc

## 1. In Praise of Liam Neeson

Oh Liam Neeson, as tricky's an anaconda  
As well-endowed as an ape-king from Rwanda  
They should build a statue of you, a Rhodes Colossus  
For boats to sail under, heading for Cork or Knossos

Oh Liam Neeson, you of the Irish blarney  
Breaker of hearts from Shanghai to Killarney  
Like Moses, you could part most women's seas  
And bring an entire thé-atre to its knees

beth Taylor

As a piece of architecture,  
Elizabeth Taylor was like a colossal house  
The distance between her inner self and the door  
Held labyrinths which lovers never escaped from

The garden of her body was kittenful,  
Full of yowlings and scratching and hundreds of scarlet roses  
Mirrors would be everywhere, de rigueur  
The world would dropp by for tea and cookies  
Neighbours would check in and out between rehab visits

Come Back Kid

I was born devoid of come-back lines  
Destitute of the slick quick-fire put-downers

Not for me the lightning repartee, shot from the lip  
I smoulder in corners like a damp squib  
Pick at my verbal scabs

At half past three in the morning  
When even the death watch beetle's nodded off

I sit bolt upright, the answer comes, Eureka.

When the rug's pulled out from under me,  
I go all Humpty Dumpty, egg on my face  
Verbal sparring's not for the heavy footed  
For his pure cheek, I once punched a boy on the nose.  
The perfect come-back.  
My answer blossomed crimson for a week

#### 4. Orangey (1952-1963)

A Hollywood cat nicknamed Orangey  
Was mean as Attila the Hun  
The scourge of the great movie moguls  
That thespian son-of-a-gun  
His performance in 'Rhubarb' was gripping  
It won him a Patsy award  
When he co-starred with Audrey Hepburn  
He acted her right off the board  
He appeared in his own TV series  
So orange and fluffy and sassy  
He was moody as Marlon Brando  
In his day he was famous as Lassie!

Sheena Blackhall

# In The Asylum

A Poem inspired by the titles of the Tales by Guy de Maupassant

You'll see them abandoned in back wards  
It may be hinted they're off on a country excursion  
Not part of a humble drama  
A family's secret

Insanity may come as a coup d'etat  
A cremation of memories and selves

Patients flit like ghosts along the corridors  
For madness is the mother of monsters

Confessions, recollections  
May be sparked by a quiet whisper  
The whimsy of a shadow on the wall

They are all at sea,  
Circling the ward like the drowned  
Who remain unburied  
Released, they account for suicides  
Beggars, drifters, swamped by the currents  
Of living in the world

What is sanity?  
How long is a piece of string?

Sheena Blackhall



## In The Botanical Gardens, Kandy

Come and snap the scorpion! Quick, Madame!  
Rupee and picture do an instant trade  
The tourist scorpion always on parade  
Park keeper's park to supplement his pay.

Lovers hold hands and kiss  
In this pleasure gardens of queens  
The Mahaweli river skirts around.

Hungover monkeys, comatose with heat  
Slump over branches, toes and tails down dangling  
Their leader topples a bin, prises the lid ajar  
Then disappears inside this leavings-larder  
For take-aways to feed his screeching tribe.

Fruit bats drip from the fig trees looking furtive.  
Deep in the shade of bushes I almost touch  
A spider, like a breast-brooch made by Cartier  
Deadly as napalm, shining in its web

Sheena Blackhall

# In The Channel Tunnel

It takes 35 minutes to travel the Channel Tunnel  
24 miles under murky fathoms of deep  
Napoleon would have loved this foxy link

Not wishing to ruin nearby Shakespeare Cliff  
Men, from its waste, erected Samphire Hoe,  
Seeded with wildflowers, a recreation site.

The Chunnel may host invasions, welcome rabies,  
Illegal immigrants wishing a slice of the pie  
That is crumbling, the Welfare State

Now I am sampling this highway for migrants, merchants,  
Pirates, policemen, from Dover, Kent and Plymouth  
Normandy and Flanders, Calais and wines

I close my eyes in the capsule of the train  
As giant conger eels, blue sharks, glide overhead

Wrecks groan on the sea bed, white boned mackerel  
Drowned men turn like driftwood in the waves  
I think of miners, tremors, shafts collapsing  
The tin walls of the train speed on regardless□

Sheena Blackhall

# In The Country

ng Through

The purple heather's paling, the bracken's bronzed  
The Bens are brewing a mist for the forest's floor  
And I pass like a wraith through the glens with my two companions  
Treading the footsteps of travellers gone before

Tulloch, the Templar land ploughed by Nathalan  
Ballaterach, lodged in the child Byron's heart  
The Quoich, where Scottish chieftains planned rebellion  
This is a land where great endeavours start

The purple heather is paling, the bracken is bronzed  
The Bens are brewing a mist, the fine rain spitting  
And I pass like a wraith through the glens with my two companions  
Treading the footsteps of travellers gone before

Lady Diana, dead in a Paris tunnel  
Chaplin, King of the silent silver screen  
Stevenson, master poet and storyteller  
Woven in Ballochbuie's forest scene  
The pines are cool, the wildcat's ways are secret  
Sudden, a deer bolts out from the windy wet  
The car brakes slam, it flees, with red heart thudding  
So light the scales of life and death are set

Trip Home

The carriage hurtles on to darkening skies  
A red bull paws the ground of his green empire  
Bovine Napoleon. His breath looks sulphurous

Waves like steeplechasers leap the tide  
Whitely rearing and plunging to the coast  
A gull flies off on a highly pressing engagement  
Over a cyclist, pedalling for pleasure

Rowans like blood beads spatter verge and woods

A buzzard scans a field of grain for lunch  
Fast food- a rabbit take-way, its flight like fire

Wind-farms winnow the clouds on the horizon  
Here and there cliffs dropp to crazy paving  
Blue marbled waters sliding over deeps

In Perth, meth addicts queue up for their scripts  
Their benefits, their bag of reduced shopping  
Women pluck clothes from a clothesline  
A sparrow hops across from peg to peg.

In the Tay, the murky undertow of currents  
Shuttlecock fish from reed to reed and back  
Sun shines its searchlights into Angus corries  
A heron stands in the mud flats at Montrose  
Like a kirk steeple. Waiting to spear a fish  
A crow sits on a street lamp, feathered mugger

Through this rural idyll a ladette  
F's & C's, too drunk to stand to pee  
A girls' day out, all thirty-ish and plastered  
The WC receives her with a groan  
Stonehaven under moonlight, cold and dreich  
And how they drag, those final chugging miles  
The train slides on across the shining river  
Sparkled with stars, the darling of my city  
Wearily up the dank steps from the Green  
To bus, to home, to bed, to sleep, to dreams  
Of the dear dead, rising from narrow graves  
Walking towards me, smiling, arms outstretched.

r of Pearl

Mother of pearl  
Shell with an angel's membrane  
Pink and silver sheen

Heron

Motionless heron

Grey mist rolls off river  
Heron does not stir

's Court Room

Black crow pleads guilty  
Crimson gash is evidence  
Flies clinch the verdict

Sheena Blackhall

# In The Interests Of Democracy

In the interests of democracy, the world should be flat  
To remove the threat of floods  
People at the North & South poles  
Can semaphore each other like happy penguins

A safety wall should be built around the rim,  
The contract being given to the Chinese  
Werewolves from Slovenia to the Ukraine  
Will howl at the same moon

The tides can stop their ridiculous to-ing and fro-ing  
The blood will no longer run to the heads of kangaroos  
Shipping will be alerted near Earth's end  
And migrating birds may require some safety netting

The odd Greek myth will have to be changed,  
And astrologers may prove difficult to persuade  
A referendum's being drawn up. Please vote,  
This is a major issue

Sheena Blackhall

# In The Middle Of The Night

In the middle of the night  
Hear the fretful feet of vole  
Fox has put a crimson sash  
In the velvet side of mole.

In the middle of the night  
See two claws unpick a mouse  
Night-fall owl has put a tear  
In the side of her brown blouse.

Sheena Blackhall

# In The Spirit Of The Khaki Tree

Nobody asked the crow, the bee, the clover  
For permission to bulldoze the meadow

Despite hourly bulletins from the flowers  
Of pollen deprivation, nobody heeded the warnings

When birds spontaneously died after the oil slick hit  
Nobody raised their case for compensation  
On behalf of desolate hatchlings, orphaned and unfed

Now our wild life lives in little oases  
A corner of scrubland here, a strip of railway there

Memorial plaques, they say, are in the pipeline  
Once this patch housed sparrows now deceased

City planners have eaten all the rule books  
Stuffed their projects with woodlands, gluttonously

How many nests do you see on the wires of no-man's-land?  
Soon, watching a squirrel may be an event, like a visit from the Pope

Leaves may become museum pieces, auctioned as rarities  
Prized by collectors.

But of course we shall always have plastic imitations,  
In the virtual reality landscapes of tomorrow

Sheena Blackhall



# In The Trenches

The whistle blew, piercing the gas and rain  
He rose to go over the top. A virgin Scot,  
A shepherd, not nineteen

It was a brisk exchange. Not lost, not won.  
Hun hung on the thin wire, too  
Too much killing to pause to bury one

At first, his mild expression did not alter  
Mouth, frozen in shock, eyes in alarm  
We fought around him, as he'd been a plank.

The second day his corpse swelled up and stank  
His white face went from yellow-gray to red  
Purple, green, and black, from black to slime  
The watch his mother'd set kept perfect time  
Though all had stopped for him in his clay bed

Like cattle in a bog, we tasted mud.  
Deafened by shell fire, shrapnel's distant thud  
The burial party came, gathering him  
Into the crowded sheep-bucht of the grave  
The blood rose on his brow like a ram-stain  
Again the whistle blew, piercing the gas and rain.

Sheena Blackhall

## In The Tropics (Habarana)

Left of the blue pool, the slat-bridge walkway  
Turtles rise in the lake like chocolate bubbles  
Bug-eyed froglets parp,  
Green knobs on flap jack lilies

A chipmunk two tables along  
Dines off German pastry  
Elegant under a beautiful rose wood chair  
Not for him the village dust beside the tin-shed shop  
He's tasted affluence and come to like it.

Ants have sent out scouts to fetch supplies  
Mosquitoes kamikazi into a swat  
Killed at their moment of ecstasy, snuffed out to a red streak  
Maitre d'hote, a crow on the balcony  
In full evening dress  
Bows approvingly over the hot tureen.  
Left of the blue pool, a monitor lizard  
Is monitoring the proceedings. His pop-out tongue  
Like toast from a black toaster

Sheena Blackhall

## Incantation (Scots)

Three times roon I wauk the puil  
Tinklin watter. Puddock sweel  
Inno memory's fikey pyoke;  
Stap the image, tie the knot.

Syne, fin hyne awa I gyang,  
Inbye aa thon sights are thrang.

Fa'd hae thocht that loch an knowe  
Cud set the senses in a lowe?

Three times roon I wauk the puil,  
Sun an meen an puddock sweel;  
Lest thon ferlies I should tyne,  
Cherm an chant shall mak them mine.

Sheena Blackhall

# Incident On The Hills

Late October. Twilight gathers gloom  
A seated group. A table. Someone lost  
Drizzling rain. An absence in the room

Walking alone has brought with it a cost  
Dark deepens, owls zipper down the air  
Cold rises, biting, from the freezing moss

A search begins. The how, the why, the where  
How fit was he? Was he the kind to stray?  
Police dogs look lively, sniffing here and there

The mountain rescue team maps out the way  
The helicopter arcs its pool of light  
So soon it flips face down, the perfect day

A slip. A frightening wait. The walker, found  
No body bag- safe stretchered to the ground

Sheena Blackhall

## Inside The Pod (Mri Scanner)

Inside the pod, privacy is assured  
It could be a futuristic coffin for an astronaut  
It could be a Japanese hotel room

The scanner screams like a dentist's drill,  
Like a banshee passing a kidney stone  
But yet it is warm, and soothing  
Like a dog-eared teddy

I imagine I am staying in Tokyo  
I imagine I am staying in a capsule  
I have removed my outdoor clothes and footwear

There is an etiquette to be observed  
'Are you comfortable?' the medical aide inquires.  
'Yes thank you,' I reply, not wishing to disappoint

It would be unmannerly to fart during the scan  
In Japan, if you lie down immediately after eating  
Folk say you'll turn into a cow

In the scanner I feel quite cow-like  
Like a beached Friesian, enjoying a summer meadow

They have removed my denture, my watch, my identity  
But left me my Buddhist woven bracelet  
Blessed by a Saigon monk  
So I know I'll come to no harm

The scanner will eject me, like a spat out pandrop  
Into the wheeze and grunt of the hospital's breezy entrance

Sheena Blackhall

# Interlopers

Two tables along  
From two Dutch lovers whispering  
And a housemaid pushing a broom,  
Three sparrows hoop round a menu.

A flea-bitten dog climbs onto a seat,  
Not ordering,  
Lolling abundantly.

This is not reciprocal.  
I do not perch on sparrow's branch,  
Or slouch in the brown dog's kennel.

Moreover,  
Not content with  
Patronising the eatery,  
Even now  
Three sparrows are hopping about this page,  
The flea-bitten dog is lolling across this poem.

Sheena Blackhall

# Jacob's Ladder

Debating in a Small Aeroplane Garden  
Jacob's ladder soars from bins and shop-fronts.  
Masonic angels wearing bover boots  
Working the day shift, clip the beanstalk trellis  
That hugs the sides of misty steps,  
Dusted by night squad angels' dusky wings.

Such a ladder  
(a spiritual Forth Road Bridge  
In constant need of repair)  
Symbolically ferries  
Storybook Giants,  
Jacks, Knaves, Aces, Kings,  
Discarded heroes,  
Mourned (and unmourned) lovers,  
And penguins who ascend its heights with hoists.

This tower of fable  
This Babel of to-ings and fro-ings  
Doesn't teeter like Pisa,  
No Rapunzel's hair hangs from it.

What's there?  
What's up at the ladder top?  
Iron-shuttered bookies?  
Urban terrorists masking pots of tea?  
A tiger picking its teeth with a pheasant's feather?

What's the climate like?  
Is the weather fair or stormy?  
Is there a Fast Food Palace serving loaves and fishes?  
Are there security angels to oust intruders,  
Illegal imps and demon asylum seekers?  
The ladder is ancient.  
At its rickety feet Dragons and skinheads sleep,  
Palaces tumble, myths abandoned weep.

Sheena Blackhall

# Jacob's Ladder, Sidmouth, Noon

It's hot as a blacksmith's forge.  
A Union Jack droops at the end of its tether,  
A sloughed skin.

Scallop-shell indents  
Of fingers toying with architecture  
Belong to the Lord of the sandcastle.

Ancient slots in the rocks  
Fill with today's Channel.  
The sea is wide and blue.  
Everyone faces the water  
As if expecting Neptune  
To step ashore, bringing a lobster grill on a silver tray,  
With lemon sorbet for afters.

A little girl, her bum two scoops of flour,  
Looks down surprised  
At two new sea-spray anklets;  
Curtains of flaxen hair dropp round her cheeks

Half boy, half fish,  
Up to his belly button in delight,  
A splashing toddler tries to quell the ocean.

It is on its best behaviour,  
It is showing its Sunday face

When bells and drums fall silent in their cases,  
When pipes and fiddles return to reeds and staves,  
When night shuts evening's eye, down Jacob's ladder  
Will Moon send pearls and silver into the waves  
To hire the piper who plays a lullaby,  
Soft and gentle as wings that hush and hover,  
Cool as milk that slips down a girl's white thigh  
An hour after the act of passion's over?

Sheena Blackhall



# Jane Eyre And Mr Rochester

Jane Eyre and Mr Rochester  
Like Buttons at the Dorchester  
She's famed from York and Manchester  
There is no greater love, is there!

For she was poor and honest, sir  
And not the kind to sin, not her  
Unbending as a Douglas fir  
Which set his lusty fires astir

And now ask any connoisseur  
Of romance, they will all concur  
The love tale that makes matrons purr's  
Jane Eyre and Mr Rochester.

Sheena Blackhall

# Jane Russell's Popped Her Bra Straps

Jane Russell's popped her bra straps at 89  
She'd her footprints placed in Grauman's Chinese Theatre  
She was a pin up for World War Two GIs  
She married to a Yankee football quarterback  
She formed a singing group, sang gospel songs.

'Christians have bosoms, too, you know, ' she said  
At sixty she promoted Playtex bras  
They crossed your heart and kept those pups in check

She was jailed four days on drink and driving charges  
Her ma was a lay preacher. They had a backyard chapel  
She led film people to gather for Bible study  
She'd had back-alley abortions in her youth.  
She founded the International Adoption Fund  
She was just a regular gal, and that's the truth  
Like liquorice allsorts, the ultimate eye-candy.

□

Sheena Blackhall

# John Clare's Stroll In The Country

Dark the clouds in the troubled sky  
Dark the sigh of the windswept trees  
Dark the terrified thoughts that fly  
Through a mind adrift in a soul's unease

White the moonlight on leafy boughs  
White the owl in its deadly swoop  
Whiter still, the furrowed brow  
Of John Clare fleeing from Bedlam's coop

Cold the fields that he stumbled past  
Cold his bed in the bare hayrick  
Cold his death in misfortune's blast  
John Clare, poet and lunatic.

Sheena Blackhall

# John Lennon (1940-1980)

Every man has a woman who loves him  
He was a big hit with wife number one  
They were married on borrowed time

Imagine Instant Karma  
Starting Over  
John & Yoko

Then came the old story  
Cold Turkey  
Crippled Inside

No more mind games  
Hoping for the luck of the Irish  
In New York City  
Glitter of steel and glass

On global TV screens around the world  
We sat watching the wheels fall off  
End of an era, within earshot of his death  
The juggernaut that was Lennon  
Peace maker extraordinaire

Sheena Blackhall

## John Mackie, Scottish Poet, Rip

Winter's the time of loss, the robber season  
Chilling the lives of creatures, large to least  
John Mackie's dead- his living poems keep touching  
The minds of others- his intense creation  
Rings in the ear, engenders transformation  
In any honest soul who cares to listen

He'd challenge subterfuge, cause men to listen  
Throughout his life, from youth to the sere season  
From Hippy Sixties, made the transformation  
From media star, reached down to help the least  
His warmth enveloped all the world's creation  
John Mackie's dead- his poems, alive, still touching

Black Widows. minors fleeing fear, and touching  
The very bottom, he'd make time to listen  
A Djinn whose life was always a creation  
In progress, like a soup his songs could season  
With wit, compassion, so he could at least  
Exhort his peers to work for transformation

In holding camps, hope brings no transformation  
John Mackie's dead- and yet his poems keep touching  
Upon hard times, when Largest hammers Least  
Whoever let the dogs out- stop and listen  
He's joined the Ghost Dancers in this sere season  
His legacy, to seed Good in Creation

All life's a circus, but his fierce creation  
To cut through prejudice, fire transformation  
Came from a climate-shift in his thought-season  
John Mackie's dead, his living poems still touching  
The knob of things. His soul sings out- oh listen!  
Before you call the mind police in at least

Recall he loved wild jasmine, champion of the least  
Strove not for fame, but pure love of creation  
His audience, shell-eared, sat round to listen  
All underwent a conscience transformation

His impact on the world, profound and touching  
Three score and ten, he'd reached the prophet season

He cut through prejudice, fired transformation  
John Mackie's dead, his living poems still touching  
Three score and ten, he'd reached the prophet season

Sheena Blackhall

# Journey Of The Oncologists

'A sore prospect we had of it,  
The worst diagnosis possible  
For a journey, and such a journey:  
Into the patient's interior,  
The very heart of cancer.

And the woman terrified, the screens  
As black as death  
Where she lay stretched out, anaesthetised  
On the cold table.

The operation long and lonely  
Bringing us bloodshot eyes,  
Dark stubble, bloodied gloves  
And the life-line guttering, the  
Lack of time and resources,  
And the cancer malignant  
The progress decidedly bad.

A hard time we had of it.  
Working at night,  
With the song of Asclepius singing in our ears,  
Saying all life is sacred.

Then at dawn we came out to a  
Blar-eyed morning,  
Smelling of antiseptic

And the old white horse of pestilence  
Galloped away from the ward  
The outcome (you may say)  
Was satisfactory.  
We have made an Amazon  
Out of a suckling mother  
We must go again and again on this same journey  
Into a patient's interior  
Into the very heart and hub of cancer.'





# Journey To The Amitobha Buddha, Forres

A fox lay on the tarmac,  
Back curled like a hen's feather,  
Foraging paws stopped in their urgent tracks.  
Dead on a full belly -  
Snapped like a twig by a quick car,  
A punch bag thudded onto the cat's eyes.

His delicate pointed face was bright with dew.  
Round a narrow bend the road stretched wide;  
Autumn burned in flames,  
Where an eagle guzzled the wine of a stilled hare,  
His raptor's feathers flounced like a grandee's ruff,  
His great beak skinning the fur.

Under dripping shrubs,  
Through webs of trees, leaves fluttered down like snow.

Journey's end.  
A house of stairs and hush  
Where Amitobha sat, the sunset Buddha  
Above two peacock plumes, framed by a window  
Holding day's dead fires.  
Flowers in his hand, warm candles at his feet,  
The shrine-cloth coiled beneath in folds of blood.

And then, the muffled drum-beat of a tabor,  
The mantra like a pulse, lub-lub, lub-lub.  
An owl rose from silent woods,  
Opened his wings and scattered stars like jewels.

Sheena Blackhall

# Julian Petrocles Proctor-Jones

Julian Petrocles Proctor-Jones,  
Has 'Spend spend spend' ingrained in his bones.  
His cheeks are tanned and his hair, streaked-blond,  
Off like a fish in a goldfish pond,  
He rattles around consumer-hopping  
Where the cash-till's jaw is a yob pill-popping.

Between his ears there's a row of stalls  
And the light of a thousand shopping malls  
He never wears clothes for more than a week  
His pants are Gucci, his earrings, chic

His brain is soft but his cred's fantastic  
The God who feeds him is store-card plastic.  
He's a football star and his balls are high  
His one delight is to buy, buy, buy

Julian Petrocles Proctor-Jones  
Has flooded the market with yuppy clones.  
They don't read books and they don't need fables  
They open their jackets and study the labels!

Sheena Blackhall

# July In Arlington

A blood-red maple spills a pool of cool,  
The sentry's polished boots pace twenty-one.  
Green acres hold their buried treasure safe,  
Gravestones, white as cotton, fill the fields.

The sentry's polished boots pace twenty-one.  
The stars and stripes flap like an eagle's wing,  
Gravestones, white as cotton fill the fields.  
A leaping flame rekindles Sixties' fire.

The stars and stripes flap like an eagle's wing.  
Four whisk-tailed horses pull a glory box.  
A leaping flame rekindles Sixties' fire,  
Tour buses visit the necropolis.

Four whisk-tailed horses pull a glory-box.  
A blood-red maple spills a pool of cool,  
Tour buses visit the necropolis,  
Green acres hold their buried treasure safe.

Sheena Blackhall

# Just Chillin

He's sitting on the park bench near the fence  
Just chillin, like a scraggy Mina bird  
Beak-nosed and stubble chinned, bare to the waist  
His small pot-belly, flops above his pants  
The laces of his trainers are untied  
His old-man's navel sags, a sunken fig  
His greasy baseball cap is back to front  
He's dreaming he is once more Mr Big.

The park runs right beside the back street shops,  
Dog turds and lovers sunbathe on the grass  
A scrawny cat dismembers day old chops,  
Thrown out from Big Dave's fast food takeaway  
There every day, Old Jock mops down the floors  
Eking his pension out, and earning beers

Each noontime takes his break on a park bench  
Spits on the gravel, mouths off at the queers.  
He was a golfer once, a pro, they say  
It sort of spoiled him that, life off the course  
Was like cold porridge, wasn't to his taste.  
Refused to lift a tool, or push a pen

After a while, his fame wore out, like jeans  
Split in the knees. Now, nothing seemed to fit  
His name no longer served to bum him drink  
Wife, kids long gone, he rents a cheap bed-sit  
It has a bed, a table, and a chair  
A small TV that flickers off and on

He mops the floor at Big Dave's takeaway  
To pay to feed its small electric sun  
Divorce, the final battle she has won

Sheena Blackhall

# Kai Moon's Dip

Hua! The mahout's toes tap Kai-moon's scabby ears  
That flap like rudders in the slipstream heat.  
The jungle hits you with a wall of warmth.  
Elephant hide feels bullet proof,  
A bursting horse hair sofa

Being carried on Kai-moon's back  
Is to brush the treetops on a moving mountain,  
Each ponderous thigh creaks in its curtain of skin.  
Her footprints gouge out bowls in the ochre mud.

We reach a pool that is mosquito heaven.  
The horizon heaves,  
Kai-moon has stopped to drink.  
The mahout nudges her and down we sink  
Into the chocolate pool through man-high reeds  
Like a house sucked into quicksand.  
The water's now a handspan from my feet.

Burned charcoal-black beneath the tropic skies,  
This Thailand matriarch enjoys her dip.  
Her drowned trunk periscopes up,  
Snorkels and squirts,  
Swallows the murky water.  
I pray she doesn't develop the urge to wallow.  
She doesn't. Wet and dripping she emerges  
Into the scorching day,  
Swaying into the steaming, humming leaves.

Sheena Blackhall

# Kandy: At The Citadel Hotel

Like kingfishers alert and keen  
The waiters stand in mauve sarongs  
With cumber bands of white or green  
Ruled by the clang of dinner gongs

Small gods with their almighty dollar  
Plump Europeans brandish tips  
Gone are the days of tie and collar  
These days its t-shirt package trips

Firewalkers tread a trench of coals  
The flames leap skyward, red and stark  
To conch shells bellow, and drum rolls  
Like Satan's imps across the dark

The guests applaud. The lightning rips  
The water bag that holds the night  
On honeymoon, ten grooms unzip  
Their whey-faced brides, and grip them tight

This is their moment for romance  
Those newly-weds from Slough or Fife  
Before the treadmill of the kids  
The weekly shop. The mortgaged life  
The earth does shake in the monsoon  
Even for brides from Hull, or Troon.

Sheena Blackhall

# Katy The Crocodile (39 Scots Bairn Poems)

## 1. HOOLET

I am the hoolet in the tree  
I like moosies fur ma tea  
I ett their fuskers, tails an heid  
An wash them doon wi ratten's bleed!

## SUZUKI

I'm a firewirk fu o starns  
Tae peint alang the nicht  
Niver haud me in yer haun  
Or ye will get a fricht

Fur 'Bang' I'll gyang  
An fire will poor  
Hyne ooto ma bihoochie  
Vrocht in Taiwan  
Tae bring fowk fun  
Ma name is Sam Suzuki.

## ILIE (I)

Snailie snailie on the waa,  
Are ye niver feart ye'd fa?  
Wi yer hoosie on yer back  
Like a hiker wi a pack?

Feech, snailie! Dicht yer snoot!  
Slivvrin ower the watter spoot!

## SNAILIE

A snailie heistit his hornies up  
Ae simmer's day, ae simmer's day.  
Ahin a gowden buttercup,

Come oot tae play, come oot tae play.

Bit first ae hornie,  
Syne anither,  
Wis drookt wi rain, till,  
Feech! Sic weather!  
He cried, an pued his hornies doon  
A weeter an a wycer loon.

## ILIE

Slivvery, slivvery, bubbly snoot  
I am the snail frae the watter spoot  
I cairry ma hoosie upon ma back  
An draa in ma heid  
Fin the skies are black.

IES: tune: Wha saw the 42nd?

Fa sells ye minty sweeties?  
Far dae ye buy them ma?  
Fa sells ye minty sweeties?  
Is't a corner shop or staa?

## CHORUS

Some fowk gang tae supermairkets  
Some fowk dinnae shop at aa  
Some fowk noo e-mail their eerins  
Niver leave their hoose at aa!

Fa sells ye crabs an fishies?  
Far dae ye buy them ma? etc  
Fa sells ye claes an ribbons?  
Far dae ye buy them ma? ...etc

## TED

Fin I pit on ma jammies,  
an climm the stairs tae bed



I ken that he'll be wytin,  
ma frien caad Mr Ted

An fin I coorie doon tae sleep  
I'll haud him in ma bosie  
He's made o fur, he disnae gurr  
He's affa affa cosie

IN TV

Cricket!  
Foo mony runs wis thon?  
Can I nae cheenge channels?  
I canna?

Yon's nae fair...  
Jist cause I'm wee  
It's Dae this  
Dae thon  
Ye manna!

Ma, can I bide up late?  
Foo nae?  
Mrs Smith lets my frien John!  
I've washed ma lugs  
An ma teeth's clean tee  
There's aliens comin on Channel 3  
Foo can I nae bide up tae see  
TV, fin there's monsters on?

Da, there's a cartoon on jist noo.  
Fit wye maun I watch the news!  
I've deen ma hamewirk  
I've fed the dug  
I've cleared ma lego frae aff the rug  
Oh fan div I get tae choose!

9.FITBAA

Fitba is the favourite game

O Mrs Baxter's loon.  
She canna dish his denner up,  
If he is dowpit doon,  
Tae watch it on the TV screen.  
He canna aim his moo...  
The beans faa aff his suppin speen  
They're on the carpet, noo!

#### 10.MISSUS KANGAROO'S POOCH

Fit's in yer pooch, Missus Kangaroo?  
A cuckoo clock, or a pirate crew?  
Or a blue-tailed gibbon frae Embro zoo?  
A wee roon cake?  
Or a pirn-taed doo?  
Oh, fit's in yer pooch, Missus Kangaroo?

#### IE CHEETAH

Charlie Cheetah's taen the chukkenpox,  
They sent him hame frae skweel  
Wi a fever an a furry tongue  
He really wisna weel

That's the wye he's hingin luggit  
An he's wabbit an he's wae  
He's the faistest rinner in the class  
He's missin Sports, the day.

#### 12. THE BENGAL TIGER.

I am a Bengal tiger,  
Upon a fence I trippit,  
Fin it wis newly peinitit,  
An yon is foo I'm strippit!

#### LANNERS

Spottit semmit,  
Gollach's wings,  
Reistin far  
The harebell hings.

Leddylanners, Ruby reid,  
Yer a drap o fleein bluid.

Pitter patter Doon ye faa  
Dowpin, deinty  
On the waa.

### HEILAN COO

MOO MOO MOO □  
I'm a Heilan coo, □  
Twa horns fur a hat, □  
An a winnerfu view.

I dinna ett sweeties,  
Or skirly or stew,  
MOO MOO MOO  
I'm a Heilan coo.

### IN REIDBREIST

Fa's that stottin ower the sna?  
Robin Reidbreist, roon an sma  
Wi a fire upon his sark  
Tae licht his hoosie in the dark.

ROBIN SANG tune: Chick- chick- chicken

Rob-rob-rob-rob-robin  
Stottin up an doon sae reid  
Rob-rob-rob-rob-robin  
Wid ye like a daud o breid?  
Fur ye michtna get a crumb till Xmas  
Nae even a shakk o seed

Sae Rob-rob-rob-rob-robin  
Wid ye like a daud o breid?

Rob-rob-rob-rob-robin  
Wid ye like a crust or twa?  
Rob-rob-rob-rob-robin  
Wi yer feathers broon an braw  
Fur the sky is cauld an wintry  
An I think it's gaun tae snaa  
Oh Rob-rob-rob-rob-robin  
Wid ye like a crust or twa?

Rob-rob-rob-rob-robin  
Wid ye like a drap tae drink?  
Rob-rob-rob-rob-robin  
Cause the pond's like a skatin rink  
An the icicles are jigglin  
An it's caulder than ye think  
Oh Rob-rob-rob-rob-robin  
Wid ye like a drap tae drink?

## 17. THE CAT'S PYJAMAS

Ma's awa tae a hen nicht,  
A cluck o wifies claikin,  
Will she win hame wi a beak an caimb,  
Efter her meenlicht raikin?

Da's awa tae a stag nicht.  
Will he staun in the street an roar?  
If he jynes the breed wi horns on its heid,  
Will we let him back ower the door?

Da says I ett like a grumphie,  
Ma says I've the sense o a flee,  
Gran says I'm the cat's pyjamas,  
Bit I say I'm jist me!

ITY SHOP

Dalls an knickers,  
Lampshades, stickers,  
Kettles, forks  
Recycled claes

Blankets, mochles,  
Buits an bauchles  
Selt, aa gyang their separate wyes.

Scarfs an jammies  
Caps fur mannies  
Floerpot on the windae sill  
Jam jars  
Go cars  
Xmas tree stars  
Cast aff trock  
Fills up the till.  
Can ye sell them?  
Aye, we will!

## SLATER

Naebody likes me!  
I am a slater  
Ye chase me an squash me  
Bit I'm jist a craitur  
The same as a kittlin  
A dug or a moose  
An I dinna need  
Hauf as much  
Space in yer hoose! ☐  
☐  
☐

## 20.MIDGIES

Vampires roon the campfires,  
Heeze heeze heeze.  
Midgies, midgies, midgies,  
Dinna bite please!

Ging tae Transylvania!

Ging an takk a dook!  
Bit Midgies, midgies, midgies,  
Dinna takk a sook!

□

R THE TYKE

Far's ma lead?  
Far's ma dish?  
Far's ma tasty been?

Bowf! Bowf! Bowf! Bowf!  
I bide in Aiberdeen.  
I am the faistest, fiercest, tyke  
That ye hae fiver seen!

ER

Teacher's got a fite boord,  
Teacher's got a blackboord  
Teacher's got a stick o chakk, computer an a pen  
Teacher's got a heidache, teacher takks a teabreak  
Dylon Buchan's fechtin Jamie Paterson again!

MONY HOOLETS?

Foo mony hoolets hoot  
Roon about the hoose?

There is hungeret Horace Hoolet  
On the look-oot fur a moose

There is genteel Harry Hoolet  
Suppin denner wi a speen

There is scunnerin Hackit Hoolet  
Wi his oxters bowfin green

There is sleekit Hamish Hoolet  
Wi a doocot fur a nest

There is slystery Hefty Hoolet  
Wi her pudden doon her vest

There is Hooligan the Hoolet  
Luikin fur some glaiss tae smash  
Flew intae a double decker  
Noo he's Hoolet-Instant-Mash

There is Skinnymalinkie Hanna  
Fatty Hetty big an broon

There's a hoolet caad Horatio  
Fa ay sleeps upside doon

Foo mony hoolets  
Hoot roon about the hoose?  
As mony as the bubbles  
In a tin o orange juice!

Custard wis ma favourite food  
As muckle's I cud swalla,  
Until the day I waukened up,  
Ma beak an feet war yalla!

An noo, I plap aroon the world  
A skyrie, dowie, dyeuk  
Wi a neb an twa flat flippers  
That's the colour o a plook! ☐

HOG

Dauchle awhile, an gie's yer crack.  
Michty! Siccan a jobby back!

Preens fur a sark, like a besom's bristle,  
Yer as stobby's a dykside thrissle!

Fin danger's near,  
Yer heid's in yer dowp.  
Tapsalteerie, ower ye cowp!

the Crocodile

Katy the crocodile stappt her moo,  
Wi chocolate, chips an cheese.  
She raxxed yer jaws an she fullt her wame  
Wi puddens an cakes an peas.

She fried her tatties, she fried her breid,  
In a pan o gruesome grease,  
An efter a year or twa o thon,  
Her belly it reached her knees.

She cudna daunce, or sweem, or wauk,  
She jist grew fat an fatter.  
Fin Katy lowped in the jungle puil,  
There wis nae room left fur watter.

She grew as roon as a green balloon,  
Till she eft her last meringue.  
Wi a terrible soon, frae taes tae croon  
She blew up wi a bang!

-Room Bogle

Doon in the foon  
O oor Fite bath,  
Dowpit on echt black legs,  
A wyver sits wi a smirk on its moo  
Wytin tae gie folk flegs.

Turn on the tap!  
Sweel him awa!  
Belly, oxter, an lug!  
Ae black wyver  
On echt black legs  
Vanishin doon the plug!



FAWKES Tune: One more step... (An Action Song)

James the Saxth rode intae Lunnon toon X 3

Chorus: Far the Thames gaes rowin ower  
James the Saxth pit on the English croon X 3

Guy Fawkes didnae like the new king's wyes X 3

He crept tae a cellar unner parliament X 3

Guy Fawkes tried tae blaw the hale place up X 3

They caught him an kilt him doon in Lunnon toon X 3

Licht the bonfires let them burn, burn burn X 3

NEEP

It's Halloween, wee neep in the park!  
We'll teem yer belly  
We'll save yer sark  
Pit caunles inno yer twa neep een  
Fur a ghaistie-licht at Halloween.

CHY MOWDIE

Mollochy Mowdie howks an howks  
Till up through the grun his black neb powks

Mollochy Mowdie's blin's a bat  
He cudnae tell cake fae a fit d'ye caat

30.WILLIE WIRM

Willie wirm is tied in knots  
Because he disna ken

If it's his boddom or his tap  
That's heid or hinner-en!

## IETAILIE

If I cud be a beastie  
I wadna be a snail  
Fa humfs his hoosie on his back  
Alang a slimey trail

I wadna be a centipede  
Wi hauf a hunner beets  
And hauf a hunner socks tae rug  
Aroon ma gollach's queats

If I cud be a beastie,  
I'd be a forkietail  
Wi a shears on my bihoochie  
And an armoured coat o mail.

## 32. OCTOPUS

An octopus's oxters  
Are dichtit eence a day  
He soaps them wi a sea sponge  
Afore he gings tae play  
At fitbaa wi a mermaid  
A labster an a sole  
Bit every kick he catches,  
They can niver score a goal!

## 33. DINNA BE ROCH tune: Holy Spirit Hear Us

Dinna be roch be gentle  
Dinna be coorse be gweed  
Be polite an helpfu  
Think o anither's need

Dinna tell lees be truthfu

Dinna makk ithers greet  
Dinna be lazy, wirk hard  
Be kind tae fowk ye meet

Dinna be rude or selfish  
Dinna gie chikk ava  
Takk tent an ay be cannie  
Things brakk if they should faa

Dinna makk feels o ithers  
Dinna lauch at the weak  
Fin ither bairns miscaa ye  
Turn roon the ither cheek

IST

Dentist, dentist, ma tooth's sweet  
Will I need a fillin fin I'm dowpit in yer seat?  
If I pass yer check up, I'll promise that I'll eat  
An aipple or a tangie fur a treat, treat, treat.

I'll clean ma teeth at bedtime,  
Finiver Derkness comes,  
Tae stop the germs wi clarty buits  
Fae dauncin on ma gums.

Ching! Here's a pensioner.  
Wyte till she's on  
Move ower an gie her a seat, come on!

Staunin room anely! Step ben, step ben!  
We hinna got aa day tae wyte, ye ken  
Click ging the wipers. Rainin again!

I DRIVER

Taxi Driver, fit's yer fare?

Hurlin fowk fae here an there?

Taxi Driver gin yer late  
Plane an pilot winna wait!

R

Sen fur the doctor, my kyte's churnin  
Sen fur the doctor, my chikk's burnin  
I will takk a mixture or a great big peel  
Sen fur the doctor cause I'm nae weel

IE

Dunt, gings the letterbox! My, fit a thrill!  
Da got a letter. Mither got a bill  
Granny got her pension, Granda got a pack  
Sae aabody got somethin fae the pyoke on postie's back.

WARLOCK

There wis a warlock tried tae makk  
A spell tae gar the lichtenin crack  
Bit fin he steered his muckle pot  
A drap o rain wis aa he got

Till he can turn cheese tae chakk  
He's weirin L-plates on his back

Sheena Blackhall

# Keening For Morven

Even my tit was useless  
They said I had hungry milk

The midwife forced your face to my swollen breast  
Prized your jaws apart. Prodded your cheek  
To kick-start you to suckle

Always we were last to leave  
From the special nursery  
You, yellow with birth jaundice, me all fingers and thumbs  
Worried it'd get it wrong. Worried I'd pull your arms  
Out of their sockets, or break your new-born legs  
Tugging on your baby grows and vest

That first night out of hospital, my dad in slippers feet  
Crept into the spare room; both of us were crying  
Mother and son overwhelmed by the battles of birth

He sang us sound asleep  
You in his arms, me in my rumpled sheets  
The years dissolved- I was his child again  
His lullabies rocked us to slumbers deep

When he died, folk said you crept into his bed  
Cuddled his clammy corpse, before the undertaker carted him away  
As if your childish heat could warm the dead!

At our last supper, your eyes were starry bright  
You talked of writing down your life to date  
Its traumas, twists, from Memory's black crate

'Three nights running now I've dreamt of him  
My granda, ' you remarked

Later, I found you lifeless in the dark  
And thought of slippers feet and lullabies  
The way my father held you, like an Ark.



# Kesson Country

The dark land of the farm lies buried under snow  
Glittering like mica, black trees in the sun  
Cast long blue shadows

Kesson country, where Jessie Grant McDonald  
Born in a Highland workhouse  
Came, via a Skene orphanage,  
Cornhill Asylum and marriage  
To drudge as a cottar's wife

Winter has made for the earth  
A quilt of frost, bare but beautiful  
Needing nor seeking any ornamentation

A lone bird trills in a thorn  
It is peaceful as the grave

After the cries of troubled souls  
In the locked wards of the town  
After the squalid grunts of her mother's  
Clients, coupling in an Elgin slum

The dark lands by Fyvie, empty and cool  
Lay in her mind like a balm, an outstretched virgin  
Untouched, pristine and calm

Sheena Blackhall

## Kilmainham Jail (1796-1924)

Producers' heaven, that's Kilmainham jail  
Five famous films made here, give it street cred  
Its walls stout built to keep out storm and hail

Conditions must have made the strongest quail  
Where prisoners lay, each on his narrow bed  
Starvation rations, thin soup. Bread half stale

The firing squad set up the widow's wail  
Of Joseph Plunkett's wife, when he was dead  
Connolly, shot in a chair, he was so frail

Death Row- the slop out system, stench and pail  
Such images leave with you in your head  
Each condemned man, a martyr's coffin nail

The Irish Bastille. Lights out. Life in braille  
Feeling the cell close in, a special dread  
The last meal only, offered cakes and ale

Now song and history book still tell the tale  
Young lives cut short like sentences unsaid  
When Eire's tracks went off the British rail  
And patriots for love of Freedom, bled

Sheena Blackhall



# Kinaalda: The Navajo Girls' Puberty Ceremony

On the first morning after her first bleeding  
The girl bathes.

The girl washes her hair in suds from a yucca root  
Now her hair is combed  
She is dressed ceremonial garb  
Others work her body with their hands  
To mould her in the form of Changing Woman.

She runs to the east three times  
(dawn, noon, sunset) throughout the first three days  
She grinds 100lbs of corn over the ritual time

During the four days of the kinaalda,  
The girl stays up all night,  
Sitting with her back straight, her legs in front of her,  
She must not fall asleep  
Throughout each night of prayers.

She digs a firepit in the ground  
To cook the mighty ritual corn cake  
On the last morning, she runs toward the sunrise  
She blesses the cake, which has cooked all night

She offers the first piece of the cake to the Sun,  
She serves the rest to her people.  
Her people sing the songs of the Navaho tribe  
Her hair is combed  
Her body is painted with white clay  
Special jewellery is placed upon her  
Outside her home, her body again is moulded  
The ceremony concludes. The girl is a woman

Sheena Blackhall

# La Chanteuse

X factor singer on a soaring note  
Unleashes the vibrato in her throat  
Her hands in her white gloves are damp with sweat  
This is her most nerve-wracked audition yet

Her hair's been bleached to catch the judge's eye  
She's swallowed a small something on the sly  
She's not an addict yet, unknown and young  
Wait till she's famous and the tabloids come

That's when the old temptations beat their drum  
That's when the talent & the health's undone  
For now she's all a quiver on the stage  
The latest bubble of our air-head age

Who seeks to tread the thorny road to fame  
Yearning to see the spotlights flash their name  
How quickly famous starlets come and go  
Celebrity's a mirage in the snow

Sheena Blackhall

# La Leçon De Piano

Pierre, I am playing arpeggios  
Mama can't afford two lessons  
She bought you a football kit  
So you could kick and sweat and be a boy

Pierre, you're such a Gruffalo  
So jealous of even a trifle  
I'm sure you were adopted  
You're such an oaf!

Pierre, on you a music lesson's wasted  
Look at your hands, two nut-hard knobbly fists  
Whereas mine, dear brother are delicate and slender

Sheena Blackhall

# La Plonge

Pears, pineapple, lemon, orange  
All swollen, pregnant with sun

Piaf Debrun, bends over the kitchen sink  
Pours froth upon mugs, pans, plates  
Like a gurgling jacuzzi  
All terracotta Mediterranean bright

A sad tap leans over the rainbow ceramics  
It cries over onions and condiment shakers

The spilt milk is out of place  
In this olive and tuxedo kitchen

Sheena Blackhall

# Lament For The Raj: 20 Plus Poems In Scots

## 1. LAMENT FOR THE RAJ

Mither's Uncle Dougie, an faither's Cousin John →  
Ane vrocht in Kuala Lumpar -the tither in Ceylon;  
Twa hin-hochs 0 the Raj's - rump... the tail-eyn 0 its reign  
Milkin siller ooto rubber trees -the Fite Man's gravy-train.

Atap ma mither's mantle (Dougie's gift frae Singapore)  
An ebon elephant wad raxx its muckle chouks an roar.  
Three monkeys cocked abune the press: ane's lugs frae lees war stappit;  
Anither's mou wis steekt frae ill; the hinmaist's een war happit;  
An ben the hearth, on box 0 braise, far granny's coal wis keepit, Emblazoned  
wis a tiger, creepin forrit, fly an sleekit.

Johnny's keepsake? Twa braid oxen rugged a braise cairt wi a reef  
As princely's a pagoda, fit fur Rajah or Caliph.  
In the firelicht 0 an evenin, foo yon oriental breets  
Wided ben a bairnie's fancies, far the Real an Unreal meets!

Mither's Uncle Dougie, an faither's Cousin John  
o Aiberdeenshire fairmin stock, war eident an won on;  
Twa sahibs brocht up on sowens, cheengin kail fur vindaloo,  
Spikkin Hindi melled wi Doric on the roads frae Katmandu →

Oh, the schule buiks fu 0 mahouts an mongooses that I read!  
Foo I yearned tae cross the coolie lines far Jumbos trumpeted!  
Tae converse wi haly Saddhus, dusky Brahmins, warlike Sikhs  
In the jungles an the temples far the slit-ee'd cobra keeks!

Mither's Uncle Dougie. an faither's Cousin John →  
The nearest tae their Eastern airts I reached wis Foggieloan.  
Noo my quinie's pulse is quickened bi the TV's trashy trock →  
Foo she yearns tae gyang tae Disneyland (the thocht o't gars me bock) Viewin  
Mickey Moose an Donald, ettin Super Macs an Cokes  
Or tae traivel tae Australia, the surf-Ian 0 the Soaps!

## 2. THOOMBNAIL THEOLOGY

Yahweh an Kali →  
Hell's richt up their alley;  
Like them I canna... My deid-end's Nirvana

Krishna an Allah –  
Twa wheels, the same barra;  
Foo pit a face on  
Cosmic creation?  
I force-feed  
Nae Godheid  
Gie my seed  
Nae wersh creed

Nae deus  
In my hoose  
Nae papoose  
In guilt's noose

Karma an Dhyana  
(Born ootside the toga)  
Are my moral guidelines  
As siccar as tramlines.

Consumer-expressed  
Buddhist is best!

3. Some Scots owersettins 0 poems taen frae the Hong Kong anthology →  
100 Tang poems (Bruce Wilson and Zhang Ting Ching)

SPRING DAWN: MENG HAO-RAN (689-740)  
Langlyin in Spring,  
I tint the dawn;  
Noo, birdsang's aawy soundin,

Tulzie 0 win and rain blattert the nicht.  
Foo mony blossoms fell mids the stramash?

HILL-CLACHAN IN BLIN-DRIFT: LIU CHANG-QUING (709-791)

Blae Bens at gloamin seem tae raxx for aye.  
A fite hoose -even peely-wallier wi cauld.

At nicht, I heard a tyke bowf at the ice-clad yett  
My host tcyauves hame, in wind an snaw.

ZEN MEDITATION HAA, BACK O THE TEMPLE: CHANG JIAN (c.749)

First sklents 0 mornin sunlight  
Poor throw heich bamboo.  
I enter the auld temple, haudin teetle the path  
Tae far the meditation haa  
Is hidden under the floerin trees.

Braes an Bens invite the sang 0 trees.  
Images in the pul teem the human mind

Aathin's vanished noo, inno the hairt 0 the quate,  
Barrin the chingaling 0 bell an chime.

PHEASANT AN ARRA: HAN. YU (768-824)

Aawye's quate. Lowes burn i' the lan.  
The falcon-fleggitt pheasant  
Rins tae grun again.

As the tinchel slawly narras  
Lookers-on draa tee.

That his pouer micht bumbaze aa  
The general reins in his shelt  
Raxxes his bow... haudin back the shot.

The pheasant flees.  
The sturdy arra strikks it.  
Up it soars, heich, heich, abeen the watchers  
Till its reid finery an the fite arra shaft  
Arc doon

Reezed oot bi his fiers  
The general tosses back his heid an lauchs.  
A toozle 0 skyrie feathers  
Dunts doon before the hooves.

SPRING, THE RIVER, FLOOERS, THE MEEN: NICHT  
A Scots version 0 the poem bi Zhang Ro-Xu (666-720)

In Spring the river swalls abreist the sea.  
The fair meen rises, striddlin the tide;  
Watters bleeze furth the nivver-endin licht  
Far on the spring river, is there nae bricht meen?

The river furls ben fragrant flooery parks,  
Skinklin wi draps 0 meen, like beads 0 ice.  
Fa sees the rime alicht  
Or kens the isle's fite san, frae meen's fite lowe?

The lift, the river. Aa's ae perfect hue →  
Bricht, bricht thon lanely circle in the lift!

Fan did the meen first glimmer ower fowk?  
Fa first espied the meen, frae river's bank?  
Bluidline follaes bluidline wi'oot en,  
Seein the same river, keekin at thon same meen.

Dis onybody ken fa the meen wytes fur?  
We anely spy the river, lang an ripplin...  
A skirp 0 cloud is dauchlin in the lift.

Fit hame this nicht his tint a gangrel,  
Lowsed upon the tide?  
Upon fit lanely wummin's reef  
Dis the meen shine ower?

Peetifu, the licht playin on the hoose,  
Meevin ower the dresser 0 ane left ahin.  
Eesless, tae caa it aff the washin  
Or switch it aff bi rollin doon the blinds.

Noo, we jist trace ain anither's  
Likeness in the rain.  
Gin I cud stream doon on ye, in the meenlicht  
Or sen a message wi the fish  
That, lowpin frae the watter, plunges tae the founs



→Or wi the wild, wild geese  
That soarin heich intae the lift  
Bide ay inbye yon brichtness!

Yestreen, I dreamt 0 petals faain  
Inno the quate 0 the puil.  
A peety, hauf the Spring's gaen by  
An we twa pairtit.

Spring's near foonert, catched awa wi the river's watters.  
Noo, dwinin, hapt in a sea 0 liftin haar  
The meen slants wast ower river an ower puil;  
Enless, yon road.

Foo mony return bi meenlicht?  
Settin, the meenlicht seems tae shakk the floerin trees  
Along the river, thrang wi unquate thochts.

#### 4. HAÏKU: JOSE JUAN TABLADA (1871-1945)

[Owersettins in Scots frae An Anthology of Mexican Poetry (Indiana Press 1958)  
]

Altho he niver steers frae hame  
The tortoise, like a flittin,  
Styters doon the pathie.

Dauds 0 dubs, the taeds  
In the shady sheugh  
Lowp.

The dragonflee, tcyaavin eident  
Tae preen its transparent cross  
On the bare an trimmlin bough.

Aneth ma windae, the meen on the reef,  
The bawdrons' silhouettes  
An their Chinee tunes.

#### 5. OUR LIVES ARE BURNIES: (Scots owerset o a poem bi LUIS GURBINA (1868-1934))

I anely hid ae notion: a pleisunt dwaum  
Yon 0 the burnie drawin near the sea  
An yearnin tae be cheenged inno a puil,  
A meenit tae devaul  
In some auld palm tree's shade.

For, quo rna soul: 'I gyang tribbled an trauchelt  
Wi reengin plains an owerloupin dykes.  
Noo the storm's dane, I fain wad rest  
Blue as afore, an wheeplin a sang'.

I anely hid ae notion, sae serene  
It sained ma sairs, an gleddened aa ma waes  
Wi the bricht lowe o a fire in the hearth

Bit Life quo: 'Soul, gyang tribbled an alane  
Nae iris on yer bank,  
Nae starnie in yer wave.  
Reenge ye the plains  
Syne vanish in the sea'.

6.OWERSETTINS IN SCOTS 0 twa POEMS FRAE: MARILYN MONROE AND OTHER  
POEMS (publ Search Press 1975) bi Ernesto Cardenai 1925)

#### IN THE MONASTERY

Ahin the monastery, doon bi the road,  
There's a kirkyaird 0 connached ferlies.  
Yonner lies brukken cheena, roosty metal,  
Crackit pipes an furled dauds 0 wire;  
Teem fag packets, wid-stoor,  
Runkled iron, auld plastic, tyres ayont remeid:  
Aa wytin the Crack 0 Doom  
Somelike wirsels.

#### THE BIRR 0 TRACTORS

There's a birr 0 tractors in the parks  
The geans are pink wi floer:  
Tak tent -the aipple tree his blossomed.  
This, ma jo, is The Sizen 0 Luv.

The starlins cheep in the sycamore,  
The roads yoam 0 fresh tar  
An cars gyaun by  
Are cairryin lauchin quines.

Luik ye: The Sizen 0 Luv his briered:  
Ilkie fleein bird Has ain gyaun efter't.

## 7. JET IN THE GLOAMIN

A jet in the gloamin lift  
Rikk like a threid,  
As the sun sets, gowden.  
The plane's ower faist tae see,  
The gowd threid dauchles...

## 8. MEY

In Mey, the trees staun like young brides.  
Their coronets are sprigs 0 green;  
The air is rich in merle's chant →  
Winged clarsach 'mangst the fragrant gean.

Smaa shooeries weet, in sun replete,  
The gowden-crested clouds are skiffin;  
Sangs, soft as oo, plump cushies croo,  
Fine feathered joes, the doos are gliffin.

The vauntie birk shakks doun her braids,  
Her marra's in the widlan puil;  
Yon keekin-glaiss, like burnished braisse,  
Far drappin, dusky blossoms sweel.

Hill watters clash, in wud stramash.  
Sic tulzies! Ilkie burn is reamin;  
In Spring's swack thaa, ice castles faa  
Like fleein hordes, the braes doon-streamin.

The wins are lowpin -swippert troot  
The mirled mavis gyangs a-biggin;

Tae keep her nyaakit cheepers snod  
Her nest wi foggy girse she's thiggin.

The Beltane dyew's a magic drap  
That swalls intae a linn 0 wine;  
Mey caa's her cairt, wi floeries girt  
Throw winter's yett, the sonsie quine!

## UFO

The UFO cam furlin doon  
We're sure that it hailed frae Mars  
Tho Davie said twis a Northern Licht  
Or ain 0 thon sheetin stars.

It hovered atop the cloud awhile  
Abeen the steeple an kirk  
Syne hyne ootower the clouds it flew  
Ayont the nicht's pit-mirk.

Hard teetle the Milky Way it gaed  
Far aa the sternies steer  
Ahin the meen an anent the sun  
Awa frae the Eird's mineer.

Yonner it bedd fur a meenit or twa  
Bit fegs, it cudna saddle!  
Ootby the meen wi its space debris  
(A meteor, shuttle, an rockets three)  
It drapped like a bairnie's rattle.

Forrit it breenged, along an ben,  
Throw the riggin 0 the nicht  
Its lichts blinked aff an its lichts blinked on  
Twis seen frae Venus an throw Strathdon  
In the mids 0 Saturn it briered an shone  
An heich ower the glacks 0 Gight.

Doon it fussed aneth a loch  
Ablow derk pike an troot  
It lay at the fit 0 the murky waves

Like a muckle fat cheroot.

Laigh at the boddom it wadna bide  
Bit inno the tide it sprang  
Upwirds ooto the dubby loch  
It floatit abeen the stirkie's troch  
As licht as a fite meringue.

Aside the playgrun, astride the schule,  
Inbye the classies it wannert  
Inower the jannie's gairden shed  
It dauchled an it dannert.

Wi'in wir hoose we watched it gang  
As inno a waa it traivalled  
An Mary rubbit her een at yon  
An swore her wits wis raivalled.

Ontil a doontoun cafe it dowped  
An plunkit itsel at the foun  
Syne twa green men cam steppin ben  
An luikit roon an roon.

They birlid their lugs an they flashed their een  
An gibbered a wheen 0 styte  
An Davie said they war frienly-kind  
Bit Mary thocht them gyte.

Backwise inno their craft they gaed →  
Twa wee men gyaun haikin  
Back tae the sterny firmament  
An their interstellar traikin.

10 RAM ON THE MUIR  
Morag spied the ram  
The upwird raxxin hoof  
Wis thon 0 a dauncer  
Caad tae smush on stane  
Caught in the lilt  
o a genteel, slaw Strathspey.

Drappit lace its fleece. Its ribs  
War strung like a clarsach  
The win blew coronachs  
Tween ilkie singin bane  
A requiem fur ae breet life at peace.

Niall spied the ram  
The horn, hoof an hide  
A cuttit knot o ripe reid ochre, cream,  
An ratten grey  
A glut o hues... Mortality's bricht palette  
The rich an reekin tapestry o rot  
Far peat an sinew mells  
The hinged skull  
Wi'ts crannies, neuks an furls  
A sculptor's challenge  
The horns war hard as shells.

Murchadh spied the ram  
A smuggler's coggie  
Caad tae crocanation in the snaw  
The precious wine  
Scaled doon the peat's dry thrapple  
The plappin pulse wis still  
Twis an auld kill  
Puir scrats o flesh an skin  
Far wyvin mists  
Crept sleekit oot an in  
Pot scapins, fit fur a crow  
Murchadh turned on his heel  
An strode awa.

Ceit spied the ram  
The quaet ram, fur naethin's quaet as death  
Far hid the bleat gaen  
An the glimmerin ee?  
The warmth, the leevin braith?  
Fit did it mean, tae dee?  
Like a shipwrecked boatie  
Ooto the world's steer  
Its anchor lowsed an sinnert.  
Ceit spied the ram

At the hairt 0 the winblawn muir  
An winnert.

## 11. GIMME-TIME BLUES

Gotta hae a TV  
Gotta hae a phone  
Gotta hae a holiday  
In Greece or Rome

Gotta hae a motor  
Gotta hae a shooer  
Gotta hae a ghettablaster  
On full pooer

Gimme a jacuzzi Da, if ye can  
Fur it's buy buy buy  
In the consumer clan.  
Ye winna? Och, ye're eesless  
A scunner 0 a da. I'd kill fur a computer  
Gonna get ain, ma?

## ITHER TIME, ANITHER PLACE

[Pollerttia, a Roman town built in Alcludia, Majorca, in 123 BC by Quito Cecilio Metelo]

Haein daundered yonner in the steps  
0 the auncients  
I dowpit doon on a bleezin hett  
Slab 0 a steen  
Bigged wi a when ithers  
Inno a semi-circle.

Jist ane 0 a raw 0 tiers  
Gaithered twa thoosan years  
Ago or mair, wi Roman virr  
In yon sun-birsslit place (A richt geometric race)  
In open air.

Thon Tiber fowk

Warna acquaint wi sleet an smirr  
They didna bigg fur comfort, bit fur grace.

Masel an a Moorish lizard  
(Twa daft gangrel gowks) shunned the siesta,  
Glowered doon inno the teem stage  
At the heicht 0 the sun's rage  
Wytin fur a happenin tae happen.  
There wis anely a cricket, cricketin.  
Weel, ye ken fit Theatre's like...  
Pure magic or a pain in the erse.  
An fit wis even wirse  
Than missin the Grand Finale,  
Bein a Doric pleb,  
I'd tint the suncream  
Sae I brunt ma neb.

### 13. THE LITTLIN

Mrs McBride telt Sadie Broon  
'Jessie MacAndrew's haein a loon.'  
Ma sez, 'Faith, it micht be a quine'.

'As lang's the littlin's hale an fine  
Fit dis it maitter either wye? '  
Spiered Mrs Mckay.

### 14. SPRING THE POSTIE

Spring, the postie, cam yestreen  
Wi parcels fur the trees  
o leafy duds, rowed up in buds  
Tae waucht on ilkie breeze.

Spring, the postie, cam yestreen  
At ilkie door he chappit  
A pyock 0 sunshine on his back  
His heid wi shouers tappit.

Spring, the postie, cam yestreen



Noo, breengin bawds rin gyte  
Lythe lammies lowp; splash! puddocks plowp  
An luv-sick doos cheep styte.

## IN THE TOUN

Her lugs lie flat.  
Her snoot's lirked in a gurl;  
A nicht-shift wirker nears.  
She backs awa ↯

Quick as a blink she's gaen.  
An interloper,  
Scaunin fur scraps, her littlins need them aa.

Ahin lace curtains, mugs o tea are teemed  
Curtains are steeked. Fowk slump in TV's thrall;  
Gardens are tombsteen-quate. Street lichts wheek on:  
A shadda, she lowps by the shoppin mall.

Dossers in doorwyes glower. She hashes on,  
Back o the Chinee, cowpin buckets ower;  
Powkin her fremmit neb mangst human soss,  
Stappin her kyte, for she maun ett fur fower.

Man's orrals feed her cubs. Their den's a drain ↯  
Nae mair the sweet, cweel earth, bi fairmer's puil.  
Her mate lies hyne awa. Last Winter's cull  
A Trojan horse o pyson his last meal.

Catched in cars' heidlights, see her een bleeze fire!  
Her hackles rise, her curved incisors gant:  
Tod in the Toun -nae pampered hearth fur her  
Bit kick an curse -a hounded immigrant.

## 16. THE HERO

[for Sgt. Arthur Middleton, 51st Highland Division; Ballater banker, b.1919;  
d.1947. Buried New Cemetery, Aboyne, His name is included in the North East's  
Roll of Honour]

Fit campaign did he fecht, far thoosans fell?  
I dinna ken, it wis afore my time.  
Far war his leaders? History buiks micht tell;  
Sune there'll be nane alive that even myne.

Faither's wee brither, mither reminisced,  
Wis musical, wis coortin,  
An wis quate -Thon twa three bars wis aa she iver said...  
Backwird at comin forrit,  
My uncle Arthur... studious, an blate.

Guns an guts an gore  
The coffin nails that haimmered Hitler's door  
Are roosty memories noo  
A fyew grey hairs explore.

This unkent sodjer-banker.  
Wis he braw? A warrior, braid-backit and weel-faired?  
His lugs cocked oot. His heid wis hudderie,  
A hame-ower loon, wi shanks as thin's a straa.  
An did this Scottish sodjer choose tae craw  
o martial strife, wi deeds o glory tapped?

He'd nae pech left in his scarred lungs tae blaw  
Fur Afrik's desert sans his oor-glaiss cracked.  
An aa the fiers that micht hae telt his tale  
Lie hyne awa, bi girse an heidstanes happed.

Shipped hame tae dee. Fit kinno victory yon?  
'He aye kept cheerie, even near the end, '  
Ma faither said.  
Bit mither catched his greetin unawares  
Crushed bi his weird, ower coorsely smashed tae mend.  
She crept awa... didna invade his grief -  
Teem platitudes bring sorra, nae relief.

'A roch hurl tae yer ward, ' ma faither myned.  
Ma uncle lauched, kennin ma birth wis near.  
'Ca-cannie ower the rig-back o the road  
Ye dinna wint the bairnie born here'.  
Ane deed. Syne ane wis born -Noo he's a name~  
A book wis Victory's wages. Tint generation, in a rowth o pages.

'The Lord God gies, the Lord God takks, ' mither wad mummle.  
'Snuffed Arthur's spunk oot, kinnelt yer wee caunle'.

A faimly poppy... sacrificial lamb;  
The airmy pyed his cross. Fit price, a man?

## 17. COLOURS

The Wee Fowk peinted the roses reid  
The pheasant's lugs an the cockerel's heid

They peinted the skyrie sunbeams gowd  
They splytered broon far the brackens showd.

They steered the fite in the calfie's cream  
They darted yalla ower the meen

Siller they set on the snailie's back  
An a daud 0 blaik on the hoodie's back.

They mirled the mavis, they strippit the brock  
They skirpit green ower knowe an knock

Pit blae on the slate wi a doughty dicht  
The Wee Fowk, makkin the warld bricht.

## 18. WANTED

Soo-moued, ringle-eed Jock McBride  
Is socht bi polismen far an wide  
An identikit 0 his coorse physog 's  
Bin sent frae Turra tae Auchenshog.

His teeth are nesty's a nettle's nip  
His pow is huddry's a scaffy's skip  
His neb is brukken (a caber bowed)  
His lugs are thirled tae the clink 0 gowd.

His broo is gurly, his mowser's jobby  
His neive strikks fear in the boldest bobby

His thrapple's knotty... a rinnin noose  
He'd stert a fecht in an empty hoose.

McBride is hard as Barlinnie rock  
He'd gie Count Dracula's bairns a shock  
His fingers, crannies an thoombs are tarry  
His claes fell aff the back 0 a larry.

His harns are crookit's a shepherd's cromack  
Hate in his hairt an a big Kilmarnock  
Stapped on his heid like a baker's bap  
He's a blicht on the Lan, frae taes tae tap.

His showders are braid as the Forth Road Brig  
His shanks are heich as a Nor Sea rig  
His oxters are blaik's twa bats frae Hell  
It's sure he's sib tae the deil himsel.

Wi his elbucks sherp an his ragnails teuch  
He'd howk a canyon ooto a sheuch  
His kyte's as lean as a Heilan stirk  
An he picks yer lock wi a rooshty dirk.

His dowp, behouchie, his dock or hurdies  
Are twa roon meens ower grim fur wirdies:  
Wanted McBride. Alive or Deid!  
Reward -Twa Tinnies 0 Best Shortbreid

## 19. THE SANG 0 THE. SEANNACHIE

The burns in Mey will sweesh an swey  
(Peat watter's sweet, mo ghradh,  
Fur lowpin troot an swackenin shoot)  
The Braes 0 Mar, gu bradh!

The Beltane dyew gars aathin grow  
(Birds, buds an breet, mo ghradh,  
Baith larick green an floerin gean)  
The Braes 0 Mar, gu bradh!

Ower Coilacreich hings Samhuinn dreich

(The burn's a shroud, mo ghradh,  
Loud keens the win, the mist creeps blin)  
The Braes 0 Mar, gu bradh!

Winter's a knife, a carlin wife  
(The bluid rins cauld, mo ghradh,  
The skreichin craw craiks oweraa)  
The Braes 0 Mar, gu bradh!

## 20. The Back o Beyont

The breets are breengin inno the Ark  
The muckle, the braid, the sma;  
Twa bi twa they're treetlin in  
Tae the Back 0 Beyont, awa.

Lowpity lowp comes the teenie flech,  
The puddock, the taed, the bawd,  
Scooshlin along wi the strippit brock  
The mowdie, tyke an bawd.

Sleekit an sly the sliddery wye  
Comes the aidder, softly creepin;  
Flappin awa, the erne, the craw,  
Wi the doos an peesies cheepin.

Teenie an wee, the bummer, the flee,  
The emmack, the gleg, the moch;  
The dyeuk, the coo an the snochrin soo,  
The troot frae the skinklin loch.

The breets are breengin inno the ark  
The muckle, the braid, the sma;  
Twa bi twa they're treetlin in  
Tae the Back 0 Beyont awa.

Sheena Blackhall

# Lazarus

Only a god could pull a stunt like that,  
Like plucking a plumb from a pie past its sell-by date.  
There are lines which should not be crossed,  
Lairs should be left unopened.

Death made living flesh is miraculous  
But also barbarous.  
It doesn't seem right... like trawling the night  
And catching the moon in a bucket, just for the hell of it.

Quite a show, as spiritual parlour tricks go.  
But what of the gape in the ground?  
What becomes of the status quo  
When the dead start shillyshallying to and fro?

What if, to your surprise the dead did rise,  
Long after time had chosen to erase them?  
Would you look them in the eyes?  
Would you turn and face them?

(' All things arise and bloom in their time, and then they return to their root.  
Their returning is peace.'  
The Tao Te Ching XVI)

Sheena Blackhall

# Learning Curve

Don't phone.  
I won't be in.  
I am learning to be a corpse.

Just now, I'm foetal  
A beaker body, with knees drawn up to chin.  
I am practising the ultimate in post-natal.

But when you're dead what happens to your head?  
Where thoughts roll round inside the skull like marbles?  
Do they leak out, like veins that have been bled?

I am learning to be a corpse.  
I want to know.  
When I am dead, where will my daydreams go?

Sheena Blackhall

# Leave-Taking

This is the seventh week of your leave-taking  
I am re-walking our happy places

The river is spreading out her fan of amber  
Her pretty illusions rippling like taffeta  
Memories swirl like the winged seeds of sycamores

Your dust is shelved in a box, beneath the door of the grave  
In the monstrous dark, I cannot reach or touch you  
Your few possessions binned, or burned, or lost

Each day now is a cloud, caught on a nail  
I think I see your profile in the crowd  
Imagine you running, waving, by my bus  
Crying ` Mother, mother, I'm here! '

I wish a crow could pick my mind away  
Make it a windy space like a dead eye.

My precious hatchling,  
Ah, could you only climb back into your shell!

Sheena Blackhall



# Leftovers

A litterbin of the past, one dented tartan tin  
Holds a key to a something no-one quite remembers:  
Buttons of Sunday jacket,  
Saturday's dance dress -  
There is also a red pencil, Braemar in golden letters,  
Stamped on its side.

Buttons, key, pencil,  
Have never grown fatter or thinner.

The buttons have lost their owners, but do not mourn them;  
In the manner of buttons they are quite hard, quite brazen.

One button shone from my brother's blazer pocket.  
Over the thunderous organ, his long, white fingers  
Pressing keys, releasing hymns from silence,  
The button reflecting the brass from altar and aisle.  
The other is incognito.

The key may have opened amazement's door  
To a china can-can dancer's jerky steps.

The pencil stamped Braemar in golden letters  
Ran a red light one night in father's conscience;  
Scribbled a passionate letter to a lover.

Leftovers, when we're dead, outlive us all.

Sheena Blackhall

# Leonard Norman Cohen

Canadian singer, songwriter, poet, novelist.

He tackled themes head on  
Religion, politics, social isolation  
Sexuality. He was the bird on the wire  
Tapping into the hum of the busy world

You want it darker?  
Hallelujah! Cohen is your man

This son of a rabbi, a famed Talmudic writer  
Descendent of the great High priest called Aaron  
A buckskin boy who wrote of mythologies,  
Sparrows, even flowers for Hitler

Look in the spice box of the world  
To find his treasures

Zen and Hebrew ran through his every vein,  
A thousand kisses deep.

Joan Baez loved his songs, a Winter lady  
A true sister of mercy to chant his words

How he could reinvent the new from old!  
New skins for the old ceremonies

Cohen is your solace if you're blue  
Everybody knows his prophetic songs of the Future  
His lyrics ringing the changes of popular problems  
From any street in the world, he writes of longing

Re-named Jikan, the Dharma name for silence,  
Now that the party's over  
Does he watch us now from a window in the skies  
This songbird, does he enjoy the sound of silence?

Sheena Blackhall

# Leonardo Da Vinci

His singing would have transfixed the great God Pan  
He fashioned a silver lyre, like a horse's skull

Composer of music, geometrician, sculptor,  
Designer of mills and engines, model maker  
Architect, draughtsman, painter, anatomist  
Military engineer and costume designer

Love child of a peasant, ambidextrous, witty  
Dyslexic and vegetarian. Keeper of horses and servants  
Bought caged birds in the market to set them free  
Studied planets and each herb's property

Four years he painted the lady, Mona Lisa  
While she sat, men came to jest, to keep her merry

In his room were reptiles, lizards great and small  
Crickets, serpents, butterflies, and bats  
And dead men, to dissect, death in his nostrils daily

And he loved bizarre heads on a pair of shoulders  
Would follow a man for a day to catch his likeness  
He made a lion which walked for several steps  
Then opened its breast, revealing a heart of lilies

He died in the caring arms of the King of France  
His protector and patron,  
Leaving behind his paintings, his true children

Sheena Blackhall

# Let's Pretend

I am re-inventing your childhood  
Let's pretend your bedroom  
Was specially painted blue  
With mobiles, night-light, music  
Fit for a prince.

Let's pretend  
You only cried if you fell  
And never from fear or pain, distress or grief.  
That everyday adventures were always nice

Let's pretend you never held a gun  
Were blooded before you were ten  
With your first kill  
That you never cowered from the belt  
Or ran away, stayed up till the wee tired hours  
Child-gambler, playing daddy for pennies  
Eight turned twenty one

Let's pretend that mummy  
Wasn't a sponge of tears  
That leaked out messy and useless,  
Not fit to raise a flea

I am reinventing your childhood.  
Let's pretend that mummy  
Didn't put you in care  
Believing the lie that the Nanny State knows best

Intelligent, musical, quick,  
A natural leader and athlete, the teachers wrote  
But all those early apples  
Withered on the bough  
Counted for nought

I am reinventing your childhood  
Indulge me kind ghost  
And all those other ghosts  
Who walk that bitter track

On torn, bleeding feet

The Past is gone away, beyond pretending  
Ah, could I take it back!

Sheena Blackhall

# Letter From The Grave

This is a note from the grave, stranger  
It tells you to live each moment full and well  
Take life by the scruff, with disregard for danger

This is a note from the grave, stranger  
My shout has receded...an echo, now, in a shell  
Love life, love now, for age is a cruel changer

This is a note from the grave, stranger  
You too, will die. Hark to the tolling bell  
Be you tumbleweed, or straw in a warm manger

This is a note from the grave, stranger  
Love life, love now, for age is a cruel changer

Sheena Blackhall

# Letting Rip, Knock

In an Irish Charity shop I encountered  
A third order lay Franciscan,  
Who let one rip, and said with Falstaffian charm  
'Were you after hearing that now? '

Oh, he was as full of smiles and wiles  
As a basketful of ferrets  
He was Ireland wearing its Blarney mask  
Hiding its bleeding heart

Calvin would never have let one go like that  
Too mean to share the humanity of a fart.

Sheena Blackhall

# Life In The Uk: Becoming A British Citizen

Where does the PM stay in London?  
When did Guy Fawkes plant his bomb?  
Which percentage of Brits use drugs?  
Where do Cockney speakers come from?

When did women first get the vote?  
What date was the Irish famine?  
What's the speed limit on motorways?  
When was the Queen's coronation?

Upon which day is the poppy worn?  
Who'd speak with a Scouse accent?  
When did the National Health Service start?  
Who is Scotland's patron saint?

What does the National Census collect?  
Are Baptists Christians or Jews?  
How often are General Elections held?  
To qualify you must chose!

I've read the book. I'm ashamed to say  
There's lots I didn't know  
But then, I've only been living here  
For 66 years or so.

Sheena Blackhall



# Lighthouse

The lighthouse stands like an Easter Island statue  
Staring stonily into the leaden skies

Wrecked waves far below on the shore  
A foghorn keens like a banshee through the gloaming

There is nothing sadder than a treeless land  
Jutting up from a bare limb of rock

This edge of earth is truly God forsaken  
Peopled only by wind howl and sea crash  
And the bitter screech of gulls

Like Bach in a black mood  
Overlooking a beach  
Where every pebble's a quern  
Reducing the world to shale and sand and shingle

Sheena Blackhall

# Like T-Rex

It felt as if it had rained for centuries  
Drips fell ding-dong remorseless, over the drowned fields  
As if summer had been deleted altogether

Even a pope might lose his faith in prayer  
The Thinker up his plinth  
Was pondering arks and floods

And then, like T-Rex loose in a china shop  
The sun burst out

Such a big thing  
In our tiny world of happenings

Sheena Blackhall

# Like Tutankhamen

Until I was ten I thought everyone wed their relations  
Cousins, or second cousins  
The in-house arrangement seemed to suit my parents

It cut down the need for wedding invitations  
All the family skeletons in one cupboard

One day, a friend explained  
That most people married strangers

How weird, I thought!  
How many nasty shocks might they be hiding!

Sheena Blackhall

# Lines In A Greenwood

Within the city of the wood  
The busy insects hum  
Two squirrels pour along a bough  
Like quicksilver. The bumbles thrum  
Fat shoppers, a continuum  
Swinging each flower's frail pendulum  
Chiming of here and now

Surveillance from the towering clouds  
The wide winged buzzards wheel  
The leafy canopy below  
Bathed in an eldritch sylvan glow  
Where sycamores, safety bestow  
And timid birds conceal

Three ash trees thole the stranglehold  
Of ivy's grim embrace  
The palmate patterns, liquid drops  
Descend from forest's chimney tops  
Twigs that cruel winter's axe will chop  
And leafy lives erase

A breeze arises. All the leaves  
Are chattering each to each  
Green saplings swish, great elms creak  
And all are moving, mighty, meek  
The rowans brush the robin's cheek  
As she flies out of reach

A lightning bolt has blocked the path  
Spilt beech and mistletoe  
But unconcerned the recent tread  
Of deer hooves on the muddy bed  
Of track with mulch and fern spread  
Have gone where whispers go

Sheena Blackhall

# Listening

Listen, he said,  
(Matter of fact, like discussing a shopping list)  
I'm wondering which is the best way  
To kill myself. Pills, d'you think? And get pissed?  
I've heard injecting air into a vein  
Is quickest. Hanging can be fudged  
Slit wrists are messy, not to mention the pain

Shut up, I replied  
Those who speak about suicide  
Aren't the ones who do it  
I know. I was there once  
And I got through it

Listen, he said, almost brightly  
They've upped my prescription  
So many friends have gone  
But not you, I exclaimed with conviction

No answer, no answer. Phone ringing  
No speaking. No speaking  
I am opening the door  
He is curled like a foetus, my darling  
The silence is chilling  
Far too late, too late, too late  
At last, I am listening

Sheena Blackhall

# Little Dragon Grand-Daughter

Little Dragon Grand-daughter

The mythical fire-breathing dragon, one of the four holy animals in Vietnamese folklore and legends, has a very significant place in the country's culture.

According to legend, the Vietnamese are descendants of the dragon

My little dragon grand-daughter

Brightens Ho Chi Minh like an opening orchid

Her tiny toes flip flop past sleeping scooters

A troupe of dancers wearing their dragon costume

Weave around her, lost in New Year joy

She raises her lovely eyes in childish wonder

Stunned by the sounds of bells, the reds and golds

Like sunsets bursting above her

Clouds of colour and light

Far away in my chilly Northern city I give thanks

That the gate of childbirth opened to some purpose

Three times she died, three times came back

To the world of sound and being

Uncertain hold on life at the beginning

So small a thing, a breath, unseen and precious

Sheena Blackhall

# Little Hooves

Words like little hooves  
Canter across my mind  
Restless until they're stabled in a poem

Sheena Blackhall

# Liverpool/ Shanghai

The U boat story, Slave Trade, Mersey beat  
Junks, sampans, memories of the Opium Wars  
Scouse Chinatown, where doves and dragons meet

Paddy's Wigwam, Catholics' prayer retreat  
Canyons of High Rise homes of Global tsars  
Bold, Berry, Hope and Underwater Street

The Cavern, Giant Wheel (a scary treat)  
Silks, porcelains, pagoda-shrines and bars  
Cheapside and Strawberry Field, a childhood treat

Galleries galore, the Liver Birds high seat  
Fried dumpling, hairy crabs, poteens in jars  
Football supporters' pitch, day out complete

Docks quays and yards with ships and yachts replete  
Seven million Han Chinese, shipping and cars  
Immigrants hoping poverty to cheat

Irish, Jamaican, Chinese all compete  
To thrive with Liverpool's Scousers and Jack tars  
The Maglev train, the Bund, Mandarin's pleat  
Jade Buddhas under white magnolia stars

Sheena Blackhall



# Locked Door

Locked door, locked door, please tell me your secret.  
None of your business. Full well shall I keep it.

Is an old woman there, shuffling and slow?  
Is there a weeper with no place to go?  
Is there an invalid? Is there a nurse?  
Is there a haunting? A murder? A curse?  
Is there a promise? A threat? Or a cry?  
Are there raised voices? A sob? Or a sigh?  
Is there a table? A kettle? A chair?  
Is there a window? Oh, what could be there?  
Locked door, locked, please tell me your secret.

None of your business. Full well shall I keep it.

Sheena Blackhall

# Lost Property

One 14ft. inflatable boat,  
Marooned in a cab, washed up near Nelson's Column

One coffin in purgatory  
Stuck between the Angel & Burnt Oak

False legs left on the bus to the London Eye

One lawnmower, its neck in a plastic bow,  
No fixed abode, on the tube by Covent Garden

Breast implants, like cod steaks, sliced,  
Getting under the skin of a driver near Maida Vale

One jar of bull's sperm, destined for mooning cows  
Going up and down on a bus by Petticoat Lane

Three dead bats, awkward as young umbrellas  
Left by the tube at Knightsbridge

Dozens of mobile phones, their small mouths stopped  
Doomed to be deaf and dumb on Speaker's Corner

Sheena Blackhall

# Lourdes Wheelchairs

Between two empty wheelchairs  
In a hotel foyer in Lourdes  
A potted plant stands on its plinth  
Like a small green god.

Did you know asks wheelchair one  
That Jesus has been seen on a jar of marmite?

Wheelchair two is silent.  
Heavy on arrival,  
It's leaving light.  
Death, and not a miracle tipped the scales

Sheena Blackhall

# Love-Bubble

Love's a bubble, a burp in the hookah-pipe of life  
Ephemeral as cuckoo spit on a thistle.

Inside this nebulous sphere, would you Adam and Eve it,  
Lust is flowering.

Young flesh  
So ripe  
So sweet  
Swelling with juice.

Cherry mouth, apple cheek, eyes like sloes  
Everyone else is a gooseberry  
An extraneous prickle  
Especially the large black rat  
Who'll slip in when nobody's looking  
By the back entrance  
Bring the bills, the infidelities, the disillusion  
The hundred little barbs to pop the dream.

Sheena Blackhall

# Made In China

What did the Chinese give to the world?

Abacus, bells and brandy

The calendar, compass, crossbow

Fireworks...the world's first whisky

They gave us the decimal system

Drilling for oil, and lacquer

Gunpowder and mechanical clocks

Fishing reels, kites and paper

Flamethrowers and flush toilets

Helicopters, silk and rudders

Magic mirrors and parachutes

Porcelain and horse collars

Iron ploughs, the suspension bridge

Matches and printmaking

Relief maps, stirrups, umbrellas

Wheelbarrows, where work's back breaking

What did the Chinese give to the world?

Subtract from life these things

I'd miss the bells and the fireworks

The fun and the useless things!

Sheena Blackhall

# Maigret

Commissaire of the Paris Brigade Criminelle  
George Simenon's French detective  
Was as much the stuff of my teenage years  
As the Beatles, Kennedy, minis.

I loved his pipe, the exotic sounds of his tipples  
Pastis, Armagnac, Cognac, Calvados, Pernod,  
His trademark raincoat, his laconic style

In a battle of nerves he'd climb into a man's head  
Going to any lengths to track down killers

Maigret was rarely mystified  
In the shadow of a courtyard, the beach or a boulevard  
In Montmartre, in the Inn of the Drowned Men  
In the Rue Pigalle, Bayeux, or Étoile du Nord  
He'd sleuth them down, the criminals, biding his time  
A man of scruples, meticulous

He mixed in circles that coloured the celibate evenings  
Of Scottish puberty, jostling with fortune tellers  
Cadavers, the madman of Bergerac,  
Bums, pickpockets and strippers  
Lovers, informers, wine merchants

The most obstinate man in Paris  
I lived a kind of half-life dogging his steps  
Looking in through the open window of Simenon's art.

Sheena Blackhall

# Man In The Moon

Man in the moon,  
Hunched buffoon  
Of a Mr Punch,  
When the cow runs away with the spoon,  
(Gay dreams of a Marc Chagall)  
We will all leap over you.

Already our emissaries have landed.  
Infinitesimal one,  
You are accessible.  
Now, we can pocket you down to size.  
Bleeding scythe, tide tetherer,  
When you are round and whole,  
Small and safe as a wonderland,  
I could swallow you like a pill.

Sky-disc, High-Druid priest  
Of the great necropolis,  
If I rub you like Aladdin  
Will you moonshine me  
A little of the way?

There! You dropp in a pond,  
A perfect halo.  
But touch you, and you shatter,  
Like footsteps in quicksand.  
Cold stone, hanging alone  
On the edge of nowhere,  
Deceitful owl, dark cowl  
Of cuckoo day, impassively there,  
Drawing circles in the night;  
Star trinket,  
Lover and lunatic's delight,  
Would you like a little worship?

Man in the street,  
Father, stranger, brother, lover,  
I could make a moon of you.  
You could be silvery, heavenly, a deity...

But you, too,  
Hang on the edge of nowhere;  
When you dropp in a pond,  
A perfect halo,  
I touch you, and you shatter.

Sheena Blackhall



# Man On The Bus

I am the man on the bus  
I sat on your left last Tuesday  
I am balding, nondescript, meek  
I am dressed in shabby clothes

You with your tip-top, incarnadine nails  
Your businesswoman's suit  
Chose not to notice me

Once I was a boy who always raced  
Under the careless wheel of a passing lorry  
I learned young to moderate my pace  
What lessons, fellow traveller have you learned?

Sheena Blackhall

# Marmaris-Aleppo

Marmaris, an all inclusive package  
A western Shangri-La  
Friendly staff, nothing is too much trouble  
Cheap, clean, rooms, mirrors & marble gleaming

The pool is blue as sapphires  
The families relax, all's cuddles and smiles  
Children's plump bodies, tan in the smiling sun  
Wives pamper bodies, massage, luxury  
A bubble of laughter, leisure and free laundry  
Bare flesh under yellow parasols gleam bronze  
The clink of ice. Skin wrinkles in the water  
Glinting under fair, unclouded skies

Unlimited food, dishes of olives, nuts  
Tourists coming and going like birds  
Pecking at dainties, in the pursuit of pleasure  
A steady stream of drinks soft/alcoholic  
Cigars, sweets, cigarettes all cut price here

The dentist said 'So many Scots come here!  
How you must love your sweets!  
I crown their teeth, you Scottish men and ladies  
They go home with the Marmaris Hollywood smile.'  
Shows us pictures of 'before' and 'after'  
Rotten teeth perked up to look like pearls

Aleppo in Syria's a no-go zone  
Of breadlines, fuel queues, fear and devastation  
No electricity or running water  
The public parks have all been stripped of trees,  
For wood to cook the little food there is

Buildings are rubble, normality is history  
Hotels, mosques, government hubs, are twisted wires  
Whole suburbs wiped from the earth by falling bombs  
Threadbare healthcare, children traumatised

Bullet holes puncture street signs leading nowhere

In the wreckage, in the honeycomb of holes,  
Life, of a sort goes on  
Here, stagnant water fills a hungry belly

Sheena Blackhall

# Masks

Masks are part of life's carousel of encounters  
A girl's dark hair hangs either side of her face  
Like curtains on the wings of a hushed stage  
Her narrative's yet un-played

Who is she?  
What are her needs?

Her face is moon-like, a Halloween pumpkin  
Fixed smile and gleaming teeth  
(So white, so bared and eager)  
Her brother's beard is Assyrian  
All ticks and curly follicles  
His eyes are diamond sharp  
Could cut to the bone

Their mother has the face of a plate  
Wiped clean by many washings  
Her eyes have been rubbed away  
By the drudge of years

Her mouth's a weathercock  
For all the familial seasons  
Tick tock, her tongue  
Is chiming out the hours

Sheena Blackhall

# Maternity

Joan X and Mary Y were admitted today.  
Three hours ago they shared a labour room  
Clicking machines, productive screams,  
Hot hands pressed like leaves.

One cot empty.  
One cot full.

Rain is blurring the window, gumming the sticky view  
Cut roses bloom in the ward  
Their short, forced flowering fills the room with scent  
Red and heavy and wet

Joan X does nothing but cry  
She is breaking the waters of grief  
Her child was un-becoming  
Someone has sent for the chaplain  
With words for every event  
He will not bring a card  
Or a teddy dressed in black

Mary Y does nothing. Her baby came to term  
Was born and lived. Sadly, on this occasion  
The mother's love miscarried,  
Did not survive the labour.

The afterbirth is slippery with guilt.  
The living child stirs in its hungry cot  
Needy for touch and taking  
The tiny hands reach out like tentacles

Its mother is stitched up tight  
The Sister bends and lifts the weeping bundle  
Places it tenderly  
Onto the mortuary slab of a blue-veined breast  
The live child lies like ash in two cold arms

Two deaths on the ward today.  
And not one easy.

And not one kind

Sheena Blackhall

# Matzevot: A Walk On The Face Of Gravestones (16 Poems In Scots)

ona and the Old Ladies

Dinna spen time wi Iain the fisherman  
They say he bairned the lass frae the B & B

Watch oot for the Dubhloch muir,  
Twa fowk deed there last simmer  
Sooked doon bi the glaur  
An nae a body near them

The Ben's nae safe tae wauk ower  
It snas fin the sun is heich  
Can smore ye in a glisk

Thon ferm at the clachan foun  
Is hauntit...dinna bide at the chalet yonner  
A young loon hanged itsel  
In the barn ahin that park

Na, na, takk a room wi us.  
Oor scones takk aa the prizes

Seat

The guff aff Silas Broon, wad caa ye sidewyes  
Ay, clean aff yer stot

Ye'd brak a steel caimb tryin tae  
Redd up the hudderie heid o this flee-bag o a bodach

Eftir a nicht on the reid-biddy  
Or the Strang-bow cider,  
He'll streek hissel oot on the same  
Park seat, an pish his breeks atween the metal grids

The evenin starnies dinna care a boddle

Silas wad grumph an snore like a creashie grumphie

Eftir he styters awa wi the crack o dawn  
The seat fands better dowps tae test its mettle  
Wee bairnies an their mas, dribblin ice cream  
Business chiels chawin their denner sannies

A park seat canna be choosy. It has a saft spot for Silas  
Aabody else haein better seats tae sit on, o a nicht.

### 3. Loch Kinord

Five mile East o Ballater, lies a kettle loch  
Pine, birk an sauch tree, bog grun an heather  
Formed o a glacier, here bedd crannog fowk  
Osprey an otter, oot in ony weather

Greylag an Widgeon, back-packers, deer  
Pike in the watter, fower faddoms deep  
Battles an staunin stanes, clans o yesteryear  
Here, Malcolm Ceanmor bigged a huntin seat

Five mile East o Ballater, a victory for the Scots  
There, on the heath, in the widlan o Culblean  
Strathbogie he wis killt wi his back agin an aik  
Bluid is in the peat-bree, on ilkie stick an steen

### 4. Doll

Dall, dall, will I be a gweed mither?  
Will I mairry for luve? Will he lue me foriver?  
Noo I am wee I can practise on you  
I'll rock ye an pett ye ma bonnie wee doo

Dall, dall, will ye weir ma ain face  
Fin yer flesh an bluid in this cloutie toy's place?  
Dall, dall, neth the licht o the meen  
Dae ye hae a dall mither wi glaiss steekit een?



## 5. Return to the Promised Land

Fin Dan wis a loon, thrang wi lego an letters  
He niver aince thocht about apin his betters

Growin up, aa his saints, his role models an heroes  
They warnae archangels, nae Einsteins or Neros  
Na na, they war astronauts, mercenaries, bikers  
An teddy boys, draft dodgers, big fitbaa strikers

An fin he grew dottlit, he sat in a Hame  
Hummin Johnny Cash sangs, whylst forgettin his name  
For he'd entered the Promised Lan, gotten inside  
Tae the desert o dreams far the deid heroes bide

## 6. Cutty Sark's Familiars

Greymalkin is his mistress's best lued  
A tortoiseshell roch Tom wi rippit lugs  
At witch's cantrips he can blaw the pipes  
An gar the warlocks birl like breengin bugs

Pyewacket is a Himalayan breed  
A Kashmir cat, wi fur o lilac grey  
Fin Cutty Sark is trauchelt, he will purr  
An knead her sairs, an keep her waes at bay

The third is Crippleclaw, an auld sea cat  
He steers her on her besom ower the storm  
An navigates the thunner, whyle ships droon  
Battered wi hail, like hard doon drappin corn

A blue-eed Siamese, Grizell is vauntie  
She brings wee deinties, moose, or bird, or vole  
An lays them doon upon the witch's table  
An lick's her paw, as saft's a harlot's stole

The fifth is Mouchi, black wi emerant ee  
As gleg a guaird as ony witch could wint  
Takk tent, for Cutty Sark has servants leal  
Five cats wi pouers as eildrich's ony kent

The witch is swippert, the witch is slee  
She gangs wi a glisk o glamourie  
Ower the spire oa sleepin kirk  
Drappin her elf-derts throw the mirk

## 7. The Desperate Battle of the Birds: Birth o a pibroch

Eftir-Stang o a Battle

Ower the deid o Clan Chattan an Clan MaKay  
The hoodie craas lowp gutsy, takkin their fill,  
Powkin the glaissy ee o the bauldest chiel  
Fa's sicht o the warld is fixed foraye an still

Sma care they fur the deid mens' luvs or hates,  
The Tay rins cauld an derk tae slake their drouth  
Like a coronach, like a dirge, the win sabs roon  
The craas fecht ower the deinties o fresh-killt youth

King Robert's lang since left the bluidy scene  
Fa watched frae a nearhaun touer the clansmens'duel  
The warst o kings, maist miserable o men  
Crippled an hirplin, chieftain o misrule.

Doon frae the clouds the wheelin buzzards drap  
Hal o the Wynd an the few survivors, gaen  
Doon the frae the neuks o trees the scurries flap  
Ettlin tae stap their wymes wi the newly slain

September's dreich, fin Autumn teems the trees  
The grey seal churns tae faem the Tay's grey waves,  
Salmon an otter greet the sweemin man  
The last MacKay, fleein the battle graves

The feastin craas skreich on throwe drappin sleet  
In clachans, fite-faced quines wyte for their men  
Skulls knelled in twa wi the battle-aixe's dunt  
Nane will sup frae the parritch-pot again.

## 8. The Borrowed Days

A bigsie coo vowed Merch cud niver kill  
Her, wi its win nor sleet  
She wis a vauntie vratch, swack shanked  
Wi twa douce horns, an udder ticht  
Pink moosed, wi creamy flanks an jetty curls  
An milk that hit the pail in pearlin pirls  
In ony herd, she wis, o kye, the peach

Merch gaed tae April, borraed three mair days  
The first day brocht a gurlly, weety storm  
Drookit the bonnie coo an gart her hoast  
The neist day brocht her crochlin tae her knees  
Win fever like tae gar her burn an roast

The hinmaist day, blin drift blew ower her corp  
A puckle reid-nebbed hoodies stripped her hide  
Aa bit the banes, an they said nocht ava  
Thon wis her recompense for glekit pride

## 9. Ossian Hunts the Deer

Fin auld & blin did Ossian  
Sikk a young loon tae aid his plan  
Tae hunt a deer in heich heathland  
Coorse Ossian o the Fèinne

A dug gaed wi them, gleg o sicht  
Nine deer its target, fu in wecht  
Quo Ossian, 'It killt bit echt'  
Coorse Ossian o the Fèinne

Ossian raxxed his scrawny airm  
Doon the dug's wyme, tae dae it herm  
Tore its intimmers, painch, tripe, thairm  
Coorse Ossian o the Fèinne

Echt preens tae haud his kyte fell stoot  
He'd steeked, sae hunger'd bare nae fruit  
Each time he ett, he'd draw ane oot

Coorse Ossian o the Fèinne

The stervin laddie, aa the time  
Nibblit the antrin morsel fine  
He sat, daft halfin thief, tae dine  
Coorse Ossian o the Fèinne

The blin man sensed the guilt he bore  
An oot the laddie's throat he tore  
The bonnie heath wis reid wi gore  
Coorse Ossian o the Fèinne

#### 10. The Kist

We sailed aff for Australia, the weather it wis fair  
And I, a Lewisman by birth an hauf a silkie's heir

Ma mither's bluid it kept me safe frae shipwrak or sic skaith  
For man that's born o silkie's wyme in oceans can draw braith

Noo on oor derk in gurly storm a kist washed up wi it  
The hale crew tried it on for size bit anely ane wad fit

A lad frae Liverpool, he leuch an lay atween its sides  
A muckle wave washed ower the deck an ryped him for the tides

An fin we reached Australia an unca thing we heard  
The lad frae Liverpool had jinked a hingin judge's wurd

Say, fit wis best, the weird he dreed, drooned in a timmer kist  
Or thrapplit bi a rinnin noose an bi Auld Boney kissed?

#### 11. Whin

The wannerin whin's sib tae the breem  
Bit airmed wi stobs tae bite an gnaa  
It scents the caller air o spring  
It flegs the feys frae hoose an haa

The bees bizz roon its yalla gowd

Rypin the nectar hoard awa  
Fin set ableeze it lichts a lowe  
That flegs the feys frae hoose an haa

The linnet biggs its bield inbye  
As dis the yitie, cheepin smaa  
Baith bide in whinny harmony  
It flegs the feys frae hoose an haa

Langsyne the fermers fed their nowt  
Bi bruisin whin throwe winter snaa  
An dyed their claith wi'ts yalla flooers  
Whin flegs the feys frae hoose an haa  
It cleaned the lum, it tilled the grun  
Flavoured the whiskey strang an braa  
In healin airt it served its pairt  
It flegs the feys frae hoose an haa

## 12. In Praise o Lallans

Aince heids o state war naethin blate  
Frae harns an hairt tae jaa  
The Mither Tongue wi kingly pride  
The Auld Scots leid is braa

Whan Jamie Saxth tae Lunnon gaed  
Scots stude in stirkies' staa  
Tho antrin poets screived in't yet  
Lairds socht its faist doonfaa

Bit Hugh MacDiarmid tuik his pen  
Moosewabs tae dicht an blaa  
Frae Scots as a reid-bluidit spikk  
Tae steer the thochts o aa

Three chiels in the Wee Windaes sat  
Some forty years awa  
An vowed tae gie the leid a heist  
Sae better days micht daw

An Lallans kythed, the magazine

O Purves, Philp, John Law  
Annand an Niell –yon siccar chiel  
Linguistic wapinshaw

Farrow an Morton noo are thrang  
Wi wab-links an Sangshaw  
Wi Scotsoun's virr tae gar the spikk  
On world's stage tae craw

Sae here is tae the forrit breenge  
O Lallans, lion's claw  
That raxxes oot tae flee the flag  
The auld Scots leid is braa!

### 13. A Carol fu o Styte

(A nonsense carol: the whetstone was associated with lying. Here, it's the prize for the best liar: (1350) - from *Early English Carols*, ed. Greene, pp 289-90. Here owersett in Scots)

Hey, hey, hey hey hey  
I'll hae a whetstane gin I may

I saw a puggie thatch a hoose  
I saw a pudden ett a moose  
I saw a deid man threid a noose  
I'll hae a whetstone gin I may

I saw a hurcheon shear an shew  
I saw anither bake an brew  
Scoor the pots as they war new  
I'll hae a whetstone gin I may

I saw a codfish corn saw  
I saw a wirm a fussle blaw  
I saw a pie birze wi a craw  
I'll hae a whetstone gin I may

I saw a stockfish pu a harra  
I saw anither drive a barra  
I saw a satt fish sheet an arra  
I'll hae a whetstone gin I may

I saw a boar its burdens bind  
I saw a puddock oo-skeins wind  
I saw a taed did mustard grind  
I'll hae a whetstone gin I may

I saw a soo her kerchiefs wash  
A secunt soo did pleat a rash  
The third gaed tae the barn tae thrash  
I'll hae a whetstone gin I may

I saw an egg that ett a pie  
Gie me a drink, ma moo is dry  
I'll tell a lee richt gleg an fly  
I'll hae a whetstone gin I may

#### 14. The Deevil & the Quine

The Deevil an the Quine is here owersett in Scots. It is a riddle poem from a Devon schoolboy's notebook in the 15th century, found later across Britain

Will ye hear an unca thing atween the quine an the Deevil?  
Thus spak the Deevil tae the quine;  
Pit yer faith in me this day  
Quine, may I yer luver be  
Wyceness I will teach tae ye

Fit is heicher than the tree?  
Fit is deeper than the sea?  
Fit is sherper than the thorn?  
Fit is looder than the horn?  
Fit is langer than the wye?  
Fit is reider than the day?  
Fit is better than the breid?  
Fit's mair sherp than bein deid?  
Fit's mair yalla than the wax?  
Fit is safter than the flax?

Heiven is heicher than the tree  
Hell is deeper nor the sea  
Hunger's sherper than the thorn

Thunner's looder than the horn  
Luikin's langer than the wye  
Sin is reidder than the day  
Communion sanctifees the breid  
Pain's mair strang than bein deid  
Sapphire's yallaer nur wax  
Slk is safter than the flax  
Noo, fause Deevil, quaet ye be  
I will spikk nae mair wi ye

15. Scots versions of Koryô Songs (The Goryeo Gayo) - from the Koryo (Goryeo)  
Dynasty (c.918-1392)

from Song of the Gong and Chimes

Gin pearlins drapped on the stane  
Gin pearlins drapped on the stane  
Wad the threid be brukken?  
Gin I pairted fae ye fur a thoosan years,  
Gin I pairted fae ye fur a thoosan years  
Wad ma hairt be cheenged?

from Song of the Green Mountain

Let's bide, let's bide,  
Let's bide on the green Ben!  
Wi blaeberries an thyme,  
Let's bide on the green Ben!  
Reeshlin Reeshlin Reeshlin Reeshlin glen  
Skreich birds, skreich birds,  
Skreich eftir ye wauken.  
I've mair sorra than ye  
An greet eftir I wauken.  
Reeshlin Reeshlin Reeshlin Reeshlin glen

Sijo and Sasol Sijo, from the Koryo (Goryeo) Dynasty (c.918-1392)

from Hwang Chini (1506-1544)

I will brakk the back  
o this lang winter nicht,  
fauldin it double,  
cauld aneth ma spring quilt,



that I micht raxx oot  
the nicht, should ma luv return

From Prince Inp'yong (1622-1658)

Dinna mock a pine  
wizzened an boued bi the wins.  
Floors in the spring win,  
can they haud their glamourie?  
Fin win blaws an snaw furls,  
Ye will caa fur me

#### 16. Daith o a Hero

Heroes an heroines sweem up in oor lives  
Like Primevera, perfeck on her shell

Teet ahin the mask, rowe back the myth  
An here's a paedophile fa beds a bairn  
An there's a gype, fame-hungeret  
An there's anither...weel, we aa hae faats

Ahin the hero-mask, a mortal man  
Kiln-crackit Ming, a nightingale that shits

#### 17. Clap-Trap

Tars are drawn tae the doon-toon bars  
Orra jaads an bizzims an hoors  
Jive an jitterbug, fechts an scars  
Shanghai perfume an plastic floors

Izzy Orts at the Boston docks  
A blin man sooks on a broon cigar  
The trumpet bles an the daunce fleer rocks  
The fag rikk's thick as the pea-soup haar

Clap an syphilis jynes the mix  
O drink an drugs in a midnicht gig  
A back street deal fur a junkie's fix  
Then back tae the bar an the matin jig

the World Wide Web: Lullaby singing: Nguyen Lan

Owersett into Scots of a North Vietnamese lullaby

Ma bairn, sleep weel,

Sae yer ma can cairry watter tae wash the elephant's back

Gin ony body sikks tae see, gyang up tae the Ben

Tae see Lady Trung Trieu ridin the elephants' gowden backs

Owersett into Scots of a Central Vietnamese lullaby

Bairnie, sleep weel,

Sae yer mither can gyang tae the mart tae buy a clay saucepan,

Gin she gaes tae the suddron mart,

She'll buy ye a lang, booed sugar cane

Owersett into Scots of a Southern Vietnamese lullaby

Imagine yer walkin on a boord-brig faistened wi nails,

It's hard as walkin on a shoogly bamboo brig

Sheena Blackhall

# May All That's Hurt Be Whole

Your time on earth is short my friend  
How fast the petals fall!  
What you've damaged, attempt to mend  
Before you leave it all

Wars and treacheries, poisoned seas  
How fast the petals fall!  
Strive to mitigate such as these  
Before you leave it all

Some wrongs run too deep down to right  
How fast the petals fall!  
Move on by keeping your footsteps light  
Before you leave it all

The world has wonders yet to show  
How fast the petals fall!  
For those unborn, pray leave it so  
Before you leave it all

Feather and flesh, things furred and finned  
How fast the petals fall!  
Help them flourish where man has sinned  
Before you leave it all

Empty your mind. Go, sit alone  
How fast the petals fall!  
Be as the pool, the tree, the stone  
Before you leave it all

Death makes short work of your hopes and dreams  
He comes for one and all  
Sweeping away ambition's schemes  
May all that's hurt be whole

Sheena Blackhall

## Meditation No 9

I do not jeer at squirrels  
Or peel frogs out of their jumpsuits

I do not throw stones at angels  
Sitting mythical and coy  
On the white limousines of their clouds

I do not have the effrontery  
To scratch the faces of pianos

I do not argue with mountains  
In matters of philosophy they know best

I do not purse Corinthian columns  
Those icons of the permissive society

Instead, I immerse myself in silence  
In the white sweep of the nothing that is the breath

Sheena Blackhall

# Meet The Shakespeares

Alum, dog turd, piss, egg, lime  
Shakespeare's father was a glover  
Lambskin kid and deer he used  
To fashion gloves of finest leather

His sister Joan lived by the shop  
Her husband William was a hatter  
His grandparents were farming stock  
Well skilled in ancient yeoman matters

He married well, Anna Hathaway  
A dowry, but eight years his elder  
Left her at home to keep the house  
To raise the children. Churn the butter

A London patron saw his worth  
And fame and fortune quickly came  
The Bard of Avon, playwright, poet  
Puts other dramatists to shame

Sheena Blackhall

# Memorial For Stillborn Babies

Blessed be the lungs that never grew  
Blessed be the thoughts that never flew  
Blessed be the hearts that never sighed  
Blessed be the tongues that never lied

Sheena Blackhall

## Metamorphosis 62 (5 Scots Poems)

Magic Neep

In Darren's gairden grew a neep  
A magic neep as big's a coo  
He needed help tae howk it oot  
Because it wis ower big tae pu

Sae Darren rugged, his mither rugged,  
His sister, granny, brither rugged  
It wadna budge. A moosie, stoot  
Jyned in. Kerplunk!  
The neep popped oot!

sh Holiday

Maisie Christie flew tae Spain  
Because she didna like the rain  
She sunbathed on a plastic boat  
She flew asleep, an aff did float

A pirate, mermaid, and a seal  
Upon the boatie climmed as weel  
It sank, sae Maisie had tae sweem  
Aa the wye back tae Aiberdeen

naut

Astronaut, astronaut, far hae ye been?  
I hae bin fleein roon Mars an the Meen

Astronaut, astronaut, fit did ye there?  
I peinted a rainbow tae hing in the air.

ies: (The Aberdeen E.E. ran a Pets' Photo Comp. in 2008)

There is Buffin, she's a cat, frae the Garioch (affa fat)

There's a tod near-haun Milltimmer kent as Basil  
There's a ferret frae the coast, wi a pelt like burnt toast  
There's a budgie ooto Bucksburn wi a whizzle  
There's a hamster bred fur fame, William Wallace is its name  
There's a rubbit nearby Banff fa's christened Mia  
There is Hamish frae Fintry, (an auld Spaniel, kinda fey)  
There is Digit frae the Denburn, a chinchilla

There's a huddrie guinea pig, ye wad sweir she weirs a wig  
There's a tortoise up bi Boddom caad 'The Gonk'  
There's a sheltie frae Kintore, wi its moo raxxed in a roar  
Bit the stoater o them aa's Ichi the skunk.

Fa wad be a beastie judge? Fowk are keen tae haud a grudge  
Ae bairn's moosie is anither body's vermin  
Bit twid be a puirer place, wi-oot pets tae clap an chase  
An tae bosie, kittle, news till, I am certain!

#### 5. Warlock o Balwearie: Michael Scot

Born in Balwearie, Fife, the scientist  
And warlock, Michael Scot, had mony skills  
He wis pairt doctor and pairt alchemist  
His pouer cut in three the Eildon hills  
Bridled the River Tweed wi curb o stane  
An jyled the plague wi as its orra ills.  
(His Buik o Shaddas, fur his ee alane  
Brocht terror fin a servant luiked inby  
As frae its pages Deils stept, makkin mane)

This warlock measured space frae kirk tae sky  
Spakk Latin, Arabic, French, German, Greek  
Sae for his service, Scotlan's king did cry  
Tae gyang tae Paris, there an audience seek  
Wi the French King tae gar thon Prince agree  
That pirates wad nae mair their coffers steek  
Stap fu o treisur ryped frae Scots at sea.

The warlock on his shelt that self-same nicht  
Lowpt ower tae France as faist as arras flee  
Tae argyie Scotlan's case, an gie the fricht



That aa the kirk bells in Paree wad ring  
Fin his shelt struck the grunn wi aa its micht.

A secunt strike, an French kirk spires he'd ding  
Doon tae the yird, tae rummle in the stoor.  
Afore the third hoof-beat gart Michael fling  
The hale toun in the dubs, he won the oor.

Sae steeped in the Blaik airts, he won a place  
In Dante's Hell, he wis Auld Cloutie's spoor.  
Fin this dreid warlock quit the human race  
His Moorish buik o secrets wis interred  
At Melrose Abbey, wi his mortal aisse  
Laird o the occult, potentates conferred  
Honours on him. Yet, fin his weird he dreed  
Daith wis the Greater, had the hinmaist wird.

Sheena Blackhall

# Midnight House Upon A Summer's Day

Insanity is never the horror rooftop hit by lightning,  
The Gothic stairway, the shaggy streaming hair.

It is when the day fuses quietly like a light bulb.  
It is when looking down, the hands in the sink  
Inside the yellow gloves, seem to belong to a stranger.

It is when the midnight house upon a summer's day  
Makes time tick like a bomb.

Ah, then the street lamp  
Is the Cyclops only eye, staring so intently into the pool  
It does not seem to have notice it has drowned.  
It does not notice the sky is a white Armada,  
Calmly sailing off to sharkless seas

Sheena Blackhall

# Millennium Blues (28 Scots Poems)

## FUTTERATS

Twa sleekit futterats in a van  
Commenced a conversation,  
On fit Reality sud mean  
A dyke, their illustration.

'A dyke's a hideyhole', quo they,  
'Far we may hide frae sicht.  
A camouflage....a masquerade....  
A screen. A cloak that's Heaven-made  
Oor prey tae nab bi nicht.'

'Yer wrang, ' a moosie pypit up,  
This steeny booger's ma hame.  
A bield, tae hoose ma furry clan,  
The littlins o ma wame.'

'Gw'a' (The corbie gied a skreich)  
'A dyke is bit a reest.  
A perch, tae park ma feathers  
Fin the pech gaes frae ma breist.'

A fairmer, stottin frae a howf,  
Aneth the sickle meen,  
His spayver lowsed, an jubilantly  
Stoored agin the steen.

This stopped the futterats learned claik,  
Their pheelosophic leanins...  
Twa hummlit, drookit, wycer breet  
The truth, his mony meanins.

DEE, OH.

A keek o sun teets throw the wid,  
An fit wis happit, derkly hid,

Gleams gowd, a liftit treisur lid,  
Alang the skinklin Dee, oh.

A warm win showds the larick trees,  
Saft clouds o midgies skiff the eaves,  
The harebell, dauncin ben the breeze  
Wauchts sweet alang the Dee, oh.

A yeitie wheeples, clear an wee,  
A willow reeshles like the sea,  
A mavis sails the lift sae free,  
Sma piper o the Dee, oh.

The watter jibbles, amber, broon,  
The clashin wavelets chink a tune,  
A luvver's sang cam liltin doon  
The fragrant banks o Dee, oh.

The meenister extols the kirk  
The fairmer reezes oot the stirk  
Gie me the glamourie o birk,  
The glimmin waves o Dee, oh!

### 3. CYCLIN UP GLEN GAIRN

Forrit wi a dunt, a pech.  
Forrit wi a yark.  
Swyte is sproutin on ma bane, jibblin doon ma sark.  
Sic a brae! Sic a heat! Like a jeelie jar,  
O marmalade, I'm plottin hett.  
Wis fiver brae sae far?

Shanks dirl.  
Queats, stoon.  
Fooshun-foonert hurdies....  
Sic a brae! Sic a heat! Beggars as fur wurdies!

Here's the tap!  
Noo's the drap!  
Wheechin like a craw□  
Faister...faister□

faister....faister... Split the win in twa!

#### 4. FUR A NEW-FAND BRITHER MEY 1996

The wins o Chaunce that wheel the warld,  
Blaw faimlies great an sma,  
An whyles, the antrin seed takks haud,  
Ootower the kirkyaird waa.

The bonniest thrissle e'er I saw  
Briered in a Heilan sheugh  
Wi deil the shade tae cweel its broo,  
Nur tender shooeries, strang, it grew  
Its lanesome, straucht an teuch.

Aftimes ye'll see a barley park,  
Weel hyewed an deeply ploed,  
An in its mids, a poppy keeks  
A winsome bairn, wi rosy cheeks  
Brichtenin yon bearded brood.

Sae welcome, ower the soundin seas  
An tides o Time, tint brither.  
Tho Scotia's far frae Huron's lochs  
Reets, tie us ticht thegither!

#### 5. THE POWSER.

The powser's sleepin like a clootie dall,  
At ilkie neuk his cleuks hing doon, twa-fauld  
His sprauchled kyte's a drift o snawy fur  
His thrapple ripples wi a rochlin purr.

His breist bane swalls wi pech, a bellows, blawin,  
Like a wee boatie, bobbin up, syne faain  
On the great sea o sleep, the landlocked powser  
Shoogles ae lug, an runkles up his mowser,  
An sic a mowser! It micht string a fiddle,  
A sailor's riggin, or a fairmer's riddle!

This spurgie's Bogieman, his wame, stap-fu,  
Sleeps douce an gentle as a cushie doo  
Bit aince ootower the yett, the doo's a Deil,  
A sleekit shadda wi a hairt o steel.

Sliddrin along the glaury, gloomy toun  
His een, rwa slits o green, gley up an doon,  
The muckle sherp-pronged trap that is his mou,  
Gants reid an glimmin. Cheepers, saft as oo.  
Chitter an squeak...the makkins o a meal,  
Tasty as herrin in a fisher's creel.

Their wicker nest's a puir defence gainst Daith,  
Sud powser chuse tae snip the threids o Braith.

He'll skreich an spit. A rowth o battle scars,  
Tell o his tulzies in aneth the stars.  
King o the cassies gaun-aboot nicht fowk  
The powser reigns supreme. He's nae man's gowk.

## 6. THE THREE GRACES: EMBRO FESTIVAL 1995

Baldy professors ee them up an doon  
(Spectacled grumphies, slivvrin ower each hoch)  
Bare as a scrapit soo frae dowp tae croon.  
Three bonnie quines. The trifle, in Art's troch.  
The kirks are teem. The Gallery is stappit,  
Thon bare-buff deems (cream puffs wi cherries, tappit)  
Staunin triumphant, merble nymphies, nyaakit,  
Flauntin, fit auld an creashie,  
I keep happit.

## 7. WAITRESS, ROSE STREET, EMBRO.

Twa oors o the smaa oors' clock,  
Hard as angeret skelp, the neon licht's  
An oolet, blinkin een tae glisk the nicht.

She shakks crumbs doon. A hummle, hodden moose,

Her een, beady an broon, smert wi the rikk  
Frae caunlelowe, cigar an nicotine.

She takks fowks' orders, pricked bi orra spikk  
O customers, fa sikk a hantle mair  
Than maet an wine, ooto the cauld rife air.

Sma-boukit, fite-faced vratch  
She glides amang the claikin cliques o diners  
Hashed on aa sides, she battens doon the hatch  
A service tug, tween transatlantic liners.

Her pooch is threidbare. Foonert on her feet  
She serves the late nicht custom frae the street.  
A single mither, skivvyin an skint  
Ae powk awa, frae Puirtith an Wint.

#### 8. TATTIE HOWKERS.

Spirkit wi sleet, the howkers wirk the rigs  
A raw o dreepin nebs, booed ower the yird  
Humfin the skulls, hauns dirlin wi the cauld  
Liftin the tattie crap wi feint a wird.

Like human brigs, twa-fauld, they stride the glaur  
Dellin the dubs fur tatties, clorty-neived  
Weet mochies, pirlid wi styew, they plyter on  
Till ilkie pikk o park is howked an seived.

A line o choochin ingins, puffin rikk  
The braith o bairnies rises frae the dreel  
At fly-time, halflins ett their pieces thick  
In this, a different drudgery frae the skweel.

Back-brakkin darg. Loons warm tae the wark  
Their elders tcyauve ahin, coats, auld an torn  
Brikks stapped in waldies. Tattiebogle duds  
Driven bi thocht o cash in haun, the morn.

#### 9. THE TRAFFIC LICHT'S SANG

I am a traffic licht..king o the road,  
Whaun I flash ma crimson ee,  
The Highway code says larry an load  
Maun stop an takk tent o me.

I am a traffic licht. I see aa,  
The Fiesta, the Ford, the Fiat,  
I carena a hoot tho they cry 'toot toot'  
Fin I cry 'STOP' they dae it.

I am a traffic licht, happit in stoor,  
A skinnymalinkie craitur.  
It's certain, sure, I'm crabbit an soor  
Pollution's ma nearest neebor.

I am a traffic licht. I'm a limb  
O the law. A robot-sage.  
Nae sweirin. Nae jeerin. Nae Gran-Prix steerin  
I canna abide road-rage!

I am a traffic licht. Oh the sights  
Frae ma emerant een I spy!  
Back seat girners. Stott-bang learners  
Saabs, as sossy's a sty!

I am a traffic licht. Cars an vans  
Are the life-bluid flowin ben,  
The lanes o ma veesion.  
Traffic stramash  
An hash, is the world I ken!

## 10. MILLENNIUM BLUES

A brukken wreath o eildritch steens,  
Yon's Tomnaverie's Druid croon.  
Snaws o the Future cweel its tap,  
The stoor o Ages haps its foun.

Meen worship there wi bluidy rites,  
Gart altar dreep wi crammosie.  
Mortlich an Morven witnessed aa,



Derk sights, tae fricht the coorsest ee.

The icy haar o Lochnagar,  
Dreid ongauns smored in secrecy.  
Noo, aa is mild as mither's milk  
The meen's bit cosmic jewelry

Nae pikk o Pict bi Davan's waves,  
For History's breem swypes aathin bare.  
Queer mystic lear, aince crystal clear  
Wauchts menseless, throwe the gallus air.

Heich heather knowes, laigh weety glens,  
Frae stormy Clash, tae Clachanturn  
Wis hamelan aince tae Eastern Gael.  
Like rain, yon clan birlid doon the burn.

Naethin is constant. Naethin bides.  
Upreeted frae the hamely yird  
New generations turn aside,  
Frae heirskip's ploo, frae Doric wird.

The links o bluid, bi sic a seed  
Are lichtlified. The fitenin beens  
O forebears rot in chaumers, tint,  
Forgotten, like the staunin steens.

The chasm o the centuries  
Yawns wide, a gap we canna span.  
The hame o Scot micht ae day haud  
A Cosmic or Galactic man.

The starnies in the mammoth lift,  
The wyvin harebell on the brae  
Exist....bit binna braided ticht,  
Wi restless sleepers in the clay

They whusper ben the keenin wins  
'Oh mind on us. Keep faith. Keep faith.'  
Tae sic as thon, tae be forgot  
Bi kith an kin is truly, Daith.

Acres o hooses, fertile files  
Spawn snod computers bi the hairth  
As e-mail swallaes ceilidh's hale,  
Plooded rigs tae muckle toons gie birth.

Heroin satts the city's brose.  
Cuckoo commuters stap the byre  
The nest is teem. The birdie's gaen.  
Kent culture fuels a funeral pyre.

Langsyne this wis a pleisunt place.  
The branches o my tribe war strang  
We war as leaves upon a birk,  
That shimmered aa the simmer lang

I am my faither's bairn, uncut  
Umbilical. On Past, we fed.  
A leevin corp, it thrived, it floored.  
It niver dwined. It niver bled.

Hyne back, the hinmaist wolf they slayed,  
Bi Gairn. It cudna wither, syne.  
Guid killin! A museum or zoo  
Fur sic a breet wad bin unkind.

A steen is in the salmon's moo.  
Cernunnos trails a cripllit hoch.  
A canker's in the larick's breist.  
A blicht his bladdit linn an loch.

The steps o Siva ben the warld  
Burn fierce an bricht...sae quick the wheel  
That wracks the humpback in the deep.  
That makks a swardaunce o a reel.

A caileach in a wintry cave,  
I bare my saber teeth an roar  
Oh doubly desolate's the lan  
That spurns aa that's gaen aforel

These next seven poems were inspired by traditional Gaelic songs from the Eastern Highlands of Upper Deeside

### 11. MUCKLE HUMPHREY

We will traivel up an ower, sclimmin bi the Gluige Mhor  
We will traivel up an ower, the lave may like or lump it

Muckle Humphrey gaed tae Blair, sikkin intment fur a sair  
The parridge poultice gotten there, gart him grue he mumpit

Better tae hae suppit tea, stead o gyaun bi Carn an Righ  
The physeecians aa agree, Humphrey hid them stumpit

Biggit like a barn door, a caber cudna caa him ower  
Ilkie time he gied a roar, aa Glen Cluny jumpit.

Muckle Humphrey hoastit twice, hauf the Cluny turned tae ice  
Sic a cauld wad jeel a grice, a wheezle like a trumpit!

Ay he pyochered, ay he spat, his dreepin neb gaed pit-a-pat  
Frae Coile-a-creich tae Burn a Vat, wi sneezles we war dunkit!

### 12. PRAISE-SANG FUR FRANCIS FARQUHARSON O MONALTRIE THE BARON BAN

Derk the was that gaithers roon us  
Since the fair Monaltrie's faa  
Warlord o the great Clan Findlay  
Niver laith the sword tae draa!

Iver foremaist in the tulzie  
Niver blate at tholin skaith  
Hail him as Prince Charlie's hero  
Feared Dishonour, ower Daith!

Sing the praises in the North lan  
O the loon wi gowden hair  
Fair his broo, an bricht his valour  
Sweet his natur, chieftain rare!

Tho Monaltrie's hyne frae Darroch  
He'll return, the foe tae scourge  
Route the Suddron Reid-Coat sodjers  
Gie their wives, the widdas' dirge!

### 13. IAIN DUBH'S LAMENT

Daith his reived ma bonnie Annie  
Grief is coorse, ochon-ma-chree  
I'll ne'er tyne the mynin o her  
Till the mavis leaves the tree.

Hard on ilkie clash, or tuizie  
Ruigh-an-t-Seilich, first, I see  
In the clay o fair Glen Ey  
My cauld luv lies silently.

There's anither lues me dearly  
Pledged tae me bi ring o gowd  
Wad the grave that haps ma Annie  
Held yon ither, in its shroud.

Bonnie lassie frae Glen Garrie  
Cud I see yon face again  
Risen frae the dowie yird  
Aa Glen Ey wad be her ain.

### 14. COLIN'S CATTLE

It's inbye Glen Ey,  
An Glen Dee's wyndin muir  
Frae ae glen tae tither  
A-chasin the deer.

The kye o my Colin  
A-grazin the Ben  
They are speckled's the grouse  
Broon's the bonnie muir-hen.

It's nae in Glen Lui  
Nor Glen Taitneach I'd be  
My hairt's on Braeriach's  
Grey Corrie o Dee

The kye o my Colin  
They are fit fur a king  
Fin they lowe in Glen Lui  
They garr Embro ring!

The kye o my Colin  
On the heather, ye'll meet  
An the milk they lat doon  
Flows sae creamy, sae sweet

#### 14. THE BURN BI THE GREEN LOCHAN

The burn bi the green lochan  
Its watter held a charm  
An tho the airt wis jeelin  
The shielin it wis warm.

Tho Norlan wins micht cloor me  
An storms ring the peak  
The burn bi the green lochan  
Wad lull me saft asleep

Ma bonnie fair-haired lassie  
Oh dinna greet nur mane  
Tho I am pairtit frae ye  
Ma hairt is aa yer ain

An far the stag is soundin  
His war-cry tae the cloud  
I wadna trade yer kisses  
Fur aa the Indies gowd.

Ae nicht inbye the shielin  
Sae lanesome in the glen  
I heard a cauld voice fuser

There's strangers on the Ben

Come ower the brae tae catch ye  
Ootower the craggy muir  
The deer cried oot a warnin  
Sae keenly, aa micht hear.

Ma skeelie gun I dichtit  
I pued ma plaidie ticht  
My pucklie gear I liftit  
An braced masel fur flicht

A hunter, I wis huntit  
Bit fear, I didna ken  
There's nae a brawer poacher  
In ony Heilan glen

Frae Cairn-Mhaim tae Lui  
I traivelled ilkie Ben  
An ilkie jibblin burnie  
I scauned, fur sicht o men

Afore the sun hid risen  
Wi mony's a gleam an glent  
I kent within an inklin  
A tod wis on ma scent

Atween the banks o heather  
The burnies treetled doon  
Their tinklin sangs an stories  
Sae sweetly they did croon

A silent prayer I offered  
Abune the watters flow  
That he fa rules the riveries  
Micht save me frae the foe.

It's early in the mornin  
The Glas Allt road I'll takk  
An shakk the hounds that hunt me  
Like dyew-draps frae ma back

Syne, tho it breenge sae brawly  
The mighty stag is mine  
There's nae a finer poacher  
Bi Allt an Lochain Uaine

#### 15. THE LASS O BRAEGARRIE

The lads are wae, oh dowie day,  
A fairmer's won an wooed her  
Her waddin's at the hoose o sang  
On heich Ben Chraimeal's showder

Oh, wad they'd lay me in the grave  
Afore I see ma dearie  
Jyned wi Tom Chullan's factor chiel  
It grieves that she will leave me.

Ochone ma lass, ma bonnie lass,  
Braegarrie's broon-haired treisur  
The warld nicht ken, frae Burn tae Ben  
Ye are ma greatest treisur.

Three year an mair, I fished in vain  
In ilkie loch an lochan  
My net an boat hid deil the luck  
Frae Builg tae Vrotachan.

Ill-faured in life, ill-faured in luv  
It's in the grave I'd bide  
Afore I hear that her sae dear  
In truth's, the factor's bride!

Last nicht, Braegarrie it wis thrang  
Wi mony's the bonnie lassie  
Afore I'd drink the waddin toast  
I'd caa tae skelfs, the tassie.

#### PIPER'S COORTIN

Sic a blaw is Francie, sweirs he's comin oor wye

Coortin dauncin Mary, a ribbon on his pipe

It's kent frae Quoich tae Derry, it isna him she'll mairry  
She's Macintosh's quarry, he'll lift her at a swype.

His harns they are raivellt, his plaidie, it's bumshayvellt  
Ower the knowes he's traivellt, the luv-sick loon, the gype.

Heedrum hoddrum pibroch, his chanter's in the coo's troch  
His drones are in the Dubh Loch, a-playin tae the pike!

Sic a blaw is Francie, sweirs Kindrochit's peesie  
Leaves its cloudy hame tae hear the music frae his pipe

Frae Inverey tae Gairn, it deefens ilkie bairn  
Eneuch tae cowp a cairn, or teem a bummer's bike!

His coronach is fooshty, sgian dubh is roosty  
There is nae a tooshtie, o cherm, wi'in the tyke.

His beeny shanks are bowdie, his chikks are pale as crowdie  
He drives the velvet mowdie, tae drink ahin the dyke!

Sic a blaw is Francie, sweirs that ilkie lassie  
Dees tae catch a glisk o him, did e'er ye hear sic styte!

His chanter skirls an toot-toots, till ghaisties in their grave cloots  
Rin faister than the linn troots tae leave him at his fyke!

He's telt the capercaillie, salmon an the snaillie  
Horned forkietailie, an they set aff tae clype.

Bit Macintosh is lauchin, wi Mary he'll be daffin  
The waddin wine they're quaffin, an Francie's left tae flyte!

#### 17. THE WISHING TREE 20th June 1998: Samye Ling Tibetan Retreat

I tied a wish tae the wishin tree  
That stauns neth a fairy knowe  
A torn clood on a hawthorn branch  
Tae flap in yon ferny howe.



And ilkie crookit, neukit bough,  
Wi knottit rags it's fillt  
Fur ilkie body that sikks yon airt  
Brings their ain secrets tillt.

There's some hae tied a wish fur Daith  
There's some hae prayed fur a Birth.  
There's some brocht Sorra tae yon tree,  
And ithers, lichtsomes Mirth.

At the hinnereyn o the Century  
Grey kirks are teem an fyewe  
Auld Faiths are tint. Fowk feel their wint,  
Cauld skulls that the wins blaw throwe.

An sae, some stray tae the wishin tree,  
Tae speir fur wirk, or gear,  
And some will wish fur pouer an pelf  
Fur siller, fur luv, fur lear□

Bit I steppt up tae the wishin tree  
An ticht yon cloot I twined.  
An sair I wished fur a priceless jewel-  
A quaet an a peacefu mind.

#### 18. THE SNAILIE: by the Esk

A snailie heistit his hornies up,  
Ae simmer's day, ae simmer's day,  
Ahin a gowden buttercup,  
Come oot tae play, come oot tae play.

Bit first ae hornie, syne the tither,  
Wis drookt wi rain, till, 'Feech! Sic weather! '  
He cried, an pued his hornies doon,  
A wyce an a weeter loon.

#### 19. THE ESKDALE YOWE

The dusky Esk comes yammerin doon  
Tho bonnie it be an braw,  
A sma, sma note it chimes in me,  
An octave, nane ava!

Fur a tippeny toot o a fooshunless troot  
It mebbe nicht serve a turn,  
Fur it hisna the pouer, the virr an the skelp  
O a guid-gaun Heilan burn.

An the yowes that tramp thon saftsome braes  
Nae horns! Nae taigles! Nae gurr!  
Sae quaet, they are, sae douce they are  
They cud lie on their backs an purr!

Gin an Eskdale yowe sud traivel North,  
It wadna saddle either.  
Fur the wins are snell frae the mou o Hell  
An there's crags an quags o heather..

Each tae his ain! A Lunnon wife  
Wadna sweel her face in a troch.  
An fit suits ye, nicht misfit me.  
Roads can be saft or roch.

## 20. THE GORBLIE

Weetin Strathgirnock's bluebell-bobbin road  
Rain shouers praises doon. Sweet Simmer's psalms!  
Wins showd a wechty larick, fu o cones,  
Like mithers lullin weariet bairns in prams.

Heich Simmer. Storm-clouds stalk the rummlin lift,  
Like bigsie bantam cocks that clash an craw.  
The sun teets oot. Its radiant butteret face  
Yolk yalla, mangst fite ooie clouds that blaw.

Aneth an aik whaur birds in concert sing,  
A gorblie lies, like precious cheena smashed.  
The table's set. The banquet month's in swing.  
Ae sma cup frae the denner service smashed,

He winna crest the win wi yon bood wing..  
Broke Breid wi Daith...his face nae even washed.

-CANNIE

Fin yer mindit tae traivel bi Quoich's thunnrin linn,  
Tae see yon bonnie burn tummil doon,  
Takk tent- ye micht skyte on the snyauvil sae fite  
Splyter inno the watter an droon.

Warsslin up tae the oxters in heather an whin  
An aiddier micht strikk at yer queats  
Sae weir thick worsit hose an ye'll ay be jocose  
Wi a pair o stoot tackety buits.

There's emerteens ettlin tae nip at yer shanks  
There's midgies'll sook yer bihooch.  
An glegs bi the hunner, wad gie the stunner  
Fair heezin in corrie an sheugh.

Fegs they're unchancy airts, oor heich Grampian pairts  
Fowk cowp aff their taps bi the dizzen  
Keepin stretcher an ambulance, sawbeen an nurse  
In employment fitiver the Sizzen.

Clartit in stookie, in bandages wippt  
Thochts rin in their hams like a pooshun  
On the nestiest craig far they neist will stravaig  
Finiver they're blessed wi the fooshun.

They tell me the lairds are as daft as the cyairds  
Fin the notion cams on tae gyang haikin.  
Bit whyles they are tint, fin the mist wi the feint  
O a warnin clean raivels their raikin.

Takk a strang cuttit cromack tae steidy yer feet  
Or ye'll rowe doon the knowe like a bool,  
An lan up tae yer oxters in traicily peat  
An be hirplin frae Lammas tae Yule.

A dram in yer pooch'll pit fire in yer breist

Fin blin- drift gars ye pyocher an hoast...  
Tho yer lugs ye may claw ben the plufferts o snaw  
Yer neb'll be cosy as toast.

Twid bumbaze ye tae ken there's bin puckles o men  
Stravaiged roon the Bens in their sark,  
Syne, jeeled tae the been like a daud o ice cream  
They're fand stiff as an ice-berg, an stark.

Spite o hurt hochs an hurdies, an weel meanin wurdies,  
Fowk flock tae the knocks in a hist,  
Bit the braes can be fickle...And whyles in a rickle  
O steens they cam doon in a kist.

Fin sclimmin the knowes takk a tip frae the yowes,  
Man's nae biggt like an erne in an eyrie....  
Keep yer feet on the grun, or like rikk frae the lum  
Ye'll cam back the roch road, tapsalteerie!

## 22.DIET

'Bird' quo the powser  
Dichtin his mower  
'Delichts a carouser'

'Een, ' quo the craw  
'Frae a corp in the snaw  
Tastes best ava '

'Wirm' quo the merle,  
'Rowed in slivvers o pearl  
Is maet fur an earl.'

'Glegs', quo the taed,  
Frae his thrapple o jade,  
'Fur naething I'd trade.'

'Bens, ' quo the mist  
'I sweel doon at ae tryst  
Like a lid on a kist.'

'Banes, ' quo the mools,  
'My derk desire fuels  
Like a pyockfu o jewels.'

#### LUELY LUELY RINS THE BURN

Sae luely luely rins the burn  
The heron's larder, trooties' gait  
Till at its linn, baith wave an fin  
Come skelpin doon in thunnrin spate.

Sae luely luely rins the burn  
The kye boo doon tae sloke their drooth  
An lauchin littlins, drookit, dook  
Sic pleisurs watter hauds fur youth!

Sae luely luely rins the burn  
It's auld's the mist. It's young's the dyewe  
Fite blossoms drap frae showdin geans  
A bridal train, it trails in towe.

Sae luely luely rins the burn  
Its waves skelp on like craws that hash  
Wi flappin wings. The burnie sings  
O luv's stramash, wi wattery clash.

Sae luely luely rins the burn  
Far bobbin wagtills big their boouer  
It smeeths the tresses o the reeds  
Like luvseek luver, ower an ower.

Sae luely luely rins the burn  
Till doon it draps tae fill a puil  
A waucht o waeness in yon drap  
Wad freeze hairt's bluid. Wad gar it geel.  
Sae thocht the lass wha slippit doon  
The cares o as her warld tae seal  
In yon kind watter's cauld embrace  
A snowflake, tint in Winter's sweel.

## 24. THE PRIDE O TULLICH

GlenTanar's knowes, Glen Cluny's howes  
Are slicht compared wi Tullich's pride.  
Thon glimrin star that's Lochnagar  
Preened tae the firmament. A guide  
Tae birdies smaa, an gangrels aa  
Heich compass o the kintraside.

His fragrant thyme,  
His burns like wine  
Wi heath an harebell lang distillt  
A glintin fin, the Glas Allt Linn  
Wi wave an merry birdsang fillt.

Fin nichts are lang, an blizzards thrang  
An beasts maun coorie in the byre,  
Ower staa, ower haa,  
He tholes the blaa  
While mortals chitter ower the fire.

The bawd rins ower  
His muirlan, hungeret,  
The erne scrauns  
His scree fur game  
Bi driven snaa  
His tap is dunnert  
An ermine plaid, drapt ower  
His wame.

A latchy Spring. The buds are brierin  
A sleepy adder, hauf hung tee  
Raxxes his coils. A hingin-luggit taed  
His spawn begins tae spee.  
Loch Dubh's a cauldron, rikkin, reamin  
Fu o the Springtime's fertile bree.

The riven crags, the broon peat hags,  
Dwaum in the simmer's birsslin sun  
Wud whirligigs daunce gollach jigs,  
The wheech o line....the crack o gun,  
Echoes aroon yon auncient lan

Howked bi a glacier's boney haun.

Autumn. The rowan's hingin reid.  
The harebell nods its airy heid.  
The Sizzen richly peints the Ben  
Flangs purple robes along the glen.

GlenTanar's knowes. Glen Cluny's howes  
Are slicht compared wi Tullich's pride  
Thon glimrin star that's Lochnagar  
The glory o thon kintraside.

## 25. MAISTER PUDDOCK

Maister puddock's like a bodach  
As he sprauchles on his stammack  
Nabs a glaikit hornygollach  
Wi his back as bood's a crommack  
Port-a-beul! The hungeret sclorach  
Thinks it tasty as a bannock.

## 26. MAISTER TAED

Maister taed weirs shiny trews  
Like the breeks o a banshee  
In the bog aside the burn  
That's sleistery wi lochan's bree.  
A pyock o plooks upon his back  
'KEERACK, KEERACK', is aa his crack  
Up he lowps! .. Draps wi a heck  
As sudden as a sair begeck!

## 27. AULD CAILLEACH

The dottlit cailleach frae the ferm  
In her bauchles trauchles throwe  
The park aside the tummelt cairn  
Far neeps like raws o sod jers growe.

Like a partan, dour an beeny  
Pechan, up she pues the kail  
Frae the ootrigs, roch an steeny  
Bluid's like watter, ower shail

It's wersh an thin. Her veins are dulse  
A rattan's fitfaa is her pulse....  
A leaky currach, tramsh an teuch  
A linn, that's dwinnlit tae a sheugh.

Her waes hae gaithered wi the years  
As fyew an fyewer growe her fiers.  
Like bees frae skep atap the glen  
Or raindraps ower the drookit Ben

Tribbles spring up tae wecht her doon  
Auld cailleach, in the creeshie goon.

## 28. NICHT-FAA

Ahin the knock the peesie keens  
A coronach's its dowie croon  
The gloamin is a trauchelt cyard  
Fit-sair an weary, beddin doon.

Cauld corries catch the derkenin clouds  
As nicht-faa smoors the lowes o day  
The shauchlin brock his ludgin leaves  
Deep in the crags abeen the brae

The Heavens screive their starry strowds  
Like peeries the far planets reel  
The Druid meen, its witchin casts  
Enthralls the muckle ocean's sweel.

Sheena Blackhall



# Missionary Soup

There was a young Reverend called Baker  
Who was quickly despatched to his Maker  
By Fijians, who said 'He looks plump and well fed  
Let's boil him up sooner than later! '

Sheena Blackhall

# Monkey King (At The Buddhist Cave Temple At Dambulla)

Hanuman, small monkey king  
Adopts the perfect pose of the adept beggar  
He has captured the plea to a T  
Those soulful eyes, just on the brink of tears  
That one hand cupped for alms like a broken stalk

His wife, two steps behind,  
Clutches their skinny baby like a holdall  
Full of credit cards in a land of thieves

Sitting, bored in the sun, a dreadlocked bead seller  
Clucks invites with his tongue, extend his fingertips  
Apes the potential giver. Lures them in,  
Then throws a well-aimed stick.

Rage defeats servility. The small male screeches a war dance,  
Wheels and charges, teeth bared like a demon.  
The peddler bats him away,  
A water bottle smacked against his snout  
A laughter- ripple circulates the stalls  
Then, silence in the cauldron of the sun.

Sheena Blackhall

# Monkey, City Palace, Jaipur

Monkey's bum is pink, shaped like a Yankee doughnut  
Plugged with a raisin.

She is the overseer of street pee-ers,  
Beggars and barter. Is there a monkey charter?  
A union for Simian needs?

Most human of breeds, she sits on the City Palace  
A watcher, a scratcher, lean despatcher of fleas.

After the fourteenth tourist snaps her profile  
She doubles her hands back, runs the length of the roof  
Her suckling infant tugging at her teats,  
A small backpacker thumbing a needy lift.

Sheena Blackhall

# Moon

Moon slumps like a hammock,  
All mooned out  
With lovers loving him,  
Lunatics blaming him,  
Owls hoot-hooting at him,  
Mars and Jupiter calling him little squirt

Tomorrow, Moon  
Will grow four legs,  
Two horns, a tail,  
And jump across a cow.

Sheena Blackhall

# Moon Cakes And Hinney (21 Scots Poems)

2

## 1. Gloamin, Siem Reap

Motorscooters ferry families hame  
Unhelmeted human sannies  
Breid slices stappt wi chillis

Cambodia's a barfit lan o sandals  
Traffic heezes like boorichs o poorin ants  
In true reid britherly solidarity

A vender peddles by, wechtit wi pyocks an trock  
Like an upright cuddy

A quine frae a new hotel, swyty in ticht blaik skirt  
Badge preened tae her sark,  
Hyters ower the road in sheen an hose  
The ootlinn in this hett, brunt, humid lan

## 2. Street Café

Nyaakit weers hing fae danglin sockets  
A muckle scunnersome cockroach  
Squats in the laavie  
Ower bumbazed bi heat tae rin for cover

The pyjamaad, three toothed waitress  
Pykes the siller frae a dumfounerment o notes  
Dunts doon a de-husked coconut,  
Pierced wi a straa

Hanks o phone weers crackle like live spaghetti  
A rooster craas afore a corner kiosk  
Like a firey sergeant major on parade

On the cassies, a skeleton in rags  
Heists his haun tae his mou, the global sign o hunger

### 3. On the Mekong Delta

Mangosteen an rambutan  
Pineapple an durian  
Mango trees an floatin hames  
Burns far chocolate watter faems

Bird's nest juice, a sting ray fry  
Stilt toons on the watterwye  
Gibbon, langur, rice, catfish  
Snake's wine, noodles piled on dish

Sampan, bonsai gairden, bees  
Basket vender on his knees  
Heich bamboo, green paddy field  
Monkey brigs an jackfruit yield

Lappin waves an bairnies splashin  
In pagoda, cymbals clashin  
Jasmine tea an sugar cane  
Coconut an monsoon rain

Weemen rowin staunin up  
Coolie hats an cheena cup  
Boats sail by wi peinted een  
Mahjong, mines, an tropic scene

Palm an fig tree, dragonfruit  
Size zero coos an betel root  
Mekong Delta, breedin grun  
Fur floatin merkets, fruits, an fun!

### 4. Angkor Wat

Roon the temple, Agkor Wat  
Mozzies whine an towrists swat  
Ilkie guide's a polyglot  
In the lan that time forgot

A mighty fig tree, heichs the sky  
Drives its muckle reets doonbye  
Temple waa, a timmer mawe  
That swallaes stane an statue aa

Vive La France! An omelette  
Wi crossant, suits the Scots palette  
French rule has left its merk ahin  
Empires faa, bit cuisines win!

Jumbos wechtit doon wi fowk  
Daunder far the termites howk  
Towrists, scan the waas tae see  
Scenes frae hyne aff century

Here, a wumman rypes a heid  
O flechs. A baker's kneadin breid  
Here a grumphie's killt an scoored  
Thon's a cauldron. There's a gourd.  
Yonner, warships wi their crew  
Fecht like veggies in a stew  
Bubblin up or drappin doon  
Crocodiles crunch shank an croon  
Fin sodjers faa intae the waves  
Crocodiles makk fechters' graves

Stane Buddhas in the rooms upbye  
Contemplate the warld foraye

Rowed in silk an incense rikk  
Furlin frae each scentit stick

Angkor Wat aneth the stars  
Teem o fowk, tuk-tuks an cars  
Tae the jungle turns its face  
An the ghaisties o the place

## 5. Grub's Up

Stir fry crocodile wi spices  
Puddock in rice parritch, cooked

Goat's prick byled. Fruit drinks wi ices  
Grilled green draigon, chawed an sooked

Bellyfish or snake in bowl  
Spurgie, ivy juice, steamed snail  
Teenie squid wi tentacles  
Scallops grilled wi egg o quail

Field moose, lemon, grumphie's stammache  
Sauted bluid clams. Lychees, sweet  
Raivellt noodles, shrimps an dumplins  
Weasel grilled, wi nuts tae eat

Byled deer's tendon, lotus juice  
Fruits o jungle, rare an bricht  
Sic a rowth o unca ferlies  
Nae a plate o broth in sicht!

## 6. Sky Fowk ower Cambodia

Sky fowk gyang traivellin in comfort an style  
Airm rests an doon-raxxin seats mile efter mile  
Road fowk maun warssle like sprats in a tin  
Crammed inno buses that Wint squashes in

Sky fowk lie dwaumin. Air hostesses say  
'Maet tae refresh ye? Roast chucken the day.'  
Road fowks' repasts are flee-pepperet an swyty  
Sappy, an fooshty, an tasteless, an clarty

Sky fowk drink aften, wi laavies nearby  
Wee, bit wi soap an clean tools on supply  
Road fowk are drouthy...nae watery, nae sink  
The bus winna stop, sae they're aa feart tae drink

Sky fowk, oh sky fowk, tell's, fit dae ye ken  
O the thoosans o traivellers wi little tae spen?  
Sky fowk, oh sky fowk, pray ye dinna faa  
Siller decides fa wauks big, fa wauks smaa.



## 7. Ninetieth Daithday

Pool.  
Peopl  
e plop!  
Cool.

Lowped inno the muckle puil o seelence  
Edwin Morgan, jynin the ither sax,  
MacCaig, Maclean, MacDiarmid  
Crichton Smith, Mackay Brown, Robert Garioch  
Raxxin the ripples o their influence oot  
A Glesga chiel, drawn tae matters o intellect  
Champion o ootlinns. Giein prejudice the auld hee-haw

Thon braid grin wad hae meltit a hairt o granite  
The gleg een keekin pawky oot ahin his glaisses  
A linguist, scholar, gaun-aboot body  
Fa gaed voice tae sic disparate craiturs as  
The Loch Ness Monster, Marilyn Monroe,  
A blin man ettlin tae pee  
Rousseau's bogle, Auld Cloutie at Auschwitz  
Mao's kittlin an Glesga Gangs

Luv-makkin on the Cathkin Braes  
In the bield o trees an buss in the gloamin licht  
He gart us ken ken that luv's the gowd,  
Fariver it's bestowed.

Sweet dreams, sweet makar  
Fa keepit yer audience warm in the hap o yer haun  
Widenin oor harns tae  
the weird,  
the wud,  
the winnerfu

## 8. Conga Fever

I am watchin the blootered attemptin the Conga  
Ane's jiggin her thong an ane's scrattin his donga  
Like dervishes dauncin tae pipe skirl or bonga

Ilkie Jack Jacques and Juan's like a native o Tonga

There's Callum frae Crieff like a wild anaconda  
There's Doris as wizzent's King Tut or Jane Fonda  
There's Wilhelm as stiff as a cut an shut Honda  
The veesions ye see fin yer watchin the conga!

The shooglin o Rhys, a toon clerk frae the Rhonda  
Nae haein tae wark tae some tickin sekonda  
He hopes tae impress a fit waitress caad Wanda  
He'll burst his bihoochie fin dauncin the conga

It's hetter than Hades, Mount Etna, Rwanda  
Foo can they still daunce? It's a mystery tae ponda  
Arooon an aroon like a furlin rotunda  
Like eels on amphetamines, daein the conga

#### 9. The World's Warst Cabaret Act

Foo much dae they pye a pro act tae sing flat?  
Dae they pye him in sweeties, or haun roon the hat?  
I've heard sweeter notes fae a fricasseed cat  
Foo much dae they pye a pro act tae sing flat?

Fin he dees, will he gyang tae a bum steer's corral?  
He's cringfu as dichtin yer a...s wi Izal  
Bring on the lugplugs, the fricasseed cat  
A hyena wi croup could sing better than that!

#### 10. 4 Confabs heard on a bus

The Punk Spikks Oot  
Ye dinna mynd me sittin doon aside ye?  
I dinna like the back seats on the bus  
Dinna be feart at ma piercins an tattooes  
Its jist the fashion, ken?  
We're nae aa tarred wi the same brush.  
Yer grandother's anither ane comin?  
Ye dinna luik auld eneuch.  
I like tae see the auld fowk getting oot

It makks them smell better, the fresh air.

### Back Speirin

Far is gley-eed Jimmy noo? He bedd at Dubby-Dykes  
His uncle ained a smiddy an sortit roosty bikes  
Ye ken the lad I'm meanin..a richt chiel fur a spree  
Ye've niver heard o Jimmy? Waur...Ye've niver heard o ME?

### I Niver Thocht

I niver thocht I'd see the day fin fish war fand in fingers  
I niver thocht I'd see the day fin burgers were humdingers  
I niver thocht I'd see the day fin girse come cut like rugs  
I niver thocht I'd see the day fowk cleaned up eftir dugs

### The Daith Announcement

Ay ay, fit like?  
Nae bad conseederin  
Foo's the man? Rheumaticks sair?  
Fair tae middlin.  
Foo's yer ma...a cheerie wife?  
The richt side o the sod  
Foo's yer da?  
He's unner it.  
Oh my God!

### 11. Tryst

This is a Scots owerset o a poem bi an anonymous seventh-century Japanee

I telt them I wis wytin tae see the risin meen  
Abune the heich Ben's showder. It wis a lee I'd gien  
As I wis wytin lanesome for the true licht o ma een.

### 12. The Bawd

An Owerset in Scots o 'The Hare' frae the Carmina Gadelica. Alexander Carmichael.

Faiver reads ma testimonial,

I wis wioot doot vertuous,  
 Wioot wae or serveelity  
 In ma natur. I wadna ett roch girse,  
 The maet fur ma wame  
 Wis the gran herbs  
 O the muirs. Ma cap, tho it be reid-like,  
 Wis lued bi leddies,  
 An ma hoch, tho cauld,  
 Bi lairds. It's a dowie tale tae tell  
 That I am this nicht streekt oot  
 An that ma harns-pan  
 Is bein rypit, efter they had strippit ma coatie  
 Richt doon tae ma paas,  
 An birssled ma corp  
 On the lowe.  
 I wisna in this state  
 Ower the Mertinmas sizzen  
 Lowpin an caperin  
 Mangst the roch knowes.  
 Withoot thocht at thon time  
 That the vratch wad cam  
 Wi his gun tae catch me  
 In the gloamin. I wis at hame on the heath  
 Far ma faither an forebears  
 War kittlesome, blythe  
 An virr-fu; chawin the blades o girse  
 On roondit braes an muirs,  
 Tho I fell inno the snare  
 That wis ma doonfaa.

Scots Owersetts o 3 Poems an ae Nippick o Prose bi Georg Trakl(1887-1914)  
 frae Inglis translations bi James Wright & Robert Bly

### 13. The Rattens

In the fermyard the fite meen o autumn sheens.  
 Eildritch shaddas drap frae the eaves o the reef.  
 A seelence is bidin in the teem windaes;  
 Noo frae it the rattens creep oot saftly  
 An skitter here an there, skreichin,  
 An a blae dowie mist frae the pish-hoose

Follaes ahin them, snifflin:  
Ben the mist the ghaistly meenlicht chitters.  
An the rattens skirl wi virr as if gypit  
An gyang oot tae stap hooses an barns  
Which are reamin fu o fruit an grain.  
Jeelin wins argy in the derk

#### 14. On the Weety Lea

A chiel fa stravaigs in the blaik win; the dry reeds reeshle quate-like  
Ben the seelence o the weety lea. In the blae lift  
A waa-gaun o wud birds meeve in ranks  
Aboot-birlin ower derk watters.  
Stramash. In the doon-faain hooses  
Foosht is flichterin oot wi blaik wings;  
Bladdit birks breath wechty in the win.  
Gloamin in teem road hooses. The langin fur hame sattles aboot  
The delicate grue o the grazin flocks,  
Veesion o the nicht: taeds breenge frae siller watters.

#### 15. De Profundis

It is a stibble park, far a blaik rain's faain.  
It is a broon tree, that stauns alane.  
It is a hissing win, that rings aroon teem hooses.  
Foo waesome the gloamin is.  
A fylie eftir,  
The saft orphan gaiters the fyew nippicks o corn.  
Her een luik, roun an gowden, in the gloamin  
An her wyme awytes the heivenly bridegroom.  
On the wye hame  
The shepherd fand the sweet corp  
Dwinin in a buss o thorns.  
I am a shadda far frae derkenin clachans.  
I drank the seelence of God  
Oot o the burn in the trees.  
Cauld metal wauks on ma broo.  
Wyvers hunt for ma hairt.

It is a licht that gyangs oot in ma moo.  
At nicht, I fand masel on a lea,  
Happit wi rubbish an the stoor o starnies.  
In a hazel thicket  
Angels o crystal rang oot aince mair.

Three Owersetts o poems bi Johannes Bobrowski (1917-65)

#### 16. Dēid Leid

Pruzzian was used by the German writer Johannes Bobrowski. The italicised words are among the remaining fragments of that tongue in this Scots owerset of an English translation

He wi the beatin wings  
ootbye fa swypes agin the yett,  
thon is yer brither, ye hear him.  
Laurio he says, watter,  
ablow, tint o colour, deep.

He cam doon wi the burn,  
driftin aroon buckie  
an snailie, spreid like a fan  
on the san, an wis green.

Warne he says an wittan,  
the craa has nae tree,  
I hae the pouer tae kiss ye,  
I bide in yer lug.

Tell him ye dinna  
wint tae listen –  
he cams, an otter, he cams  
heezin like hornets, he skreichs,  
a girselowper, he growes wi the muir  
aneth yer house, he fuspers  
in the wallie, smordis ye hear,  
yer blaik alder will dwine,  
an dee at the palin the morn.

17. Dryad

Owersett frae an Inglis trans. bi Ruth an Matthew Mead

Birk, cweel  
Wi sap, tree, yer braith  
In ma hauns, stinch  
Bark, a yieldin glaiss  
Bit tae fin deeper  
Steerins, the stretchin  
in the trunk  
raxxin tae the branches  
let yer hair faa  
faa on yer nape, I hear  
throwe the cweelness, I hear a flichterin  
hear the current heist  
the risin flood  
hear ecstasy  
sing in ma lug

18. The Soun o Watter biggs Nests inno the Feathered Seelence

Ma lift  
Mixer-maxters wi yours  
Sae dis ma doo  
Noo it flees ower yours  
I see twa shaddas  
Faain  
In the park o corn

We luik wi  
Each ithers een  
We finn a neuk  
Rain  
We say  
Like a story  
The hauf  
Green sentence  
I hear  
Yer moo  
Wi the spik  
O birds

Cairries twigs an feathers  
Up tae ma broo

Owerset in Scots of an English translation by Robin Fulton of a poem by Olav H. Hauge from 'Leaf Huts & Snow Houses'

19. □ Chapped Doon the Muckle Aipple Tree (frae Olav H. Hauge)

I chapped doon the muckle aipple tree bi the windae  
It connached the ootluik, fur ae thing.  
The parlour wis dreich aa simmer  
Mairower, the traders  
Didna wint thon kyne o aipple

I thocht o fit ma faither  
Wad hae said, he likit  
Thon aipple tree  
Bit yet I chapped it doon.

There's a rowth mair licht.  
I can see ower the fjord  
Or keep an ee on  
Mair neebors  
The hoose is noo in full  
View, shows  
Mair o itsel.

I dinna wint tae admit it  
Bit I miss thon aipple tree  
Things arena the same.  
He gaed a gweed bield  
An gweed shade  
The sun keeked  
Throawe his branches  
Ontae the table, an at nicht  
I aften lay, lippenin  
Tae the airy leaves,  
An the aipples-  
Nane finer in spring  
Wi their spicey taste



It's sair ilkie time I see the stump.  
Fin it saftens  
I'll chap it intae kinnlin

## 20. Scotland Lives: OK?

After The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living  
An installation by Damien Hirst

Pickled in the formaldehyde of forever,  
Mary Queen of Scots continues to reign  
Along my synaptic clefts

Memory's a rowan tree of myths  
Neuro-transmitters cradle Flodden's angst  
The thistle, crushed and bleeding, a mighty army, crows meat.

The hemispheres of my mind  
Track Allt na Giubhsaich,  
A broken dyke, the cry of whaup and banshee  
I am hard-wired to the history of a nation  
The prism of music, lighting its every crannie  
Its leafy glens flooding my mind's receptors

Time ferments the loch of lineage  
Deepens the self's connections

Each moment the soft rain of language  
Rises up from legend,  
The hynie-back, the eildritch, the un-deid

This charts my life, a backdrop of belonging  
The gritty roar of the city,  
The hush of the North Sea's incam

## 21. Hong Kong frae the Air

Hong Kong, the fragrant harbour,  
Is noo Chinee, ower far doonbye tae notice

Drappin doon tae Chep Lap Lok airport,  
Ower Lantau islan, bi Discovery Bay  
The Trappist an Po Lin monasteries  
Luik like chalk sticks unner a lan o cloud  
Muckle plumes an corries o air  
Glimmer at ee-level, heicher than hawks  
Ablow, the lego o skyscrapers  
Are dwarfed bi the mighty Heivens

Sheena Blackhall

# Moonlight

Moonlight's invasive as keyhole surgery  
It slips into chinks and crannies  
It is needed and sinister  
Ultimately healing

No moonlight - no lovers - no dreams  
No moonlight - no precious sleep  
Mending the frets and worries of the day

All night its creamy lamp  
Illumines the navy blues  
Deep purples and browns of dark

It is the friend of owl and wolf  
Of the restless wave-tossed ships

It lights the way above for the rising dead

Sheena Blackhall

# Morning In The Plaza

A clockwork locust with a swivelling eye  
Studied a church as tall as hopelessness  
Don't judge me! Don't judge me!  
The church seemed to imply

In the surgery over the way  
A scalpel cut a Caesarian slash  
On a girl's pregnant belly

How many cuts does it take to set life free?  
The blue peonies pondered in the vase

Meanwhile a yellow dog barked  
Jealous of a upward growing sunflower

Sheena Blackhall

# Morning Light

In the morning light Mrs Campbell's awakening torso,  
Out of its hooks and hoists  
Slips and wobbles like a skittish lamb

Thighs sprawl like cats on the hearth rugs  
Boobs slide across her belly like petulant seal pups  
The badger she sits on guards its burrow, damply.

Sheena Blackhall

# Mortification Of The Flesh

For I have mortified the flesh  
When anguish is too much to bear  
Ah then, to be a grounded clod  
Unthinking, part of everywhere

Trees yield their leaves unto corruption  
Uncomplaining, from life's wheel  
A sparrow joins itself to dust  
It is man's curse to know and feel

Sheena Blackhall

# Morton's Toe

I possess a Morton's toe  
I do not thrust it into wedges, stilettos,  
Or high-rise platform soles.

I coddle it, this toe which belonged to Pharaohs  
This toe in ancient times  
Was party to the oratory of Greeks

Once, I played the piano with my toes  
An elegant little number  
A soft shoe shuffle

Rajah, who carries the Buddha's tooth in far-off Kandy  
Has a high-cast, holy tail of utmost sanctity  
But not a Morton's toe on his stumpy foot.

Hitler's goose-stepping troops were hammer-toed  
Flat footed. Stamped on the faces of the fallen

Club-footed Claudius, Tutankhamen,  
Goebbels, Byron and Dudley Moore  
Limped into the history books  
Was podiatry their Achilles heel?

For a summer, I worked in a shoe shop  
I held the heels of customers, warm as teacups  
Searching their feet for signs of the royal toe.  
Winkle pickers, Hush Puppies, Odour-Eaters  
All loosen their tongues and soles to Morton's Toes.  
Web-toed owners pale in insignificance.

I have seen them all, the pigeon toed, splay-footed  
The Hong-Kong foot with its pungent fungal hues  
And have you seen toe-cleavages in court shows?  
Foot fetishists would die for such a sight.

Life moves forward, a progression of treads  
Tripping, jogging, processing down  
Pilgrims' Ways, pastures, pavements

Moving on in step to the dead march.

Sheena Blackhall



# Morwydd: The Mulberry Trees

Grotesquely gnarled and warped  
Two mulberries lean creaky towards each other  
Like ancient lovers

Their bark is warty and bulbous as a toper's nose  
They are Elephant man in the final stage of living  
A ghastly gash in the side of the taller tree  
Is filled with plaster, like a surgical cast  
Clapped on by a clumsy medic, 'do not resuscitate'  
Their hideous carbuncles are whiskery with twigs  
You half expect them to cackle

The elder of the pair is leaning its weight  
Onto a sturdy prop, like a Chelsea Pensioner's stick  
No birds alight on their branches  
Which writhe like Medusa's hair

A berry-eyed buck rabbit crops the grass  
Its small teeth snish and snash  
In the pulsing fur of its jowls  
Its ears, two wings of skin  
Are almost translucent

Sheena Blackhall

# Mount Lavinia, Colombo

Sipping iced tea beside the outdoor pool  
(Blue's a sapphire, clearer than a tear)  
Is an excellent view of Colombo's sweeping bay.  
Coconut palms like raffia matting frayed by many feet  
Wallop the heat. The Indian Ocean beats  
Its dirty washing on the beach.

Rag pickers strip the rocks of shirts and saris  
Imported by the tide, free hand-me-downs  
Plucked by the waves from Pondicherry, maybe, or Madras

The breeze is fragrant. Germans, British smile  
Waiters bow and circulate with trays.  
In the British governor's mansion  
300 dollars a night buys a bug free bed  
And a flunky wearing Kaiser Wilhelm's hat.  
Crows dine first class unhindered, off fat pickings  
Unhassled by the staff. This is a Buddhist country

Hard by the beach, the trains run punctually  
The human cargo packaged like sardines,  
Hangs from the window gulps what it can of air

Sheena Blackhall

# Mourning

Mourning usually arrives  
In the small hours  
When the owl digests her kill  
When souls, most frequently flit  
From their human vessels.

It is a beastly predator  
It suckles your memories dry  
You wake in the morning raw  
Knowing the full force of the word bereft

Sheena Blackhall

# Moustaches

Dali's moustaches  
Were tuned in to the stars.

Hitler's was merely a typewriter ribbon  
Over the clacking steel of his words  
Europe in mourning underneath his nose.

The laughing Chevalier's  
Was choc-a-block with beer  
Whilst Kitchener's was kitsch.

How like hedges grow the world's moustaches!  
They hibernate in winter Icicle bound and brittle.  
Soup creeps up their stems  
Pea green, tomato,  
Even Chinese lentil  
Abseils along their strands

Hercule Poirot's was stiff  
As a Welsh Life Guard  
But a mandarin's dangled like liquorice  
Sly and Oriental  
Eminently knottable, suckable,  
Machiavellian.

Doused in drams  
Moustaches curl and bristle  
Like porcupines  
Or walruses on parade

Moustaches of the world,  
We salute you  
Razors are sharpening a little to the left  
The sinister side...  
Droop, droop,  
You may evolve into a beard.

Sheena Blackhall

# Mr And Mrs Ex-Pat

They sit like pepper and salt pots  
White and silent, under the harsh sun  
Their hair is unisex, for easy-care

His shirt is M & S  
Her socks are Laura Ashley  
They are coasting the pages for news  
Of British affairs

Two of their five-a-day fruits  
Sit on a sparse table  
A pear, a plum, not luscious

He studies the finance page  
She scans the agony aunt  
She is a clapped -out mini  
He is a burned -out Ferrari

Two Cox's Pippins in an ex-pat orangerie  
Together they count their cholesterol  
Ration their pension  
Eking out their dying years in the Costas

Sheena Blackhall

# Mr And Mrs Punch

Mr Punch is holding a ticking bomb  
With a short fuse. Mrs Punch is baking.  
Under the flour, her knuckles are pure white

On Monday, Mrs Punch was late in ironing his shirt  
He scalded her hand with coffee  
But gave her Pagan perfume to ease the sting

On Tuesday, she pulled a face  
When Mr Punch set muddy boots on the carpet  
Two black eyes soon re-arranged her expression  
He gave her sunglasses and the promise of happy days

On Wednesday she shook so much she dropped his beer  
As her head bounced off the sideboard  
He told her she made him do it  
He forgave her for being clumsy, stupid, ugly,  
Who else would put up with a no-account like her?

On Thursday, she spoke to a neighbour over the wall  
Wives who flirt, he told her, were worse than whores  
They needed to learn a lesson.  
He was a good teacher, she lost three teeth that day

On Friday and Saturday, Mrs Punch was in Casualty.  
She's very accident prone, her husband told the nurse  
But we're a devoted couple. There's just no parting us.

On Sunday, she died of a blood clot.  
Mr Punch was lost, cried crocodile tears.  
What a loving husband, folk said, and so devoted.  
What was Mr Punch to do without his bag?

Sheena Blackhall

# Mr Bleaney's Room (An Open Letter To Philip Larkin)

Mr Bleaney's room was Spartan.  
Curtains, thin;  
A single, bulb-lit bed  
Where he tucked in  
His fusty blankets.  
Pied a terre to house  
The dead-pan musings  
Of a human mouse.

Dear Mr Philip Larkin: Should  
We measure Bleaney's life by Hollywood,  
Where nouveaux riches, spot-lit by plastic moons  
Use quivering naked virgins like spittoons?

Ah, in that narrow, unelaborate cell,  
Where dark tucked Mr Bleaney in too well,  
For all you knew,  
When bedsit lights went dim,  
Like Blake, his pillows  
Blazed with cherubim.

Sheena Blackhall

# Mr Charon (9 Short English Poems)

## 1. ☒Potion to Perk up your Cat

Two co-ordinates of brimstone  
A pinch of bum fluff  
Bromide of batswallop (one tspoon)  
Some magnocartesian of balsam  
A liberal sprinkling of nightjar pickles  
A shake of powdered feather quills  
A smidgeon of linctus of Sodom  
A grinding of barn owls' toenails  
A soupçon of badger poo essence

## Honeymooners

Blackpool was my parents' choice for honeymoon  
After a long engagement, strictly observed  
My mother's moral compass...N for No

A photo shows them striding out together  
Father, forceful and handsome  
Mother's perm tucked into her rain mate  
A recently deflowered flower

The Tower looms over them,  
That monster of Freudian shadows

My brother was conceived here,  
A stick of human rock stamped 'Made in Blackpool'

## 2. ☒Three Swans Drinking

Three swans drink from a puddle  
Unperturbed by crocodiles of tourists

The swans are wearing grey galoshes  
Black eye-masks dovetail into their orange beaks



Starred with yellow leaves the puddle's a window  
Onto the jet glaze of the tarmac road

Swan-bills snap-lap the water, left to right  
Their necks contorting like a tuba's plumbing  
Their midnight eyes each hold a spark of fire

### 3. Mr Charon's Cargo

The hammers of the heart  
Continue to thump out the old one-two  
Although veins thicken, cells dissolve

Silk stockings, chiffon days  
Give way to granny shoes and thermal vests

Ravens croak in the honeysuckle  
Bulletins warn of cracks and unsafe architecture  
I have become a patch up job  
The sour mouth of Winter spits into the wind

Something familiar, warty, whiskery  
Is mumbling in the queue  
Is biting into a doll  
Is unpicking its stitches and stuffing

Mr Charon, the pier is need  
Of a clean sweep

Christian Anderson

Hans Christian Anderson was born in a slum  
With his eyes half-shut he walked  
He was thin as a reed with a concave chest  
Like a monkey-man he hopped.

Dickens modelled Uriah Heap  
On Anderson (always whingin)  
An poor old Hans paid sex workers

To talk to him, a virgin  
He'd a fear of open spaces  
And of being buried alive  
He stuffed his chest with newspapers  
And wrote stories to survive

#### 5. Isaac Newton

Sir Isaac Newton was said to have an obsessive love of red

Crimson settee  
Crimson cushions  
Crimson drapes  
Crimson curtains  
Crimson chairs  
Crimson bed  
Crimson walls  
Seeing red?

acies

Aristotle dined upon camel meat  
Fried pregnant cicadas he loved to eat

Pliny the Elder, historian  
Ate hare-balls laced with the blood of men

Howard Hughes sucked chocolate bars  
As he pointed his toenails up to the stars

But models must supper on air slipped in  
With a lettuce leaf, to keep them thin

een 2014

No crocodiles lumber along our river banks  
Nobody here walks barefoot, head erect  
Bearing a basket of yams beneath dark skies

The sea is a train that always runs on time

In winter, its carriages are cooler

Extinct wolves cannot blow the houses down  
Not even the urban fox has got that puff  
Forget lush palms, the smell of frangipani  
Lampposts bloom like snowdrops through the haair

Exotic saris are buried by mountains coats  
Gold sandals set aside for faux-fur boots

Goliath of shipping, oil tankers, glut the harbour  
Blond, blue-eyed Euro-citizens chatter in Slav

Ours is a Spartan town, ancient in seats of learning  
Its virtue is endurance across time

I am travelling on a train

When I am travelling on a train  
Then lists of words come skipping  
Like minxes, sphinxes, lynx and jynx  
And others, gaily tripping

A daisy chain of verbiage  
Words rumble out with ease  
Like buttermilk and billygoat  
The poetry disease!

Poetry Lesson

'5 minutes to chat to a friend'  
I told them. 'The theme today is reflection.  
On someone with whom you've had a close connection.'

A black eyed boy with Byronic hair  
Told of a runaway wheelchair. We had to laugh!  
Another, spoke of Husky pups in Alaska.  
Teenage banter flew like harvest chaff

So it went on at a tangent until

A tentative hand rose up,  
Apologetically. 'It's a bit deep really  
When my friend was two, her father left  
She's never seen him since.  
She pretends he's there, all the time  
Even a made-up father's better than none.'

The thin sun struggled to warm the chilly room  
'Is that what you mean, Miss, by the word reflection? '

I had opened a running sore with a single word  
How deep and aching the cut of such rejection.

Sheena Blackhall

# Mr Pavlova's Comb-Over: 7 Children's Poems

1. I'm Mr Pavlova's comb-over  
I flap in the wind like a wing  
An when he is washing his bald bits  
I like to hang down like a swing

Rapunzel had hair long and golden  
And braided, a beautiful plat  
I'm Mr Pavlova's comb-over  
I'm sort of a permanent hat.

-Speak Round the World

Bowf-Wowf says the Scots dog  
Buaf-ouf barks the French  
Bow-wow calls the English dog  
At cat, or ball, or stench.  
Brippi-Brippi, Italy  
Is where you'll hear that sound  
Gong-gong's Indonesian  
Where Asian dogs are found  
Bahk-bahk yaps the Thai dog  
Wan-wan the Japanese  
Gahf-gahf growls the Russian  
Wang-wang is Chinese!

Box

Archie's pet's a tortoise  
Betty keeps a fox  
Katie's got a goldfish  
My pet is a box  
I put four wheels beneath it  
To take it for a walk  
What I love best about it  
It listens when I talk

Row row row the boat  
Row row row the boat  
Beware! It's sprung a leak

When your bottom's soggy  
You must turn the other cheek

Chilli Monster

Underneath the doughballs  
In my plate of liver  
I saw a chillie monster  
Give a little quiver  
I asked what had upset him  
He said it was the meat  
It wouldn't sit beside him  
'Cause it couldn't stand the heat

Agony Uncle

Dear Agony Uncle,  
I'm a pimple  
A zit, a protuberance, pure an simple  
Why does everyone love a dimple  
But nobody, nobody loves a pimple?

eganger

I am a wriggly maggot, my brothers call me Freddy  
I'm fat and cream and wormy and a bluebottle's my Daddy  
I chew up rabbit's eyeballs, dance in dead seagull's tummies  
The only place that I'm not found is inside Pharaoh's Mummies

rashers

A skulk of foxes, a trip of goats  
Set off with a pod of whales  
Along with a smack of jellyfish  
And a slither of Spanish snails  
They followed a colony of bats  
To a squash of rhinoceroses  
Where a sloth of bears were whooping it up  
With honey upon their noses  
A murder of crows dropped by to peck  
The cakes and patisserie  
Till a bounce of kangaroos gate-crashed

The party at half past three

Sheena Blackhall

## Multiple Haiku

Winter's a Dominican;  
Rosary of snowy-white,  
Every pearl becoming one  
In the oyster of the night.

Look upon the lily pool!  
Sailing to Thermopylae,  
Spartan shoals, comestible,  
Fallen shields of fish swim by.

Water cannot hold a shape;  
As with mysteries we drape  
Venus-veils around the mind,  
Crooked lanes forever wind  
From the centre of the whole.

What's the contour of a soul?  
A barb, a bird, a candleglow,  
In the flesh, seraglio?  
Or a phoenix, flown entire  
From the furnace of the fire?

Is it ancient as a tree,  
Solitary as leprosy?  
Does it skip on infant feet,  
Where the meadowgrass lies sweet?

Where the dead men congregate,  
Can the soul obliterate  
With the alchemy of tears  
The leaden casket of the years?  
Be the snowdropp in the hearse,  
Microcosmic universe?

The deathless river flows along  
Soft, a nightingale in song,  
Slipping, silken as a cat...  
I would have a soul like that!





# Muse

The pool quivers and darkens.  
It has become moonless, midnight black  
The tilted sickle drowns, unhinged, upended  
The stars are orphaned waifs  
Normality's suspended

Now is the reign of the heron's stilted stillness  
The corpses' clammy silence  
Uncannily, unaccountably,  
Unsought, unbought, untaught  
A stallion springs from the pot's dead centre  
On hooves of spray and ice-

Marvellous, eldritch, a gleaming jetty jewel  
He snorts and stamps, my lovely liquid tempter  
On the bank of a poem's shivering, yawning pool

His flanks are ripples of power, thus muse of mine  
My water-horse, my mentor  
He waits for me to mount his back and soar

When we are joined and one  
Joined and one and dancing  
Into the depths of the dizzily dazzling linn  
We outpour streams of words  
Like flights of snow-white swans  
As we plunge into creation  
Into the ebony dream realm  
Under the slippery salmon's silver fin

This dark lord is my shadow  
I do not fear him  
He gives tongue to the dumb, dead days  
Pray let me always hear him.

Sheena Blackhall

# Musquash Sunday

On Monday, Marigold's sheets clunked in a Persil tide,  
To and fro, the mechanical arms of the washer  
Embracing their drowned sweat.

On Tuesday, carbolic scrubbed the weekly stripes  
From her husband's collars.

The ironing board arose  
On its wooden scaffold, to receive the marital laundry  
Morning winds had slapped away the wet.

On Wednesday, sour floor clothes steeped in bleach  
Had whitened sooty hearth with grits of Vim  
Brasses were Brassoed, front door steps were scoured.

On Thursday, Marigold lavender-polished the lino  
Newspapers scrunched on window panes, raised rainbows.

On Friday, she baked tea cakes, made meat loaf  
Worm its way through a bloodied mincer  
Her Singer machine with its single metal tooth  
Devoured skirt hems, ploughed rows of thread on curtains.□

On Saturday, she fetched her groceries home,  
De-plumed a chicken, cleaned it like a whistle.  
Hair, kerbi-gripped in a net, week's chores over  
She plumped her flesh in the bath like a blanched onion.  
Pipe-cleaners clenched her curls for the Day of Rest.

On Sunday, came the Seventh Day transformation  
Marigold's steps from drudge to glamour-puss:  
Peachy corsets moulding bust and waist.  
Sateen hooks and eyes, low-slung suspenders,  
Holding aloft sheer nylons, perfectly seamed.

A string of cultured pearls at her lined throat,  
She slipped on court shoes, shimmied into her dress,  
Max Factored her nose, patted her well-pinked cheeks.  
The Coty lipstick, Rhapsody in Rouge  
Slid from its gold sheath like a crimson bullet.

On went the rings, over the creamed knuckles  
And then, across the shoulders, a sparrow with Angels Wings,  
Her musquash coat (reward for a housewife's beavering) ,  
Its mock mink pelts (some furrier'd made a killing) lined with silk.  
Marigold, in all glory, took the kirk by storm.

Sheena Blackhall

# My Eldest Child Is Dead

My eldest child is dead  
He left without goodbye  
I'm not sound in the head  
My eldest child is dead

My eldest child is dead  
I bite my flesh and cry  
The blackness seems to spread  
My eldest child is dead

My eldest child is dead  
Now all I do is sigh  
For happiness has fled  
My eldest child is dead

Sheena Blackhall

# My Son Is Dead

Sausages, bacon, apples, pizza bread  
Food's somehow lost its taste, although I've fed.  
What's missing from the small domestic list  
Ah, how could I forget?  
My son is dead

'Good afternoon. The weather's lovely, yes  
Not often you can wear a summer dress  
And after all the rain we had last week, ' my neighbour said  
I smile and nod, jump through the social hoops  
Inside my heart's a hammer pounding chaff  
My son is dead

Will I step out in brown shoes or in red?  
I've ceased to care for ordinary things  
Life is a treadmill now. All skies are lead  
Behind the mask I howl  
My son is dead

Well, well. Another earthquake in the Med  
Bombs fall on Where-was-that? On Who-were-they?  
The only banner headline in my head  
Tops all, all always will.  
My son is dead.

Sheena Blackhall

# Names Of Minor Planets & Asteroids

Feast your eyes on space, my friends  
To Daveclark, Bonk and Tea  
To Honda and Humptydumpty  
Wanke and Seanconnery

There's Pecker, Dick and Fanny  
Janeausten, and Pinkfloyd  
There's Charlene and the Cheshirecat  
(a grinning asteroid)

There's Robinhood, Millosevich  
Bobhope and Brontosaurus  
Iguanadon and Mrsrock  
And planets squashed or porous

There's Charlieparker and Jamesbond  
There's Sunshine, Smith and Jones  
There's JerryLewis Bus and Bok  
All dead as dust and bones

There's Gary, Brown and Robinson  
There's Bikki, Lick and Kwee  
There's Hippo, Swissair, umpteen more  
Having a cosmic spree!

Sheena Blackhall

# Naomi

She was a complex woman  
Neither a this nor a that  
Sometimes she kissed her children  
Sometimes she knocked them flat

She sang in the church each Sunday  
Jesus had stamped her card  
And nobody knew from her anthems  
She'd sat in a VD ward

She'd had a wartime wedding  
No cake, just bread and spam  
Parachute silk for knickers  
A brush, a wringer, a pram

She could flower beneath her husband  
She could freeze beneath his touch  
Sometimes she loved too little  
Sometimes she loved too much

She saved for a lovely funeral  
No rationing on that day  
Her bones were veiled in linen  
With geraniums, all the way

Sheena Blackhall



# Napoleon

With a high IQ, but short on height  
Three hours was all that he slept at night  
He liked his women to smell quite ripe  
His piles were huge...he'd the tummy gripe  
And it's said that arsenic caused his death  
And bad teeth gave him terrible breath

When his captors were sure that Boney was dead  
They laid him out and they shaved his head  
Each hair was sold as a souvenir  
They cut off his dongle as well poor dear  
His tootle was tiny and useless in bed  
It resembled a seahorse rumours said

In a silver vase his heart went plop  
And his stomach was kept in a pepper pot  
His intestines, sent for surgeons to view  
Blew up with a bomb in WW2

And so alas, poor Bonaparte  
Was robbed of everything, poor little fart  
Except for his toes, his hands, his feet  
Which were, I believe, incredibly neat

Sheena Blackhall

# Nelson Mandela 1918- 2013

Born Rolihlahla Mandela,  
in the Thembu royal family  
in the village of Mvezo in Umtatu

His name Rolihlahla, meant 'troublemaker'  
His clan name was Madiba.

His father prayed to the mighty god Qamata,  
Qamata, child of the sun god, Thixo,  
And the earth goddess, Jobela.

Many reeds, strong reeds, strong hands to bind them,  
The women of Africa, knew just where to find them,  
The sun said: dry them, the river murmured: wind them,

The young Mandela's father practised polygamy  
Four wives, four sons, nine daughters,  
who lived in different villages.

On the boy's first day at school  
His teacher, Miss Mdingane,  
Decided to call him Nelson  
Fait accompli

The child grew up within his mother's kraal  
in the village of Qunu, tending the family cattle

Aged 16, he was circumcised,  
A tribal rite of passage into manhood,  
Which brought him another name, Dalibunga.

Many moons, many suns and days had their passing,  
The people of Africa looked, and they were working,  
Drums for the first of the nation, Mandela is rising

He fled an arranged marriage  
Settled in Jo'burg as a runaway  
Meeting his first white friend,  
A Jewish communist

At communist talks and parties,  
All races mixed as equals

'No Easy Walk to Freedom'  
Was his powerful speech  
The title a quote from his hero  
Jawaharlal Nehru

Disguised as a chauffeur,  
Mandela travelled the country incognito,  
Acquired another name: 'Black Pimpernel'

Two wives later, imprisoned on Robben Island  
He was a convict,  
Hard labour for 18 years in the island's quarries  
Breaking rocks, mining the land for lime

Held in a concrete cell  
8 feet by 7 feet  
Classified as the lowest grade of prisoner,  
Mail censored, visits rare  
All for speaking out against apartheid  
A thin straw mat to sleep on

Often in solitary confinement  
Forbidden to wear sunglasses,  
The glare from the lime damaged the statesman's eyesight

Aged 60, the world remembered him  
Awards flowed in  
His life was austere and simple  
Even after release from prison  
The head of 'the Rainbow Nation'  
Died in his ninetieth decade

Many moons, many suns and days had their passing,  
The people of Africa looked, and they were working,  
Drums for the Rainbow man, Mandela is dying

His casket was draped in a lion skin,  
an ox was ritually slaughtered  
A family elder talked to the body's spirit

In his childhood village of Qunu,  
His body was buried at noon,  
when the sun stood at its highest  
and the shadow at its shortest

On Sunday he was told 'Madiba, we bury you now'  
His body, wrapped in a lion skin.

The people of Africa bowed their heads in mourning,  
Mandela's lion soul is passing, is passing

(Somelines are adapted from a South African Xhosa Stick Fighting Song,  
translated by Manfred Mann)

Sheena Blackhall

# Nepalese Survivor

Kimtang village is off the beaten track  
In this pure land where people are dirt poor

The country is achingly beautiful  
Mists drift from sheer-drop waterfalls  
Buddhist prayer wheels spin in the crystal air

The Himalayan Mountains are dragons' teeth  
White fangs rooted in green  
Fields climb like steps up their steep amphitheatre

The earthquake shook Nepal to its foundation  
Toppling homes like toys in a temper tantrum

Now, temples like concertinas creak at crazy angles  
Homes are strewn like straw across the roads

Mouth-masked helpers dish out tents and rice packs  
The stench of death crawls up from funeral pyres

Where will the poor ones live?  
What will become of them when the press move on,  
With the monsoon rains so near and corpses leaking?

The rhododendron bushes continue to bloom  
The tourists jet away to their safe horizons

In the midst of this sits Mr Funchu Tamang  
One hundred and one years old,  
Born when the Ghurkhas marched to the poppy war  
Twenty three when slaves were banned in his country  
Six kings have come and gone  
Like ghosts of Sherpas, under his frugal watch

Dressed in a Western T-shirt, bone-tired-weary  
He sits in his life's ruins, facing foreign cameras,  
Whilst Western coffers empty their loose change.



# Nest Of Tongues

Richt Fool Moch

Her bairns wir barkit ahin the lugs  
A richt fool moch fowk styled her  
An it wis a winner tae ane an aa  
That some chiel'd aince beguilt her

Her yaird wis a midden o orra trock  
Teemed bottles an roosty cookers  
An the anely bath her bairnies kent  
Wis the sea fin they wore their dookers

Bit gin ye sud bann her roch set oot  
Wi a shakk o her hudderie heid  
She'd gie a bit lauch an tell ye straicht  
There'll be hooses here fin yer deid.

gill Farm, Yorkshire

I'm Kevin, the Bactrian camel  
I wallop ma tail back an fore  
I watch aa the brosie faced diners  
Queuin up at the ferm café door

I share this girse park wi three ithers  
Ae Friesian an twa Charlie coos  
Fin we're scunnered o glowerin at hoodies  
We forgaiter an hase a bit news

See the fowk queuin up for their eerins  
A pyokie o tatties an leeks  
Syne they'll veesit the breets roon the sheddies  
Fyle the bairns caa the dowps frae their breek

I've a fine heid on ma napper  
Ilkie fit is splayed oot like a bap  
I'm a thochtie knock kneed an gey hairy  
An ma neb dribbles snot like a tap

I pose for ma photie wi pleisur  
I'm the sheik in a lan fu o sharn  
I hae seen desert san in ma traivels  
Nae like thon glekit stirks in the barn

er, Deeside

The picnickers hae worn awa  
Frae neuks o brig an lochan  
An clouds are wechty, dowie, grey  
As fower days steepit brochan

The yalla aik, the dwinin birk  
Tell Autumn's hashin forrit  
The mornin frost, like Futterat's teeth  
Nips faces like a worrit

The craas gae hirplin ower the parks  
Like bodachs sair an hippit  
The moosie breenges ben the sheugh  
Faist pechin, fearie fittit

Nae luvvers dauchle bi the Dee  
Fowk heid for hame, weel happit  
An ilkie Barn frae Birse tae Coull  
Wi strae an hey are stappit

A cauld rife month, tae dirl the lugs  
Gransires gyang hirplin roon  
Auld age is skatin on thin ice  
Ae shakk, the leaf faas doon

eard on the Girvan train

Her sister Meg's quick on the uptakk  
At coortin she niver wis slow  
Her Willie's nae cauld in his coffin  
She's anither man on the go



Puir Mary McWhirter frae Wigtoon  
Whan widdaed...a sair-duntin blow...  
Tho willin, drew nae mair admirers  
Tho her step wis as licht as her dough

Daith turns aff the tap o the nuptials  
Bit dis nocht tae the pipes doon ablow  
Aince the wellspring o passion's been tappit  
There's naethin can dam up the flow

#### 5.A Heeze o Poets, Midnight, Callander

Up the furlin stairwye is Rapunzel's neuk  
'Let doon yer beard, ' fowk prigg tae the hoose's maister  
'Sae we micht rype yer kitchie o its delichts.'

Ae poet's ootraxxed on a chaise longue  
Breathin in the bumbazement o the airt  
Far a murderet corp aince lay

Caunles bleeze ootbye in the nicht gairden,  
Greetin their waxxy pearlins doon siller caunlesticks  
Reived frae Miss Havershan's chaumer

In the secret greenhoose ahin a flooerygazebo  
Mangst the tomataes an doverin heids o fruits  
The mistress o the hoose keeks up at the starnies  
Fuspers poems tae the wyver, asleep in its moosewab

At the foun o a parked car, a bard o the road  
Lies huggin his scrawny knees aneth his kilt  
Fylst sprauchled langshanks in an office  
Anither poet dreams this Chagall nchtscape

#### 6. Owersettin Coo at Cwid (1925: Bertolt Brecht)

Agin the byre boord wi raxxed dyewlap  
She chaws on bales o hey, bit gey polite  
Chaws thirty times or mair on ilkie bite  
Sooks ilkie dreep frae strae that seeps its sap

Her blearie een are auld's her teuchened pelt,  
Her past's ahin, aa's left's tae chaw the cwid  
The years hae cweeled the life-lust in her bluid  
She's nae caad aff her stot bi shocks, I'm telt

An fin she wirks her jaws, some coo-herd wrings  
Wi swyty hauns, thick milk frae the puir breet  
It cud be claes-pegs nippin on her teat  
She disna gie a docken fur sic things

Fit's on the go? The auld coo disna care  
As, drappin sharn she meets the gloamin air

Yowe

The raggedy duds o her oo  
Hing frae her taigelt dowp  
She bleats throwe her yalla teeth  
Like a dottled wife or a gowk

Her horns like haunlebars  
O a roosty bike, boo roon  
An she glowers at the passin fowk  
Wioot twa thochts in her croon

Her lammies hae lowped awa  
Her mission in life is dane  
An the stars keek doon on her plicht  
Keek doon, wi their hairts o stane

Hynie awa an heich  
The stars in their glamourie  
They show nae peety nor luv  
At life, fin it's like tae dee

Niver spare ae consarn  
Fur aeons it's bin like thon  
An the auld yowe creaks in her banes  
At the wirms she stauns upon

nd

Holland's a lan that lues the weet  
Its sappy parks are framed bi watter  
Seggs wyve aside its lang canals  
Far antrin herons wyde an splyter

Barges an punts gyang glidin by  
Aa's smeeth's a skatin rink o ice  
Nae humphy howes nor muckle bens  
The sea could droon it in a trice

Inbye the roadside ettin neuk  
The tatrtrie fermers o Van Gogh  
Dowp doon tae their MacDonald fries  
For aa feed noo frae global troch

Pylons raxx up on spinnle shanks  
Haudin thin wires on shargeret fingers  
A kirn o motorwyes furl roon  
Reamin wio trailers...sleek humdingers

For taddies, puddocks, dyeuks an eels  
Holland maun be a Shangri la  
Gin aa the watter dykes fell doon  
They'd hae the governance o aa

#### 9.A Piddlin Affair

In Germany ye pye tae pee- near 70 pence, a dear doonpish  
The lavvie seat furl roons fin pressed, bit losh be here, it disna flush

Here, wyes are different. Fooshtie duggs gyang snocherin roon the wee cafes  
An sausages are three fit lang: eneuch tae burst the slackest steys

The soup, I maun allow, is gweed. The baps are saft an licht eneuch  
Bit 70 pence tae drap yer drawers? Man, thon tae thole is unca teuch

p Hatto: Scots owersett of God's Judgment on a Wicked Bishop by Robert

## Southey

The simmer an autumn had bin sae weet,  
That in winter they hidna hairsted wheat,  
'Twis a peetifu sicht tae see aa roon  
The grain lie rotten an battered doon

Ilkie day the hungry thrang  
Chapped at the Bishop's door fur lang,  
An aa cud tell, tho he wadnae deal  
His barns wi corn were stappit weel  
Syne Bishop Hatto set a date  
Fur the puir tae cam tae his great estate  
He telt them tae cam tae his Barn richt faist  
For food, as lang as the cauld should laist

Delichtit sic kind wirds tae hear  
The puir fowk gaithered frae far an near;  
The muckle barn wis fu twa-fauld  
Wi weemen an littlins, young an auld.

Syne, fin he kent it cud haud nair mair  
He steekit the door an he lauched fu sair  
They prayed fur mercy ahin the waa  
Bit he kinnelt the Barn and brunt them aa.

'I'faith 'tis a hairy bonfire! ' quo he,  
'An the kintra sud be obleeged tae me,  
For riddin the lan o the puir low-born  
Like rattens that canna pye fur corn.'

Sae back tae his palace fu gleg gaed he,  
An he sat doon tae supper richt merrily,  
An he slept thon nicht like an angel mangst men  
Bit Bishop Hatto ne'er sleepit again.

In the mornin as Hatto enter'd the haa  
Far his pictur hung agin the waa,  
A swyte like daith cam ower his face  
For the Rattens had etten it oot of its place.

As he lookit there cam a man frae his park

Wi his chikks as fite as a corpse's sark;  
' I luiked roon yer granaries this morn,  
An the Rattens hae eatten aa yer corn.'

Anither cam rinnin his cape ajee,  
An he wis pale as pale cud be,  
'Flee! ma Lord Bishop, flee, ' quo he,  
'Ten thoosan Rattens are come this wye  
The Lord forgie ye for yesterday! '

'I'll gyang tae ma touer on the Rhine, ' quo he,  
"Tis the safest neuk in Germany;  
The waas are heich an the shores are steep,  
An the river's strang an the watter's deep.'

Bishop Hatto, terrified, hashed awa,  
An he crossed the Rhine afore day's daw,  
An reach'd his touer, an snibbed richt ticht  
Aa the windaes, yetts, that loot in day licht

He laid him doon an steeked his een  
But a skirl like the torture o hell fire sune  
Gart him wauken an see a thing in a dwaum  
On his bowster, thon's far the skreichin cam.

He listened an lookit; ... twis anely the Cat;  
Bit the Bishop he grew mair feart for that,  
For she sat skirlin, wud wi fear  
At the Army of Rattens drawin near.

For they hae swam over the river sae deep,  
An they hae sclimmed up the shores sae steep,  
An up the Touer they are aa intent,  
Tae dae the wirk for which they wir sent.

They cudna be coontit bi ten nor three  
By thoosans they cam sae faist, sae slee  
Sic nummers hid niver bin heard o afore,  
Sic a judgment cam tae the Bishop's door

Doon on his knees the Bishop fell,  
Faister an faister his beads tae tell,

As louder an louder drawin near  
The gnawin o teeth wis aa he cud hear.

An in at the windaes they rummle, they steer,  
An helster-gowdie they poor ower the fleer  
An doon frae the ceilin an up throwe the stair,  
Frae the richt an the left, withoot dauchlin or care  
Frae inbye an oot, frae abune an aneth,  
They rin fur the Bishop wioot drawin braith

They hae whetted their teethies agin the stanes,  
An noo they pyke on the Bishop's banes:  
They gnaw'd the creash frae his ilkie limb,  
For they wir sent tae serve judgment on him!

11. The Siren of the Rhine: Owerset in Scots of The Lorelei by Heinrich Heine  
(1798-1856) , written in 1823

I wish I kent far it cam frae  
This waeness creepit ower me.  
The ghaist of an auncient legend  
That willnae let me be.  
The air is cweel in the gloamin  
Sae gently rins the Rhine;  
A Ben in the settin sunlicht  
Catches the dwinin shine.

The heichest peak still glimmin  
It shaws, enthroned in the air,  
A Sireen tint in her dwaumin  
Caimbin her gowden hair.  
Wi gowden caimb she straiks lichtly  
Her hair as she sings her sang;  
Echoin ben the gloamin  
Her eildritch voice sae strang.

The boatman has heard, it has thirled him  
He's caught bi luve's tyranny  
He's blin tae the reefs that engird him,  
The maid is aa he can see  
An noo the wud watters awauken

Syne boat an boatman are gane.  
Aa this, is fit wi her singin,  
The Lorelei has dane.

## 12. The Coo's Tail

Hae ye iver hid the misfortune  
Tae gyang fur a bus trip yersel  
Wi a hantle o ithers aside ye  
An the ane that they caa 'The Coo's Tail? '

She's aywis the hinmaist back, treetlin,  
Fin ye've grun yer teeth doon tae the line  
(Hauf an oor she kept aabody wytin)  
Cryin, 'Mercy, is thon the richt time? '

In a pit stop tae veesit the wattery  
Search parties gaed, thinkin she'd deid  
Bit na, she'd bin on the phone bletherin  
Wi her mobile clappt hard tae her heid

Syne tae makk the time up, things are nippit  
Ye've tae swallae yer fly at tap speed  
Bit the coo's tail is shameless an brazen  
She's bedd back for a secunt bit breid

Coos' tails, I's avow, should be libbit  
Should be dockit afore they leave hame  
Bit wioot a coo's tail tae poor scorn ower  
We'd need some ither body tae blame

Sheena Blackhall

## Netherton's Grieve (Scots) 1919

The grieve cam back tae Netherton, slaw fittit  
Lauchter hid deed in him his wife jeloused  
Altho he cairriet on his daily warssles  
Whyles, at the slichtest thing, Jock Thamson roosed.

His bairns still hottered roon him for a bosie  
(Thon spirk o faither-feelin wisna smored)  
He wadna spikk o Flanders or the fechtin  
Bit, in the byre, alane, he stood an roared  
At shaddas nane aroon could catch a glisk o  
The anely breet about the place he lued  
Wis Sodjer, the ex-airmy shelt he ploood wi  
Auld Sodjer, wi his hin hoch scarred an boood.

They'd plytered ben the dubs o Hell thegither  
In different battlefields, bit baith coored aa  
Fin Nichtmares clawed his craig, oot tae the stable  
Jock slippit aff tae bide in Sodjer's staa  
The wife, the bairns, the fermer'd read the papers  
In prent it lookit coorse. Fit wid they ken?  
Nane bit the shelt an him had seen the horrors  
The hairst bi shell an gas, o leevin men

Sheena Blackhall



# New Cottage Industry: The Egg-Head

In the writers' farm I am free-range;  
I don't want my eggs in one basket,  
I want to be broody in lark's houses,  
In hare's forms.

I want to produce triangular eggs that bounce,  
Or square ones with sky-blue yolks.

I want to bark instead of cluck,  
And maybe have metal feathers.  
And at the end, please,  
A lion stamped on my poems  
To prove they are up to scratch.

Sheena Blackhall

# New Deer Concerto

August. Sun's a kettledrum on high  
Hitting the right notes, solo, in the sky  
While underground things knit and mesh and settle  
The summer heat keeps barley on its mettle

Between the rustling fields, tall foxgloves stand  
Like sticks of bell-chimes. Summer rules the land  
Wind turbines turn like gleaming swimmer's arms  
Slicing through blue. The ditch yields up its charms

The clouds turn purple with a great crescendo  
As wind and rain beat down, drum-tap staccato  
Both meadow-grass and birch reverberate  
The summer storm sweeps in with regal state

Vetch. thistle, pit-a-pat with muffled beats  
And like the milk that spurts from a dam's teats  
Rain water gurgles down the furrow's throat  
And drenches turtle dove and sharp-fanged stoat

Night, and the shadow play of darkening leaves  
Dances upon the wall beneath the eaves  
Then biting midges lose their vampire zest  
And butterflies snap shut their wings in rest

High in the Heavens, the lunar galleon  
Breasting the cloud banks like a graceful swan  
Looks down as creatures wearied by the day  
Turn a blind eye to sight and drift away

The farm stretches out and takes its ease  
The farmer, wife, the crops, the honeybees  
Each barley head like harp strings silent falls  
Breath slows, and limbs turn limp. A barn owl calls

Sheena Blackhall

# New Deer Sheep

To my surprise, a sheep's eye  
Is not round. The pupil is quite triangular,  
Almost angular.

So when it looks at me  
What does a ewe see?

I must look like a pyramid  
Or a wandering wedge.

My cousin, its master, the farmer,  
Must look like a chisel edge  
Coming to chip it out of its Cubist flock.

A New Deer ewe's a woolly, walking block  
With triangular eyes...  
A fleece of crumbly chalk

Amongst acres of permed sheep,  
A field of woolly leapers,  
A grizzled matriarch stamps,  
Stands her ground like a tug at anchor.  
Her flanks, butted by lambs,  
Her back, mounted by rams.

Her eyes click off and on  
Like two car side lights;  
Her woolly heart is fluttering like a fan  
At this new smell on legs so near her young.

Her lamb leaps two feet happy.  
New Deer, a melting moment in March,  
Spring on four legs has sprung.

Sheena Blackhall

# Night City

In night clubs, lights are strobing,  
Chat up lines beginning,  
Cocktail glasses clinking,  
Chunky pint mugs clunking.  
Town's mascara eyes,  
From howf and alleys winking,  
Panda cars are prowling,  
Gallus posers posing.

Skinny boy, a lonely skittle  
Stands in a grocer's doorway,  
Shivering, pale,  
Sways like a bamboo reed,  
Grass, in a drug-fuelled gale.  
Laughing, linking arms,  
Four girls spray-break a puddle.  
In a jeweller's spew-splashed foyer,  
Out of a ragged huddle of filthy clothes,  
A filthy claw comes poking.  
Missus, see some change?  
The gruff voice, low and croaking.

Beggar, cuddles his empty sherry bottle,  
Stubble around his face  
Like thorns, dew-bright with spittle.  
Music jazes, jangles.  
Pools of pallid light ring tall street lamps  
Like garish gypsy bangles.  
Taxis slice away like black pirhanas  
Saturday night in down town Aberdeen  
Cash till Hosannas!

Sheena Blackhall

# Night Fields

Owl does not bring down death  
With a doctor's pills, or a surgeon's glinting knife

She falls from a height with a cruel and a careless grace,  
With an outspread wing and a Pierrot's chalk white face.

She floats in her feathered robes, a forest queen  
Falls with the curving claws of her talons poised  
Down through the moonlight onto her quivering prey.

Her collar-bone is white as bloodless stones  
The air whistles and keens around her wings

Her soul is gloomy, her eyes inscrutable  
As tomb stones with the lettering worn off

The lust of hunger drives us, one and all  
The spur to fuel the flesh for one more day

Sheena Blackhall

# Nine Monsters At A Party

Nine monsters at a party for a little girl called Mabel  
Grew ravenous with hunger and were forced to eat her table.

For afters they had potted plant with fricassed TV  
Nine monsters at a party held at Worthington-on-Sea.

Sheena Blackhall

# North East Neuk (58 Poems In Scots)

## 1. Reflections

The timmer-heided tree,  
Dis it consider the skirp o growth,  
The Adam bud o its reet?  
Raxxed till the complexity o a twig;  
Dis it fear the, rot that hungers fur its fa?  
An wid it murn, aince yearly,  
The sma birds o its leaves  
Wingin awa?

The watter, big wi spate  
Dis it consider the sky?  
That shaks it doon the antrin wave  
Or in fierce heicht o simmer  
Drains it dry?

Or is it anely man  
Wha in his Autumn, finds that Spring  
May rise tae haunt him, o a suddenty  
Wha's thochts, like leaves, may turn  
Frae green tae broon  
Wi sic a surety  
It dings him doon,  
An shaks his verra bein  
Tae its foun?

## 2. Archaeologist

Ah'm an archaeologist.  
Ah open tombs. Dream dreams.  
Ficherin with the jigsaw  
O ma ain past,  
Ah've managed tae drap it;  
An illusion, in smithereens.

Ithers get the sarcophagus.  
Ah get the curse.

Ony vacancies fur cave painters?

### 3. The Pearl

The pearl's a frozen shard o skaith,  
The ovum, in the oyster reest,  
A glimmerin orb o clammy daith,  
Pierced canker, in a rendrin breist.

Cauld gem, the wastrel ocean's bairn  
O aa the ferlies kent on earth  
Seeded in anguish, sired in hairm  
Oh wha wid envy sic a birth?

### 4. Meditation Nummer Ane fur Ian Scorgie

I drew frae the conjuror's hat  
A whylie's silence.  
Through the stage-door trap,  
I drapt, in unencumbered solitude  
Doon, in a well o' quietude  
The wheels unfurl yonder  
The cardboord scenery's tint  
There's naethin tae dae bit ponder,  
There in the inmaist cell o the mind  
It's still as a lily, aathegither bare.  
The cycle o Alpha an Omega's  
Straucht as a die. Ye can be  
An unfauldin petal  
An inwardly-turnin ee  
Hyne ooto the want-an-wish  
A nameless, ebony fish  
Dartin the depths,  
O cosmic consciousness

### 5. Mither Tongue

Fit's a whigmaleerie?  
Dinna speir at me!



Them that speirs nae questions,  
Arena telt a lee!

Fit's a stammygaster?  
Fegs, ye dinna ken?  
Ye've as little on yer tongue's  
The teeth upon a hen!

Fit's Esperanto?  
Is't nae a kinna girse?  
It's nae. Weel, the wint o't  
Winna leave me wirse.

Fit's an oxter? Fit's a neive?  
Fit did ye learn at schule?  
Dam't ye'r as tongue-tack'ts  
The Laird o Udney's feel!

I'm verbally impoverished?  
Ochone, man, ochone,  
Nae a Scot fa's wirth a groat'll  
Staun an stammache thon!

Fit's linguistics onyroad?  
Satty bree or brine!  
Spurgies cheep, and lammies baa,  
My spik's mine!

## 6. Joseph Gillanders

Joseph Gillanders, o a siccar race  
Him, o the rovin haun, an rovin ee  
O passions kept a brace.  
Love o a comely queat, an a fat bawbee  
An whaur his brethern culled a single bloom  
Joseph Gillander's flooers filled a room.

Dislikin cuckolds horns  
Men spurned him,  
His posies sprouted thorns  
Oh peety puir Gillanders, in his plight

Mair sinned against than sinnin.  
In charity, his fauts werena his wyte  
Blame Him abeen, fa first created wimmin!

#### 7. Blin Robin

A hallyrackit billie, galluses agley  
Roch-chinned; ye'd crack a spunk  
Upon the stibble  
(Twa days growth forby) .  
A weel-worn chiel  
It seemed as though  
He'd seen it as dane it as  
Stramashes — booze — an oxterfu o deems.  
(His verra sark wis fechtin wi its seams,  
An cocky wi't. A kailyaird thistle  
Quick tae roose — bit quicker still, tae settle)

Yon muckle een  
Glowered through ye  
Scunnersomely teem.

Aince set his fummlin fingers on a reed  
The deils o' dance wid dirl in yer bluid  
Fu lick o Sorra's ladle —  
Barred frae sicht  
A blin' man, on a dreich November's nicht  
Wi naething bit a chanter at his thoomb  
Took on Adversity — an turned her roon.

#### 8. Granny's Pet

His seeven lives rin oot thrice ower.  
He's swack's a kittlin-breenge an bob.  
As weel he micht — my gleyin glower's  
A kettle, hotterin on the hob.  
Aince bile, an it's a clippin cloor  
Bit granny sits, as jaunty's Job.

He's short o' years, an short o sense

Bit lang in spunk, her bonnie Jo.  
I wrote his tune, bit he's the sang  
I'll niver ken the owercome o'.

He's raivelled threids o divilment  
An she's a loom, its pattern set.  
A ragin damps, bit disna dash  
Cat's whiskers o' him, granny's pet.

He sups the cream as littlins will.  
It's yirned milk o tcyauve fur me.  
She cries 'Ye war a bairn yersel  
An youth is lichtsome — let him be'.

### 9. Eve and Oedipus

He'd wed an enchantress — she'd turned a mishanter  
His sack, niver laundered, nae thocht till his care  
The bane o contention, his first love, byordnar  
Her shadow cast lang ower the ill-greein pair.

His first love wis peerless — she'd looed him unstintin  
Wi niver a greet, nor a girn nur a carp  
His vices were virtues — she thocht him an Angel  
A craitur Divine wintin anely the harp.

Tither side o the penny, the wife wis disgruntled  
She'd turn up her snoot wi a wearisome grumph.  
Ochon, for the chiel wha unselfish adored her  
His care, an his kindness gaen ower fur a sumph!

The worm o' contention, twa roses wid wither  
He haimmered the nails, an she cairried the cross  
Her first love her faither — his idol, his mither.  
Fa else wid see diamonds, far ithers saw dross?

### 10. Sugar 'n' Spice

Hid yon guid wirds been writ fur me,  
“Turn ye the ither cheek”

Thole twa black een, far wan wid dee.  
God wid hae made me meek.

Sugar 'n' Spice an aathing nice?  
Na — bit a hill-cat's spit  
An the clinkum-clunk, as He steered in spunk,  
Wi sweirity, smeddum, grit.

I can unnerstaun, in Creation's plan  
That there's mony's a better craitur;  
Bit we cut wir claith, fin we first draw braith  
An the lang and the short's wir naitur!

### 11. Litter o' Love

They neither winted fur claes, nur care  
Nur a piece fur the playtime bell  
Fowks quick tae gie, an slow tae blame  
(Far there's nocht tae blacken their ain guid name)  
Kennin the wye things sat at hame  
Wi the throwither bairns o' Nell.

The heir till aabodys cassen cloots  
Sud a baggerels brats be swell?  
The dominie's semmit — the meenister's buits  
Fine fur Nell, wi her squatter o geets  
The guilty ghaist, in the weddin sheets  
Wi her litter o love-grown-stale.

Time saftens scorn, an a gype's weel-tholed  
It's lang, sin Nell hid a man  
Wedded, ten times ower it wis said  
Easily likit — an easier led  
Bit niver in sicht o the merriege bed  
Wi the gowd o grace on her haun

A pat in the passin — a penny in pooch  
'Tis little her craiturs tae pleisur  
For as can tell, that the mither is Nell  
Bit there's naebodys sure o the faither!

## 12. Bitter Sweet

Ye think the sun should shine as day?  
It widna please the gairdeners!  
An gin the rain ding doon the hay  
It fair dismays the fairmers.

The snoddest rose will job yer thoomb,  
The aipple rot, an faa,  
I've niver seen the pitcher yet  
That didna hae its flaw.  
Its jist a step, frae bonnie bride,  
Tae stirkie in the staa.

Ye pu the flooer, it dwines an dees  
Ye bake, the breid grows stale  
There's nae the dug, bit's deaved wi fleas  
There's nae a joy that's hale  
An love that burned sae bricht yestreen,  
The morn, is cauld as kail.

## 13. Sunday Service

Twa peaks o' prayer, Kate Wabster's hauns are pyntit  
Her heid's held heich — bit the blessin o' God is tint  
An fa'd hae thocht, as ane o the Lord's annoited  
She'd tyne her sense, fur a chief she sudna wint?

The congregation's bummin a haly note.  
Bit the tune Kate Wabster croons, is nae o' Grace  
She's singin the wirds bi lip; they're anely rote  
Fur she canna clear her throat, bit she minds his face.

The mou o' the kirk is wide, the pews are thrangin  
The Sabbath fowk are scalin agin the sun  
An Kate sud turn the snib on her eeseless langin  
Cast oot like Lucifer, on the guilty grun  
Fur Deil the thing she's heard, o' the kirk bell clangin  
An ilkie hymn she sang, wis a Hoolachan.

Bit hyne an awa, the thocht o him's her salvation  
Tho' the hale jing-bang o' the warld sud caa it wrang  
An deep in her hairt, he's keepit, a consummation  
Far the kirk an its condemnation canna gang.

#### 14. Twa Limmers

##### Tantalus

War he a reed, she'd rax tae be his bow  
The reeshlin, randy strae, she'd stap the manger  
War he a stag, she'd be the hummel doe  
An wi him, thole the brunt o ony danger

A Springtime snawdrop, derkened b' an aik  
She's spukken fur langsyne-yet incomplete  
His sun's her pleisur, mindin on his make  
Is pure delicht, her trimmlin sap replete

Be't earthly or Divine, love's freely gien  
As weel withhaud yon boundin Heilan burn  
Or ban the gowd, that croons the simmer breem  
Play gyte Canute, an stem the ocean's turn

Their byewyes niver jine-as nicht wi day  
Her baurdy, langin, ee can anely look  
She kens the futterat rives the striddled prey  
Yet fain wid lay her doon, an lute it sook.

His body's fact — her passion's fancy-fed  
Ay Tantalus — ye're North, an she is Sooth  
His love; his lust, she canna bid nor bed  
Twa certainties, within ain Hellish truth.

##### Jezebel

There's a quine on the brae in a blue, blue, gown  
She lifts her skirts, an she shaks them wide  
A flicherty May, wi her braw perfume  
Her ribbons green, an her hair untied

She's niver been true, tho aften wed  
A swick, a randy, a bawdy jaad

Wi her lips o dew, on a dykeside bed  
She'll nae wait lang fur a lusty lad

An fit d'ye ca this Jezebel?  
Fegs, fit else, but a Scots bluebell!

#### 15. Across a Crowded Room after Botticelli's Primavera

'Yer weirin yon glekit luik, ' quo ma pal.  
'Like ye've won the pools. Lettin yer thochts hing oot.  
Face rearranged like a Braque.  
This is the granite city. Stiff upper lip, an that.'

Weel I cudna, cud I? Wi an Oscar Kokoschka clout,  
I'd faaen fur a real El Greco, lang legged, wi a Spanish pout.  
An I felt like Venus, risin ooto the North Sea....  
Cauld, an green, an obvious as hell.

Ma Rodin wis spukken fur. It's tirin, staunin on a shell.  
Speecially yersel.  
Splish, splash, splosh.  
I left, wi Heironymous Bosch

#### 15. Last Tango in Aiberdeen

'Are ye dancing? '  
Torry rock, an Bon-Accordion jive.  
Queen B. o the hive.  
'Na. It's jist the wye I'm staunin.'

The raws o wallflooers wilted,  
Batted petal-een o scunner an mascara  
Fashioned tae be jilted...  
Fairies frae last year's Yuletide tree  
Fushtie scent, an tinsel-clartit frocks.

Seamen, catchless, trawled a petticoat harbour  
Shoals o quines, sma sprats  
Ruggit at anchor  
Fair bait fur some

Commercial traiveller's sampler.

(Fish-net stockings, amply fu)  
Goose-pimpled, lauchin, chilly, in the fridge  
O a caress. (Nae Latin swain's largesse) .  
In Aiberdeen, a Mither Hubbard larder.  
The music stounin harder. 'Can I wauk ye hame? '  
Subtle's an articulated larry  
A baritone as blae as Rubislaw quarry  
Gey Gordon on the haik

Pre-contraceptive-pill days  
Crossed-fingers, ram-rod-will-days  
'Ay. Fur a weddin cake! '  
Fox-trotted intil matrimony  
(An oot o it, by chance)  
I still adopt the wrang stance  
Aywis oot-o-step  
Alane, at the last dance.

16. ~~N~~br' Sea

A rim o unhapt, drooned, unhaly, things,  
The beach bubbles dereliction.  
A brukken fish box floats,  
Affcast frae nets.  
Oot a place, oot o joint  
Articles, wha've tint their anchor  
Nae point  
O' reference,  
Bob, dithery as boats.

Even the catarrhal rain's a cur  
Shakkin weet fur  
Like an auld mat skelpin the win.

I mistrust the shifty element o wave.  
Staunin, heich an dry's a deity,  
I drap it a doon-luik  
An a distance opens  
Blank an wide's the haar



This limmer, lows in her hair's  
A Magdalene. A whine an wheedle  
O a sea, endlessly washin her guilt  
Ower the cliff-fit

The cliff is Calvin-cauld  
Gulls brak frae rocks, blawn prayers.  
Pebbles, fite's the breid o life,  
Hard as Judas coins  
Slidder aneth the faem

Cran upon cran o times,  
Its mission spurned,  
Nae mass conversion possible,  
The sea turns wild cat  
Scrats the grun in storm.

## 17. Gallery

Catched concepts, caged ahin glaiss.  
Studies in style, pernickity or freak.  
Fikey perjink, bi mammoth-monumental.  
Ilkie ain unique. Sic eloquent quate!  
Nae communal contention!

Flamingo-pink, a lang-legged dozy quine, dauchles, peers incisive,  
A diletante dabbler. A human statue.  
Maks inspection  
In lanely judgement.  
Lays wirds aside, superfluous, intrusive.

Watter teems classically intae marble;  
A swatch o spatial elegance, elite portal, tae a magic, visual lan

Auldest impulse o man,  
Afore the quill cud scrat the lines o spik  
Neuked in a dreepin cave, a hunter, daubin peint on the rikk  
O blaukened waas, raxed, tae finger the kill.  
Haun, sicht, an will, wed, tae maist sensual skill.

The staney lion, flankin the gallery  
Teethless Tam o a tabby, an Aiberdonian Sphinx  
Is better nur the predatory original —  
He anely sits, an thinks.

#### 18. Unicorn in Union Street

The bigsie cooshie doos, vauntie as cooncillors,  
Strut i' the sun, atop their quarried Parthenon.  
Splay-fitted dyeuks, sploosh i' the Duthie Park  
In wellington-weet.

Bit I delicht in half-licht, in happit, hidden things.  
I lue the haar that creeps,  
Makkin a drooned Atlantis o ilk street  
The haar that statues the toun  
Wi islands o civic pride.

I delicht in the ocean's cauldron o deceit.  
The sleekit haar,  
That pads, a sounless tod, on siller feet  
Frae sea till its granite lair  
In an inexplicable tide....

An mair — I like sun, efter rain  
Strikk fire on flinty mica, on weet sclate  
Dreepin a granary doon frae the rainbow's horn  
A day fin lichtenin, passin St. Nicholas spire  
(Its thunner, a pealin choir)  
Makks a kirk o hodden grey,  
Flash, like a unicorn!

#### 19. Intercity

Deil the skirp o burn or loch  
Embankments, heich an hilly.  
Dashin by, a streak o rock  
Dykes an Wanderin Willie,

Sookit hard's a pandrop

Swallaed bi a tunnel  
Dark's a mowdie's drainpipe  
Black's a trawler's funnel;

Far's the rollin howes o hame?  
Humphy as a hammock?  
Naethin here bit clouds an coos  
Parks as flat's a bannock!

Crammed like herrin in a creel  
Shugglin like jeely  
Wis't Steenhaven finggin by?  
Dammit, its Kirkcaldy!

Screichin till a jeelin stop  
Like a stottin baa  
Far's Auld Reekie frae the North?  
Forty winks awa!

## 20. Buik-Learnin

'A dominie, lass, is a man amang loons  
Nae denyin ye that —  
Bit a loon amang men.  
The craiturs are aa verra weel —  
Bit fit div they ken aboot calvin, or hyowin,  
Or onythin' eese?  
Thon oot-lyin parks, priggin sair fur the ploo  
Wis mair nur eneuch fur yer ain.  
Buik-learnin? " He spat i' the fire.  
'Get merriet an bairned,  
Fur fit mair sud a lassie desire? '

Fin the nichts are dreich, an stark,  
I've thocht on him, lang an lang  
Yon auld man, happt i' the lee o the kirk  
Buik learnin's the anely mead  
That a mind cud wint  
Bit the grun spiiks aye tae the bluid  
O an heirskip tint.

## 21. Sufi Oor-glaiss

Time is a Bedouin, reengin the lan  
Cupped frae the desert, the gangrel o san  
Teems, sweengin her skirts in a birlin o broon  
A burnie o meenits, gaun whummlin doon

A jimp-wasted glaiss ye may cowp in yer haun  
Pearl efter pearl ower an opal-fite strand.  
Days are the dunes on a sea o illusion  
Lazarus-lowpin frae shadda tae shape  
Saracen's sandal, or Infidel's bridle  
Fate is an alchemist, shakkin his cape!  
an Gloam  
Dawn steers, half-drooned in sleep, droggit wi dwaumin.  
Dreams link hauns an flee, nicht-thistledown,  
Blawn, bi the lip o waukfulness.  
Shaddae-thochts wither awa  
Like frichtit fawns.

The dawn's a greenwid. Raxxin  
Alang her flanks, the widlan roses glimmer in the sheuch.  
The snell win weets her broo. Aathin's new  
The cairryin cries o birds, rise tull the reidenin sun.  
Her in-drawn braith's the rise an drag o oceans,  
The black lan meeves wi'in her wame  
Ower her sma breists, the clouds weave lichtly,  
The green, an pleisunt dawn.

The gloam's a cailleach, dodderin ben the mirk  
A hyterin fitfa far the corbies craw, she's bare o bluid  
Till Nicht, wi infinite peety, rows her dwinin heid  
In a shawl that the mowdie spun...  
The gloamin's tears, are glintin hyne abeen  
The glimmerin starnies, set aside the meen  
As, sinkin doon, she gently jines the grun.

## 24. Prodigal

Kenspeckle craiturs, the fairm-dyeuk's eggs

Keepit thir ain shells  
An thirsels tae thirsels.

The foremaist flew aff in a cloud o stoor  
Ower steadin an meen — the darin' een.

The lave, on a tichter tether,  
Sat siccar .... till, lang i' the neb,  
Dooncast in feather,  
The gangrel flew back,  
Fur a bite tae sup and a blether.

Nae cauld kail fur him —  
Bit the pick o the crap  
An the mither, screichin her joy frae the midden tap.

Siccan a fuss she held wi the wanderin willie  
The lave thocht, "Fit about us? "

'Damn't, ' quo his brithers, 'yon bates aa fur greed! '  
'Hoots! ' quo a hoolet, 'it cud be waur.  
The divil micht bide fur guid! '

## 25. Land

Dark druids, the meenlicht corn  
Wi'ts myriad een; the peeled  
Blades o its leaves, fite hauns  
That's linked in a queer ceremony.  
Forgotton secret, lost in the  
Black, black grun,  
That lies, as auld as keeping,  
Earth-Mither, in a restless daith  
That's quate's a barn.

The corn reeshles like a sea,  
Its echoes soun in ma lug,  
A muckle ocean.  
The rigs rin deep as bluid  
Across the hill,  
Langer than time,

The seekin reets o trees  
Cast their dark shaddas, cross, an intertwine  
Wid drink an drink their fill  
O earth's munificence.  
The air is thick wi seed  
Bi day, the corn is biddible  
Boos, tae man's will  
Bit ben the nicht!  
Breadth o an howlet's flurried flicht  
Lan raxxes, breathes,  
An is a goddess, still

## 26. Village Shop

There's bagfus o kinnlin, there's kebbucks o cheese  
There's girls o ingins, doonhing in queues  
Bit the chiel in command wi the dark dungarees  
Wints a boorich o blethers, a nippick o news.

The customer waitin, a queer, fremmit body  
May hodge at the coonter, grow crabbit an quantar  
He's pyed as much heid as the tail on a cuddy  
Tho hubberin sair as the groan o a chanter  
As weel chum the cheenge in the hap o his trooser  
He's little respeckit's the leak in a rooser.

The shopkeeper's sweir wi incomers tae scutter  
Tween shelvin an shortbreid his patrons foregaiter  
Wi regular custom he'll blab ower the butter  
Tae redd up the state o the warld, and the weather.  
(Fit Francie wis daein wi Nedderton's lass  
The nicht that the meenister happened tae pass.)

Syne the sklaik dribbled oot, like a wallie run dry  
Fowk'll buy a when ferlies, an be on their wye.  
'Regairds tae the faimily, ' he'll wheeple in pairten,  
'I'll be roon wi yer order, on Setterday, certain.'

There's far chaiper shops, gin ye traivel oot-ower  
The price o yer purchase — an uncarin glower  
Nae kent, smilin face, speirin efter yer health

A bargain's a bonus — civility's wealth!

## 27. Leaf

Tak ae wee leaf. A' piper o thin notes  
In ony back-green symphony,  
Its widlan warld, thirled tae the hum o leevin.  
Vibrancy o rain (surely it wad reca) aince glimmered alang its stem.  
Yet, in dreichsome, deid December, fin the rime hings on the wa  
Ryped o its April dream, it is onythin bit serene.  
Blawn ower the snaw, it furls an furls awa  
In visible antipathy.  
Is twal month auld, an niver twal month young  
A tapsalteerie crab, wersh, broon, an drab,  
It murns, in the weety cauld, its mony sangs unsung,  
Wi some abhorrence.  
Kennin the tune bi hairt,  
Swicked, o repeat performance.

## 28. The Rites o Hairst

The winter howe's a hermit. A pious note or twa,  
Faas, frae the chaste fingers o a yew.  
Black upon fite, convents o birks  
Incant their beads o snaw in nun-like silence.

Spring's barfit instrusion's  
Pan, pipin a cobra frae its den.  
Hissin heids o storm!  
Thin cheep o fledglin birds  
Coaxin the buds tae cast their timmer cloots  
Fur swack an lowpin green.  
A roch, unskeely measure.  
A strip-the-willow swatch o simmer pleisur.  
Simmer's rhythmic throb unlocks the lan;  
The corn's a rinnin ream o touselt hair  
An ilkie thing maun pair, an mate, an mairry  
The futterat, wi's teeth as sherp's a stob;  
The bee, upon the berry.

Drunk wi sun, the barley sweys its lythesome sap  
Links airms wi the scythe, an dances till the drap.

Hawk

Twa worm-bored holes  
Chunnerin maggots, pykin a daylight path in the hunter's een

A secunt sicht, its riven waas, ant brewin  
Guffs o rot as great as its lang fa  
Bringer o Daith, levelled till obscenity  
The hett reek o its bluid  
Thudded, a burst sack. A black, sick, shudder  
A reid writhin.

Busy heather bristles. Hone honin the hawk  
On creepie crawlie legs  
Whin whirrin wings  
Bane rises ower flesh on the brae's brods  
The win whussles spears at deid clachans, sair sheilins  
The slaw hill, devourin its prey.

30. Phobias

Fin rattens chitter ahin the door  
Drookit an clorty, sleekit forby,  
Reeshlin aroon the fit o yer bed,  
Far'll ye fly?

Fin the neuks are hotchin abeen yer heid,  
Wi spiders deistin doon till yer ee,  
Shugglin an inch abeen yer neb,  
Fit'll ye dee?

Fin yer lyin there, in a gloamin dwaum,  
An forkietails creep frae the holes o nicht,  
Wi a hantle of hornygollachs ahin,  
Will ye dee o fricht?

Gin yet like tae smore, in the wee, sma oors,



Fin something yirdy crawls on yer face,  
A wabbly puddock, happit in stoor,  
Will yer hairt nae race?

Sic thochts are fashious, the divilment o Auld Nick —  
A fearty-breeks, I pit on the licht richt quick!

### 31. Jumbo

A humphy skyscraper, the jumbo  
Skushles along like a lan'-locked, pensioned tar;  
A showdie Titanic, trailin  
His tooshtie o tail ahin, like a bargee's towe.

Grounded, yon cargo o' guffs,  
Yon barnacle-boddomed, dry-docked Victory  
Shuggles an eel at his prow.

His Buddha-belly-heid is laden wi lugs  
Twa mainsails, walloped incessant back an fore.

Beached in the Big-Top ring,  
He's a girthy whale, ashore  
On the sandy, treacherous, reef, o a fite lagoon.  
A sudden licht maroons him — Circus expertise!  
The Tinchel is ticht as a gin!

Sic applause, as the ringmaister scuppers  
The pride o the captive fleet tull reluctant knees!  
Puir Methuselah jumbo, ootward frae Hindustan  
(Fa nicht eence hae cairriet a Brahmin,  
Ganges-bound far the cobras creep)  
Peers frae his pirlie een, bamboozled.  
Fa the sorra cled the baboons?  
An fa gied the tiger, a wheep?

### 32. The Corbie

He draps frae the dyke, a sweengin gibbet  
Raxxin his warlock's duds. His weird, misshapen clooks

Gang wigglety-wagglety ower the girse. Untender.  
A render o deid flesh, he'd pyke the een frae a new-born lamb.  
He is man's shaddae; a grim mortician.

The reek of Daith in his wake, seenister as a hearse.  
A screich teirs, orra, frae his throat, unmirthfu as despair.

This executioner sud hae fiers o envy, gluttony, hate  
Fur he is merciless; a creepin palsy; piratical potentate.

He powks his lang, reid neb far nicer birds wad bowk.  
I hish him awa. He's ae third scavanger, twa thirds a bat.  
His een are blae's a heidsteen. His hairt is cauld's December.  
He lues a fat corpse. He is scunnersome as a kist.  
He is nichtmare, in the body o a bird.

Gorblie for Ross

'Pit yer finger in the gorblie's hole, the gorblie's nae at hame  
He's roon the back o the hen hoose, pykin an auld deid hen' Trad.

Ye ken, yon's a jibber o havers.  
He's NIVER far ye wad suppose.  
He's the sting in the dowp o the bummer.  
He's the stob, in the scrat o the rose.

He's partial tae ettin wee nickums;  
The anes that are nae verra nice  
Sae dinna gie lip till yer mither  
Or he'll gollup ye up in a trice!

He's the hyter ye get fin ye caper  
He's the frog in yer throat fin ye lee  
An fur powkin in neuks far ye sudna,  
He'll slubber ye doon like a flee!

Sae ay wash yer lugs afore bedtime  
(Fur yon's far the forkietails breed)  
The gorblie'll ken gin ye dinna  
He's got een at the back o his heid!

Yon's an awfy lang shaddae yer seein

Yer feart, that he's efter yer bluid?  
Na fegs. Say yer prayers like a mannie  
An I'll tell the gorblic, yer guid!

Rhyme for Morag

The owl's a hoot — his lugs cock oot  
The gull's umbrella fittit.  
The coo's a coat-rack on his broo  
The yowie's back is knittit.

The yirdy wirm is back tae front  
His twa weet snoots are bubbly  
The salmon weirs a chyne-mail sark  
The heron's knees are knobblly.

The Daddy-lang-legs, aa left thoomb  
Is skinnymalinkie thin.  
Fin centipedes tak aff their beets  
Oh far div they begin?

We've aa wir faa'ts. We sudna peenge  
Fur feathers fine, or borrow't.  
Fin Mr. Snail gyangs roon the pail  
He pits his best fit forrit!

hbogie Spring

As I gaed doon b' Huntly toun  
I heard a cushie wheeple,  
A hummel doo, her cutty gown  
Wis hamely as her threepel.

'I anely sik a bittie corn  
A sma thing, tae be speirin.  
An fa wad gie a bird the scorn  
Wi as the world brierin? '

A doo is bit a tirlin-pin  
A nochtie pluff o feathers,

That ony win may turn an spin  
I didna heed her blethers!

Yet, hyne oot-ower Strathbogie lan  
The cushie swooped an birlled  
A wee, wee, skirp, o sang, an virr,  
Wi licht an sunshine mirled.  
Abeen my dowie hums and haws,  
Her pairtin warnin dirled

'The wecht o winter, on a wing,  
A doo can unnerstaun.  
Ye cairry winter in yer hairt —  
A puir-like craitur's man! '

Lords Written late evening, Glen Muick

Twa ferlies frae a torn pooch  
That fortunes winna save —  
Drap man an woman — coins o chance  
The derk loch claims them baith.

Aa tyauve, achievement, sweetness, fear  
Gang whummlin doon the burn,  
Geese-ghaists that cross a haunted muir  
An niver mair return.

The puir concerns fowk wrassle wi,  
Are bit a fadin flooer  
Abeen the ice-the lichtenin splice  
The daithless hills staun sure.

They are the overlords o Time  
God-testaments in steen.  
Man's meltin sna — the hills oweraa  
Bide firm, till warlds be deen.

rns of Life

A bigsie chiel, o sma accoont,  
Liftit his heid ae day  
An frae the verra founs o ignorance, bespak  
That aa aroon, stars, sun, an warld  
Wis some cosmic mishanter, a celestial mistak.

Nae mishanter hauds the Seasons gaun,  
Birth, growth, an daith-the hale kiboodle  
Year in, year oot, ayebydan.

Birth's a cycle in itsel,  
A body, sundered in the fires of Hell,  
The quickenin bairn inside,  
Hungry fur braith an licht  
Fechts throw fitiver.

Nae pain like it, nur nae peace  
Fear, swyte, an bluid,  
Brings furth sair-won release.

Comes the snibbin o the door  
On beatin wings, a midnicht swan,  
The tyauve o life drifts oot  
Takkin the laich road,  
Till the siccar dawn.

ors

Car-loads o scunners on the haik,  
Brigades o' Sabbath swanks,  
Troosers pressed hard as tramlines  
Thick-skinned, as Kaiser's tanks.

'Visitors, ' quo granny, 'Are like fish.  
Kept ower lang, they stink.'  
Meanin, of coorse, the crabbit, an perjink  
That rin condemnin crannies through the stoor;  
Cry in-by fur ae meenit — stretch it till an oor.  
Yon's the kin' I'd sweep aneth the mat  
Guid-sakes — fit's aa yer hurry?  
Here's yer hat!

gers, tak tent

Bog slumbers deep; aince breech the skin, ye'll sink.  
Wauk circumspect, we arena surface fowk,  
Spreadin wir braws fur ony gangrel tink  
Raxxin wir mou', tae gibber wi a gowk.

We keep a cannie clutch, o sang, an tale  
(Kenspeckle eggs, distinct in tang, an hue)  
The peesie-wheep's wir Norlan nightingale..  
Best-loued o cries, swift minstrel o the dew.

A furrow in the bluid, yon staney lan  
Yon frosty sea, that jeels the muckle furth  
Lang nichts, short simmers, winter's nippy haun  
Has formed an framed us, craiturs o the north.

A nod's the maist we'll gie a fit that's gyangin  
Sae, gin ye'd sikk acceptance as a frien,  
Then bide a whyle; the secret's in belangin.  
It's sattled reets, pits blossom on the gear.

#### 40. Responsible

The aik wis mighty, Samson-strang.  
The girnin Ivy crept alang  
Furlin aroon lik bough an bark  
Wyvin the aik a secunt sark,

She speired an socht, 'Look efter me! '  
Sookin the guidness frae yon tree.  
The aik, wi naethin mair tae gie  
Sappit o virr, cud anely dee.

The cuckoo's bairn, in a nest  
Is rale innocuous, a guest  
Fa's teenie needs, explodin, hatch  
An aيدر, in the siblin'-patch,  
O wints, that snatch, an snatch, an snatch.

The ant lay doon tae lay her eggs.  
Leaf, heistit up on reivin legs  
O ant-ish armies, should hae kent  
Ower muckle weir, the gown is rent.

The lammie, hingin on the tree  
Bled, wi responsibility.  
The strang maun subsidise the weak,  
The vauntie, galvanise the meek.

Ower-bigg the scales, the balance draps.  
Care b'compulsion, quickly saps.  
I am a strawman, nae a stable  
Giein response, far I am able.

#### 41. Seed-Cycle

Frae seed tae bud, an hinmaist, seed again  
As in its prime, the blossom croons the stem  
Sae, in yon floer's yirdly span  
We see the pattern o a man.

I think it is the hardest thing o aa,  
Tae watch the petals, kennin they maun faa.

#### 42. The Dall

The dall, since glen tae me  
Wis jeelin as dule.  
Wis't a gift, or a tool  
A likeness o whit quines sud be?  
Fit weird a lassie maun dree?

Fyeuchie's a wirm,  
Fooshionless, blae, still-born  
Wis the dall that cam tae bide;

Ice-fite wifikie  
Teem as a tomb inside.

'Mama' wis its anely trick  
Its robot-automaton-spik  
It wis paragon-pure's John Knox.  
I'd leifer hae kistit nur cuddlit it  
Cauld, in its fantoosh box.

It wis a plastic wummin.  
An affliction afore the een  
It wis hard as a steen

Gin it hid bin a statue, I micht hae likit it  
Gin it hid bin a symbol I micht hae deciphered it  
Gin it hid bin an idol, I micht hae worshipped it.  
Bit a mummer, a puppet  
A dreid, dumb dall  
God help's, I cudna abide it!

#### 43. Puppeteer

I liked tae pu the towes.  
Gar things lowp till a set threid  
O fancy, as ma ain devisin.

Nae Punch and Judy styte.  
Na; high-falutin stuff.  
Lear, Montrose, John Knox...  
Smilin as I pit them through their paces.

Fowk, nae seein the puppets keepit safe in ma wee brain box  
Remarked, 'Yon bairn's clean gyte.'

Comes bein an activist.  
Playing tin sodjers wi reality.  
A peely wally passivist.

Chaiper nur a day at the picturs,  
Ye've gotta allow.

Whyles, I winner.  
Fa's pullin MY towe?



#### 44. Heilan Games

Anither Games. It trysts them back  
Like salmon up the burn —  
The glen fowk, the Ben fowk, sae thick ye canna turn  
Fur frienly Celtic bourichies; the faimlies intertwine  
An ay the ripple throw the claik is  
Auld Lang Syne.

Heid bummer in his tartan trock is Jock the gamie's loon  
An in a kilt — he canna fill't — some like his grannie's gown.

Yon's Maisie Wabster! Lord, she's aged! It caas ye aff yer stot  
Tae tyne a siller shullin, an boo doon tae fin' a groat.

An Attie; fu's a puggie, sowsed's a pickelt herrin creel...  
Fa cried in tae weet his thrapple, ay, an wat it ower weel.

Yonder's Donald. Sic a twinklin luik  
Wad gar a body blush  
Fur ilkie quine he coortit, Donald turned their hairts tae smush

Fits this yer sayin tae me? Gin ye hidna wed wi Belle  
Ye'd hae taen a secunt notion; ye'd hae merriet me yersel?  
Awa wi ye! ye'r haverin! Yon's styte that winna sit!  
It's guid tae see, wi' oot ae lee, ye hinna cheenged a bit!

ation Gap for Morven

Modern bairns are additive stappit  
Niacin, protein, vitamin C  
Gie them brose — they winna takk it  
Yoghurt, yak's-dirt Muesli

Modern bairns gie shears the go-by  
Spike hair, pink's a soo's bumbee  
Crimpit, coddlit, buffed bi blow dry  
Granda's clippers winna dee.

Modern bairns are ayewise girnin  
Wintin this, and sikkin than  
'Some like ye war, ' cheeps ma mither.  
Fegs, I niver thocht on thon!

### Granary

Seeven crouse years in Pharoah's lan  
The craps grew swete an green.  
Seeven coorse years in Pharoah's lan  
The hairstin rigs stude teem.

Feint the reeshle o a grain  
Feint the corn tae glean  
Seeven green years in Pharoah's lan  
Succoured the years o lean.

Far an fyew are the Maypole days  
Fin the hairt o a man is cowed  
Far an fyew syne, the lambtime dew  
Is cherished an prized as gowd!

Syne, will the green years serve their turn  
Even tho' the leaf be sere  
An the mune be a siller unicorn  
An the dark, be a sable meer  
An ilkie morn, be a hunter's horn  
Hallowin the world tae steer.

### 47. Celestial Discourse

Lord,  
Fyle the sermon wyes yer wecht in wirdies,  
(The lave, heids-booed, sit stinch, on dottlit hurdies)  
WID YE HEAR, Omnipotence, fa plenished the sea  
GIN I SPEIR (presumptious tho it be)  
Ae question. Wis it kind,  
(Gi'en as yer pouer tae gledden the begrutten)  
Tae mak ME misbegotten?

I've twa guid lugs? Odd's faith, I've fairly that  
Discorde an tribble's quick tae gie them scaud.  
I've twa hale hauns? Marred, anely b' the faat  
O' raxxin oot fur things they canna haud.  
I've twa soun een? Ay, Lord, they see ower-weel  
They peel fowk tae the core — an yon's a failin.  
Twa craw's nest heidlichts, blinkin ower a keel  
That seeks unchancy watters, tae gyaun sailin.

Syne YE'LL threep up, 'Lost yowie, dinna stray.  
Ye mauna covet things ye canna hae.' Commandments?  
Dinna tells! Yon's sophistry!

Ye framed the teemless torrent o the deep  
(I'm Yer creation, Maister, bane an bluid)  
Ye named the pit-mirk derk, o' enless sleep  
Gin I displease, ye sud hae made me guid!

#### 48. Holy Willies

Heroes ye niver hear o  
Glower, mealie-mooed an beetle-brood  
At Ne'er dae weels,  
Tow-rags, flee-ups, an ither gallus chiefs  
Fa mak a cheery kirk or mill o' Life,  
An sweeten't wi a lassie, or a drammie  
The Holy Willy's safts a buttered knife  
His maxim iver wis "Tak tent, ca' cannie"

Fine dis he ken  
Damnations's staa's reserved fur ither men,  
The orral bree o' scunnersome humanity.

He'll keep his fingers steekit in the kirk  
As ticht's a sticky burr upon a stirk  
Lest Deils, like hornygollachs, heeze aroon  
Ettlin tae yark the yowlin sinner doon  
Tho waitin in the wings,  
Assured's, his Angels gown.

Fin the tormentit screch in dark abyss

'We didna ken that Hell wid be like this! '  
The wirds fa clear frae Holy Willy's mou  
'Weel, gin ye didna ken,  
Ye ken it noo."  
Nae langer deaved wi earthly, base desire,  
The Holy Willy, stokin up the fire.

#### 49. Sisyphus

It wis a doddle; rowin yon stane till the tap  
Balancin peace o' Mind ower a towerin drap  
Deistit up frae the foun.  
Contrary, the stane cowped doon;  
A game fur the young an swack.  
Bein gallus, an gey fond o hills,  
I sune heistit it back  
Safe, on the richt track.

Nae ill tae shove —  
Consistin in the main  
O barkit shins  
Fechts wi louns  
Wee stobs an stouns...

Queers the wye it grew.  
Neist, it wis fash wi lads.  
Haein ain, or waur,  
Nae haein ain.  
Fash wi lear  
Meanin o Life  
Whit am I daein here?

Sweirer nur fiver, tae shift.  
The swither o' half-road hyter  
Fear o' a tumble  
The same auld rummle  
A muckle cairn o care  
Takks aa ma smeddum tae lift  
I keek back aftener nur forrit  
Showders buckled wi worrit

A rollin stane gaithers nae moss  
That's aa fowk ken!  
Dird, dird, dirdin doon  
The Sisyphus stane, again.

#### 50. Incommunicado

I stopped tae spik wi Wattie Spence,  
He wis a moosie, gaitherin corn.  
His hale confab, wis pounds an pence  
The nest, he'd feather-bed the morn.

I stopped tae spik wi John McBride  
He cheeped incessant, like a jay  
Fin he drew braith, dumfoonert, I'd  
Forgotten fit I meant tae say!

I stopped tae spik wi Solomon.  
He gied nae wird, bit luikit lang  
Far lilies blossomed neth the sun,  
Raw upon raw, a thrivin thrang.

'Fit kinna confab's yon? ' said I  
'The lilies dinna news, nor speir,  
They dinna puzzle, murn, nor sigh  
Nor winner fit they're daein here! '

An syne I stopped, fur syne I kent  
Fit incommunicado meant  
We sodjer on, as best we can  
As wi the lilies, sae wi man.

#### 51. Eurydice

I am telt, Eurydice, that ghaists maun be laid.  
That the heidstane maun slide on the lid o the past.  
That worritin auld banes, is an unhalesome pastime  
The last luik o ye, quine.  
Maun be jist yon — the last.  
An sae, fareweel, ye kent, ye unkent shaddae.

We maun pairt, unbeeriet stillborn wirm  
O bairntiine, maidentime. I'll turn nae mair  
Doon the derk maze o yestreen  
Dod na, I'll bumbaze ye yet!  
I'll rowp yon fattit Minotaur,  
Ye haud at yer yirdy core  
In the neist mart!  
Yer deid, ye jaad, yer deid,  
An canna sook upon ma leevin bluid.

I maun foresweir the auld, tae cultivate the new.  
Bit ilkie divit o dirt  
I set on yer unclean broo  
Clarts ma airs face wi glaur  
Eurydice, ma cross, ma bonnie monster,  
Lie quate, noo.

## 52. Twa Ferlies

Aince, I wis gaen twa ferlies, a keepsake an a toy.  
The keepsake wis a vase o sic a purity  
It mirrored aathin, heicht, an depth, an licht;  
Greedy fur images, it sooked them in  
Tae its reflective sides  
A skinnymalinkie ferlie, maist superior  
At nicht, the meen fell ower its rim  
An gas licht beams, pale flooers, grew up its stem

The toy wis trashy trock. A chaipskate baa.  
A roch-n-tummle thing. Charmless. I let it faa.  
I drap't the baa. It stottit back.  
I drap't the vase. It brak.

Tak only mind, o onyman.  
Gie it a thwack.  
Ye've hit it. Stot, or crack.

Boundless Sea for J.D. Gomersall

An ill-yokt pair is merriment an' dule

Ane's trottin trig, the tither rugs the load  
Heid-doon, slaw fittit, foonert in the glaur  
The tichtenin bit, gyan deep as ony goad.

Ye grip a rose fu' lang, the stem'll brak  
Its perfume, be a grave-guff ower the lan'  
A keekin-glaiss, wi waesome picturs in't  
Dissolves an shatters; stane turned intil san'.

A mirey, dubby, tapsalteerie burn  
Teirin along a bank o' reidest thorn  
Nae tinklin pull, o' tranquil blessed calm  
Twar better sic a thing war niver born!

Oh, I hae bin a rose o nae perfume  
Oh, I hae bin a stane dinged doon tae san'  
Oh, I hae bin a burn o bitter soun  
A withered laurel, cut apairt frae man.

Oh waur, full waur, nur only jyle horizon  
Invidious, the chynes we forge wirsell!  
I wis a prisoner o my ain devisin  
Biggin a boundary, I vrocht a cell.

Yet ivery teenie bird may raxx its wing  
Kennin the solace o a cloudless sky  
There is a sea that welcomes ilkie wave  
Yeh, even sic a brukken ane as I.

ery in Confab

A puckle affcast crockery wid news,  
Jined b' Adversity, grown fell compatible,  
Voicin their sair predicament, their views  
Set doon their worries, cairds upon the table.

The trimmlin tea cup only hoped her hame  
Wid haud a dash o dignity an grace.  
(She wis a sheltered craitur, gey genteel)

The sturdy ashet, feelin ooto place

(Mair eesed wi parridge-bree than soiree sweet)  
Declared fit e'er befell, she widna mind  
As lang's the fowk she sattled wi, were kind.

The glaiss decanter cocked a lordly lug,  
Cauld-showderin a common soor-milk jug,  
An in a haughty, hubberin, hiatus,  
Avowed he'd thole nae drap in social status.

A couthie open-moued communion cup  
(Whaur aa the warld nicht stop, tae tak a sup)  
Telt stories riotous an roch,  
An ill-befittin sic a holy troch;  
Syne, bein censured, silenced aa complaints  
He'd lipped wi deils as aften as wi. saints.

The boozy pint pot, pickled tae the brim,  
Averred that Fate made little odds tae him.  
As lang as he'd a dram, his drouth tae slocken  
For Destiny, he didna gie a docken.

#### 55. Twa Roads till an End

There comes a time, at the dour back end  
Fin the craps are in an stored  
The birds flee gyte, fur the Winter's bite's  
On a lan, far the growth lies smored.

A fairmer traivels his ain bit grun —  
It's siller, an wirk, an strife,  
An the muirlan fen, that he trauchles ben  
Is his unclaimed secunt wife.

A bairn, a man, a beast, a grain,  
Grow, sherpenin fur the knife  
Born alane, an beeriet alane  
An whyles, ower-weel acquaint wi pain  
Fur aathin gien there's a somethin taen  
In the kirk-or-a-mill o life.

Sae, I'll hae the gloamin onyday



Far the cloud an the dirt are mirled  
An the hairse craw crawin abeen the grey  
Is a voice frae anither warld.

Fur mebbe, jist mebbe, there's room fur baith  
Fairmer an dreamer tae;  
Him wi his hauns that reap an bind  
Ithers fa gaither thochts tae mind  
The yowe in the pen, and the reengin hind  
Climmin the self-same brae.

#### 56. Room fur Remembrance

Sma fire, sma-boukit fairmer.  
A collie, yoamin o damp fir  
Its een, twa blaik dowsed coals, lies sprauchled ahin the door.  
Ootbye's an aipple tree, rypit o its fruit.

This room, aince stoot's a cosmos, is compacted till an orchard.  
Aipple blossom wechts the air.  
Its maister's the sole tenant. It's a hinney-jar o a room.  
Hae I grown bigger, or wis't ay this sma?

Dwaumin, I explore the silences, fur bizz o bairnie's claik.  
Nane's there.... Winter's at haun. It palsies the bracken.  
Birks lowp, palfrey-pale. Sun's a bitter rodden.  
Lauchin's dane, in the byre. The roads are teem, untrodden  
Time hings fire.

I sit an sit, a bee reistin its wing in a room o essences  
The clock ticks forrit. Fear; I hear it chime.  
The room recedes till nocht. Anely a space in time.

#### 57. A Gibbon on Evolution

In the monkey hoose, a gibbon, orang-ootang, an baboon,  
War sociably flechin, fin a veesitor walked roon  
A scientist. He claiked about the origins o man  
On reets an evolution... foo humanity began...

'Div I unnerstaun yon aiblich his the crass temerity  
Tae makk oot he's a relation? Weel, he isna sib tae me! '  
Quo the gibbon, fair affrontit, as she scrattit the baboon;  
'Wi half the warld starvin, he pits rockets tae the moon!  
He's the ethics o a vulture, he's the mainners o a hog,  
Gin ye dinna share his politics, he'll sheet ye like a dog!  
His warmth is mainly nuclear... or wippit roan a pylon  
He canna grow a coat; it maun be wool, or flax, or nylon  
Fin a baby gibbon's girny, it gets liftit fur a sook  
Far a man-bairn gets a bottle, syne, it's stappit in a neuk  
An his customs matrimonial — ye really wid suppose  
That insteid o roon the finger, that the ring gied through the nose! '

The gibbon paused, an cocked its tail.

The flechs began tae lowp.

The neebour apes, compassionately, picked them frae her dowp.

'As fur Darwin, an his theory, an the entire human race, '

(said the gibbon, in conclusion,)

'Faith, they're better aff in space! '

Sheena Blackhall

# North Sea Rig

Moonpool fills with moon  
North Sea crinkles like tinfoil  
Waves smack at the rig's metallic legs.

Greasy fingers stack the doped up pipes  
In semis and jack ups workers dream  
Of Santas who'll never visit their Xmas trees.

Beneath the rig's tall crown  
Even asleep, the rousties strut the catwalks  
The engineer is trapped inside his doghouse  
The derrick man is high on his monkey board  
Dreaming of smoko shack at the end of shift.

Roughnecks toss in their bunks  
Counting the hours like rosaries  
That lead to the helideck, the `copters whirring blades  
When they'll struggle ashore to place  
A victory flag on their personal mound of Venus.

Pipes however, fantasies of leaving their murky fathoms  
They yearn for meltdown, steely transformation  
Of being reconstructed as fencing rapiers  
Fishing forks, Art Nouveau, or Jacuzzi taps.

Sheena Blackhall

# Not Home Now

Like a dog that's lost the scent  
On a night of snow and dark  
I sat outside the door of what's Not Home Now

Who's the Mummy of the house?  
Is she blousy, milky, cuddly,  
Warm as well-worn slippers?  
Is she slap and tickly,  
Whipping up meals from nothing?

Who's the Daddy?  
I'll bet he's a regular brick  
I'll bet he walks the dog  
I'll bet it's a rescued dog  
I'll bet he never strays  
From the marital nest  
Like Mr Cuckoo

I wouldn't fit in there now  
A fridge in its sixties  
Icicles grown on my icicles  
A two pin plug in a world of remote controls

Somewhere, between the cracks  
In the old foundations  
Like rot, like a slow mould  
My stains remain.

Sheena Blackhall

# Not Spilling A Drop

Not spilling a drop, in a zigzag line  
Red-as-a-lobster man, trousers at half-mast  
Veers fore and aft towards his tilting table

The blue tattoo on his arm has a wrinkled mermaid  
Her sad green tail folds into the wrinkly equator  
Around his elbow.

Poor mermaid, gone from a peach  
To a shriveled walnut  
Her plump pink face and breasts  
Now concertina squeezed.

Sheena Blackhall

# October 11th

On your birth day  
You were met with a halo of hellos  
A flock of blue cards fluttered on the bedside  
The days flowed by like a murmuration of starlings

Today girls from the red brick house  
Throw sticks to an old pit bull  
A student jogs along  
His lycra running shorts as tight's a drum skin

In a side ward of the geriatric wing  
A patient wheezes into an oxygen mask  
His veins stand proud's the Ganges tributary  
At the harbour mouth, frisky as ocean lambs  
A pod of dolphins play  
A pregnant girl buys tins of reduced price beans

The rain falls down like nobody's business  
And I hang my head in despair  
Like a wet umbrella dripping from a hook  
It is your birth day. You're not here to enjoy it.

Sheena Blackhall

# Ode To A Patio

I had a little patio, I tended it with care,  
But still, it looked so lonely in its suburban lair!  
I bought it gnomes and trinkets, and plastic frogs from Ayr,  
(To replicate the live ones that used to frolic there.)  
And just last Wednesday morning, to celebrate the Spring,  
I bought a cd disc where simulated bluetits sing.

And now life's so much nicer, dawn chorus comes at will.  
I just switch on my cd, and monitor each trill.  
I do think fields are nasty, with cows that moo for hours.  
They poo in awkward places. They pee upon the flowers.

I think I'll make a video called 'Cows and grazing crop'  
And then we could incinerate them all and build a shop.

Sheena Blackhall

# Ode To An Unkind Reviewer

I did not relish your review,  
It took a hanging judge's view  
Of what my Muse attempts to do.

Now, had I been a Saxon toff,  
I might have laughed, have shrugged it off,  
As would an academic Don  
With tea leaves for testosterone.

But you. my dear, lampooned a Celt  
A creature with a prickly pelt.  
My race keeps grudges to the grave,  
When we are kicked we do not cave,  
And whimper like a pricked balloon.  
We weigh your venom spoon for spoon.

I pray your dentist takes the shakes,  
E-Coli crown your cornflakes.  
May your physog be pox-embossed  
Your fax be lax. Your wires be crossed.  
Your body odour on the air  
Be ripe's a donkey's underwear.

May your amour be impotent's,  
A blob of jellyfish that's spent.  
May his libido never rise  
And cellulite engird your thighs  
And when you slide beneath the covers,  
May plaque and dandruff grace your lovers.

I call on all the gods of wrath,  
To set a tide-mark round your bath.  
Your rancid writings turns to ash,  
Your crass computer screech and crash.  
Your friends be few, your days be numbered,  
Insurance contract be encumbered  
With horrid clause in tiny print....  
Your house burn down, and leave you skint.



Long may your morning coffee curdle,  
Your winners fall at every hurdle.  
The fusty fruit of your sad loins,  
Be worthless as devalued coins.  
Your mats have mildew. Greasy stains,  
Lurk in your pipes and block your drains.

Should you possess a motor car,  
May it break down outside Stranraer,  
With balding brakes and leaking oil,  
And tank, like kettle on the boil.

If fashionable shoes you buy,  
I hope they slip and make you fly  
Face foremost in a mound of dung....  
Flat pancake, into treacle flung.

May all your canine chums have rabies.  
Your cat have fleas. Your gerbil, scabies.  
Your table catch Dutch elm disease,  
A cloud of locusts eat your peas.

Your hair turn green...Your molars rot,  
Your fillings rust, your scribblings blot.  
Your windows leak. Your bedposts crumble,  
The chimneys from your rooftops, tumble.

May death watch beetle chew your plugs,  
Your linen cupboard jump with bugs.  
Your TV, cooker, fridge, break down,  
Just when the engineer's left town.

When your dry dust to earth is laid,  
May it with D.D.T. be sprayed,  
Vile Vampire, spewing froth and spite,  
Who feeds upon what others write.

So sour and vinegry you are,  
You'd make a champion pickle jar,  
More tart than acid dropp by far.

Before you wield your bitter pen,

Your inky guillotine again,  
Draw in your claws, and count to ten.  
For should you others drub, alas,  
This Celtic curse may come to pass.

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Woodlands, Puberty, Norway (19 Poems)

## 1. Far, far from People-Land

At the end of the street, across the road  
Behind a crumbling wall  
The snow lies soft, untrodden white  
The firs stand dark and tall  
The moon is bright as diamonds there  
The stars climb up his glittering stair  
And only the night owls call

Oh, often I cross from people-land  
Where the air is charred and sour  
To enter the forest's secret ways  
Where the hermit heron stands in praise  
Of the nervous deer come down to graze  
By the silver river's strand

At the end of the street, across the road  
The air is cold and clear  
A single breath is a cloud of mist  
In the darkest days of the year  
The tiny robin's crimson breast  
Burns like a flame that dare not rest  
Where the fox's sharp eyes peer

They're close as the hollow of my hand  
Those woods all muffled with snow  
Where the song thrush flutters his frozen wings  
Lifts his head to the clouds and sings  
To the quiet trees which hear such things  
Far, far from people-land

## 2. Mrs Lion's Culinary Tips

Eating brains is messy.  
Human juices are sticky on the paws

Skull crackers such as nearby stones are helpful,

But I prefer a single swinging blow  
Break the skull in two with a twisting motion

Now, it should look like a coconut shell,  
I assure you, a perfect bowl

Some lions season the raw brain with saliva,  
An optional relish I do not recommend

Scoop it from the skull to savour at your leisure  
As for the meat, let it be rare as possible  
Failing which, let maggots tenderize it

#### Muick as an Ironing Board

Wintry Loch Muick is an ironing board  
Spread with white linen,  
A little dusting of starch for stiffening  
Frost stands hunched for hours  
Flattening its waves and crinkles into submission

In summer, the Loch wears water crumpled  
Risking the censure of faddists, the anti-crinklers  
I suspect it's happier creased and lumpy

#### 4.VIP suite Pittodrie Stadium

A button switches the crowd-noise on or off  
Here, the Neros of Enterprise  
Cocooned from Arctic breezes  
Watch the footie.  
Nobody Spits or tramples on their turf.

#### House with the Gun

One neighbour had a high-powered red lawn mower  
Sawing its way through smothered summer days

Every time Jane went to watch the earwigs

Crawling from the nasturtiums, higgledy-plop  
He carted out the thing to shear the grass.

The Johnstones, two doors off, played Band of Hope  
Tubular angel music, goose-step brass  
The woman across the cobbles had a Yorkie  
Snapping and yapping moments into shreds

But Jane's house had a gun, her father's treasure.  
It stopped the rabbit's shriek,  
It stilled the quilted pheasant's plumping breast  
Often she loaded and primed it with her mind  
The screeching lawn-mower bleeding pools of oil  
The yapping Yorkie, dead in a snarl of red.

and Burial: Angus Calder 1942-2008

Today your face was everywhere  
In the tilt of a daughter's jaw  
The flop of a son's hair.

I think you were standing a little way behind  
Watching, as young men shouldered your white box  
Shoulder-high through the light-green summer trees

You entered the healing earth to a choral sigh  
Sent on your way with a woodwind song and a poem  
Only the dram was missing and that came later

It was a perfect day for cricket.  
No Greek wailing. No Celtic keening.  
Nobody tore their breasts, their arms, their clothes  
None of your former loves clawed rival faces.

A speckled thrush adjusted his civic waistcoat  
Cleared his throat and welcomed you to his home.  
You lie near a row of Polish generals  
And a gravestone inscribed MacDonald  
The Lewis equivalent of Smith

We should warn them, you'll test their mettle,

Already I hear the clack of curling stones  
The rustle of manuscripts in the thin air.

Bird (Paolo Uccello 1396-1479)

Odd, melancholy, solitary man,  
Mr Bird loved painting hides, hooves, wings.

Falcons, dogs and deer dripped from his brush  
His bestiary became a virtual flood  
Of hares, hounds, hunting horses' swishing tails  
Crossbows and bridles, golden, crescent moons  
Oranges on trees, roses in battles.  
(For roses still bloom beautifully near blood)

His ladies were as cold as Greta Garbo,  
Florentine women, haughty, jewelled, human  
Their nipples hard, as if with frozen milk  
Dangerous breasts in bodices of silk  
Plucked eyebrows, pony tails with rough, split ends

His dragons looked as though they'd like to roar  
With indignation at the gore they'd shed  
As if to say to prodding knights 'How dare you! '  
Their sides, like open doublets, flushed with red.

All night he stayed up, practising perspective  
Only alive inside art's wonderland  
Leaving his wife to twist frustrated sheets  
Play with her rosary, or woo her hand.

Critics, baffled, called him idiosyncratic  
Mr Bird, long-bearded like a goat  
Who else would paint blue pastures as a protest  
Because his abbot-patron fed him cheese?

Cheese pies, cheese soup, a plague on mozzarella!  
He said until they fed him normal meals  
His scenery would be as queer's his meat.

Such patrons! The Medici wanted beast-fights,

And other snips of jungle tit for tat  
Making a glory out of violent death

The Deluge...the Creation...Noah's Ark  
A nestful of egg tempera, linseed oil  
No time for family matters, day's chit-chat  
No wonder that his girl became a nun.

Ten years before he died, his tax return  
Stated 'I'm old and ailing, my wife's ill,  
I can no longer work.' A bitter pill  
In his last years, poor Mr Bird was moulting  
A shrunken, feeble, coffin-cold crossbill

Letter to Mr Spock

Dear Mr. Spock,  
You're always right.  
I love your ears, your trousers, tight  
And when I fall asleep each night  
I dream that you and I take flight  
Aboard U.S.S. Enterprise  
I'd cross your Ts and dot your Is

Sleek Vulcan, master of `geek chic'  
I could mind-merge with you all week  
McCoy's a plod, Scotty's a bam  
Plump Captain Kirk is an old ham  
His corset's straining at the seams  
His make-up runs in sweaty streams

Live-long and prosper's your advice  
Some think your sang-froid is a vice  
Cool Mr Spock, your ice is nice

Ballater

Listen. The grass is growing. Small trout leap in the Dee  
This is Eden, where geans plump into ripeness  
Whether you like it or not

Where rain hammers golf rounds into the ground  
Whether you like it or not

The kirk has wrung her tiny bell near dry  
Calling the faithful to prayer.  
Rain has filled each shop with unbelievers  
A soggy gull in pink umbrella feet  
Plaps over concrete like a comic Chaplin  
A thrush is wearing its beak like a baseball cap

In canvas city, by plink-plonk caravans  
Family tents are igloos of resignation  
Of those marooned in muggieness

Sticklebacks, belly-upwards, cook in jars  
Bedraggled dogs haul owners in search of papers,  
Car tyres spray the wet like ptarmigans' tails  
Puddles are making Olympic hoops of raindrops  
Lochnagar has closed his grey net curtains

In B&B land, umpteen genteel couples  
Stare over their P.C. continental breakfast  
(The toast in perfect pyramids,  
Elegant folded napkins set by the china ducks)  
Out at the drizzle weaving Gaelic mist  
Tufty the squirrel, drunk on the joy of summer  
Forgets her Highway Code  
Dices death with a BP petrol tanker

all Moon

Tonight the moon was a snowball.  
Cars slithered like snakes  
Over roadways rutted like ladders  
I saw a poem with a red breast  
Bob under a car  
Its shadow, a blob of ink.

r Train



Like dragging a knife over a wedding cake  
The train slices through ice

The sky is a cloud of lilac,  
Violet and white, under a trembling veil

Like rows of sleepy badgers,  
Cars lie humped inside their snow-striped pelts

Roads are a grey salt lick,  
Sprinkled with brown sugar

Passing graffiti's confetti flung upon pastel grey,  
In this land of stamping elks and growling bears  
With here and there  
The tiny tracks  
of birds

the Airport

Quick as a colt from its holster  
Out they whip them  
People on mobile phones.

They are pouting, tapping their knees  
Crooking their necks  
Phone trapped between neck and shoulder

A mother and son are sitting together politely  
Both grimace at a small Italian boy

A real firecracker. Kicking his limbs around  
Like a Power Ranger. Setting the hackles up  
Of a grumpy stranger.

He has an audience now. He grows more daring  
A tumbler, leap-frogger, BOOM he's a falling bomb  
WHEECH he's a Kung Fu warrior!

Marco! Marco! His mother sighs...But he's not for taming.  
He's off to explore.

What's under that lady's seat?  
Behind that exit door?  
His imagination is boundless,  
Beyond parental restraining

r Street, Oslo

A pigeon, not wearing its thermals  
Is winnowing paper bags where street lamps glow  
Children with hair pale as wheat, booted and hatted, go-slow

Padded out with clothes like small salt shakers  
They slither and stomp on the ice.  
It is – 20 below.

An avalanche drops from a roof, surprising a hedge  
Frost has cocooned the fir trees in furry ermine.  
It is so, so, cold. It's like breathing inside a fridge  
The night sky's indigo.

Pavement, gutter and road  
Have blurred their boundaries  
Small glaciers cover the tram-lines  
Toddlers waddle around like small, fat penguins  
Swaddled like mummies.  
An icicle Hangs from the tip of a baby's dummy

The breeze has dropped to a wheeze.  
A pensioner leaves her breaths behind her  
Tired clouds, resting. This is the Big Freeze.  
Her cheeks are like frozen dough

A very Norse raven, flaps its inky banner  
A bus glides by. It is a cold ice floe  
Cars slide like hearses, silent, ominous.  
The sky is heavy, weighted down with snow.

y Scandinavia

From hairy Norse noses and svelte Japanese

From any direction may come a huge sneeze  
Of epic proportions, as if Thor was blowing  
A snotty wet blizzard, germ-laden and growing.

No hygienic hand is clapped over the mouth  
Swine-fever is wafted from North, East & South  
And next, an Atishoo explodes, all defiled  
With drops of green gunge from some Gruffalo's child  
When it smears its phlegm over its sleeve, mum says 'Bless him'  
When all that you're wanting to do is distress him  
With nose plugs of concrete to block his excretions  
Or posting him off to the Poles or Silesians

Why is it that people with colds seek to share  
Every whizzle and snort with the neighbouring air?  
Their hankies are horridly soggy and sopping  
Their voices like ratchets, their coughing eye-popping  
Oh why can't they shiver and shudder at home?  
Why don't folk with flu-bugs like being alone?

ved Behaviour at an Airport

A couple sit down at the flight gate  
Warmly dressed in top ski-labels. They chat in German  
Or rather, she does, he listens.

Off she strides. She is going to Sort something out.  
He rises to film an aircraft  
Parked on the runway...a version  
Of train-spotting. Twitcher of sky-ware.  
Exciting to mainstream women  
As studying the anatomy of a Hoover

A predatory female approaches. Mutters a question in German.  
Hoping to fan the flame  
Of non-acquaintance into something warmer.  
She oos and aas into his camera viewer  
Feigns interest, pupils widening, Lips ajar.  
Hangs on his words Like a butterfly on a petal, with  
Lightly fluttering lashes. Things are Progressing nicely.

His girlfriend re-enters the scene  
The camera shrivels, pulls its head in  
Slides back down in its case  
The triangle collapses,  
A tripod, knocked off its perch.

Year's Eve, Oslo

People are patting each other down  
Tucking each other in  
Battening down the hatches  
Of Parkas and ski suits

A girl in quilted turquoise  
Is mining a quarry of large frost crystals  
To pelt her yelping friends

Folk defrost in steamy buses  
Like trussed up broilers

Trees and bushes groan under acres of snow  
Street lamps wear white busbies  
Over their primrose faces  
Cars are anchored in bays and inlets of snow

It's cold enough to hold a bonspeil ceilidh  
Football pitches are ice rinks where gulls go skating  
Two bikes, like surfers, are breasting tides of snow.

Pensioners crawl like snails, braving the slithers  
Fearing fractures and metal pins in shattered withers.

A crow hopscotches over a polar landscape  
The cold is searing. Drivers skid along roads

This is the white season.  
The sky is a floating sea of mother of pearl  
A salmon and lemon lake glides under an opaque cloud  
The land lies like a corpse, under a stiffening shroud

ed Bear, Thon Bristol Hotel, Oslo

Round from the library bar  
Where journalists pump their guests for information  
The stuffed Norwegian bear gives nothing away

I am told he is very old. He is just my height.  
Where his heart should be I see a rectangular tear

His small brown eyes look into the middle distance  
Facing his final moment.  
He looks distinguished, a Russia diplomat in his coat of fur  
His beard is Freudian. His claws could be those  
Of a Moor, or a swarthy count.

He stands on a marble floor that's sea-green as a Nordic fjord  
A powerful train shunted into a disused siding

If you took this bear to bed, Baboushka  
He'd hug you to death. None of the bar-room beauties  
Will kiss him awake.

to the Noughties

Madonna like a stick insect going orphan-hunting  
George Galloway on all fours purring and a-miewing  
Subo from West Lothian a-pouring out her voice  
Harry Potter movies were the teenie punters' choice

Rebecca Loos got personal and fruity with a boar  
Jude Law shagged his nanny in a step too far  
Moss, Winehouse, Docherty, were sniffing up the coke  
Burrell in the jungle eating gunk to make you choke

Tiger hit a hole in one. He ended in the rough  
Heather Mills McCartney told the world she'd had enough

Jordan had her boobs enlarged and later had them trimmed  
Britney Speirs went bald, then fat, then settled down & slimmed  
Posh Spice ate a burger...folk thought she was in the club  
A trophy winning actress couldn't speak just barely blub

Barack Obama won the president election  
The economic crisis brought a Credit Crunch recession

Sex in the City thrived, Michael Jackson died  
There were terrorist atrocities performed world wide

There was global pandemic, there was British MPs greed  
Is life going down the plughole? Is it running down to seed?  
Oh it's goodbye to the Noughties...they were anything but nice  
Full of Jedward-type nonenties and the slosh of melting ice.!

ty (Edvard Munch, Oslo Gallery)

Tugging against the blood-tide pulled by the moon  
She is facing the death of childhood.  
The future is bleak and frightening  
The shadow of her doppelganger tries to cut itself free

Her body's become the enemy.  
She sits like a city occupied by an enemy

These changes are not for the best  
She can not kiss her father  
Or be left alone with men.

She is a woman now  
Her body bleeds  
The Future's a thorny path  
Beasts snuffle through the tangled undergrowth

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Amsterdam, Vietnam, Boddam (22 Poems)

## 1. Existentialist

Where do I live?

In the space between Monday and Sunday

In the retina of the crow's eye

I am a skin of prickles under a blue balloon

Always, the salt spills.

The cupboard's shadows Fall across the floor

## 2. In Rembrandt's House (Museum Het Rembrandthuis)

Four storeys high. A wooden, spiral stair

The floors are deal, glazed tile or stone with marble

The ceiling beams are painted red and ochre

Turpentine, oil, a palette on the table

Strange inventory...a Nero, assegais

Most striking is the master's small box bed

Rembrandt and Saskia slept sitting up

To stop the blood from flooding to his head

## 3. Japanese Pool in the Trossachs

Six orange fish swim in a perfect mirror

Black water, jade leaves floating

Like Samurai shields across a bolt of silk

Above them, a plum tree umbrella's

Shielding red hot poker from the breeze

Flower heads nod like Geishas, groomed to please

Peering intently down into the dark pool

Seeing their colour in the bright scales of the fish

Wheatfield

,

Close to the time of the scythe he painted the wheatfield

Gathering crows, dark skies above the corn

A dead-end path that led through the wheat to nowhere  
Drawn by one who thought he should not have been born

The grain is a heavy burden for the land  
Its glorious harvest cut down at a price  
And still the wheeling crows in the thundery heavens  
Croak like widows of doom, give sorrow voice  
Two brothers lie in the burial ground of Anvers  
One by the hand of fate, and one by choice.

& Seek

Her father fought at the Western front for the Kaiser  
A quiet man, in the jam and jelly trade.  
In Frankfurt, she'd sledged in Winter

Walked in a city of trees, a Jewish sapling  
In Amsterdam, she hop-scotched on the pavement  
Turned cart-wheels, practised hand-stands  
Could not whistle.

Then, Hitler governed Holland  
She wore the star of David on her breast  
Parks, trams and cinemas were verboten.  
One day the hide and seek began in earnest  
A chamber pot in a hat-box  
A diary, hanky, curlers, schoolbooks, comb  
Moortje, her little kitten, left in the rain.

The Secret Annexe, up leg-breaker stairs  
No skylarking, a life of hush and tip-toe.  
Outgrowing vests and shoes, she danced in the dark  
A budding ballerina, fed on potatoes.

At fifteen years, she took a ride to the country  
A cattle-truck provided by the Nazis  
Nightmare searchlights, an hour's march to barracks  
Her mother gassed, then on to Bergen-Belsen  
No time to grieve, no rituals observed.  
Winter. Hunger. Cold. Starvation. Death.  
Now, her house again is a place of silence



Crowds file speechless through denuded rooms  
Where absences are present in the walls  
Within this hidden house, half-way from horror  
The TV monitors show matchstick bones  
Bulldozed into the pit, with one girl's dreams

## 6. Cher Ami

Over the battle's charnel house you flew  
Flight was your sanity, the unstained clouds  
Hearing the beating of your petite heart,  
A Swiss watch movement rising through the shrouds  
Of rain and rifle fire, a feathered hope  
Soaring above the makeshift morgue of mud

Give me your power and courage, Cher Ami  
Your blind, unswerving grit to meet each day  
The small defeats, the drabness, the ennui  
That dwindling, withering years may bring my way

We stretch a wing to fly, because we must  
Pigeon and human, pecking the world's crust.

Romanesque:

The Ritzy Romanesque  
Is a photogenic feast of a veg.

Its fractal geometry, is a cosmic drollery  
Its nests of vaults and pyramids, Pythagorean.

It's a supermodel, out-mossing Moss in radioactive green  
This crunchy, nutty, knobbly clone of selves  
This church of spiral spheroids, psychedelic oddity  
It clones its parents, grandparents  
A small, exploding orchard of family trees  
A vortex of golden angles

Seeds of a sunflower  
Seeds of a cactus

Bracts of a pine cone  
All indulge in cosmic computation  
Enjoy the perpetual flutter  
The Bingo factor of Fibonacci numbers  
Hitting the golden jackpot every time

Its cousin, the Brussels sprout  
Climbs up its own Maypole  
Rattles its silent bells

Its cousin, the cabbage, a bloated ball of coats  
Peels off its top, a striptease no one notes  
Except the worm

Cavolo Romanesque, little Italian quirk  
Your turrets, pagodas are complex  
As blood vessels on the lungs  
Are exquisite as snowflakes,  
Glorious as veins on September leaves  
\*Golden Angle: 137.5degrees.

Spanish High-Inquisitor (Amsterdam Dungeon)

I'm the Spanish High Inquisitor, I do enjoy my gore  
I'm a host who's most considerate.  
Would you like a little more  
Anguish, terror or discomfort? Would you care to take a look?  
I have tongs, hot poker, fetters. Screw, and disemboweling hook.

Have you got a little problem?  
Are you rather overweight?  
My live rats upon your tummy will chew everything you ate!  
  
Perhaps a tiny manicure? Those nails are rather long.  
I could whip them out completely with one flourish of my prong.  
Your joints are stiff and creaky? Step in...lie upon your back  
They'll be supple as elastic when I stretch you on my rack.

You are tongue-tied with confusion?  
When I chain you to the wall  
With a twist, a yank, a holler, you'll have no tongue left at all!

I'm a Spanish High Inquisitor,  
I'll gralloch you in style  
I'll rip out all your entrails, and I'll do it with a smile.

You're a spineless, chinless wonder?  
You are gutless, too high-strung?  
To enjoy my hospitality.. too old, too weak, too young  
To step in to my dungeon where the living fall apart?  
Mind, I never pull my punches...I just haven't got the heart!

My favourite guests are witches.  
I like them quite high-strung  
Those crones keep me in stitches  
When they're on the bonfire flung

I just do my sacred duty.  
Heretics should all be fried  
When they claim their God's the true God,  
My stock answer is 'He lied'

### Ripples

One morning, feeling tired and old  
Chill in the soul, all prospects, cold,  
Down by the sea I walked. Fool's gold  
Of sunlight, with its alchemy  
Made every lustrous wave unfold  
Its curling rigging to uphold  
The sign that through each ripple rolled  
The joy of life! I stepped away  
Rejoicing, gladdened and consoled.□

### Rossebuurt, Sex Workers District

Brothels, clubs and sex shops, are the place of work  
For the world's oldest profession,

Women of every race, clock on to their shift  
They begin by displaying their wares in red-fringed windows.

Their tools are suspenders, thongs, white lace, red silk  
And lust, which drives their clients to close the deal

Working girls, they haggle, business-like.  
Drawn curtains in a booth means 'on the job'

Others, on a break, swivel their butts on bar-stools  
Fiddle with straps, scratch, stretch like leisurely zoo creatures  
Still more, gyrate their hips mechanically,  
Stiletto heels tauten their legs, their lips fake pouts

Their customers, packs of men, both young and old,  
Eye them up and down, try for a bargain.  
Respectable couples go there seeking shocks  
Giggling groups of girls on hen nights, point and stare  
Busloads of tourists make the obligatory tour.

The Rossebuurt district's beautiful... old houses  
Winding, cobbled streets, and the gothic Oudekerk  
Built in another age, when Protestants protested.

The ancient buildings lean at peculiar angles,  
Tree-lined canals thrum with music and danger.  
Their cosy restaurants, a setting for liaisons.  
Here are honest whores.  
Window prostitutes in the R.L.D. pay taxes

Their practices are regulated, monitored.  
Their health is checked. The police and private bodyguards patrol.  
No Hanky-panky here, Unless legit.

Some girls are beautiful as classic sofas.  
Others are horse-hair armchairs, oozing stuffing.  
Men in a foreign harbour, homesick for wives  
Back home, clinch deals with such as these,  
Wearing the stretch marks, scars, that make them human.

Courtesan

Legs like a frog, she jumps  
From one man's bed to the other

Voila! Now she's a crane  
White, unruffled feathers round her neck

Unattainable look...she's up on her high horse  
Everyman mounts her. None can rein her in.

tempel, Damrak, Amsterdam

The sex museum could do with a lick and a spit  
Of elbow grease. Like visiting a rest room  
Of embalmed hookers, sitting in frozen poses  
Beavers covered with dandruff, dust, or both

Prosthetic boobs and buttocks are glued to the wall  
A plastic anus farts as a boy walks by  
Like stuffed game, on display's a dominatrix  
Rubber and whips and mask, a Dutch Madonna  
A chastity belt from Embro's, heavy metal  
Like knight's scold's bridle for the nether parts  
A flasher leaps from the dark, a Jack from his box  
Plastic penis aiming to fire blanks  
In a shrine to the Marquis de Sade  
The tethered mannequin's corsets need a launder  
The crowd's respectful. Sex is serious shit

A Japanese student peers at a silk vagina  
As if writing a PhD on intimate areas  
The ticket seller's heavy-jowled and jaded  
The brand names change, the merchandise remains.

in September

I met a stoat in September, tipped on his side in the road  
His mouth ajar, baring its delicate pincers  
His face was heart-shaped, russet.  
His black- tipped tail was soft as summer moss  
His elegant pelt reflected the flashing sun  
He could have been asleep, legs curled like a forest foetus  
Snuggling into itself, but for the jewels that spilled

From the cream purse of his belly  
A string of pearls and rubies

Pale as the thistledown blown across the dyke  
Red as the rose-hips drooping above his ears  
The currency of all that made him vital  
That differentiated him from a painted page

A careless wheel had squandered him  
And not even noticed the profligacy.  
Now he will fade like an old engraving  
Like a leaf from the sycamore  
Swirling away like smoke in the spendthrift year

### Empty Coracle

Something's in me that hungers  
To claim its space in the air  
At one with the dappled birch leaves  
And the sun that lingers there

I go for my soul's refreshment  
And sit between two pines  
Where the mossy stones lie quiet  
And the fiery squirrel dines

The flesh's shrill insistence  
To conquer, gain, create  
The human need for approval  
Drops off like needless freight

So, like an empty coracle  
In the cradle of a pool  
The rustle of waves runs through me  
And leaf-speak, slow and cool

Something's in me that hungers  
To walk in ways less trod  
Where wind, wave, light are brothers  
And every sunbeam's God.

## Oosterdokskade

A duck is drawing a V on the canal  
Planes etch furrows of white across the sky  
The morning trams slip on their metal shoes  
The poplar trees are calm, and so am I

A pair of gulls splay flippers on a rail  
Leaning across the pier as lovers do  
Six flurried seabirds fan their snowy tails  
A long-necked swan, disdainful, sails in view  
This is the land where shopping's done by ship  
Under the boats, the cross-hatched waves are black  
Seas are these merchant traders' motorways  
Water, carries the city's wealth on its back.

## s in Amsterdam

By day, the Amstel's grey.  
By night Canals are waterways of light  
For bistros, streetlamps, bars and moon

Transform what's dreich and drab at noon  
While in the country, flat and wet  
The draining arteries forget  
Their daytime, bland, lacklustre scenes  
And rock themselves in starry dreams.

## am/Boddam

Monkeys, mangos, pineapples, bats  
South East Asia.. the China Seas  
Tangerines, elephants, litchis, nuts  
Monsoon rains and banana trees

Seagulls, rabbits and slippery seals  
Herring in oatmeal, Cullen skink  
A fish and chipper for take-home meals,  
North Sea gates, and a dram to drink

am/Boddam

In Boddam, the wedding date's fixed  
By hotel, church, and bride's availability  
The posted gift card, details the bridal wish-list  
Brand and type of toasters, fridges, beds,

In Boddam, on hen and stag nights, folk get bladdered  
Blow-out in Barcelona or Amsterdam  
Then back to final fittings, hirings, pinnings  
The groom in kilt, the bride in veil and train  
Children from previous marriages may attend.

This is the age of serial monogamy,  
Let those who have been sundered, wed again.  
In Boddam, the groom at the altar awaits the bride  
Thumbs behind his sporran, watching the door.

They'll promise to stick together in sickness and wealth  
Exchange rings, kiss, step out to sign the book.  
They'll speed off to speeches, blue jokes and confetti  
Past pipers and flowers, off to the feasting and dancing.

After the pricey honeymoon, in Corfu or Paree  
Home to their bungalow facing the granite sea

Whereas in Vietnam the astrologer decrees  
The most propitious time for nuptial bliss  
When bride and groom should wear the silk A6 Dai  
With Khan Dong head-dress, solemn and traditional  
The groom comes bearing gifts to his own wedding  
Vast umbrellas, sway above the procession  
Of lacquered boxes swathed in cloths of red  
Within them... betel, cakes, roast pig, and tea  
Laden with fruit and jewels, the bridal dowry.

The groom must go to kneel at his in-laws' house,  
To seek ancestral blessing for this union  
Incense is burned, the couple bow to their parents  
Thank them for their protection along life's way.



The bride steps out to visit her husband's home,  
The ritual's re-enacted, blessings given.  
Firecrackers, not confetti, flower in the day.  
Candles are lit. The mother of the groom  
Bejewels the bride. The couple bows to their parents,  
Serve them tea, then via the Buddhist temple,  
On to the feast.

Red envelopes of cash, pushed in the dragon's mouth  
Glasses filled with rice, or bees' nest wine  
'Chuc suc khoe! ' the guests cry, drinking the sweet elixir.  
'To your health! ' Another marriage launched.

In Boddam or Vietnam, however the boat is built,  
The sails must be lashed tight to face life's storms.

.  
e Shop, Amsterdam

On the bridge above a canal the colour of dishwater  
A stoned crocodile rises or submerges into granite

In the coffee shop a Rasta man, wearing a tea-cosy hat,  
His matted dreadlocks slumped on his back like snakes  
Hugs the crotch of his jeans, his eyes slit shut  
Chains from his trousers hanging round his knees

A boy steps in, his eyes two pools of black  
The bliss he puff's is fake as knock-off chic  
The menu's glued to the table in case it walks

White Widow, Shiva, Thai, Jamaican hash  
The bar stool vinyl's ripped. It's the colour of treacle.  
The Ganja-man's a totem-pole of silence.

am

Rain pockmarks the water's painted face  
A dancing bottle bobs around a pole  
Spiders hang their curtains on a bridge  
A paunchy cormorant slumps on a buoy

Bjorn, a punt, is banging on a post  
A heron on a houseboat blinks and craps

Berthed on the canal's De Posenboot  
The boat where straying cats receive protection  
Puss, minus boots, sprawls on a rattan chair.

### Water-Bull

Have you seen the sea  
On a wild night of storm  
Pounding the cliffs with its white horns in the moonlight?

It is black and raging  
Its muscles swell and quiver Its nostrils flare with foam.  
Again and again it lunges  
Its great flanks glistening  
Its salty shuddering loins cover the shore

Sated, it sinks back down  
The wind abates  
Back to its fathomless byre at the world's core.

□

ces

Because they were Sephardic or Ashkenazi  
Because they lit the Hannukah lamp, or didn't  
But most of all, simply because they were  
A maniac decreed they'd cease to be  
Six millions absences. Human sand  
In the black, malignant hour-glass of the Reich

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Auschwitz (7 Poems)

-Case, Auschwitz

Clogs, boots and shoes built to the skies  
They stun the mind and glut the eyes  
All plundered due to human guile  
In every shape and cut and style  
That speak of old atrocities

Where were the good, the kind, the wise  
Who should have counted human sighs?  
The empty clogs on this grim pile  
Those crimes unmask.  
Why did their God not heed their cries  
That from such torment did arise?  
Selection. To an ending vile  
Their frightened feet walked the long mile  
Why did no soldier sympathise?  
Just shoes to ask!

## 2. The Boys Who Wouldn't Grow Up

Welcome to Auschwitz.  
As a holiday camp for children it is unparalleled  
The strict timetable is character-building  
Food fads are not catered for  
There are daily challenges, stretching them to the limit  
We have a camp orchestra, showers,  
An endless supply of constantly changing playmates

Here, children learn to share and enjoy adventures  
Quite beyond what you could contemplate.  
We do not encourage laziness,  
We aim to instill the work ethos  
Whenever they cross the gates

The games on offer are endless:  
They go on scavenger hunts  
Play sardines in the dorms

Winky winky murderer  
Raises screams of anticipation

Hide and seek is discouraged  
Solitaire isn't an option  
Freeze frame's only played at sudden roll calls  
Sharks and Minnows is our most-played game

At nights our little campers dream of food  
As circus horses dream of an open prairie  
They are the Lost Boys  
Stranded in a nightmare, the gas-tide rising  
No boat comes to sail them safely home  
They'll take no shadow with them  
On to Neverland

### 3. Paradise Revisited: Auschwitz, Mrs Hoess's House

Imagine a cottage in the country  
Imagine a garden, a swimming pool  
Think of the sun in the flowers,

Imagine your children playing,  
Carefree and sturdy-limbed  
An idyll of languorous pleasure.  
Are the seams in your stockings straight?  
The cook in her apron smelling of peeled potatoes  
Your nimble tailors, sewing designer clothes,  
Your furs of mink and ermine  
Ready for winter, hiding in the cupboard

The cooling showers of summer  
Sprinkle your roses  
As you sit in your chair and read  
The only blot in your landscape  
The tall chimneys, belching their endless smoke  
Over the fence, a thousand miles away.

### 4. Holocaust, Auschwitz

Mothers and fathers, children, babies too  
Gone in a blink into the empty sky  
Their simple crime was being born a Jew.

Hard to believe whole countries never knew.  
Too terrified, perhaps, to even try  
Imagine what a Fascist world might do.

Wives, youngsters, husbands, all with a tattoo  
Unless it was decreed that they should die -  
Shuffling towards the showers in a queue.

All their tomorrows up some Nazi flue.  
And still men jib at facts, and would deny  
That millions walked into the shower's adieu.

Those cattle trucks from Europe thundered through  
Whole towns where no-one heard each ghetto's cry  
The moral compass shattered, all askew.

Go visit Auschwitz.  
Learn that this is true,  
Feel the despair of those who here passed by  
Vast evil out of racial hatred grew,  
Live for today, but give the dead their due.

5. Hair- Harvest, Auschwitz.

Copper and chestnut, raven, long and flowing  
Tresses of virgins, children, all unwed  
Passing the weeping-willow, windswept, blowing,  
Auburne or ash-blond, salt and pepper, red,

Braided or tousled, under the barbed-wire bough,  
Tangled or matted from a prisoner's bed  
Long Jewish side-locks, orthodox, hung low,  
Walk to their Nazis hosts, quite safe until  
Flick of the thumb will state, you stay- you go

The babes in arms, whose fledgling hair will fill  
Some SS general's amply-padded chair

Top-knots and hairpins, down like snowflakes spill:  
There's no escape, for Evil's everywhere;  
Thousands of ashes tumble through the air

## 6. A Visit to Planet Auschwitz

The people-carrier's a Polish taxi  
It's air-conditioned, waterproof and roomy  
The TV screen drops down. The film is grainy  
The others in the taxi soon grow weary  
It's just a video-clip like any other  
It could be from a B-list horror-movie.

We park, we disembark, we stretch our legs  
A comfort break. The sanitary arrangements  
Are gleaming, automated, clean's a whistle  
Rinsed and refreshed, we step into the sun

A glorious day. The smell of Polish coffee  
Wafts from the café, where with plates piled high  
Diners chose their tables, check their watches  
The atmosphere is verging on the gay  
The poplars lining gravel paths are green.  
Their leaves like tiny flags on shining boughs  
Under the German words, 'Arbeit Macht Frei, '

We're strapped into the seats for health and safety  
Our comfort is of paramount importance  
Squads of school-parties march behind their leaders  
The double rows of barbed wire fence are harmless,  
Beside a skull and crossbones on a stick

The Polish guide speaks English with an accent  
Exhibits tell their tale in grisly silence  
A child's red shoe, glows in a glass display case  
Single roses, draped or stuck in crannies  
A single, plump blonde braid, amongst the cloud  
Of poisoned, dark-grey, matted, Jewish hair

The spectacles are like a spider's web  
Constructed on a futuristic planet

Of robots, where life's all mechanization  
A nesting place, an altar to myopia

Prosthetic limbs, like snapped off metal cogs  
Frozen in time, are going nowhere ever

A baby's pinafore all stitched in flowers,  
Laid out, an accusation and a grief

Cases are here, their baggage-weight allowance  
Less than Vienna Airways for each traveller  
With no return ticket. Contents plundered  
Bearing the name and country of their owner  
Where 20,000 faced the firing squad,  
Young, smiling tourists photograph each other

Do women watch them through the weathered planks  
Where Mengele prepared them for the knife?

The buildings here are red, two-story brick.  
For this is Auschwitz I, where most could work  
Or perish from disease, starvation, hanging  
The gallows, like a dismal washing line

Beyond, is Birkenau, the sister camp  
End of the line where railroad convoys stopped.  
Entire communities off-loaded here,  
The human loaves that fed the Auschwitz bakeries

The trees around are rustling green with echoes  
A solitary bird flies in the sky  
We're taken to a pleasant little mound,  
Led underground into the killing chamber  
It's dimly lit. We're all crammed in together  
Like rush-hour on the tube, jostling for space  
But they were naked, dignity stripped bare  
The lights went out, and then, the gas, the gas.

One million cobblestones, strange monument  
Our shoes are white with dust that won't shake off

The people-carrier's waiting at the gates.

Back in my room, I shower in cleansing water

## 7. The Roma

The Roma moved from India,  
I don't remember when.  
We pitch our camp, we set our fire  
In wood or moor or fen.

In England, once, they hung us,  
And in France, laid on the brand  
Bohemians cut off our ears,  
We tramped from land to land

The Hapsburg empire flogged us,  
The Spanish made us slaves  
In countries over Europe  
We were hounded to our graves

The Czech folk sterilized us,  
The Germans fenced us in  
At Auschwitz-Birkenau we knew  
The ultimate in sin

They studied us, they tortured us,  
They put us in the fire  
But we're the Roma, we rise up,  
Our race will not expire

Our maidens they are virgins  
Till they pay the bridal price  
Our caravans are spotless  
And we keep our clothing nice

Our Romany musicians  
Entranced Franz Liszt and Brahms  
In the East we read the Koran  
And in Scotland sing the psalms

You'll hear us in bolero,  
In flamenco, gypsy jazz



We dance, we work, we fortune-tell.  
We're known for our bizazze

We chose a place that suits us,  
Washing flapping in the breeze  
Making brushes, taming horses  
Underneath the leafy trees

We go where fancy takes us,  
With a whistle and a song  
The Roma's like the wandering wind,  
That never settles long.

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Barking Dogs And Lady Godiva (27 Poems)

## 1. A Walk in the Desert

I seldom speak of this  
And not to strangers  
The desert that I inhabit  
Holds empty boxes,  
Masks of smiles and frowns.

The sun's an unwanted intrusion  
It's minimalist. I have moonlight for company  
The horizon's a crater of cacti

You could walk the plank  
Where the cracks begin to show  
This orb has ceased to orbit long ago  
Now, it's suspended over an ominous void  
Like a noose, a noose  
That's swinging, oh so gently

## 2. Pathways

There, where the trees stand tall  
Where the road is trodden down  
This is the path to town  
Followed by most.

Crows call  
Here where the leaves scarce fall  
Rich in each golden crown  
When with a corporate frown  
Gardeners burn them all

There is a second way  
Blackbirds dropp from the bough  
Merry with dew and singing  
Far from the hoe and plough  
Ah, to be there in May  
And all the bluebells ringing!

### 3. At the Ebb

The crucifix stands high and dry  
Sky is a Bible no-one's reading  
Stone walls crumble into sand

Now at the ebb, great tides receding  
Systems betray, and peoples die  
Chernobyl, Dachau, all unheeding  
Poisoning minds or poisoning lands  
Now at the ebb, great tides receding

Over the oceans factories fly  
Greed and need are forever seeding  
Justice and opposition banned  
Now at the ebb, great tides receding  
Spin doctors, politicians lie  
Aiding war mongers frenzy-feeding  
Succour the foul, the underhand  
Now at the ebb, great tides receding

All of the misery man can buy  
Someone must pay for - hope lies bleeding  
Global warming at every strand  
Now at the ebb, great tides receding  
Eden will soon become a sty  
Man plays God, fresh horrors breeding  
Frankensteins at his cloned command  
Now at the ebb, great tides receding

### 4. Roses in Rain

Come rain or shine  
Come hell or high water  
Roses continue to grow

Tenacity of Waterloo proportions  
The light brigade pushing  
Against all odds for the sun

For a moment's glory

## 5. Stitch Up

Gender's a stitch up.  
The woman wears the world on her skin  
Hence nip tucks, boob jobs  
Fat sucks, face lifts, botox  
Plodding along the cat walk of her days

Never looking beyond her own two feet  
The man's a thinker. Watch this space  
A think bubble  
Waiting for a Eureka  
See how straight he stands  
His world, a football

## 6. Femme Fatale

She is wearing the birth mark of Eve  
She has no blusher  
Her durex elite's in the bag  
She is wearing her flirt skirt  
Sporting her lucky knickers  
Surprising her mobile  
The morning after the trap.  
The Brazilian clinched it  
It was a close shave.

## ng Dog

The scrawny dog  
Looks right in the eye of the storm  
Under the accumulating clouds  
Four legs firm  
Head Barking

## red Steps

Leather sandals skipping along  
Soft to make her feel good  
Phonic rhymes and fairy book times  
Pop goes her childhood

In and out of college and school  
Bopping off to disco  
Bruiser boots and tottering heels  
He's proved his manhood

Jogging off to office or bank  
He's thinking of the mortgage  
She's off working nine to five  
Just like a mum should

Kids all grown and flown away  
No use cogitating  
For you can't retrace your steps  
Pop the hearse is waiting

#### Introductions

At the height of noon  
Lady Godiva entered the streets of shoppers  
Wearing stilettos, standing on a boar.

It was a perfect tusker, bristling like a brush  
Words failed us. We gulped. We goggled.  
She was a porker, carried it well though,  
Or rather the boar did, nonchalant old ham.

Her hair was cropped at the nape  
Her only apparel, stockings sans suspenders  
Patterned with fields and meadows  
Like Picts' tattoos

We heard police sirens wailing up the road  
She carried a giant cannabis leaf in her left hand  
Sinister, like.

A man with a honeyed ferret narrowed his eyes  
Listen. The lewdest thing in the whole shebang  
Was the orchid that flowered at her feet  
A flagrant vagina.

#### 10. The Elvis Impersonator

Draws himself up like cobra  
Stands in a pool of light  
He is dressed like a street-boy  
The tickets are priced sky-high.  
His greasy hair hangs lank across his face  
His heels begin to drum  
His shirt is damp with sweat

It is like watching Beethoven play  
Beside his piss-pot  
The eye will always stray to the foul container  
Bypassing the golden swell of gracious notes

#### 11. Pigeons and Girl

The pigeons descended like snow  
From the white clouds on a windy April day  
Then the kids came, boisterous as tumbleweed  
Bombing the pigeons with cans and kicks and shouts

And she sat there, still as a figurine  
The bracelet of birds at her wrist  
Hungrily pecking the seeds from her cupped hands  
Like St Francis who understood the winged world  
Being himself part angel  
The children gone, the trees rained birds  
Onto her arms transformed to boughs of flesh.

#### 12. The First Days of Autumn

Maria's thoughts are foraging for her son  
They are racing along the dusty roads to school

While she cooks paella. She is the hearth  
And axis of the house.  
The magnet pulling the family to its core

This is an old village. Even the starlings are leaving  
Shaking the frost of autumn from their feathers  
Juan has carried his CV seven miles  
His hat is pulled down hard against rejection  
He is not an adaptive commodity  
In a market of flux and change

Juanita's mouth is filled with Catalan  
Words pour from her like water from the tap  
Screwed tight at school. There, everyone  
Uses Spanish.

Two dogs on the hill  
Get by with barks and sniffs

Senorita Jerez stares at a tablecloth.  
A wasp crawls over her untouched bowl of fruit  
She has removed her peach,  
Replaced it with a sherry.

Her husband dines with his mistress  
Slow, Senorita Jerez will draw the cork.

Steps go down to a pond of festering reeds  
The sun's extinguished. One star blinks awake  
Two lovers kick aside the tumbled leaves  
Fall into each others arms like swing doors meeting

Old Pedro drives his seven pigs along  
Walking behind small tails like twitching bedsprings  
His son Jose and grandson Federico  
All day have raked weeds from a broken drain  
The village church bells chiming, Six seven eight

Everyone needs a region to call their home  
Where there is land, sky, night  
A cricket chirruping somewhere in the olives

When the credits fade in the cinema,  
The tribal currents of jealousy and joy  
Waiting there in a warm, familiar landscape

### 13. Pros-op-agnosia:

If we pass on the street when we happen to meet  
And it seems that I just doesn't knows-ya  
Don't take it to heart as if struck by a dart  
It's only my pros-op-agnosia

'Hello' people say, stepping into my way  
In Bangor, In Banchory or Bosnia  
And I look wholly blank with an empty think tank...  
It's only my pros-op-agnosia

I'll give you a clue..we once met at Loch Dubh A  
nd discovered we both played harmonica'...  
You might as well tell to a desert sea shell  
Because of my prosopagnosia

Remember that night? Why, the landlord turned white  
When you danced wearing only a fuschia! '  
You recall with a grin. Did you serve up the gin?  
Oh it's devilish, this pros-op-agnosia

Worse...I can't smell at all...just another short fall  
You could stink of Old Spice or ammonia  
Not a clue would there be to your identity  
Combined with my pros-op-agnosia

I detest when folk smile...say  
'I'll give you a while It'll come'.  
So will mould on ambrosia  
If left on the plate. I'd much rather they'd state  
That we shared the same bus in Estonia.

Just lately, I lie if some strange passer-by  
Say's 'It's you! ' I reply, 'No comprendia..  
My name is Yocande from that little known land  
The country of Pros-op-agnosia



## Goth's Sunflowers

We are Van Gogh's sunflowers  
Reporting from the other side of the glass

Red herrings lie in the air  
Between patient and doctor

It's always on the tip of their tongue  
Freudian slips the psychiatrist coaxes from them  
'Take your time' he says  
Furiously clicking the nib of his ball point pen

The patient stares at our yellow, squirming petals  
Breathing in-out in-out  
We too know what it is  
To be watched

## Bride who Carried a Dolls' House

Marriage is a precision instrument  
That must always be checked for accuracy.  
Therefore a doll's house should be carried  
Rather than a bouquet  
In the afternoons, between work  
And her husband's arrival,  
The newly-wed may wish to study her dolls  
In their small, domestic theatre.  
She must practice balancing millstones  
Transforming flour to bread  
Like a creaking windmill  
Her husband walks through the door

## Barbary Ape

I am a British ape, a true blue monarchist  
My troop is billeted at the Queen's Gate  
My wife refers to me as 'The Old Contemptible'

She is currently picking the fleas from my left ear  
Her nose is the colour of brushed peach  
With nostrils, slim and delicate as a split pea  
Her bum is a bruised pomegranate

I myself have many admirers  
I have fine thin lips, like Darwin  
A serious expression,  
And luxurious, grand side whiskers

I think I may be descended from professors  
My grandfather died in the Royal Naval Hospital  
As befitted an listed ape, on the military pay-roll.  
He was named after Admiral Nelson, the records show.

We are a national treasure,  
On daily rations of vegetables, fruit and nuts  
Alms, from visiting tourists, have been banned  
Begging is not the traditional British way.

I am a bona fide 100% Macaque  
Tattooed and micro-chipped for identification  
My identification photo is held by Interpol  
My troop is inspected and checked on a regular basis

When the rock is bare of apes, the British will leave  
Sir Winston Churchill himself ensured our survival  
Smuggling in reinforcements under cover of darkness  
When our numbers fell to barely sustainable levels

My great-great-great-grandmother, Hibbu Faziz  
Took the subterranean route beneath the Straits  
According to the legends of my people.  
She may have been the Queen of Drowned Atlantis.

## 17. The Dance Mistress

Adagio! Madame shouted.  
We were puppy fat trussed in tights  
My fingers laid on the barre were pale as lard

My satin ballet pumps were flesh made silk.

Allegro with arabesques and pirouettes  
Madame was a scarlet scarf on a dancer's high  
Whereas my tu-tu was a bristly porcupine  
My spangled belt, a tummy tourniquet

We changed direction, tried the Ghillie Callum  
Over the crossed swords, the victory dance fell flat.  
Father gave me the claw of a ptarmigan  
Clasped in silver, a Cairngorm on the hilt  
Mother, the flouncing jabot, the heavy tartan

There was talk of sow's ears, silk purses  
I was snapped elastic, stiff as a marionette  
Madame was sympathetic, but unyielding

Forty years on, her farmer son spoke riddles  
A messy business... poker, blood, a fire  
He blamed the Devil, said he drove him to it  
She would have been a living leaf of flame  
Twirling and falling in the dance of death.

### Sampler

Shadows spilled from the folds of the practice sampler  
Each week the linen rose, a crumpled Lazarus  
Each week I was Penelope, forced to unpick my labours  
The sampler was the elephant in the Art Room  
My needle stabbed and jabbed at its gender parameters

Boys who studied Art were handed chisels  
For hours we bent to our allotted task  
Our little squares of boredom  
Learning our place in the pink quilt of the world  
Obedience, dear, is a lesson to be valued  
And sticking power, of course. That thing you lack

er 1916

Scotland. The mist lies lightly on the land  
In kitchen jars the wine-red brambles set  
Fences are built to stop the rough-shod ram  
Mounting a neighbour's ewes.  
No fools' neglect  
Leaves blank defences.

Roaring evening fires  
Drive families inward from the cold and wet.  
Along the Somme, gas hangs in shell-shocked trees  
A frozen corpse is pocked by clotted blood  
His fellow-soldier, bound in thorns of wire  
Like a snared rabbit, twitches in the mud  
Round Bennachie and Loclmagar, the byres  
Are filled with steaming cattle every night

The fields are ploughed.  
The prized potato crop  
Is lifted, sorted, saved from frost and blight.

In Devil's Wood, an eyeless, bloated horse  
Floats in a trench, where rats glut on the dead  
A baker-boy, swells in his uniform  
His flesh transformed like doughy, sodden bread

The men who set their lives aside for war  
Walked forward up from Hell through History's doors  
Lance Corporal Hitler, wounded near Bapaume  
Carried the killing seeds like mushroom spores

Horseman of the Apocalypse

Shovel the bones in Auschwitz  
Sri Lanka and Darfur  
Remember Nagasaki's rain  
Once fell like Devil's spoor.

Earth is a violent planet  
Where fierce guerillas fight  
To milk the poppy harvest.  
Corruption outweighs right

Bury them in Rwanda.  
Ah, there, the dust is red  
The blood of fallen farmers  
A tidal wave of dead

In Afghan lands and Israel Iraq and the West Bank  
The little children's drawings  
Show gun and fist and tank  
In Kashmir it's artillery fire  
In Lebanon, the bomb  
In Chittangong in Bangladesh  
The terror lingers on

Namibia, Nigeria, Somalia know well  
The human price of conflict Of mine and mortar shell

In the Cambodian Killing Fields  
The skulls lie crate by crate  
War tourists view the genocide  
Of Pol Pot's nightmare state

In New York city's ashen streets  
How the Red Horseman laughed!  
For bloody is his countenance  
And deadly is his craft.

His Lord and Master's Ignorance  
With Bigotry and Greed  
The dogs of War that run beside  
The Hell-hooves of his steed

And until Peace pervades the world  
He rules in Awfulness  
And razes countries to the ground  
And murders loveliness

ncy Crunch

Predatory lending, , , Business talks  
Corporate jollies, , , Joe the Plumber

America sneezes

overspending doves and hawks  
empty trolleys  
Wall Street tremor  
World wheezes

## 22. Something Amazing

Beside the dancing water at Terminal Five  
A businessman wearing a trench coat  
Dips his mouth to the lips  
Of a pretty Thai girl, sipping her kisses  
Like a stag in the cool of evening tasting a pool.

His smile as he comes up for air  
Says 'Something amazing just happened.'

## 23. The Soap Poem

Gutted John walks out on love-cheat Mary  
Jim snogs John. But Mary's parrot sees  
John and Mary's marriage nearly over?  
Mary's secret lover's uncle Fred  
Loved up John calls Mary's Fred a pervert  
Freddy does a runner to the Costas

Deep down, Mary's heart is torn apart  
Mary loses it with drugged up granny  
Jim's her dealer. Granny hits the bottle  
Freddy's back. A hit-man shoots the parrot  
CID charge Jim with stalking Mary  
John comes clean and Mary has a face lift  
Uncle Fred has bedded cousin Cindy

Crazy Mary snaps and cheats with priest  
Parrot sells its story to the tabloids

## 24. Spanish Sunday

Rain is a high-powered hose-down everywhere  
English dilutes in watered tourist-speak  
Wrong-footed I gesticulate in air  
Struggle where sullen vendors do not care  
For foreigners, like Frenchman, Scot or Greek

Bull-ring I say. The waiters stand and stare  
As I, with pointed fingers try to share  
By charging up the pavement like a geek  
My wish to see this ritual affair  
You want a steak Senora, maybe rare?  
A waiter guesses, wrongly. Heavens leak

The day is dreich's a tale by Baudelaire  
I'm Gulliver in Lilliput. A freak  
Tongue-tied by meanings that play hide and seek  
Costa del Sol shows its sadistic streak

## 25. Pillar of Hercules

She's riddled with cannon shot,  
A raddled old rock, randy camp follower  
The fringe of her salty petticoats  
Lifts where the Med. meets the stiff Atlantic breezes  
One of the pillars of Hercules,

Gibraltar's head lies on a quilt of clouds,  
Looks down on a dolphin bay  
Battered by storm, simmered by sun  
She stands in her own shadow  
Waves, lapping around her ankles.

She keeps a look out on two continents  
Oh, she's got a colourful past  
She's fond of a tar and a squaddy  
Old Nelson entered her once, he was  
Always one for a girl with a roving eye  
Muslim, Anglican, Jew, Catholic and Sikh...

Gibraltar's an easy berth

People crawl up her sides like beetles the wind could flick away  
The Levante blowing east from the dry Sahara  
Has dried her face, her sides,  
Into a warren of tunnels where caves have dragon teeth  
Here, everything speaks of home  
But is not home. Same street, a different house.

Apes are juxtaposed with British policemen  
Shipping lies in the bay like Christopher Robin's toys.  
The tide climbs up the rock, then tumbles back  
Like Zebedee, dropped off the Magic Roundabout  
Streets are a necklace of the known, unstrung and rolling  
Geography's fallen through the crack in the crazy paving  
She's terribly British, Sahib,  
Best fish and chips and curry in the world!

y Business

A Barbary ape that I stroked  
Sank its teeth in my flesh, unprovoked  
While the one on my head  
Stole my ice cream and fled  
And I hope that the wee bastard choked!

## 27. Bullfight

People spill from their gardens and plazas  
To savour the spectacle, the frisson of steel on bone  
Into the sandy ring, the bull hurtles  
Wearing his black Sunday coat  
Men put out the eyes of the bullfinch  
To make her sing better, just as they'll goad this bull  
With lance, harpoon and shout,  
Till he's nothing but rage and fight.

He has not been de-horned nor calf-killed.  
He has not been castrated.  
He is a son of Minos, this bull. His horns  
Have the wide embrace of ivory scythes.  
His juice could sire a herd worthy of Mithras.



He could crush a farmer's rib-cage like a nut.

The sun-topped arena is a blazing eye.

Into it, steps the gaudy matador

He is graceful's a Cretan bull-leaper

Bending his back like a bowstring

Rising up in his pumps, his muscles taut

His manhood tucked to side of his skinny pants

Like a lithe Nijinsky.

He is wearing his suit of lights, embroidered gold.

The ancient ballet begins, the dance of death.

Think of Yiyo, killed by the bull Burlero Of Manolete, killed by Islero.

The bull snorts, pissing hotly into the sand

A bubbling hiss.

Crowds throw hats and roses into the ring

Ole they cry as a horn brushes the matador's velvet thigh.

Fear breeds fear, like fire in a dry season

Fear is a scorpion hiding in the shadows

Its sting ready to strike.

Spinning on his toes, the matador rears like a cobra

Plunges his sword dead centre

The wound opens up like a flower, like a dark orchid

The lungs, red bellows, drown in their own blood

Black bull with cloven hooves, sticky with sand and blood

Leaking your own gore, brute strength is no defence

Against subterfuge, the power of wit and weapons

The bull collapses, a tent that won't stay straight

Its hedgehog head bristling with lance and sword

Tail, ears cut off, as trophy, he stiffens

His small black eyes fixed on the fiery sky.

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Berserkers, Cows, & Lady Gaga (17 Poems)

## Berserker

The last time I looked in my shield  
I did not recognize myself  
I'd forgotten what my own face looked like  
Naked and white, human as melting ice

Who could stuff their ears with the scream of death?  
Live with the stench of blood like a reeking pottage  
so often, a surfeit of horror, and still be human?  
The solution brings in the bear, the wolf, the shaman.

My face in the shield looks bleak  
Lifting a sheet in the morgue and seeing myself  
Alive under layers of bear growl, wolf howl

I bite my shield to strangle the terrible fear  
Of living itself. Battle Fatigued, at night  
The heads of those I've killed  
Are singing apples on the Tree of Death

Some days when Odin's sleeping,  
This fear turns in on me. Makes of my skull  
A gourd of bitter carnage.

## Spear of Destiny

There is a certain weapon ancients tell  
Used by a Roman on high Calvary  
That flashed, the Saviour's agony to quell

Men say the lance contained a sacred spell  
Constantine held it up for all to see  
When crowned with incense, Holy Book and bell

Conquerors treasured it, the nonpareil  
Of relics. Hitler in ascendancy  
Shipped it to Nuremberg, a Fascist jewel

Its power secured he thought it would dispel

All opposition with its pedigree  
The lance, once housed in palace and chancel

Some hidden power, avenging archangel  
Led men of William Horn's C Company  
To Nuremberg in Victory's up-swell

The Holy Lance to US soldiers fell  
When Allies held the Spear of Destiny  
Walpurgis Night...by his own bullet shell  
Hitler, the priest of Darkness, fled to Hell

Six centimeters long from crown to rump  
A tiny cluster of cells is becoming human

Toothbuds sprout in the dark  
Nails and fingerprints form on translucent skin

There it floats at anchor moored to the curled placenta  
It squirms in the amniotic sac. The tiny fingers close.

The curling toes, the tiny growing brain  
Practice their paces, ready to take their place  
In the family line, filing blindly forward  
Caught in a flash of film, a virgin pose

Packed eye feathers splay like a grandee's ruff  
Facial discs like dishes of arsenic  
Swivel pale and deadly, Pierrot white

Ears hone in on frequencies high and squeaky  
Owl pinpoints prey in the void  
His sonic beam plumbing the depths of dark

Soft plumage hides his talons, rapier sharp  
The empty night echoes to his twit-hoo  
The whoosh of his swoop  
Bringing death down on wings.

Haining, Scotland's Schindler

Hers was a face no sculptor'd mould in plaster;  
Plain Jane, but with a smile of deep content  
Born to confront both terror and disaster.

A Scottish missionary, one of a cluster  
Who died at Auschwitz, for a life well spent  
Teaching the Jewish orphans. Faith, her master.

Then Hungary fell, too few in force to muster  
Defence for all that the word human meant  
When Fascist boots marched in, they brought disaster.

The Jewish children lost rights ever faster  
As each of them were to the Death Camps sent.  
The trick of dying isn't hard to master.

Then the Gestapo car came for their pastor,  
The Scot who crossed both waves and continent  
Knowing her mission'd end in a disaster.

79467 was Jane Haining's number  
Brave heart, she followed where the children went  
The trick of dying isn't hard to master  
To reject decency, that's true disaster.

ly Shore

When the evening's dark and the clouds are rags  
Wrung out in a weeping sky  
And the wind howls and the frost bites  
And the fox creeps red and sly

Then the farmers' knuckles are red and raw  
And his boots are mired in mud  
And the hedgehog hides in his bed of leaves  
For winter's in his blood.

When the broth is hottering thick in the pot  
And the holly berries glow  
This is the time when high on the moor

The hare turns white's the snow

And bare, the trees stand stripped of all  
Right back to their Pagan roots  
Nor can they dance to the tune of man  
Ice flowers in their frozen shoots

The oldest trees will be last to bud  
When spring returns once more  
They've known too many Seasons fall  
Dead leaves on a deathly shore

Tourists

The days of the Scots cow are over  
No more Peggy, or Jessie or Bet  
The French mademoiselles in the cow-shed  
Are Louise, Celeste, Antoinette  
Every dairy queen carries a passport  
For nipping all over the globe  
With her details attached like an earring  
Pierced into each hairy ear lobe

You or I might jet over to Egypt  
For a fortnight of camels and heat  
But your average cow would choose Delhi  
Where she's sacred, and life's one long treat

There, one day each year they are pampered,  
With garlands, and fruit...the good life  
Not herded in byres in a blizzard  
Awaiting the slaughter man's knife

A Jersey would loath a safari  
(The Masai tribe drink the cow's blood  
And there isn't much grass in the desert  
Where cows tumble down with a thud)

In these days of increased foreign travel  
A cow may jump over the moon  
To populate distant Uranus  
With her natural wind as a boon

## Flight of the Turtle

Turtle is almost blind. She feels her way  
Through waves and currents of oceans  
Using the strength of the earth's  
Magnetic field to chart her course

Her head is an armoured penis  
Carapace of platelets form her shell  
On land her eyes dropp tears excreting salt  
Caretta Caretta, seven feet long  
Full twenty stone of gentle swaying history.

Forty million years this ancient nomad's  
Scaly kin, have hauled themselves ashore  
To leave their mark, to leave their progeny  
All the while the Hittites, Phrygians  
Amazons, Persians Romans came and went  
Byzantine, Ottoman, shifting sands of peoples.  
Hindus call her the soul of a dying sinner,  
Chinese think she is a bowl of health  
Forming the very vault of Heaven itself  
Apollo strung her shell, for the first lyre  
Aphrodite's best-beloved creature, Caretta Caretta

Twenty years it has taken her to mate  
Bringing her back to her birth-beach, warm sand.  
Troy fell, and still she crawled along the beach  
Digging a pit for a hundred creamy eggs

For sixty days they lie, till the moon is right  
The flight of the hatchlings is a lunar happening  
Tiny, they steer to the moon on the water's surface  
Navigate towards the lunar seascape

Crabs pincer movement sidestep over the beach  
Skritch-al-whump-Sloosh  
Catamaran crab's spindle-hop sidewinder sidestepping  
Skritch-al-whump-Sloosh

Stiletto legs eye-popping-talks fathom the lurch  
Of hatchlings, on the sludge and stir of sand slide

Slither-drag-crunch, they crush small shells to smush  
Primeval Frisbees, discuses with flippers,  
Pie-crust horn-backed scrabblers, the hatchlings race  
Scramble-hobble-wobble-tilt into the beaks of birds

Floundering UFOs they lop-side onwards  
Scampering over cooling sands to the surf  
Snakes, crows, herons, seagulls snatch them off  
The handful of survivors, like picking peas from a plate

The door to the sea is over the burning beach  
A hectic dash from nest to grave, or wave  
The greeny soup tureen of the Mediterranean

There, the drifting currents tow them off  
Buffeted by tide like a powerful train  
Shunting them back and fore in rhythmic motion

Before lie many hazards, Caretta Caretta  
Traps, pots, trawls and dredges wait for you  
Docks and marinas eat away your shores  
Sharks, seals, whales, raw sewage, oil spills

Shrimping, fishing, netting, Caretta Caretta  
Your flesh is a soup, an aphrodisiac  
Much coveted. Beware discarded plastics  
The light pollution of neon bars and streets

Toxic chemicals, marine debris  
Your shells makes pretty trinkets, Caretta Caretta  
Blind, gentle creature of a waning people  
Your beaches shrink, horizons drown, turn sour.

#### 9. Lament for a Poetry Nook: Tune: Black Velvet Band

Lesley Duncan a graduate of Glasgow, as a poetry Ed. she was grand  
And many a poet she published to be read by the whole of Scotland  
But a great misfortune's befallen us, the paper's deleted that nook  
Where many's the upcoming poet, found an audience outwith a book

#### Chorus

In a once-daily slot in the Herald  
The poems were the best in the land

Now from the Gretna to Shetland we're mourning  
That column with poetry to hand

One day you'd meet Wordsworth extolling, the pleasures of lily and cloud  
The next you'd encounter Ed Morgan, plucking pen sketches out of the crowd  
John Clare, Kenneth Steven, Keith Murray, Robert Frost or a Sunny haiku  
There was never a Central belt bias, with cosy wee reads for the few

Where else will the Muse find a corner, to crystallize views about peace  
Devolution, Sex War, Family Matters, or an activists' longed for release?  
Oh prose may be fine for the weather, or the scores clocked by footballers' boots  
But where will go to find poetry that most Celtic of Celtic pursuits?

We've stated the case and it's proven, Herald owners, your duty is clear  
At the earliest possible moment, the poems will soon reappear  
So stand up for justice and culture...the poet should never be banned  
In the country of Burns and MacDiarmid, and that's why we're making this stand!

#### 10. In Chalet-Land

In chalets, 'lecky meters whirr, through sunshine, blizzard, rain & smirr  
A pond's 'a loch' in brochure terms, 'A forest'...well-pruned trees and ferns  
'Majestic landscape's' hills with farms, 'A nature trail's a pool with charms  
Of tame ducks squawking after bread. No osprey hovers, since the spread  
Of golf retirement cosy streets where geriatric swingers meet  
Or moan that they are under par...I wonder where the squirrels are.

The wildlife must have upped and fled  
From lawns like those, well groomed and dead  
The waitress in the restaurant, is friendly as a cactus plant  
I'm told the hen dos are a blast but nature lovers...drive on past.

#### Vanishing Osprey

They seek it here they seek it there, the tourists seek it everywhere  
And then they see a gull and cry 'Look! There's the osprey in the sky!

Ah, poor deluded naturalist, demented, blind, or two thirds pissed  
I am afraid to tell you that the osprey flitted some years back  
When the first bulldozers appeared and neat retirement homes appeared  
In Osprey Place and Roundabout and drove the great sea eagle out



But there's a pond. If you're in luck it's possible you'll see a duck.

Dawn

The frost's like stardust over the spears of grass  
With tiny movements of birds, the branches stir  
Sunlight shifts like the glow of a candle mass  
Under the creaking eaves of a wood of fir

A robin sings, the blush in the throat of day  
The rabbits sleep in their dens deep underground  
A single silent needle parts the air  
Drops to the forest floor without a sound

The rolling Angus hills beyond are round  
Round and combed by the ploughshare smooth and neat  
The soil's like the hair of an ancient Celtic queen  
Each twisted furrow a brown and glistening pleat

at Piperdam

Synchronised swimmers: three ducks performing  
Bold as brass. Pulling a water triangle along the pool  
A mallard swims for the reeds. From the reedy bank  
The resident cheer leader squawks with clacking beak  
Necks corkscrew under wings like tubas' pipes  
The great sun orchestrates the lapping waves

14. Woodland in October

The acorn cup's like a friar's tonsured pate  
Mushrooms bloom in the shadows half unseen  
Dusk brings the timid rabbits out to crop  
The frosty grass, under the groaning firs  
Speckled toadstools ring the secret ways  
Of sharp beaked blackbirds hunting on the hop  
Twigs wear the nimble spider's flimsy shroud  
The full moon hangs in the sky, a sad-eyed pumpkin

15. Broch Road Blizzard, 2010

Each empty-bellied cow stares into the maw of hunger  
Cars drive by with rooves like rising loaves

Ice has locked the lid on the earth's pantry  
A robin shakes hydrangea's pom pom head

Wastes of white are pierced by lights of cars  
Slicing a way between the snow-drowned dykes  
A gritter driver, ice dropp at his nose  
Red thread veins on his cheeks  
Powers a path through all-enfolding drifts

Snow piggy backs on tombstones where the chilly dead  
Like still in rows like antique cutlery

Sky is cream, swirled by a giant's thumbprint  
Clouds like the brains of a hare scudding across white acres  
Season of muffled speech, of all things seeking shelter.

#### 16. Elizabeth Siddal's Grave

Pre-Raphaelite Brothers: Siddal was their star  
Beautiful green eyed Lizzy. Autumn's breeze  
Topples the apple to the forest floor  
Rossetti's wife fell with a self-taught disease.  
Her love of laudenaum, unlocked death's door,  
The artist, cutting off their marriage ties  
With tears, set by his poems in her lair,  
Thinking symbolic acts would bring him ease.

Seven years elapsed. His fickle Muse had failed  
A midnight exhumation then betrayed  
His dead wife's sanctity, disordered mate!  
His poems retrieved, his long-dead love unveiled  
Her copper hair, her glory, all arrayed  
A sleeping beauty lying there in state

#### Ga-Ga's Meat Dress

She stands and poses in her dress of steak  
Attired from head to toe in uncooked meat,  
And what a stir her fashion foibles make!

Aeons ago, on fur-bound, frozen feet  
Neanderthals progressed, became adaptive

Roasted their kill, rendered its juices, sweet,

Yet here she stands, provocative, subversive  
Attention seeking with her 'Look at me'  
Her food stunt keeping paparazzi captive.

Maybe it is an anti-fashion plea  
Stating that the red carpet treatment should,  
Be obsolete...shallow celebrity

Maybe it's feminist, pondering should  
Men treat their wives like chattels wearing rings  
Just there to cook and clean and raise the brood

Or is it a new art form's weird birth pangs,  
A commentary on decay's release  
Of death's corruption where the red skirt hangs.

Perhaps she rails at vanity. The face  
That's painted. Fame so quickly fled  
Media moulding the soft populace

Her critics shod in leather, write a spread,  
On how disgusting and how out of place  
Was Lady Ga Ga...and her purse that bled.

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Eurotrash, Unicorns, Valentines (13 Poems)

A river, green's  
A jade king's blood  
To dream beside of  
Sunflowers, cyclist thighs, balloons, church bells

a bottle cooling on ice  
the soft loaf of the sun drops crumbs of light  
transforming ducks from wheeling wings to boats

a plastic cup rolls in a perfect arc  
a jumping child claps at the bob bob waves

two lovers lock their edges in a jigsaw

, Tiger

Tiger, Tiger in the heat,  
ponder well your choice of meat  
Never chew or swallow man  
in your jungle frying pan

Though he's in your kitchen venue,  
Humankind is off the menu  
If you put him in your pot,  
Tiger, Tiger, you'll be shot.

Trash

Our North Sea coast has fluid, porous borders.  
A Spanish yoghurt berths with Flora marg

The shoreline is an easle of oil paints  
Where loaded waves, impasto, lather gulls.

Slippage from yachts and quays

A continental drift from Norway, Sweden,  
Follow the Viking road,  
A gruesome Valhalla of gunge.

Eco-terrorists are breaching our defences  
The sea permits no checkpoints, walls, or fences  
A tide of Eurotrash slip-slopping in  
Muscling in on home-grown Scottish waste.

Bottles from Spain and Denmark made the trip  
120 blobs of polystyrene (nationality unknown)  
And 12 balloons bob-bobbing with the puffins

5 shoes, not matching, of assorted sizes  
their tongues licking the tides  
Are surfing a net that's trapped  
One rubber duck with grinning yellow beak  
One German oil container oozing slick

Somebody's going to have to clear the lot away  
Neptune, maybe, arming his crabs with bags.

I City

Skyscrapers....movie-makers.  
Motorways.... rainy days  
Housing scheme....druggies' dream.  
Single mum.... builder's bum  
Mobile phone....home alone.  
On-line bank....taxi rank  
Goths in black....coke and smack.  
Teenage gangs....traffic prangs  
Begging boom.... civic tomb.  
Plastic hips....botax lips  
Faceless bosses...local losses.  
Caffeine drinks.... world, shrinks  
Flying high....My oh my,  
sittin pretty.... global city!

5. Tree no 02363:

Tree no 02363 is wearing a green tag  
It inhabits a green corridor  
Between a rock and a hard place

No-one has christened it, it is a bare tree  
A number placed in someone's databank

Hedging a bet between New Age and Old  
Between Science and Pagan Rite  
Someone has set a horse shoe  
Into the crook of its wooden arms  
Invoking the healing powers  
Skill and intuition wed to luck

A virgin lawn nearby sprouts maidenhair  
Waits for a unicorn to make its day.

## 6. Moving On

We lifted pots and pans from house to van  
Families, drawn by the sight of a home, moving,  
Watched from summer gardens  
Mowers idling.

Minus its couch potatoes  
The sofa got an airing  
I nursed a soup dish with a dodgy lid.  
A dog, three doorways up, barked  
Fit to burst.

Its owner, Molly, (whitest sheets in the street)  
Gathered her kids around to cheer us off.

The driver gripped the wheel,  
Reversing out. Crooked his mouth in a leer.

`That slapper used to like a bit of rough.  
Three of us had her once in Linksfern Wood  
Took it in turn we did. Pissed as a newt!  
She sucked us dry. She couldn't get enough. '

In the wing mirror I watched her as she stood  
Receding into the lane, sheets hanging on the line  
Bright as the Holy Rood.  
Rooted in sunshine with her little brood  
Light years away by far from Linksfern Wood

## 7. Clun Village, Shropshire

The Duke of Norfolk's castle stands askew  
Pretending to be Pisa.  
Opening Clun's public toilet  
Activates a male Welsh choir  
Accelerates defecation

An Aylesbury duck  
Cuddles its own head  
Folding in on itself  
A feather coracle

On a dandelion big as a biscuit,  
A storm-stead red admiral butterfly  
Holds to the topsail

A dancing dog drapes its neck  
With the scarf of its own tail  
The Isadora Duncan of the kennel.

## 8. The Hurst, October

On Monday the ivy clung to the wall  
A blackbird lit on a bush. It flew off, mute.  
A sheep dislocated its jaw  
Mechanically chewing. The brown ditch  
At its feet like the brew of a bog  
I used to go to, slinking off for a bit of peace,  
After the peats were cut when the kids were small.  
It was a mead of honeybees and sun,  
Of trees and firey nettles, the bones of birds.

On Tuesday, another poet used this room I sleep in  
I occupy her hollow like a hare in a high pasture  
I would not chose her track through nightmare's thickets

I think of the horse at rest out there in the rain.  
I willed and willed it to come, with tongue clucks and whispering  
It turned its back, like a poem that won't be ordered.  
Tonight I'm a melting baby, mouthless, mouthless.

### 9. My Uncle's Cows

Matilda, heavy uddered, took the lead  
Plodding between the violet sprinkled banks  
Hoof drumbeats on the road. A docile breed.

Behind her, lesser matrons swished their tails  
Their milky breath like kettles on the boil  
As tardy as a bucketful of snails  
A lapwing ran zigzag across a field

I'd suck a straw and cut myself a switch  
In spring the cows were skittish, slow to yield  
The farmhouse was a hayrick on the hill

Beside the shed where bantams scratched and clucked  
The distant woods were secretive and still

Flossie the sheepdog gave a warning bark  
The herd ignored her. Plopped green cowpats down  
The hidden moon rehearsed for grown-up dark.

### 10.A Valentine to Marcus Aurelius (121-80BC)

Who says flesh cannot crave a ghost?  
Aurelius, both good and just  
Your spirit fans my mind to flame  
Though I am clay and you are dust.

Rarer than jade, than dragon's tears  
You were a man that all could trust



I'd be the villa to your vine  
Though I am clay and you are dust

Some gaze upon your sculptured face  
Seeing a cold, imperial bust  
I see a forehead to desire  
Though I am clay and you are dust

Who thinks that mawkish modern man's  
A fit receptacle for lust?  
Aurelius, I kiss your feet  
Though I am clay and you are dust

### 11. In the Psychiatric Ward

Who's that in the mirror wearing a stranger's face?  
Why does the picture move and come alive?  
What is the thing that whispers, 'Jump! Fly! Die!  
Why does Admissions buzz, a blocked up hive?

The ward is locked at night. No 'Get well Soon.'  
No flowers. No glass. That visitor's the moon.  
Leah's an island nobody can reach  
Hazel sings nursery rhymes to the cracked wall  
Old Martha three beds down's a rocking horse  
Judith sees walking phantoms that appall.

The ward is locked at night.  
No 'Get well Soon'. No flowers.  
No glass. That visitor's the moon.

### 12. The Unicorn

The unicorn says he will come, but you mustn't tease him  
Nor will he stay for long if you say you need him.

No photographs. No footage for the archive  
He must have lilies to lie on  
A bed of fern and a virgin's breast to sigh on.  
And love as wide as Wyoming, as deep as loss

And a road for coming and going  
Into the mist, the damp, primeval moss.

### 13. The Little Nut Tree

I had a little nut tree, nothing would it bear  
But a wall eyed mirror and a deadly stare

The king of Nightmare's brother came to visit me  
To show me the path leading to Insanity  
I skipped half a life away, I wooed misogyny  
And all because of that little nut tree.

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Flowers, Felines, Fiddlers Et Al (15 Poems)

the Railway Sleepers

Travelling south, I rise out of myself  
A stone leaving mud

A woman old as a walnut husk  
Slowly draws a flask from a battered bag  
Tips two wraps of sugar, a dribble of milk  
Into a plastic cup that smells of linoleum

A heron sails over Montrose  
Stilt-walker legs tucked up like tent poles

Red haired Ayrshire cattle  
Slump, abandoned sofas, in a field of tares

Poppies and meadowsweet simmer in the heat  
In a civic park, rustic goalposts face the ghosts of goals

Lopped trees stand marooned in green  
Where mowers circling blades cut Celtic swirls

Daisies polka-dot a lawn  
A turtle dove sits on a TV aerial  
Tuning in to hissing football stories

The skinniest horse in Scotland  
Crunches a nettle in a field of hard times

In a field of young green corn  
A roe deer raises its head to watch the train

A black crow rows its hull through blustery trees  
Like cheering bystanders  
Beeches welcome a sudden influx of swifts

At Perth, a hind on delicate horn hooves  
Picks her fastidious way by the shingly river  
The river flashes bronze by her matt fawn flanks

Silver lady birch tree is stirring a soup of flies  
Stirling arrives not speaking of Bannockburn.  
It's midgie season.

A climber with cliff-bitten knees  
Is swatting his ears. A wire hangs from his ear  
Drip feeding a musical balm

## 2. Thunder

Cracking her seeds, squirrel's eats twitch-ear  
The nearing thunderstorm in brooding heat  
Sky's heart is blood, darkening after a bruise

## 3. Fallen Angel

The girl-child held her father's favour constant  
Fixed as the pole star  
Her brother, the scarecrow  
Flapped his arms in the cross of his sister's shadow  
Titbits, dainties, praise...She feasted well.  
Beloved, in a glut of glory

And so he stole the doll  
Took it up to the dark bog past the crooked tree  
At the edge of the stand of oaks  
Buried it there in the muck  
Pressing the steel nails of his boot  
Onto its spoiled face  
Driving it into the suck of the black mire  
Like the bones of a fallen angel

## 4. Two Cafetieres, one Glass, one Steel? / Barney and Babs

You do realise you're transparent?  
Always on show, even down to the dregs  
Objects like you- I use the word advisedly-  
Give coffee a bad name.

Where's the mystery? Where's the je ne sais quoi?  
When you're full, you're smug.  
Half full, you're begging for pity or attention.

Look at me! Look at me!

Your heart's on your sleeve  
You're an air-head, an air head  
Waiting for something to fill you  
Not a single independent thought

Well, don't look at me for excitement.  
I stew in my own juice. I'm a recluse  
I could be plotting or pining.  
You won't catch me whining  
Nothing betrays what's quietly fermenting.  
Look at you, weeping condensation  
From every pore

Furthermore I'm heavier than you  
Intellectually speaking,  
You're light-weight as Irn Bru

Your grounds are gritty  
Your general outlook's shitty  
But...given your elegant lid  
You'd fit very well in a scene  
From Sex in the City.

5. Dhanakosa June  
Dhanakosa June  
Hungry ghosts stalking mint lambs  
Dreams of dragon cream

6. Cobweb  
A spider's cobweb  
The last word in flycatchers  
Insect's winter noose

7. Bolt Hole  
A mouse's bolthole  
Underground cat aid shelter  
Full of summer fear

8. Chopsticks  
Swallow on a wire  
Tail feather's tucked together  
Two chopsticks resting

## 9. Three Balquidder Haiku

Scooped by a giant hand  
Terrified frog leaks water  
Not from the small pool

Calluses on dew  
Young grass under old feet  
Rising sap of June

Bull-rush sonata  
Leaf look-alike jumps upwards  
Small brown air-born frog

## 10. The Naming of Flowers

Beggarticks, bear's breech & little mouse-ear  
Fiddleneck, dewberry, Sweet Cicely  
Cherryplum, mooncarrot, mint, Marjoram  
Quince, Creeping Jenny & Black Bryony

Bogmyrtle, Tom Thumb, wolfsbane, adderstongue  
Monkshood, Sweet Alison, Thumbleberry  
Gipsywort, Looking glass, thyme, pennyroyal  
Tancy & Teasel, mousetail, rosemary

Sneezewort & foxglove & glory of snow  
Deergrass & dragon's teeth. Belladonna  
Ghost orchid, weasle's snout, sweet Rose of Sharon  
Bridewort an birdsfoot, Wild Angelica

Bedstraw & bulrush, moonwort, Blue eyed Mary  
Rusty-back, violet, & sweet pimpernel  
Enchanter's nightshade & goldilocks buttercup  
Blinks, ragged robin & Highland harebell

## 11. The First White Hair

What wiped the colour from his first white hair?  
The mouth, drying with fear perhaps  
The heart, breaking at a latch-click  
Or the day when the first word tripped

From his tongue, and couldn't find its meaning

## 12. Conversation with a Dead Brother

I was always drawn to the glen that you grew up in  
Like a sheep, snagged on a wire.

Half a century before we met.

Weren't you curious? Didn't you want to know?

Canada blanked old shames and secrets out  
Offered a gold horizon, rebirth, rebranding

Maple sweet, great bear of a Redwood brother  
Your hug could block out blizzards  
Your footprints walked too soon to the Lodge of Silence  
Where mine will dog you when my last snows fall

## 13. Fiddler in the Mall

Hurrying, scurrying, round the shops  
Crowds go hunting for hats or tops  
Emptying out the family coffers  
On footwear, hardware, and bargain offers  
Searching for health and beauty aids –  
Trainers, stickers, or razor blades  
Jewellery, perfume, or toddlers' toys  
Joggers, jigglers, girls and boys  
Stood astounded in Union Square  
When a fiddler played in the entrance there  
Till bobbin about like a dolphin's pillow  
In an Orcadian strip the willow  
Shopper and strollers joined the dance  
Linking arms in a rhythmic trance  
Pensioners, children, in-betweens  
In t-shirts, leggings, and torn blue jeans  
Denim-skirted or business-suited  
Barefoot girls and the leather booted  
Joined in the music one and all  
When the fiddler played in the shopping mall.

## 14. Feline Matters

The cat thinks cat, speaks cat, lives in a cat-like way

Tits die so cat might keep itself alive  
It only lives if it can catch its prey.

Cat pulls birds from the table to survive  
It dozes like a dullard through the day  
But dusk sees all cat's skills and lusts revive.

Under night arches cat's black shape will pour  
Like some small panther. It's a midnight beast  
Where deadly nightshade drops its wicked spore

It kills and is not shriven by the priest  
Killing is both its joy and its birthright  
Bloodletting does not scare it in the least

The cat thinks cat, speaks cat, lives in a cat-like way  
Tits die so cat might keep itself alive  
It only lives if it can catch its prey.

#### 15. Foot Jive

Trainers, sneakers, sandshoes, tap shoes  
Clogs and crocs, slip-ons and flat shoes  
Platform soles and thigh high boots  
Pumps that skip to drums and flutes

Jesus sandals, soft shoe shufflers  
Furry boots for days with mufflers  
Velcroed, backless, buttoned, zipped  
Open-toed flip-flop, steel-tipped

Plastic, rubber, crocodile skin  
Shoes with straps around the shin  
Shoes that point like ballet pumps  
Meet the world with clacks and thumps

Sheena Blackhall



# Of Foxes, Crows And Artichokes (20 Poems)

## 1. Winter Fox

Out of a siding, the studious urban fox  
Trots off in the furious rain  
Too wet to decipher the runic spelling of claws.

The wind deadheads a hydrangea  
A squirrel, padlocks his cache of nuts  
Hedgehogs hug their navels in worsening weather

Corridors of brambles lead to the morgue of a tunnel  
The fox's den, stuffed with bloodied leaves.  
This is his terminal pillow.

In the bus-station toilet a sliver of icy soap  
Sits by a dripping tap, awaiting a glove's removal

Clouds tussle with storm, their bearings afloat  
Birdsong pierces the day, a cold keening  
Fox is becoming intimate with a throat.

## Crucified Crow

The sky bent down to touch him,  
Dead Crow nailed over the wheat,  
(That silver tide down which the moonlight plunged.)

The crow did not exist beyond the crucifix.  
Feathers, frayed from his saltire.  
He hung, unwilling martyr,  
Half-way between death  
And the dew-cool dawn.

Two mornings he had helped  
A new-born lamb out of its white coat.  
The gun, stopped his disrobing.  
Flies, drunk from feasting on his blood  
Laid eggs to wobble in his open heart

Furtive as stolen kisses,  
Rain fell on his frozen beak  
Mouthing one last curse  
At widow-maker world.

### Wedding of the Deer

Deer stepped from the skeletal woods.  
Left their virginal freedoms  
Went out onto the moor to meet their match.

They were the colour of warm tea  
Soft bellied as Burmese girls.  
Avoiding old tracks and the muffled  
Thump of bullets, their bridegrooms  
Swung sharp antlers, like incense bearers  
Sweetening a temple.

The perfect place for deer and a stag to wed  
Is a brooding slope high on the edge of nothing.  
Stag on deer, a quivering tower of venison.

When the twined towers topple  
Deer seeds stir in the dark.

### Toll Gate

One day, and that quite soon, I'll climb the Hill  
Look back at the three spires of the village churches  
Watch men at their work, observe clay chimneys,  
Through oak trees lush and leerie  
Growing smaller.

I envied them, those oak trees, local and sacred  
Cheered them on in Spring, like a winning team  
For they always welcomed me back when I dropped in  
On a flying visit or just to ease my heart.  
They peopled the summer landscape that was childhood,  
It seemed my fate was tied up with their roots.

Their accents, leafy lisps, made honeyed hearing  
That Druid grove, sun-speckled, halcyon.

Soon, I must pass the toll gate,  
Shadows above are beckoning  
A traveller trying to enter the eye of a needle  
Pine needle, part and whole of the ancient woods.

How much mud will stick at the final reckoning?

#### Artist's Dream Woman

In a primeval forest a woman lay nude on a sofa  
(Though this is an artist's dream, the girl looks bored)  
She stretches her hands to animals, sun, blue sky.  
She's his mythical woman, born to be adored

Not a word of the rusty heater his model used  
The tigers sniffing around, the bad cheques bouncing  
The snake charmer's flute, though cute, could not defuse  
The critics snapping like jackals, the tax man pouncing

And while he was dreaming and painting, her sultry skin  
Flinched as mosquitoes hummed around her breast  
Under the crimson lips, her skull started to grin  
The sofa sagging beneath this French Mae West.

You can tell by the frozen pose, the words unsaid  
He hoped she'd step from the frame and warm his bed

#### Artichoke's Valentine's Card

The artichoke complained it had been stalked.  
The Valentine card was its proof,  
Arriving as it did, at the fruit and veg show

The kiwi refused to comment.  
The raspberry declared no interest,  
Stating the artichoke had all the allure  
Of a rhino fart in a bathtub

The Brussels sprout confessed it was polygamous,  
But was not a lover of artichokes per se

The carrot said it was pink, but currently celibate  
The cabbage wore her heart on her sleeve, claiming  
She only went on the boil for Wessex cauliflowers

The radish revealed the artichoke as a fantasist  
The courgette accused the beetroot of necrophilia,  
Of lying with a fallen Cox's pippin.

The spud said he was into S & M  
Due to his long proximity with thistles

The pea confessed she'd popped her pod that evening  
The whin-seed flashed, but only in the Fall.

r is I cumin in

Broccoli or chestnut? Cream of celery?  
Carrot, coriander? Chicken stock or Brie?

Cauliflower, green pesto? Courgette, Emmental?  
Parsnip, yellow pepper? Cumin or lentil?

Savoy Cabbage, Bacon? (That could do a week!)  
Tomatoe and Spring Onion? Turnip boiled with leek?

Oh this summer cooking! Read what's on the tin  
Toss it in your basket, put your apron in the bin!

instructions for 8 Left-handers

Prince Charles: hand wash only.  
Tiberius: do not wring  
Queen Victoria: starch the collar  
Nietzsche: iron on high.  
Lewis Carroll: full wash cycle  
Paul McCartney: steam iron low

Albert Einstein: short spin only  
Bill Clinton: tumble dry

## Calls

Dirty Gertie, one more time,  
Played Bingo on the Brighton line  
Two fat ladies, bang on the drum,  
Clickety clicked to Kingdom Come

Dirty Gertie's halfway there,  
Up the winners' golden stair  
Man alive, between the sticks,  
Strange how some folk get their kicks

## ey Rhyming Slang

After last night's Ruby Murray blew out through me Khyber Pass  
I was Tom and Dick all down me Dinky Doos  
When me Baker's Dozen asked me out, I had to say  
'Alas I am too Boracic Lint to pay for booze.'

I still had some Bread and Honey owing to a China Plate  
And I had to go and square the Duke of Kent  
Took a Sherbet Dab to Putney, where a Dustbin Lid of eight  
Stole the little bit of gelt I hadn't spent!

## blages

A spring of teals, a gang of elks, a parliament of owls  
Assembled with a drift of swine, moorhens and other fowls  
Beside a stud of sturdy mares, a sounder of wild boar  
A sege of herons, walk of snipe, the world to explore  
They met a cete of badgers, bench of bishops, rag of colts,  
A wilderness of monkeys where the brindled muskrat bolts

A chattering of choughs arrived, a muster of peacocks  
A rye of pheasants, herd of curlews, wearing their flight socks  
A coveyfull of ptarmigan suggested they go home

A starlings' murmuration lead the leavers, via Rome

An exaltation of the larks took refuge in the sky  
Malapertnesses of pedlars cried 'Good riddance! ' and 'Goodbye! '  
So the assemblages of beasts went off their separate ways  
The ferrets to their businessness, the dolphins to their bays.

Like a hung ladle  
The summer sun drips slowly  
A honey spoon's kiss

w

A willow plunges its wrists  
Into the cut-throat water  
My mouth is a bricked up fireplace  
Sucking ash.

Love

Some fathers are bitter grapefruits,  
Rotten orchids  
A man smashes his fist into his son's right ear  
Calls it an act of love

A robin usurped the manuscript of morning  
His scratchy feet etched runes across the moss  
His twin eyes watched me scraping up the leaves  
His bulbous puff of crimson paunch, ballooned  
Under the lemony arch of rowan eaves

He made a chill day warm.  
Slime-belly worms  
Rose like smoke through the grass

To this flick tailed bobber, gone in a blink  
Like a municipal tulip in a gale  
Back through the bird-door fashioned by the wind

ce

The latitudes of silence are becalming  
The quadrille of ravens that perch  
On my sinister shoulder, flap like flames

The slippage of days continues  
Like the drool from a fool's mouth

Silence, though, is sherbet on the tongue  
Dissolving melancholy. I no longer want  
To emigrate from the world.  
The anthill Of my thoughts quietly stills, its denizens  
Curl up tight in separate cells.

the Sun

Under the sun a gouged cathedral looms,  
Empty's a dry-docked liner, hugging echoes

A teenager turns a corner, wheeling a buggy  
She is wearing headphones. The child screams, frantic.

In Novodevichnaya, Chekhov's silent  
A Clydebank striker harangues a passing crowd

Flying an urban semaphore from a tree  
A plastic bag flags up a roundabout

At a screening of The Madness of King George  
Somebody's mobile rings in aisle three

A piano writes a concerto. Trees raise saplings.  
A driver, parked in a lay-by watches cows.  
He is Saint Anthony, patron saint of the Lost,  
Finding Pan, his haunches sunk in fern

In Cairo a Pharaoh's make-up is restored  
A soccer draw leaves goal-mouths unappeased

-Rope Lover

I have never turned a tide,  
Raised a Lazarus, painted a Buonarroti.

I have, however, walked  
The tight-rope ladder from self to lover  
Without a safety net  
Like you, me, another

19.A Meditation

When I am still, the moon falls into me,  
I become water.  
Stars shine from my eyes.

An owl opens its wings,  
Drifts from my empty heart

am

Rockets & mortar, artillery shell  
Napalm & booby-trap, planes that dropped hell  
Children of dust, refugees behind wire  
War tunnels, ecocide, firearms for hire

Paddy-fields, fishing nets, conical hats  
Boat people, pirates, sea-horses, fruit bats  
Dog-meat & paw-paw, shark-fin,  
Saigon Beer Coconut, cinnamon, bugs, muntjac deer  
Hitch-hikers, back-packers, loos where you squat  
Ancestor-worship, pagodas, kumquat  
Bamboo, malaria, peach-blossom, plums  
Dragon-fruit, myna birds, reed flutes & drums



Buddhas & lacquer ware, turtles & rice  
Porcupines, scorpions, pythons, dried ice  
Cholera, polio, cobra, monsoon  
Leprosy, crocodile, stonefish, typhoon  
Durian, lychee, ceramics & ticks  
Leeches & rabies, bean-paste, incense sticks

Sweet & sour country of mangrove & palm  
Pearl of the China Seas, gentle Vietnam

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Freud, Humming Birds, Byron And Greece (17 Poems)

## 1. Island of the Dead

Two men for a time, resided in Vienna  
An Art School reject and a Jewish burgher.  
Both admired Bocklin's 'Island of the Dead'.

'Finis Austriae, ' Freud wrote in his diary.  
When Hitler in an open-topped Mercedes  
Rode in triumph trumpeting the Reich  
Distinguished professor to refugee at a stroke  
Marooned in his home by bigots, racists, thugs  
From freedom of the city to fleeing outcast  
Books burned, his savings stolen for 'the cause'.

Now, his London desk's a mausoleum  
To old and grubby gods who survived their master  
Athena, Goddess of Wisdom's, centre-stage.

The curtain's closed, museum lights burn low  
On Mummies' masks, on small carved Grecian Sphinx  
Rembrandt's Moses, upholding the Ten Commandments  
Here, in the home of the Patron Saint of Surrealism.  
The analyst's couch is wearing a rug from Iran  
With chenille cushions. The bookshelves groan with Goethe,  
Shakespeare, Oedipus and Poe.

Freud's chair is weathered and leathered  
It has listened to dreams of mountains, rocks, umbrellas  
Balloons, pens, aials, and the occasional snake  
Interspersed with churches, passages, mussels,  
Peaches and shells, to weird accounts of  
Slipping, sliding, climbing, running, skipping.

Its owner escaped the Auschwitz Crematoria  
For that of Golders Green, off Finchley Road.  
Its grounds contain two ponds, a bridge,  
A children's swinging bench, and crocus lawn.

He shares this place of final solution with Kossoff,  
Kingsley Amis,  
Cancer deleted him from humanity's fabric,  
And not a Nazi poison-sprinkler system.  
Bocklin's 'Island of the Dead' may or may not  
Have received that portion not of fleshly origin.

Hitler, twice-dead by shot and cyanide,  
Doused with gasoline, shovelled in a shell-hole  
May not have had his passport there permitted  
Having created a drastic increase in deaths  
So much, so much, the very trees protest.

## 2. Humming Bird

Luke told me what he'd liked about his childhood `  
The humming birds that flew along the river  
He loved their speed- the way they never stopped.

Two stars sat in his eyes as he described them.  
He'd fried his brain on acid, Es and smack  
Heard voices now, a hopeless schizophrenic  
His long fair hair was lank, uncombed, a flop.

His pianist's fingers had grown beggar's nails  
The local yobs would dog him to the shop  
Relieve him of his benefits, declare  
Undying friendship till his funds ran out,  
Until one day some traffic light said  
STOP inside his veins.

They soon re-let his flat  
His life erased by paint, fresh air, a mop.

## 3. Evening Visit

The face itself is little changed  
But for the glitter in her stare  
Lit by Delusion's phantom lamps

Unreason is the tenant there

She talks of meetings in the woods  
The scent of violets in her hair  
With my dead father, warm and dark  
Unreason lifts him from his lair

I watch her lips, they're bramble-blue,  
Babble of kisses on the stair  
Of how she danced last night till dawn  
Unreason lays her memories bare

The folk she whispers of are ghosts  
Distant, I listen in the chair  
And watch the clock hands crawling round  
Unreason's thrills are hard to share

of the winds

The North Wind wears a heavy cloak. He blows a twisted shell.  
The North East Wind upholds a shield of stones, that fall pell-mell

The South East Wind's an aged man wrapped tightly up in clothes  
The South West Wind's a sailor-boy, ships hurry when he blows  
The West Wind is a handsome boy who carries wreaths of flowers  
The South Wind, strong and muscular, decants an urn of showers

The East Wind bears a load of fruit and grain within his sash  
The North West Wind's a bearded man, his bronze pot full of ash

And round and round the Tower they go, they whisper, howl, or shout  
The World's Winds, like dervishes that stir the air about

## 5. Overheard on the Metro

Hello? Helen?  
Paris here. Just leaving the office now.  
Getting into the Metro, dear.  
Yes, I remembered the olives.  
I made a Titanic effort to clear my desk

It's been Pandemonium at work since half past three  
A Marathon, to meet the boss's deadlines.  
Grace finally lost her Marbles  
We always said she was a Nymphomaniac  
Last night proved it. Eros was done in,  
Called it a Pyrrhic victory.  
You know he's no Apollo, bit of a Cretan, really.  
It's known she sleeps with anything in pants.  
Drink's her Nemesis, of course  
A bottle of ouzo, she thinks she's a Siren

Eros vomited over my new Nike trainers  
One Olympian binge too many  
Wanted to pour his soul out. Well, I couldn't have that,  
A right Pandora's box that would unlock!

Echo is the boss's Achilles heel.  
Platonic relationship? Pull the other one!  
She's such a yes-girl.  
If he wasn't such a Narcissus  
He'd see her for what she is.  
Still, it pays to be stoical,  
Discretion pays the rent,  
And Menelaus's alimony, of course.

## 6. Athens

A drain-pipe ends in the pout of a fish's mouth  
A brass door knocker's clenched in a knuckled fist  
Flocks of clouds drift over the Heavens' blue fields

In the furnace of high summer it is 40 degrees and rising  
The sun burns in the sky, its low red eye  
Searing the flat-topped roofs, their jungle of aerials  
Palm trees sprout in small parched balconies

Piratical taxi cabs cruise Piraeus Harbour  
Yellow piranhas seeking unwary Euros  
Iris from Gravesend, hair a ripple of waves,  
Flags one down and climbs onto its seat

In an Athens agora, squat as a statue of Pan  
Savros sits cross-legged on goat-skin rugs  
Demetrius, serving wine in a roadside café  
Could have stepped straight down  
From a Theban amphora.

Andreas, humping cases behind a Spar  
Seems to leapt off a silver coin from Cos  
His bronze face framed by wild hair

Smiling like Helius,  
Pallas Athene in sandals strides from the Metro  
Laden with messages for a lovers' tryst

Veins on his neck like a bull,  
Mythos, a back-street mechanic  
Screws a jack beneath a leaky chassis

A toothless crone with a face like a satyr's mask  
Wordlessly rattles a tin at passing shoppers

A Greek priest, tall as a column  
Grey beard in a tangled fork  
Strides past windows of the nouveau chic  
Looking neither left nor right, black cassock flapping,  
Smelling of goats and incense

## 7. Beach Group

From evening to a sunset tribal gatherings dine  
Barefoot children toddle from lap to lap  
Like monkeys in a troop  
From grandma to uncle, father to cousin and back.

Greeks are expressive people  
Nuzzling snuggling squeezing patting  
Stroking caressing petting  
Watching their brothers and sisters  
Bobbing like grapes round the bay  
Waving to one-winged butterflies,  
Wind surfing in-laws riding the dolphin waves

Cliffs rise around like gorgonzola cheese  
Like honeycombs of history

Beneath a battered Ford,  
A piebald dog is furiously scratching its balls  
Like a vendor clicking his worry beads for relief.

The waiter's hair is pulled back like a Sumo  
Chest hair prickles like cactus through his shirt  
He plumps across the sand in sandaled feet.

Five red toenails scratch a lover's thigh beneath a table  
An old man smiles as a girl squeezes his crotch  
Not her pater familias, evidently

Aegean beef-cake's plainly on the menu  
Rib-cage pleasantly covered, olive-skinned  
A bather ties back curls like luscious grapes  
Dives in the pool, his horn of plenty  
Curves in his wet, red trunks.

On the white tables under the blue sky  
Beer sweats in glasses.  
Men squat, bronzed frogs on scooters  
Helmet-less in sunshades

Children's smiles are melon slices  
Seeded by pearly teeth  
A shuffling beggar dressed in polka dots  
Thrusts posies at each table, mutters 'Please? '

After the sun sets,  
Moon drops saucers of light  
On an ink-black sea.  
Masts of boats at anchor  
Skewer the shadows

8. Byron was here

At Sounion, the old Aegean sea

Is sparkling polished turquoise, set in gold

The guide's monotone's like a buzz saw,  
Her screed played over and over  
On the grooved clefts of her tongue

Nearby's a small taverna, costs hiked high  
As the headland, roughly shaped like an axe

The tiles are terra cotta, dusty, cracked.  
The waiter in the noon ferocious sun  
Looks to have been dipped in olive oil  
Dripping from his brow, his arm, his chin

The tattered sun shade's faded, yellow ochre.  
Flies peruse the photocopied menu.

Above the list of lattes, cappuccinos,  
Wines and Greek dishes, above all that  
A verse in English. (Lord Byron was here) .

## 9. Dog-fight at the Acropolis

Sixty marble steps lead up to Athena's portal  
Gypsies, withered as walnuts dried in the sun  
Are easily waved away, like troublesome flies

Kings of the Hill, top dogs, have come and gone  
Persians, Romans, Goths, Byzantines, Franks  
Feudal Florentine Dukes and Turkish overlords

On every second step, a stray dog lies  
Nose buried in paws, a mongrel colony  
The city has them collared, strangers feed them  
Under the gnarled boughs of the parched olives

A dog-fight starts. An alarmed tourist trips  
The marble's sheer as glass, and treacherous.  
The dogs challenge and snarl, salivate and chase  
Until the pecking order's re-established



Like tourist guides, some act as canine escorts  
Padding friendly, alongside family groups

The leader of this pack of cosmopolitans  
Wrinkles his nose in a snarl, bares fearsome teeth  
Tails between their legs, his subjects submit.  
Democracy is not the beastly option.

#### 10. The Porch of the Caryatids: The Sisters

2,000 years and more, six sisters stood  
Hewn from the finest marble, Spartan maids  
Guarding the divine relics, olive-wood  
Athene, rising over cypress glades.  
Where great Poseidon's trident struck the well  
The temple serpent in his amber shades  
Knew them as fixed, each graceful sentinel  
They'd watch priestesses bringing honey cakes  
To feed it. Listen to the rhythmic swell  
Of the far sea that round Piraeus breaks  
And venerate the dead as virgins should  
Lit by the glow that lamp and incense makes

Through earthquakes, pestilence, the wrath of war  
Six sisters stood unflinching at their post  
Through centuries of Sun and Moon and Star  
As different masters changed from flesh to ghost  
Until the peaceful tenor of their home  
Was ravaged by a Lord who sought to boast  
He'd borne off Athen's finest. One alone  
Was carried off to Britain's stormy shore

Men swear they hear her grieving sisters moan  
Nightly, as to Athene they implore  
Her intercession that the gods afar  
Might bring her back, restore their sisterhood.

i

Hundreds of wild goats race beside a lake

Under an adder-path of precipices  
Where footfalls are precarious, speed's cathartic.

The road to Delphi passes ancient Thebes  
The tomb and bridal bed of wronged Antigone  
Her dead face gleams from every glass of wine

Almost, you hear the earth crack in the sun  
The bones of the past rattle.  
Between aisles of cypress trees.

Cotton sways, blood-red tomatoes burst  
With sweetness, melons swell in the dirt.  
Under a gnarled olive, white beehives  
Spill their buzzing, sonorous hoard.

A stork on a church's dome is a painter's blob  
On a palette of russets, ambers, ochres.  
Villages ply their trade of rugs and cheese  
Black, wrought-iron guards on shuttered windows  
Keep out the sun's intrusions

Old men in sunglasses, leg-veins of twisted vines  
Toil up village steps, straight from a sixties movie  
The waiter has yet to clear a table's debris:  
Grilled octopus, moussaka, salad, ouzo

In the shade, a baby tugs on a nursing mother's teat  
A boy like a young wolf strokes the pelt of his thighs  
Parnassus, the sacred hill, soars like a paeon  
Rising up from the hyacinth gulf of Corinth  
Eagles patrol the cliffs of Phaedriades

Sheltering in almond groves, obscured by  
Peach and fig, greenfinches burble and chirrup

Down the evil stairway to His grove  
An ancient tortoise crawls to visit Pan

I talk to the creature in Scots, it's Greek to him.  
He's standing chairy, wearing his Spartan shields

The sacred way is a flagstone walk through fire  
Under a sun that almost melts the marble  
Slippery white as a downhill Alpine ski-run

Above, an amphitheatre built of stone  
That overlooked the ancient Pythian Games.  
Apollo's temple dominates the mountain  
Dwarfing the tips of cypress minarets

The world has worn a shiny path to this door  
Once lined with statues, shrines and offerings  
Gold treasure houses, thronged with potentates  
Looted by Nero, close by the earth's navel.

Here squealing sheep and cattle reddened altars  
Their pulsing entrails searched by priests for omens,  
Here, spoke the drugged Sybil, high on her rock,  
In its mantle of ivy and sulphur.

Today, the oracle's silent.  
I sit and listen, waiting for a sign.  
The trees release the whirr and clack of cicadas  
Seven years buried under the dark soil,  
For one short summer, pouring out their song

## 12. Adios Amigo

People are kind to pets, you know,  
So when senility starts to show  
The mice run quicker, the paws slow down  
The fish in the dish meets a weary frown  
And the fiercest Tom's too tired to scratch  
Or rip the flowers from a neighbour's patch `  
Just hold him gently, he won't feel a thing, '  
Says the vet. 'It's quick as a wee bee sting.'

A prick, a sigh as he turned his head  
And the terror of garden and lawn was dead.  
How pleasant, I thought, to go like that!  
Like a glass of fizz before it's flat  
No pain, no trouble, no mess, no fuss

And no return on Departure's bus.

### 13. The Melancholy Shark

Oblivious to the grace notes of religion  
In the green chaotic fathoms of the deep  
The melancholy shark, is needless of love

In the enormity of his moronic grin  
Sleek and diabolic, he crunches mariners  
Bones strum his cold heart's rhythms  
He lacerates fish openly, too proud to hide.

He has no hatred of the sun, filtering down  
To his foggy, glassy kingdom

No book or mentor ever taught him abstinence  
He is a lost cause, indifferent to blame or applause

from a Rooftop Restaurant

I am the moon,  
Tossed in the air and hanging.  
Far below, the sleepless city  
Traffics in secrets, transactions, intimacies  
Too far off to decipher

White tea-lights flicker side-ways in the saucer  
The paper table-cloth raises its lacy wings  
Impatient to be off.

I am Icarus, atrophied, Dried like an old dead fly  
Heights appal me, the perspective of birds and angels  
I would rather be a frog  
Sinking into myself like a tired sofa

Behind me, I hear the crackle of friendly fire  
Between two lovers sucked into love's flame  
I am not myself up here, on the ledge of a cloud  
My cats' eyes narrow and burn

Two steps away from the edge of unbecoming

### 15. A Little Daub of Paint

Wife number one, Catherine of Aragon  
Was Henry's cross, a Catholic paragon  
Not to his taste, more rue than tarragon

Wife number two, was lusty Anne Boleyn  
A mistress first, a beauty schooled in sin  
She lost her head for love, poor Magdalene

Wife number three, Jane Seymour, bore a son  
Dying in child-bed, when the act was done  
From palace to a grave location.

Wife number four was difficult to find  
Europe was scoured. The bride must be refined  
But sensual. The King would not wed blind.

Holbein was sent to sketch the candidate  
The portrait seemed to frame the perfect mate  
All was concluded with the pomp of state

A portrait may be true, as a tongue talks  
But this one lied. Sly colours from the box  
Concealed that Anne was pitted by smallpox

The painter lived. The wife was quickly shed  
Cromwell, who'd brought her to the Tudor's bed  
Within six months, by Royal decree, was dead

### 16. St Kilda (Hirta)

A thousand feet of stormy rock and cliff  
A slice of land beyond the Hebrides  
A land of rain and mist where winds blow stiff  
At blunt Eirde houses. Zephyr, gale or breeze  
Pour round this lost Atlantis. Druid's bones,  
And Viking's rotted long-ship take their ease.

Norse-Gaels once clawed a living from these stones  
Caught fulmar, puffin, gannet, razorbill  
Kittiwake, petrel. Cattle gave them cheese  
They brewed their beer from nettle on the hill

St Kildan sheep, long fleeced, were fleet as goats  
The seabirds, rendered down would serve to fill  
Pillow and mattress. Off on fishing boats  
Cargos of tallow, mutton, quill and feather  
Medicine for rheumatism, sprains, sore throats

Inside their Cleit storehouses, built to weather  
The storms of winter, stores of meat and meal.  
Their own black houses battened down to tether  
Thatched roofs where folk and sheep dogs brought to heel  
Could huddle round the comfort of the fire  
Lay down the fowler's hook, the fishing creel.

A simple life of cliff and brae and byre.  
Over the centuries, how many fell  
Plucked from some dizzy crag's unholy spire?  
A superstitious people, rag and shell  
They'd lay in pagan ritual by some nook  
Beside the waters of a healing well.

They closed the pages of their island book  
Boarded the Harebell, sailed across the sea  
Leaving an open Bible in each home  
Drowned family dogs but turned their pet cats free  
Leaving their land to storm and sun and foam  
Now gannets rule this sea bird sanctuary.

## 17. Telling

I could tell you the truth  
I would have liked to pour out a Colossus  
To bridge the world's divides  
Fractured by loaves and fishes

But my tongue is forked like a snake

I am always in two minds  
One day I'll float away  
To a land of cherries and madrigals  
Like a Chinese juggler's plate,  
Rattling down to silence

They may personalise my gravestone with a cormorant  
A gypsy, a thorn will rise to meet me.

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Gales, Crows And Zoot Suits (18 Poems)

1. St Nicholas Kirk, Spring

The ivy's creepin up the wall  
Towards the clock. Old Father Time  
Already turns the snowdrops brown  
How short their flowering! How sublime  
In purity those sun frost days  
When Winter leaves & Spring steps in!  
St Nicholas in sober greys  
A sanctuary from city's din.  
Beneath the graves the quiet dead  
Make the transition like the flowers  
Who seem to pray with bended head  
Their seconds spilled by fleeing hours

2. Gale in a Northern City

The wind is rocking the bus, like a steel cradle  
Ownerless plastic bags, graze in the trees  
A raging tethered ribbon, causes commotion

Beech leaves rat-at-at-at on a postman's back  
He is folded over, facing towards the gale  
Like a bull, about to charge a grinning matador

A man in blue pyjamas stares into the empty  
Street from his council window. He is three  
Months late in his rent. He'll not go out today

A wheelie bin lies toppled on the road  
Refuse spills from its mouth like a sick drunk

A trampoline lies where the gale has flung it  
A child's toy, tossed aside for another plaything

Dark granite confronts the sheering wings of gulls  
The wind sighs from a giant wound in the sky  
Heavens' breathing runs off the accustomed scale  
Animals cower beneath the roots of houses.

Murderess



Sally was sturdy at school, with reddish hair,  
With a meditative stare, and freckles  
Nobody shuddered when she walked through a door

Her fingers were squat and nimble,  
Her handwriting, precise and bare of scrolls  
We shared the vista of roofs and sooty clouds  
Walked between classes to the sound of the period bell;  
Dreamt, like that Mr Right would canter boldly up  
On his snow-white horse, from the happy-ever-after

Our alma mater became an ancient wood  
Where beetles scuttle through memories.  
We were all quite bewildered, in our quiet lives  
Hearing that the dunce of the class in bravado  
Had murdered her faithless husband

Everything has the potential to reach the edge  
To come to the starless abyss, its grave conclusion  
Did she know, in her virgin girlhood  
She'd put her handsome prince in a bloody coffin?

Amo amas amat  
Well well, the age old story. Vintage husband  
Sniffs out younger model  
Even the humble daisy can crack cement  
Women deteriorate, but men mature  
Events blow over us like mournful shadows

Lawyers made the heartfelt apology; Crime of passion  
British justice held no truck with that

I think her skull, in which the brains grew bright  
Filled with a howl of grief against betrayal  
His life, her freedom, gone in a knife flash  
In all respects, the woman was perfectly normal  
In war time people are killed for lesser reasons

could have come from anywhere  
She could have come from, anywhere and nowhere  
Vienna, Ireland, England ran in her veins,

In Prague she slept in a squat,  
Sang gypsy in sleazy corners.

Men went mad for her straddlings, moanings, lickings  
Oh, she could pack them in, a full house every night  
Her jade-green eyes were deep as the cool Pacific  
But dead behind, like a drowned ship ten years down

Looked like she bathed in a golden tub of ass milk  
Skin like a peach, with a sex-life down and dirty  
Spoke like she'd been born to rolling lawns  
Playing at poor, gap year of roll-your-owns

Lived life at the edge, in Marrakech  
Chose junky lovers, relished the crazy buzz  
A dangerous woman, of the ancient line  
Delilah, Sheba, Mata Hari, Eve

Even streetlamps agreed the girl had grace  
A cougar who could eat men up and purr.

5. A Very Auspicious Birthday: for Sally Evans, poet & editor  
We are gathered here together  
To give thanks for the birth of this poet,  
Sally Evans, in the month of the Ram

This self-same day, was born on the birthday plate  
Alessandra Ambrosio, Brazilian model  
The very rice pudding of pouters  
Rembrandt, Chopin, Rita Hayworth,  
Boris Yeltsin, Mike Tyson, Billy Graham

All hail, this Sally,  
This gardener and beekeeper, hen-wife and poet  
This Pegasus amongst editors,  
Born in the year of the horse in the Chinese system  
Feet unbound, galloping out in style  
A high bred filly, with an independent streak  
Hard working, intelligent, popular

In the Zodiac, she is a ram

Three Cheers for the Stanza winner of Grand Slam!  
May her hens continue to lay their golden wonders  
And all her poems hatch out in perfect flight

ron Rocks

Running North from Machrihanish  
Camper vans and loaded cars  
Surfboards, wetsuits flippers snorkels  
Crabs in creels an fish in jars

Barefoot tousled water dabblers  
Bubble round the cauldron rocks  
Barnacled crustaceans scribblers  
Race from chasers without socks

Model

He holds a pose for a painter  
Hoping he'll fill his bowl  
Hurry up mister his eyes plead  
Look. I've scratched my drawing on the wall  
Any buyers for that?

8. I Think I'll be a Sailor

I think I'll be a sailor. A-pirating I'll go  
I'll have a monkey up on deck, wine barrels down below

I think I'll be a tailor. I'll be a wealthy man  
I'll dress the rich and famous from Paris to Milan

I think I'll be a soldier, with bullet bomb and gun  
I'll be a famous general, with medals, twenty-one

I think I'll be a tinker, I'll travel all the while  
I'll have a shiny motorhome and roam the world in style

Hope I won't be a beggar. Hope I won't be a thief  
I think I'll go and grow some more on beans and bully beef

9. Quiet Moment

So thin the curtains that the light shines through  
Wild flowers make a shabby table gay  
A shadow falls across the whitewashed wall

A stifled cough. No work begets no pay  
A clutch of weary fingers stitch a seam  
The evening passes quicker with a book  
Two sisters, locked in weary solitude  
Both hungry, but with little left to cook.

#### 10. Girl in a Punt

The punt, a wooden water lily, glides  
Along the Thames, an idyll green and wet  
As into Hadley Pool the vessel slides

And here the trailing willow briefly hides  
The love-forsaken Lady Henriette  
Fleeing from heartbreak, gossip, cruel jibes

She'd hoped to join the Season's summer brides  
The peak of her ambition, poor coquette  
Vain hope the very raucous crowd derides

She has fast growing life between her sides  
The seed that means she never can forget  
How trust betrayed, launched her on troubled tides

And this is how a springtime love duet  
Becomes a shame, a shudder, a regret

#### 11. My Uncle's Ladies

Cranking my clock back to Eden,  
I revisit a blink of life  
Colossal, cherished

I shared my childhood with my uncle's ladies  
Cows who walked from the byre  
Swaying fabulous hips

Together we lay in clover chewing the cud  
Learned to take life on in peaceful mouthfuls  
Munching in sunny meadows under the cornflower skies

ing Princes Street, Edinburgh  
Princes Street... The trundle of trams

Patter of toddlers... rickety strollers  
Judder of buses.... the traffic jams  
Down in the gardens cricket and bowlers

Lights flash off and lights flash on  
Dodge that motor and you'll be lost  
Bang it's the castle noon day gun  
Here's the pavement. Phew! We've crossed  
dropper  
Bohemian life's corrupt and vital in Marseilles where the sailors go  
Women sell themselves for a trifle. Trade sails in where the breezes blow  
The scented bushes and jasmines flower. Shady pleasures are out on show  
A bored Madame from her fusty bower, eavesdrops on a negotiation  
Fashion's sexy but facts are power. Kaleidoscope of tribes and nations  
Trawl the bars for a bit of skirt. Drink or the current drug sensation  
False façade of a jaded flirt. Here is danger, delight and dirt

#### Suits

We come to Britain from Jamaica man  
An Trinidad, West Indies labourers  
It's cold and dingy. We ain't got no plan  
We can't afford no fancy cars or furs

Lordy, we miss already swaying palms  
The smell of Mama Babba fryin yams  
Check out our zoot suits. See us flaunt our bling  
And when yo' British rain falls down, we sing

#### en Town

Camden Hill Road, a Sunday night  
Baptist Church on the corner of the street  
Pub, church pavement's where the people meet  
Sunset city in the warm half light  
Children playing before tea & bed  
A slice of the evening. A lemon curd bite  
Sunday sermon tells that Jesus bled  
To save us sinners from the fires of Hell  
Old folks listen now they're almost dead  
Granny in the wheelchair like a sucked out shell  
Mouth pursed in and her jaw sunk down  
60 years ago, a Cockney swell

Sunday, Sunday the week's pell mell  
Slows to a sidle with the Baptist bell.

-me-down Joe

Hand-me-down Joe rolls his trouser tops  
Over his belt. As the hemline drops  
From his second hand jacket and his stitched up shirt  
His knees are scabby and his wellingtons hurt  
He hasn't had a bath since the Lord knows when  
An his folk doss down in a squatters' den  
Hand me down Joe, no fixed abode  
Dirt for a pillow and his bed's the road

in the Frost

Leaves curl around their spines  
Like famine-hungry people,  
Hugging themselves for warmth

In the multi-storey woods  
Crows glide into their landing bays

Up in the sharp-edged air  
Planes drag strings of pearls  
Over the plate-glass heavens

18. As the Clock ticks  
Clouds like fraying damask, loosen and unravel.  
Amongst the skeletal beech trees,  
Scaffolding waits for its brick and concrete cladding

Under the boots of shoppers,  
Trampled down in the lust  
For desperate sales,  
Early stars drown in city mud

I am still acquiring knickknacks  
My family, soon, must toss  
In the skip of my out lived time

Three cormorants fish from a rock beneath the prison.  
In the tarry ripples of dusk  
Rats whiplash their tails at the river's edge

Two swans dream of their cygnet days  
Amongst the freezing tangle of the reeds

Tonight I fill with peace like a tired cat  
As the clock ticks into the new year

I am not tomorrow yet  
Aloneness is a comforting companion.

It does not mind that  
I am a limping fox  
A fiddle with no bow  
A high wire walker, wobbling  
A many-faced chameleon  
In the human jungle

I listen to the sand  
Hissing through the hourglass  
I am not tomorrow yet

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Gas Masks, Napalm, Weasles (26 Poems)

## Witch

Her knife, like a scarlet beak, clipped the apple's side  
Her restless dragon bared its teeth at the pot  
Its tongue spilled over its lips, a lick of flame  
On her shelf, a black egg imprisoned the wind.

Her blood boiled when they ordered ten barrels of tar.  
She laughed her head off, saw right through them  
When they promised mercy

Making it rain cats and dogs was a piece of cake  
When asked why she did it, she told them  
All flies have wings. A circle has no side

Her excuse was,  
If there were no nettles, violets would cover the lea

The day she died the moon turned inside out  
The sun turned a blind eye.  
Two salmon by Ballochbuie turned to stone

## Gas Mask

A gas mask lived in our cupboard  
Rubber, with huge bug eyes.  
Its arrival pre-dated mine,  
A female baby-boomer

It belonged with the aerial song  
Of bombs that gralloched my city  
The thin, high Sirens' whine

Its straps and buckle were tentacles  
A disenfranchised horror, clammy's a dead skylark  
Turning sour in the wet clay. It had out-stayed its welcome

At night, in post-war pyjamas



Watching the coal on the fire with its tigers' eyes  
I thought of the lungs of soldiers, frothy as candyfloss  
Their tongues like those of nightingales, impaled on spits.  
A present out of the blue from poisoned skies

and Matins

An aphid is using my finger as a footstool  
In the loch, a thumbnail trout is building bridges

Leaves fill with chirrups and cheeps  
Wing-whirrs part bounce-back twigs.

And this is what wise men wish for:  
Water, sunlight, trees  
The drone of bees on bluebells.  
Miracles such as these

#### 4. Out of the Orange Jungle: 1972

A June like any other in the village of Trang Bang  
A plane, low on the palms  
Dropping a sun that turned the jungle orange

Out of the napalm fireball ran Kim Phuc  
A human torch, wearing her skin as a shawl

The cameraman dropped his lens  
Stepped from his job, gave succour.

Countless operations down the years  
Saw Kim Phuc's shawl grow old,  
Her face, a lamp of peace.

Tourists

In Cambodia tourists visit the Killing Fields  
The main attraction...there, plough-shares raise skulls.  
Amerasian children of the dust, in uniform-black,

Tell of the mangroves, cleared by agent Orange.

At My Lai, drenched in blood by Charlie Company  
Storytellers stir the broth of the past  
Shaded by coffee plantations and black pepper trees  
Hawkers and soft-drink sellers peddle junk.  
The country's major selling point is war

Wind's Nest

I am more cuckoo than wren  
Could clear a nest in a moment  
Leaving it wicca-woven for the winds.

I am Brueghel's ploughman.  
Splash! It's not my worry  
When high-fliers take a tumble.  
What's the fall of Icarus to me?  
I place the ball of my foot in a firmer furrow.

I am Rousseau's sleeping gypsy  
Loving the stars, the moon, the warm sand  
Letting the dark dream-lion nuzzle my ear

I imagine a Chopin Prelude, hiking up the emotion  
As I step from the world's tent like Captain Oates  
A practised martyr.

I am Ted Hughes' pike, hanging alone in the water  
My old sides worn ribbons of battle honours  
My eyes two tin-tacks hammered into my head.

I

Because I was too slow he would not wait  
Because I wished to watch he disappeared  
Leapt from the pool of sun on the forest track  
Swallowed up by the dark crack of the dyke.

I only wanted to see behind his eyes

Into the little chamber of his mind  
Chips of light, they dulled, and clouded over

When I grew tired of waiting, he came back  
A flicker of fur, a lick on the grass like flame.

### My Father's Grave

I seldom visit my father  
Only at high summer.

It's twenty years since I laid the earth on him.  
' Haven't the years flown, ' I whisper to him.

Here, in the hill's cup,  
The song of thrush and blackbird  
Seep into the soil. A beetle  
Creeps from the undergrowth  
Is dazzled by the sun.

The sky is blue as speedwell  
Clumps of clover knit the lea together

A spider treads the rutted veins of my hands  
Trickling off towards the granite headstone

Mrs God has joined our family gathering  
See her beaming from that daisy's face!

ling

It lay on the side of the track  
Dropped by some predator  
From the dark wood, the fledgling  
The parent bird not witnessing its fall

It had happened  
When the mother was somewhere else  
Practising scales in a tree  
Or fetching dinner

Its beak was open in a silent scream  
Its small legs drawn up tight  
On the blue cave of its belly  
A wisp of nest-moss clinging to its claw

Deja-vu. Mother was peeling spuds  
When I toddled into the lane  
Climbed a neighbour's wall (A childhood Everest)  
Slipped astride the ravishing teeth of glass  
Studded along the top to keep out thieves.

I didn't recognise the screech was mine  
My river of screams ran dry as I went cobbling home,  
Torn knickers bleeding.

No questions asked. Not held.  
Adult stuff. Whispers in corners  
Of dark things waiting in lanes for girls alone  
Dropped into bed mid-day, small legs drawn up tight  
No soft stuffed bear could hug away the pain  
The bear's soft face unblinking as a Sphinx

-Portrait of a Young Man

Looking into the mirror he saw  
Pythagoras, Bob Dylan, Aristotle  
Applauding his intellectual performance  
But not the Arctic lorry pulling out.  
His body, the pathologist determined  
Was common-place as a stick of Brighton Rock  
Shot through with others' thoughts.

Letter Day

Mabel suicided off the pier,  
Too heavy to survive life's bouncy waves  
In fish boxes her past sailed out beyond her  
Stamped `MacDuff in letters branded red

## 12. Balquidder Glen

The stencil of a frog upon the tarmac  
Is etched in blood, a crimson ballerina  
The gate is new, the path beneath is ancient  
Sheep and folk have worn its flesh away

A wheeling buzzard lassoes beds of broom  
Its yellow eye burns on a dot of fur  
The heavens are catacombs  
For the glen's worm-eaten gods

Forget-me-nots form roads where pale feet patter  
A water-bull ploughs up Loch Voile in furrows  
Wind-tossed sheaves of spray, splay on the shore

A thistle, wearing purple Mohawk hair  
Its neck in studs like a young Goth's bulldog collar  
Dribbles a trail of spittle down its leaves  
Dandelions, those yellow spivs of summer  
Give it a wide berth.

A stream spends nickels and dimes from the bog's mint.  
A stilt-walking forest bares black-nippled trunks  
Advancing up the hill like a fifth column  
A wounded tree, a gaping hole in its side  
Is a patch-up job of lichen, cob-webs, wood-dust  
Till lightning calls to relieve it of its duty.

## 13 Last letter

These closing years have rushed apace, pell-mell  
They've had their share of roundabouts and swings  
This could be my last letter of farewell

But what to say? Who'd listen? What to tell?  
Too late to seek forgiveness for some things  
Better not done, old sand spilled from the shell.

To start with, youth delivered the hard sell

Ambition led me on, its kisses, stings,  
Higher I climbed and stumbling, harder fell  
I wed, I bred, I watched my belly swell  
I played the game of house and wedding rings  
I wombed four children, bore them, heard them yell

I closed my parents' eyes. The funeral bell  
Tolled also for close friends.  
Now, murmurings  
Of ghosts surround me, a lone pipistrelle

The ferry's waiting. Soon I must propel  
The oars to where the cob swan beats his wings  
This little life has been a bagatelle  
How weary turns the cosmic carousel!

#### 14. Maggie May

Being a nautical icon could be fishy  
A sexy, spongy girl of orifices  
'Sweetie' they said, 'Just keep on saying yes'.

She stared at the hangers, where her outfits waited  
Imagined being old...so very old  
She'd get to wear her hair like mouldy thatch.

For now, she wore her hairgrips in a vice  
Stood on one leg like a heron, acting coy  
Ate tarts with matelots between the sheets.  
She tightened her whalebone steys,  
Adopted the Siren look, with power dressing  
Slipped on her sealskin jacket, oyster pearls

She was the harbour every sailor dreamed of  
Rum and pepper, she had them on the rocks.

#### 15. Mafia Nicknames

Tony the Ant and Mr Fish, Big Tuna, Teflon Don  
With Sally Fruits and Charlie Moose, know something's going on

Mad Sam, Three Fingers, Joey Doves, Ice Pick, Milwaukee Phil  
The Falcon, Paint Glass, Handsome Jack, leave bullets in the till.

Sammy the Bull, the Turk, the Gent, Balloon Head, Trigger Mike  
If they walk in your local bar it's time to take a hike!

#### 16. The Cannibal's Wish-List

I'd have Lulu with an omelette,  
Spike Milligan on toast  
Pavarotti as a pizza, Johnny Prescott as a roast

I'd have Kate Moss with a twiglet,  
Michael Parkinson as tongue  
I'd have Gordon Ramsay pickled, stewed or rare and under- done

I'd have Paul McCartney in a pie,  
Prince Charles in a kebab  
I'd have Tony Blair with tripe, and have his missus dressed with crab

I might then poach Alec Salmond, or turn Jordan to a crumble  
Though the implants might be dicey and the pickings rather humble

I could saute Mr Paxton, turn Bush into potted head  
Hang Prince Philip till he ripens by the garters, in the shed

#### Little Word Tornado

Rotas, iotas, flotillas, Godzillas  
Ebony parakeets, Marley and locks  
Bitterns and vittles white thistles and mittens  
Foxes with barnacles over their socks

Sour-berry, fruit- pebble, mandible, chatter  
Chuzzlewit, peewit, and Derry-down dale  
Evils and weevils elliptical swivels  
Words shaken up in the swirl of a gale!

Amigo

Even after a fitful sleep  
The creased bed linen loses its lines in the wash  
Rises fresh to the wind

The high tide of the matter wasn't his dying  
Rather the remorseless way the sand  
Continued to cover the shore  
Washing his human steps away like salt

ished House

Let to rot, the chimney pealed with gulls  
Window frames became a fringe of ferns  
The ceiling opened to receive the sky

Devout mice genuflected in the wainscot  
The demolition squad came in like a cleaver  
Chopped it up, like a pepper on a plate

A blue chair faced the sky on the second storey  
In the basement, boots kicked masonry into touch

In the skip, the freezer mourned its lack of ice  
Dust and dead flies littered the mantelpiece  
First, the cleansing, then re-written space

iae

Between two breaths,  
Marmalade cat, an eye-feast crosses the lawn.

A fly is rubbing its front legs clean of flower  
In the cupped rose, clumps of tea-leaf beetles scatter

The cherry tree is one long arm of bracelets  
Nettle sharpens her teeth on the sun's whetstone



the Wicked -Fairy Mother Never Said

Welcome, little stranger.  
I spun your flesh from my blood  
For nine months, you rocked  
In my cradle of flesh

What a beauty you are little doll-girl!  
I shall cradle your every cry  
My milk is yours for the taking  
Warm as the love you'll have in plentiful measure

Vanishing Woman

The self, like a tent, was always pegging her down,  
Trying to fill her up with views and reasons  
So one day she just dissolved,  
Became nothing but light and air  
A glitter of mica, an atom of delight  
A fleck of spray in the mids of the cosmic ocean

-Scape No 9

A wave, like a green boy, races along the shore  
Herrings gulls howl their heads off, white sea-wolves

Under the green rip tide, a lace snags rock  
A red crab lifts the tiara of its eyes

On the prom, chained bikes are tethered in the cold  
A lighthouse turns its glass eye to the horizon  
The Ferris wheel creaks round like an ancient windmill

ock Holmes's little unsolved Mysteries

Mrs Lamb at number 87  
Owns a Bavarian ottoman, impact resistant

Mr Bruce's left trainer is always missing a tongue

His Irish partner wears her slippers out

There's no right turn, the road is always up  
Mrs Brown keeps a flick knife underneath the mat

Eddy is lathering his chin. His towels are monogrammed.  
There are more children here, than you'll see on Exmoor  
Lives on a short leash, wearing out the lawns

Up and down the worn steps they tramp  
To Bingo, tanning shops... for biscuits, perms  
For nasal rings and head shaves, trips to Spain  
And all the garden gnomes in pokey hats  
Roll up their eyes, pretend to fish for carp

tion Critical

Sometimes I'm here  
Sometimes I'm not  
No plant  
No earth  
No seed  
No pot.

y

The fall guy, the feathery litmus paper  
The miners' canary mistook need for love  
As many do.

Sometimes it dreamed of tropical flowers and creepers  
Not knowing the sooty streets above were ice  
Not knowing that black crows waited  
To rip the song from its throat

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Hospitals, Otters, Tramlines: (24poems)

-Hourly Observation, Casualty Dept

This is the waiting room for wounds  
A joiner's rip- sawed hand  
A golfer with his heartbeat in his mouth  
A knitter who's dropped her stitches

A child wails like a whistling kettle  
Boiling with weariness  
A drunk wallops a vending machine  
That refuses to vend  
Latex gloves, like flowering hanging gardens  
Drop their pastel fingers from a box

The central heating hums its little tune  
Doors and bloodied patients show hard knocks  
An old man's mouth is a line  
Red as a scar. He is slumped back  
Watching long seconds  
Crawl round the moon faced clock

Flip flop, the nurses' shoes  
Are going somewhere.  
Lucky shoes, their destiny's decided.

## 2.A Stair of Porcelain Roses

I am shaking the living daylights out of a dream.  
In it, there was a stair of porcelain roses, sharp cupped petals  
I knew I'd have to ascend  
Thorny china treads of leaf and cream

No shadow filled the briars.  
The slab of sun framed by the bedroom window  
The checkpoint, where real roses filled with dew

Incremental Poem

She slept with men she barely knew  
Gay moth men chased. They often caught her  
Strangely, she always looked brand new  
An Embro girl. A sixties daughter

She slept with men she barely knew  
Shepherding them, lambs to the slaughter  
Her increment of conquests grew  
I thought some satyr must have taught her

She slept with men she barely knew  
A siren, when they thought they'd got her  
Their pledge of love she would eschew  
The more she spurned, the more they sought her

She slept with men she barely knew  
My frowning church said hot and hotter  
Would be the hell flames she'd go to  
Free spirit. No-one bound nor bought her

She slept with men she barely knew  
The Angel with the inky jotter  
Totting up sins as Angels do  
Barely had time to change his blotter

She slept with men she barely knew  
Fashioned by some licentious potter  
Yet she was fresh as April dew  
Graceful's an evening star on water

She slept with men she barely knew  
Met Dan, who said he'd always love her  
How he would beat her! Black and blue  
Pure evil, a psychotic rotter

the Ethnic Cleansing of Vermin in the Humane Buddhist manner

I am taking the mouse for a walk  
Where Summer is painting the woods,  
His squirrel brush, loaded with leaves and shadows.

Like Captain Oats, the mouse will not return.  
A postcard may arrive from a far country  
'I never liked my husband', it will say  
'I do, however miss the carrot cake.'

y Easel

I sat at the donkey easel. The class, a Celtic torc  
Awaiting the model's coming.  
He shuffled in, peeled off his greasy coat  
Tied with a rope. Stripped to a g-string  
Grey's the city road.

A human toad, he slumped into his pose.  
His bulbous nose, seed bed of warts and scratches.  
He stank of mouldy bread, dried pee and ditches.

Three days' stubble darkened his hedgehog chin.  
His eyes were lead, brain dead from drinking Brasso  
To please the student boys.  
They'd pay to see how far one life can sink.

I pencilled in his nails of horn and grime  
The pitted grooves at his shoulder, a rusty hanger  
Creased skin that hung in folds.

His life poured onto the page through his charcoal face  
I sat at the donkey easel, a young creator  
Sketching a life the model had lived to the lees

6. Jaipur

Jellied, a dog's dead eye assembles flies  
A monkey troupe hop-skips along a wall

It's noon. Strange fruit, a basket lid conceals  
Predatory cobras by a market stall

Under the trees, red dust mells into mud

Rain thunders down a hard Hebraic flood

by the Grey North Sea

For one whole week I walked out blind in beauty  
In a far town, in a country over the tides  
Like a woman who can't see her lover  
For looking at everyone else's

Forgetting my own city, lying by the sea  
Tide washin his lovely hair, birds in his eyes.

Snap

The Municipal crematorium incinerates the unfestive dead  
Trees flap the leafless semaphore of February  
Frost bitten gulls make heavy weather of flight  
Hills have a white cleavage. Birds on the wire are black  
Not bobbing, a sparrow coddles a cold perch.

From last year's picnic season, six empty beer tins  
Lie like chopped tin logs beside a fir.

An old man layered in clothes like an onion  
Shuffles home from the shops  
Stockpiling goods which may quite well outlive him

Piano

The piano sat in the best room in the house.  
'It's not yours, ' my mother said.  
'I bought it for your brother'.  
She polished it like a shrine.

He moved away, never returned.  
The piano gathered dust.  
My mother grew old.

Bloody Piano

Bloody Piano  
The metronome counted the drips  
That fell from her heart

ines

My father marched fresh milk around the fridge  
Oldest was highest, newest, bottom shelf.

Tins kept his order in the spotless larder,  
Regimental rows of prunes and ham,  
Beans' garish heraldry, pink livery of spam.

Double lock on the door, like belt and braces polished every Friday.  
Ten times round each cheek his razor hummed,  
The household clocks all wound at 9pm.

Time wasting made him fume  
Clocks wouldn't dare.

He died the very day he'd changed his sheets  
And not one stain or mark left on the bedding  
His old, safe, rituals gone, their tender tramlines lost.

phone Sails off with Captain Bly

Tired of being unwed, a plum ripe for the bite  
She rolled into the bed of Pluto, anyman.

There was a wedding. Vows.  
A veil was lifted  
The usual sweaty honeymoon Olympics  
Children, . to wear his face and bear his name.  
Orgasms came and went. He'd watch TV  
She's walk out with the moon.

Drink, gambling, hate,  
The usual household things turned sour and stank  
The pomegranate flung behind the grate.

She mutineed, sailed off with Captain Bly  
Rigged up a clean sheet  
Set for the maiden freedoms of gold days.

Not till the mountebank cancer hugged him close  
Did she consider her dark Lord at all  
How she'd short changed him in those years of wedlock.  
I love you. Say it too  
Hed wrung the lie from her lips  
Of course I do.

She should have been the bread upon his table  
She should have been the sweet wine in his cup  
She should have lain by his side, a trembling rose  
She had been none of those  
Her mouldy kisses, dirt strewn on his bed□  
Such as the minister throws on a long coffin

There is a time when the ripe plum aches to fall  
He had walked underneath the fruit tree as it happened  
Had lifted his hand. Had caught her.  
That was all.

ng the Otter

I met an otter once, by invitation  
A school friend's family kept him in their city garden  
His local zoo enclosure, still unbuilt.

They gave him his Gaelic name  
He didn't answer it.  
His short term memory  
Skidded around the cage.

A rug was spread upon the summer lawn.  
We sat in our short white socks, holding triangular sandwiches.

You could eat the sun off the plates they were so clean,  
Everyone talking as if the otter was really  
The bearded girl at the fair  
Waiting for him to perform, to entertain



His mouth was a rasp of teeth  
His head an inky lightbulb.  
He lolloped up two red bricks into a chipped tin bath  
Water muddy as treacle, festering grass.  
Faced with the stagnant muck he just went bang  
An exploding crackerjack.

And everyone bored now,  
Saying professor so and so had recently got a chair  
And who composed that sonata  
Had you met the writer from Yale?  
A queer old buffer..  
Me, like the otter completely out of my depth

Mum mangled clothes each Monday rain or shine  
Trudged to the shops for mince  
Our sandwiches were square.

I crept to the otter's cage  
As they talked on of composers, and weird philosophers  
Whose names I couldn't catch.

He stopped careering round the horrid mesh  
That boxed him in.  
We had a private moment.  
He dreaming of lost horizons  
Me, dreading those to come.

Wake

Today, brother, I'll take a turn in your shoes  
Now that the suns we orbited, like two small raging planets  
Have ceased to burn.

First born and male, all the parental hopes were in your basket.  
The second birth of your manhood  
Didn't descend. Genes stuck in the dead-end slipway.

Much later, the surgeon hollowed from your back  
An incubus of teeth and flesh and hair.

A year you lay on the rack  
A human saltire, stretched on the curative bed  
An attempt to train a true from a twisted vine.

I did not hammer those nails into your hand  
Do you hear, do you understand?

I wasn't the limp that tipped you as you walked  
To your love each day, face shining,  
To the piano where you played out all your hurts.

Bad birth. Not mother's fault.  
But not mine either.

Self-exile meant you died before your time  
A seedless, twisted, bitter bush of thorns  
I found I could not water with my tears  
This is as close to keening as it gets.

Shot

Snap shot of a former army soldier  
Born in Cam-Ranh, South Vietnam  
Resident and voter of New Deer

White shirt, white teeth, black hair  
Smile like an easy chair  
When did he decide to be a Scot?  
The snap shot doesn't state.  
What's his Achilles spot?  
Does he still dream in Vietnamese, or not?

ors

Once in a blue moon  
The china came out of the press,  
Like a jack in the box going boo.

You didn't quite like it.

You knew that something was up  
There was a definite smell of visitors in the air...

Linoleum polish, brasso, bleach, the works.  
The table's legs were extended.  
They always creaked

After the laying on of the leather square  
(Bare linen would have gone against the grain)  
Baking commenced,  
Fairy cakes, so light they levitated.  
The apostle spoons beamed in their heavenly saucers.  
The clock chimed in its tuppenceworth, unasked.

'They're late, ' my father muttered, ominous.  
The welcome was like joining up the dots  
Politely filling in the 'how d'you do's? '

A shoal of fish paste sandwiches  
Followed weak tea down the collective throat.

Whipping the plates away after they'd left,  
The dog allowed back in to scratch and fart,  
Still in her Sunday voice my mother said  
'Once in a while it's nice to entertain.'

The clock ticked faster, like a frightened heart.

nsibility

An ox brought young to labour  
The yoke of my father's workload never lightened,  
The bright one, the one with brains.

His father, drunk in a ditch,  
Whisky-soused might sing like a lark all summer  
Knowing his quick, dark son would hold the reins  
Would guide the mule to market  
Would milk the red-haired cow

Running late to learn his ABCs.

Class photographs show furrows on his brow

Ten years old and trained to follow the plough  
To pull his weight, save leather,  
Would do for his younger brother.  
He carried them tied to his neck like a milkmaid's pails.  
Grew calluses till others filled his shoes  
Cobbled together with poverty and nails.

Other kids had fun.  
And he could have it too,  
If he carried the coal;  
If he swept the byre with the broken handled broom  
If he faced his father's rage and hid the bottle  
Too tired to lie awake and count the stars

He rocked the cradle, like the Holy Trinity  
Father, Son and Spirit, all in one.

He drove at life full throttle all his days  
Head of the home where I made daisy chains.  
Death wiped his cross-lined forehead smooth as glass  
Like a young colt, released to feel the grass.

## 17. Darning Day

The tail shouldn't wag the dog  
The darn must never upstage the cuff or jacket  
Make do and mend  
The repair must blend with the tear

Every Friday morning, after she'd twisted the papers,  
Lit the consumptive fire,  
Grandmother lifted the lid of her wicker basket  
Wool lay sleeping like a cobra's nest.

She'd take a sock on her knee, one heel clean gone  
Usually grey, the colour of the road  
She'd build a bridge, keeping the perfect tension  
Darn the damage, neatly span the gap  
You'd never know there'd been a hole at all.

After her funeral, we fought and spat like weasels in a sack.  
The family mortar groaned. Its hue was black.  
We'd lost the art of mending broken bridges.  
The cobras hissed inside the wicker basket  
We lacked her skill to cover up the crack.

rection

At Cock Crow when the Wife of Usher's Well  
Climbs from the crypt with Sir Winston Churchill  
Puffing on his cigar

When Lady Di and a butcher's dog from Troon  
Walk the grave cat-walk  
They'll need a marquee as large as the Milky Way  
To cater for all those folk on Judgement Day

Truckloads of soldiers from Ypres and Verdun  
(German and British) rattling into the sun  
From the boneyards over the channel  
Would they opt for angel's wings or military flannel?  
Time will stand on its head  
If a son aged sixty meets a father who died  
Just two years wed...

If my dust should suddenly sprout new skin and hair  
I'd rise aged ten, go looking for grandma's lair

But how'd I feel if granny was nineteen  
Proud and splendid's a medieval queen

And how'd it be if she didn't know me from Eve!  
How fortunate then, this poem's just make-believe!

selah's Plate

What would be on Methuselah's plate  
A pterodactyl stew?  
With a tippie of Irish dew?

On Sunday he'd have mammoth ribs  
And mermaid's nipples fried,  
A dodo's toes with a radish or two,  
Sliced unicorn cut and dried.

For when you're as old as Methuselah,  
A Brontosaurus egg  
To start the day is the perfect way  
To help you shake a leg!

my Way to the River

On my way to the river  
A black slug reached the peak of a fallen log  
A clump of dandelions bowed to Mecca

A neighbour spat on a cloth to clean his shoe  
A heron tried to chart the unchained current  
To popular acclaim, a rainbow formed  
by Two

Two by two they pass me by,  
Lovers walking in the park,  
The young, the old, the bold, the shy,  
Paired like the beasts in Noah's ark.

A singleton, I watch the swans,  
Mated, they swim the pond together.  
The air turns chill. I hug my coat,  
Old bones ill thole inclement weather.

My pen's been lover, husband, friend  
For years. Yet still the quill can quiver  
Watching the buds of courtship sprout  
On others' limbs beside the river

It's growing late. The stars come out.  
I turn, there's no-one there to tell  
But the soft wind that shakes the leaves,  
And fills with shivers each harebell.

Love's like the shimmer on the corn  
Of summer sunshine. It can burn.  
I, too, was once a newly wed.  
Now, it's one mug, one plate, one bed.

-Ward

Television's perched on a wall  
Like a silver gull on a white cliff  
Sitting on eggshells.

The clock is round's an orange  
It turns in its orbit over the vinyl flooring

Patients are tumbleweed  
Passing through this room  
That's warm as Spain  
The bed, like a giant cicada,  
Crouches down on its haunches  
Its sides tucked in,  
Ready to spring alert.

Machine and dials click  
Like cricket's legs

Soap hangs in the dispenser A pink drip at its nose.  
A patient lies in a web of tubes  
A headsquare hiding her baldness

Her terrible enemy squats behind her eyes  
His paws, singed with chemo

Hungry to learn, imagining a future,  
She bends over her books  
Her young face smooth's  
An apostle's spoon,  
Seriously smiling.

of Approaching a Loch

Walk quiet and alone  
Follow the music of the hedge.  
Approach with caution, as you would a bird  
With wounded wings,  
Huddling deeply into the healing nest of the hills.

It is not a pair of sheets,  
Tugging a plastic line on indifferent trees.

It is not a worn brush,  
Filling with sun in a doorway.

It is not a sweet white apple,  
Safe in its own skin.

It is liquid smoke  
That flows through your hand's crannies,  
A mulch of yesterdays.  
Fish and insects suck on its many nipples.  
Trout give birth to its ripples.  
Reeds poke through its skin,  
Green spokes from a broken wheel.

If you get too close,  
The loch will wrap you up  
A muddy treasure.

Quiver-winged robin wears his pulse on his sleeves,  
Plays peek-a-boo with leaves.  
He eyes me round, bounds off on match-stick legs  
Bounce bounce, his hopscotch pegs  
Stop at a worm he'll spear with his Trojan beak

The peony rose of his breast  
Is a song-store cupped in wings,  
A paeon in feathers.  
He is the red clock ticking  
Through Winter's cold white days.



Sheena Blackhall

# Of Houses, Churches, Glens (38 Poems)

in Affleck Street

The house like an eaglet sits in its stone eyrie  
A cloud on its head, a magpie in each ear.  
A brown door catches its breath,  
The harbour tang sneaks underneath  
Over the welcome mat that's hardly worn.

Cool slates walk down the roof in study order  
Like Japanese sardines  
The hedge is a thrush's playpen.  
Over the Zen tarmac, over the rat-run road  
A JCB is straining at its gears  
Wandering Willies pour through concrete cracks

A gull zips over a flyover.  
A yellow oil ship slithers from the dock  
A Virgin train is humming in its grooves.  
Everything's leaving, Desperate to be off

Machar's Gate, Evening, July

Confetti has drifted away from a bride's veil  
Tissue bells roost on tombstones  
Paper horseshoes gallop over grass.  
Cathedral cross is a crow perch.

Down in the worm arena,  
Rose petals tumble like aristocratic heads,  
Culled in a bloody coup.

A yew forms stalactites that creep into the clouds  
Razor wire protects religious glass  
From smash and plunder.  
Daisies close their doors,  
Invisible clocks wind down,  
Slackening jaws unhinge.

In woody quarters  
Sycamore roots in time will drive their point  
Straight through a flesher's eye.  
A dog rose periscope rises from the mould  
Sharpens its thorns on the air  
A scissor-grinder whetted by the rain.

Aberdeen

A yew tree slides its shadow over stones,  
Parishioners, like pews, have worn away.  
A granite skeleton gives birth to bones.  
Red leaves hang from knotty boughs, like rags.  
A Moslem family walks towards the park.  
Dead congregations fertilize the loam,

kshank Gardens, Winter

Cold pond's a puckered mouth of wrinkled ice  
Dead leaves are laminated to the grass  
The Machar Bell clangs through the tinny air  
A whining plane cuts circles in the sky

Dead leaves are laminated to the grass  
Snipped bare, black dripping trees are candy-twisted  
A whining plane cuts circles in the sky  
Five snowdrops tremble delicate and chilled

Stripped bare, black dripping trees are candy-twisted  
A sparrow scuds along on sturdy wings  
Five snowdrops tremble, delicate and chilled  
The snarl of traffic rushes like a sea

A sparrow scuds along on sturdy wings  
Cold pond's a puckered mouth of wrinkled ice  
The snarling traffic rushes like a sea  
The Machar bell clangs through the tinny air.

kshank Gardens, Summer

Crazy paving leads to a sunk Gethsemane.  
A lily swings its polished pendulum.  
Flowers are cutlery on a table of leprechaun green.

A poppy core, pungent as snuff  
Has petals of crepe paper, an old man's skin.  
A thrush is yodelling summer.

A bouncing tit tobaggans down a slope.  
Water lilies glow like butter lights.  
Deep in the pond, limp as liquorice, a black leech hangs,  
An accordion looking for music.

Tadpoles canoodle in the hatching soup,  
Newts swivel their tails like curved propellers.  
A tiny frog goes blip, misses the mark by a leg.  
Forget me nots, spectacularly blue,  
Wear collars of Maypole green.

The sign says 'Do not walk upon the grass.'  
The potting shed is dark with possibilities.

e by a Housing Scheme

No-hopers are throwing stones,  
Smack in the centre of the cold current.  
The sky is grey as slop.

A fly is caught in a web,  
A note stuck in the throat of a rotten harp.

Rust is slowly eating the spars of the bridge.  
The slimey wooden slats splinter and rot.  
Between their chinks, a slab of Autumn air  
Lies on the leaden lid of the scummy waves.

A jogger pants towards a mugger's haven.  
Behind a shed, boys picnic upon dope.  
The wind rattles the ribs of a plastic bag.

A guard in a yellow jacket prowls his kingdom,  
The throaty bark of his dog is fierce and raw.  
One by one, the city lights come on,  
Small Chinese lanterns wobbling on the water.

o Balgownie

The bridge is almost exactly as it was in Byron's day,  
when he terrified himself by thinking that  
Thomas the Rhymer's prophecy applied specifically to himself□

Six white feathers curl like question marks.  
A woman un-pegs washing, flaps a sheet.  
The river has its life, and she has hers.  
She puts to flight a bobbing duckling fleet.

The bridge span is a stony bishop's mitre,  
Over a troubled pool, as deep as doubt.  
That arch has borne the weight of centuries,  
Miller and wheelwright, jogger, roustabout.

Walkers inspect the livery of the town,  
The leopard, castle, motto on the plaque.  
Meanwhile the bridge stares resolutely down  
Into its drowned self shimmering and black.

Gulls break from parting continents of clouds,  
Breeze blears the slow, queer water's twisted face.  
Driftwood snags reeds that tug downstream like hair  
Grey scudding waves like fins of salmon, race.

A student's loud hullo rings through the air.  
A panting dog jigsaws towards a root.  
A trout-leap is a wobbly up-tossed coin,  
The crunch on sand is a lone walker's foot.

A leaf floats to the sucking, swaying sea.  
The bank's a twist of serpent, woody braids.  
A beetle stalls. An indecisive path.  
Juggernauts growl on distant carriageways.

Those incandescent moons in lamp-lit trees,

Spill creamy cargo through the darkening leaves.  
A heron finds a parking space to sit  
Neighbourhood watch...how close he's watching it! □  
□

## Building

Drawers of jaws and claws,  
A mummified mausoleum.  
A mortuary of owls, stuffed feathers, painted props.  
Skulls, like jewellery, lie in a glass case.  
Ivory skeleton hangs, a coral doll.

Butterflies are pinned down.  
Each polished cage, a stitch up of dissections  
Embryo fledglings float in formaldehyde  
Like fruit preserves.

Hat stands of birds of paradise do not sing.  
Hedgehog, dead as a foot scraper gathers dust.  
A soup of polyps, swim in vinegary limbo.

A sperm whale swings in its chains.  
A squirrel's seams are showing,  
Its paws like flattened spiders.

Frozen Polar bears are fashion mannequins,  
A winter haute couture of claw and cream.  
A deer is wearing a coconut's dry coat,

A throttled adder hangs from a thin noose.  
Only the tiger captivates, swashbuckling tiger  
Sleek as a chaise long, bearing its head like a rajah  
Only the tiger pads softly out like a thought,  
Like a snowflake settling into the nest of my mind.

## shop Fish

Fish in a tank.  
Furious gills  
Like millwheels rearrange water

## ng Scheme Telecommunications Mast

Three violets, a twisted Twix wrapper, four haggis-pudding dog-turds  
A seagull feather (singular, never in twos or fives)  
Lie fanned out like a sundial's metal hours  
From the giant mast.

The mast has a robot's intestines  
A succession of welded toast-racks of grates and drains  
Standing on four steel legs, it scrapes the sky  
It jags against the eyes, ringed by Auschwitz-wire  
(You almost expect the search-lights)  
Covered with barnacle-dishes.

Its neighbours are mainly tower blocks.  
A belch of smoke is rising like a pyre from somebody's car or garden  
A plane's so low you feel you could touch and squash it like a fly.

It is dusk, and the ice cream bird is calling  
Lean dogs chase stones across this urban waste.  
It's cold. I pull my jacket close, and shiver.

## Street on a Grey Day

Starlings lasso a sooty chimney stack  
Clouds smoulder in the ash-tray of the sky  
Leftovers wait in the street for seagull uplift.  
A car squats in a lane.

On ageing pads a mongrel hobbles by,  
Sniffs lamp posts of pee-gone-dry.  
Blossom, like froth from a beer mug overflows  
The cat on a windowsill's a yellow postcard  
Stella Artois' been flattened by a boot.

Pigeons decide, then undecide, to fly  
Phone wires swing with sparrows  
A window is a spider web of cracks

From an open window, someone's singing

Evening will cover the sight  
Of six dead flowers in a pot.

I am a child of the bog.  
I am sphagnum, yellow as jester's bells,  
I drink the dew from a thousand secret wells.

I am a child of the bog. I am the purple heath.  
I am the royal road with the black, black bog beneath.

I am a child of the bog. A sleepy, scaley rope.  
I am adder, the forked tongue that sleeps on the slope.

I am a child of the bog. I sting, I bite.  
I am the tiny midge, cloud dancer, sharp and bright.

I am a child of the bog, the gossamer dragonfly.  
My shimmering wings are mirrors that catch the sky.  
I am a child of the bog. I am the slithering newt.  
Here, is my alpha and omega. Here, I lay my fruit.

I am a child of the bog, the staring owl  
My hood of feathers frames me like a cowl.

I am a child of the bog, the ancient otter,  
Threading my fish-fuelled way through the land of water.

I am a child of the bog.  
I have a crown of thorns  
I am the stag.  
I flee from hunting horns.

I am a child of the bog. I soar, I sigh,  
I am the goose skimming the weeping sky.

I am a the mother of all. I am the yielding peat  
I am birthing bed, and tomb, where all bog-creatures meet.



### 13 Tyrebagger Earth House

Entering the earth, one chink in the pitch-black roof  
Lets sky stream through a musty shaft of light  
Lets trapped clouds dance in the den.

The eye in this dark socket blearily fills with stars.  
Creeping night is Lucifer, cast from his golden throne.  
Fox could lie here in his hot red coat  
His ribs like clarsach strings, thrumming a bloody tune.  
Here, he could rest, lulled by the rustling spruce, the hush-a-bye beech  
And watch fern wave its cockscomb crest at the den's mouth.

High in trees the raven rides the wind.  
The owl with her bowl-shaped face scoops up a mouse.  
From the great heraldic shield of wood and wind  
An oak steps out in livery of green.

### 14 Late Evening, Loch Voile

The mist has swallowed the forest like a shark  
Alders are elderly cailleachs,  
Hunched beneath a wicker creel of reeds  
A straying ewe bleats weakly

Clouds float overhead  
The sky is weeping  
Day's agendas drown.

### idder Blackie's perspective

Soft small rain sits lightly on my back  
Like glisten on an umbrella  
I am a cloud creature  
My world is wind and wet.

I swoop beneath the leafy see-saw beech.  
My toes are thin forked twigs  
That I bounce up from.  
My tiny retina's an eclipsed moon

I am familiar with stars as trees I shall not visit.

When I open my beak to pour the music out  
I fill an empty moment up with song  
The echo from the glen tells I'm alive.

Down by the path I hear the huge gate click  
I bolt for the sky's embrace  
Retreat into the air.  
Within its silence, its acceptance  
All that's me will shrink  
Into a dot.

e Room in a Glen

Meditators enter the holiness of silence  
Where the heart in its red nest  
Drums its no-sound lullaby  
Shushing the birds of worry  
Into rest.

Eyelids dropp like leaves  
Signs and visions ripple behind lashes.  
The room is still, is cool with quiet breathing  
Bliss shines in copper bowls  
Mist-thoughts rise,  
Dissolve and float away.

Two clogs, four boots, six sandals  
Sit at the shrine door, vessels filling with thrums  
Of morning's noise.  
Mountains bleat. Nettles squeak.  
Rhododendrons cheep.  
A green pool parps and hums.

ng, Dhanakosa, Balquidder

I walk in silence, parting long green grass  
A bird sings in a tree in the high wood  
The grass closes. My footsteps disappear.

Oak is a great cathedral, a moving ikon.

A bird sings in a tree in the high wood  
A cloud drifts like a swan across the sun.  
Oak is a great cathedral, a moving ikon  
In shadow, secret insects swarm and hum.

A cloud drifts like a swan across the sun.  
The wind smudges the glass of the still loch  
In shadow secret insects swarm and hum.  
A leaping trout hangs like a silver scythe.

The wind smudges the glass of the still loch  
I walk in silence, parting long green grass  
A leaping trout hangs like a silver scythe.  
The grass closes. My footsteps disappear.

Sidmouth Festival tune: The Lincolnshire Poacher

When I came down to Sidmouth town, it was a marathon  
I sat on a train, a bus, a plane and a ten mile traffic jam

Chorus: And what's to do on the Devon coast? I asked the folks about  
Oh go down the quay to watch the sea and the tide go in and out.

I sat me down on an English lawn some carolling for to hear  
Through the hullabaloo a Frisbee flew and I nearly lost an ear  
They sang a song of a famous ram with horns that reach the sky  
But an English lamb can fit in a pram so I knew that for a lie

Folk come in droves they're peculiar coves with beards and hairy legs  
They lie on the grass both lad and lass a-drainin cider kegs  
You can rattle your can or your old bodhran or whistle and stamp your clog But  
you'll need to carry a plastic bag if you exercise your dog

So here's to the Morris dancing men all wreathed in bells and smiles  
No need to ask where their venue is you'll hear them coming for miles  
Oh I'll go back to my Scottish kin and I'll take them by the hand  
On English ground no midge's found it is the Promised Land.

A fir-branch wigwam, smelling of pine and green,  
The den was a hideaway, a shadow wrap-around.  
Through chinks of childhood,  
I watched a hoodie crow  
Peck the eyes from a still-born lamb in the field.  
Its cold caw spelt out needs that were legitimate

## 20.E-mails in Purgatory

Good afternoon sir. Can I help you?  
Half an hour you've tried to call?  
I'm a typist not a robot.  
Just be glad you're through at all!

You were passed to Bob in Finance?  
No excuse for being gruff!  
You're the man who sorts the plumbing?  
Heavens! Now I've cut you off.

Karen's invoices are ruined?  
Why's it always ME they blame?  
Over every sender's name.

Mr Khan in Abu Dhabi lodged complaints with our HQ,  
When I faxed him Nigel's time sheets, destined for Rosheen in Crewe.

Where's I.T.? My screen is empty.  
This computer's crashed, quite gone.  
Thank you Kieren for observing that I'd never switched it on.

Why is Matthew so crestfallen? No one said his favourite mug  
Was the one I broke on Friday... Tell him he can use the jug.

No I don't shout down the pager.  
No I didn't deafen Joan.  
She's off sick because I stapled  
Her left finger to the phone.

Now the photocopier's grounded.

Clean it Phyllis ordered me.

Am I psychic? Who'd think Brillo ruined new technology?

Urgent e-mails all have vanished into files I never raised!

Logging off time. Halleluja.

Homeward bound, the Lord be praised

Lady of the Loch

The way to the loch is hidden by starts and stoppings,

By blink-bright sun.

By a blackbird's chirps and hoppings.

The lady of the loch is not for knowing,

Though her skirts are full and her petticoats are showing.

Don't be conned by the flash of a lacy frill,

For the heart of the lady's black...it's rot gut still.

The blood that runs in her veins is cut throat chill.

Aeons crumble to dust in her in her murky bed,

Though the moon's her pillow and stars shine round her head.

Big Round Moon

Last night the big round moon walked down to the loch

Carrying stars to drop into the dark nest of my heart.

Today in the rattle tin of the train's motion,

They tap against my ribs, eager to tumble out

Eager to shine once more before my eyes.

23. Time the File

Time wears you down to dust.

Ideals enter ancestral vaults.

Hope sips a double brandy, packs and flits.

One day a postcard will come, addressed to you from the past

In your own hand, and you won't even know it.

Time wears you down to dust.  
The winds of change will blow it.

gal Manoeuvres

After I was born.  
Conjugal manoeuvres ceased  
Dad should have fired blanks.

25. Marks and Spencers as an Insect Fetish

This morning during meditation  
A cabbage white butterfly flew in.

Not cuffed away, it settled on a shirt  
Sipped strange pollen, male deodorant  
Pretended to be a tiepin, then flew off.

26. Kidney Bean Child

Stars stare from hollow sockets.  
Moon wears a sad face,  
Like a woman I knew once,  
Far to the North of Kindness

In a withered time and place.  
When we finally parted,  
Frost sat where tears should have shone.

I had rolled from her womb like a kidney bean  
Gathering dust and grudges.  
Dry as an old bone.

Poem

In the lenses of the mind, thoughts are cloudy or refined  
Blurred or skewed, enlarged or small.

Microscopic. Ten feet tall!

Through its landscape, when disturbed,  
Prowling tigers can't be curbed.  
Sun drips blood and devils prate.  
Here, breeds sorrow. Here, breeds hate.  
Here, no hunger after fame,  
Wealth nor love nor high acclaim  
Brings the calm that wise men find.  
The priceless jewel. A quiet mind.

## 28. Stalker

Death, like a cat, is stalking one of our number.  
He flicks his tail, he crooks his yellow paws.  
His widening maw's where all hopes come asunder,  
Flesh turns to bone in the teeth of his grave jaws.

Some of his kills are sudden as a hanging,  
A trap door fall from this world to the next.  
Sometimes the door's ajar, he's softly tapping,  
His calling card is elegant mourning text.

Hiss puss, there's plenty pickings! Choose another!  
Choose hang-dog Jade, or dreary, prattling Finn!  
Choose snuffling John.  
Choose Jenny's half-wit brother Draw back your claws.  
Choose anyone but him.

ish-English

English bounds like a puppy  
Wearing a tartan collar

Monologue of the Burn

Drip slip dripple drapple  
Lit split lit split  
Splat stars trippy tars

Splat stars trippy tars  
Linn spin linn spin  
Liddleplump liddleplump  
Plupple plupple plupple  
Blub blub blub blub  
Whimble whumple whump whoop  
Whoosh

### 31. A Ferry of Poems has docked at Blaikie's Quay

Some poems travel steerage,  
Others are first class.  
Some halloo from the deck,  
Waving a red silk hanky.  
Some run up the mast,  
In strictly semaphore order.  
Some jump in the Duty Free  
Waving spotty knickers  
And red fridge magnets

I am the captain  
I encourage stowaways  
Slipping aboard at midnight  
I never closely study their credentials  
Grateful, when my table's full of guests,  
Taking my mind off storms,  
The attentions of sharks.

### 32. Seagulls

Beneath their creamy breasts,  
Seagulls tuck their legs like resting oars,  
Sky-high tea cosies, beaks split in eggy smiles.  
Fleets of them anchor on roofs  
Warming their feathery bums.  
Points of the compass  
They slip-stream air,  
Cliff skimmers, cloud swimmers, screechers,  
Waddlers on divers' flippers.



## ng Dog Haiku

Thought's a barking dog.  
Today my mind is tethered,  
Chasing its own tail.

## 34. Can of Worms

The can of worms held its secret for 50 years.  
One day the tin rusted,  
Out flew a May-fly brother wonderful as Troy.  
Who'd ever have thought  
We'd stewed in the same juice!

## 35. Portrait of Self as a Dead Bat.

Look at the bat on the sofa!  
Dead, by its own misogyny.  
Its claws are cut to the quick.

It used to plan an itinerary, then stay home,  
Make a few turns of the ceiling,  
Watch the stars through glass.

Now, its wings are packed like an old umbrella  
Left over from somebody's funeral.

Its tin tack eyes are wide,  
But sightless, sightless,  
An old bat there on the sofa,  
Still as a doll that nobody really wanted.

## 36. Bird in a Dark Room

No-one ever told it the hunter'd been dead for years.  
A fresh world turned on its axle,  
A new sun shone,

So it continued to flutter its wings  
Down behind a press in terrible darkness.  
No-one got close enough to clean its wounds,  
Too raw for tenderness, too sore for touch

And so the bird, Despair could not move on  
Out through the open door  
Up to the sky where swallows swooped in joy.

### 37. A Scottish Cashier's Fantasy

Oh Sikh with black moustaches, and turban gold and red,  
You'd make a lovely parcel to unwrap in some bed.

Not mine, of course. My boyfriend works with Lloyd's TSB,  
But- purely out of interest- what do you think of me?

I'm on the Atkins diet. I'm on the pill as well.  
My salary is rising. I'm solvent. Can you tell?

My hair is layered and tinted. Flight's called!  
I've got to go!  
Now, Sikh with black moustaches, we'll never ever know.

### 38. Bangkok Get-about

Buddhist monk in saffron robes and trainers  
Cycles past, his air-waves plugged into peace,  
Overtaken by a Bangkok tuk-tuk

Three speed trip:  
Turn right, turn left, turn over.

Elephant squashes a carry-out,  
Sways out behind a street of open shops  
Sucks pollution up like a vacuum  
Sashaying heavily into a dead end.

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Jersey, St Malo, Nazis And Wuhan(22 Poems)

I Chest

The bird on her maiden flight  
Took a little light reading with her  
Daphne Du Maurier's The Birds  
And a salutary tale of a Dodo

Leaving nothing to chance,  
She adjusted the straps on her safety helmet  
Defence against hawk or buzzard

Her sat-nav's in her genes  
She wouldn't know a map from a wish-bone

This bird's a book-worm  
(Thoreau to Baudelaire, Chaucer to Poe)  
Ever since she learned that books  
Were written by men with quills

She has the makings of a first class pilot  
Being a bird who won't change her feathers  
Because the weather is bad

Every library should have a resident cat  
(So sleek and so silent, so silky, so wise)  
Named Old Jellylorum or Coricopat,  
Or like Alice's Cheshire...a smile and two eyes.

All artists and writers should have as their perks  
The finest of coffee, Gold Blend, in a mug  
And a bagful of malted milk biscuits to munch  
As they laugh on the bus making others cry 'Ugh!  
You can tell she's creative, she speaks to thin air  
and the bees in her bonnet have hatched in her hair

By buildings, in gardens, near shopping parades  
Is that rustling paper? Or wind in the trees?  
The prose may be merry, or evil as spades

A serious reader keeps turning the leaves

Oh the freedom to step into literature's land!  
The only things needed, a book and your mind  
The words light the touch paper- find Samarkand  
Leave the everyday streets and their sorrows behind!

-Magnon

The past seen through the blurred lens of the future:  
Baby teeth from the Grotto del Cavallo in Italy,  
Oldest Cro-Magnon remains discovered in Europe,  
45,000 years old, an infant ancestor

Remains in the Cave of the Bones,  
Near the Iron Gates in Romania  
A bear den, where humans were prey

A skeleton, in a cave in Gower, South Wales,  
Red ochre nearby for anointing  
Laid by a mammoth skull and personal decorations

Male and female remains  
By a rock shelter at Les Eyzies, Dordogne  
Evidence of infection, a skull fracture

In life, straight limbed and tall,  
Tan-skinned and strong,  
These folk pierced shells,  
Used bones and teeth for jewelry  
Killed mammoths, bears and reindeer  
Hunted with spear and javelin  
Made huts of mammoth bones with furs and hides  
Wove baskets, knotted flax

14000 years after the paint had dried  
In Spanish Altamira, a girl  
Entered a cave with her Papa  
Bulls, bison, oxen flickered in the lamp  
Cast long shadows of lost aeons

The cramped, hunched artists painted with  
Pigments of ochre and manganese

Iron dug from the earth,  
Animal fat. Charcoal from the fire  
That lit their caves

Danger, death, dark and licking flames of fire  
At one with his world  
An artist-hunter pauses,  
Poised with paint in hand  
Catching the fleeting procession  
Of herds and stalkers.

You Spring  
Thank you Spring  
You came in the nick of time  
With your multiple spears of daffs  
Bearding the frozen hill

Thanks you daffs  
Your golden faces beaming and buttery  
Nodding like archangels  
Under April's tumbleweed clouds

Thank you magpie  
A waiter bringing a tray  
Of song notes, jingle jangling  
Over the scrubby garden grass

Thank you spring  
Your dewy eyes so bright  
Your breeze so up-and-downsy-tricksy  
See! Winter runs away like a mad March hare!

ry on Jersey  
The column of Russian prisoners came from the harbour –  
Shuffling, filthy, ashen grey,  
Fuddle, de-humanized.

Guards from the Organization Todt  
Prodded and shouted at them  
As if they'd been a herd of lumbering cattle.

About 6,000 came  
Housed in eleven camps, on the west of the island

They built sea walls, and other wartime works  
Were starved, beaten by shovels until they died

The Nazi guards were drawn from German prisons  
Scum of the earth, no morals, no compassion  
Bodies were often thrown into wet concrete.

Some slaves escaped, slept rough and stole their food  
Locals brought their hens into the kitchen  
Kept the milking goat beneath the stairs

Many Russians lie in Strangers' Cemetery  
Others, under the ground where they were killed.

Mary Sinclair: in memoriam  
June Mary Sinclair, shiny's a new pin  
Blue eyed, fair haired, single  
Had a right-side parting,  
A cotton print dress  
A nice-as-nine pence grin

And then she moved to Jersey  
Blonde half Jew with a Scots surname  
Became a waitress in that mild land  
Of cows, of fields, of paddocks and race courses  
Molested by a drunken German there,  
She slapped his face, committing the ultimate sin  
Of 'insulting the German Forces'

The punishment? Shipped off to Ravensbruck  
North of Berlin, for heavy labour, whippings  
Extermination through Work  
Medical experiments or enforced prostitution  
Her half-lived life soon brought to a conclusion

By 1943 June Mary Sinclair was dead  
Creating a free space in the Ravensbruck barracks of four to a bed  
And all because that lovely girlish smile

Turned one drunk Nazi's head

y

An American state. A pullover  
A lily, potato, a cow  
The swastika flew oer the island  
Where financiers and bankers live now

Its reefs and its pirates were famous  
'The Kingdom of Congers', though small  
Provided a Prince of Wales' mistress  
Lily Langtry, the toast of Pall Mall

Once smugglers, ship wreckers and pirates  
Posing puffins, green lizards and wine  
All thrived in the Gulf-Stream warm waters  
Where British and Francais combine

Devil's Hole, Bouley Bay, and the Spice House  
The Lavender Farm and Hamptonne  
The Moulin de Lecq, oysters, orchids  
Durrell's zoo and Le Rue des Platons

French Patisserie, the crapaud statue  
Elizabeth Castle, Bonne Nuit  
The Corbiere Lighthouse, war tunnels  
And the boisterous breeze from the sea

Blokarting, skydiving, abseiling  
Sea fishing, golf courses as well  
Kite boarding, windsurfing, coasteering  
Body boarding to catch the sea well

The beaches and bays are breathtaking  
Walter Raleigh was fond of this nook  
As he pirate, he saw its potential  
Until officials brought him to book

An American state. A pullover  
A lily, potato, a cow  
The swastika flew oer the island

Where financiers and bankers live now

sts

In plastic comfort shoes and panty liners  
Wagging their bingo wings, flashing their bling  
The tourists view third world through shades of gray

Creased, crumpled, balding, the faintest smell of rot  
Dried sweat and ennui oozes from every pore  
Splay footed spread bellied water suckers tax duckers  
Voyeurs with lists to tick  
Their money buys them a ring side seat to poverty

Soon they'll be on Mars, their spacesuits covered  
In stickers: I love Saturn'  
They cut through cultures like a knife through butter  
Loud as bursting bags thrill seekers, plane hoppers  
Short stoppers site bloggers beach snoggers  
Face bookers tale tweeters  
Cross them and duck the toys, flung from their prams  
Some of them spark off wars

Malo

At the gate of the great walled city,  
Carrousel Maluin, rises and falls in a circle  
Of children's yelps and screams of unbridled joy,  
Gaudy painted horses and carriages rear up  
Mechanically, to the hurdy gurdy music

Brittany's coat of Arms and motto  
Better Death than Stain  
Are set in the stone, along with an ermine,  
Symbolic of the Dukes of the ancient town.  
In the pretty harbour, a forest of masts  
Sway in the mild sea rhythms

A man in knee length khaki shorts  
En plein air pees in the shrubbery

A yapping Pomeranian and two poodles  
Have slipped the leash to attack a plastic ball



Stopped on the cobbles, a man with rouged cheeks  
And a straw hat garlanded with flowers,  
Is singing a peasant song, accompanied by his melodeon

A family of intrigued Spaniards, lick ice cream  
In the shade of a shop awning  
A magpie peers for crumbs from a French post box

Pirates festoon every nook and cranny  
Fridge magnet Long John Silvers,  
Plastic masks of Blackbeard  
Jolly Roger ashtrays, ready to waylay  
The stream of passing wallets

All Europe's here, a flight of jackdaws  
Pecking up the crepes, the sweets, the delights  
Of all that a Breton summer has to offer

Vagabond: Le Petit Train de Saint-Malo  
Up the streets the little train  
Choc-a-bloc must take the strain  
Of screeching toddlers, frazzled mums  
Of hefty tourists' spreading bums

Street pirates posing for a fee  
Are dressed as if for villainy  
Skull and crossbones, flags and toys  
Pistol sets for savage boys

Breton lace and Gallic charm  
Picture postcards, trinkets swarm  
Peeling Brits in sandals, socks  
Shedding Euros pass in flocks

Up the streets, the little train  
Toils through summer heat and rain  
Drink it in, c'est tres jolie!  
This sunny town of fantasy□

## 11. Fruits de Mer, St Malo

Fruits de mer, all plated, garnished  
Oysters, lobsters, pollock, crabs  
Scooped out, scoffed, have quickly vanished  
Mussels, out on fish shop slabs

Chablis, Laroche, Chardonnay  
Sauvignon Blanc, Pinet Noir  
Bordeaux Rouge, Champagne Rosé  
Wines from Rhine and Rhone and Loire

Chocolates, biscuits, sweets and spices  
Kids with drippy whippy ices  
Crêpes, a painted carousel  
Beneath the great cathedral bell

Castle with a grand donjon  
Kept the English out of reach  
Now, the French can't keep us out  
Brits have commandeered the beach!

Is on the Razzle  
A rhumba of rattlesnakes went to a club  
With a bevy of roebucks in tow  
A party of jays joined the shindig as well  
All seeking a drink and a show

On the stage pranced a marvel of unicorn mares  
A flange of baboons close behind  
A quiver of cobras, a bump-grind of toads  
The compere was a bear, most refined.

A lounge of green lizards sloped off to the pool  
With a business convention of ferrets  
A smack of pink jellyfish brought the cocktails  
Which the squirrels agreed, had its merits

A confusion of guinea fowl phoned for the police  
They complained they'd been hassled by vultures  
But a prickle of porcupines poo-pood these claims  
As merely a clash of two cultures

at

A meerkat, enjoying the sun  
Set off on a marathon run  
He forgot his sun cream, so he started to stream  
With sweat and turned brown as a bun

la  
A porky gorilla named Flo  
Was afflicted with dreadful BO  
Since she's sprayed with perfume  
The apes queue up to groom  
Her. She charges 10 mangoes a go

15. Phyllis Flamingo  
Phyllis Flamingo is terribly pink  
When a suitor comes courting, he gives her a wink  
It isn't her beak that attracts all the beaux  
It's the length of her legs from her tum to her toes

utan  
An orangutan, very hirsute  
Thought a short back and sides would be cute  
But Gertie, his mate, cried 'Oh Lord, what a state! '  
And promptly she gave him the boot

Hazel, a white haired gibbon  
Like to dress in a hat with a ribbon  
But she dribbles her food, which is terribly rude  
And really, should eat with a bib on

A snake who was feeling depressed  
Went to live in a zoo for a rest  
He opened each eye, as the folk wandered  
Then he spat on their toes for a jest

Aye-Aye  
I'm not a squirrel. I'm not a cat  
I am an Aye-Aye, I hang like a bat

A lemur-like being, I look like a clown  
Things seem so peculiar when I'm upside down

ial Day for Childhood  
Memorial Day for childhood  
Its griefs, its joys, its nightmares  
Learning guilt and jealousy and fear  
Mourning lost holidays  
The sacrifice of outgrown toys

The World was milk and honey  
With more than a dash of vinegar  
Terrible God was mother's invisible policeman  
No use to scream or run, he always saw  
Memorial Day for childhood  
The cortege marches past over the egg shells of memory  
Dead dolls wearing fixed smiles and glassy eyes.  
A nightmare swims a little above my head

day  
Birthday's a time to look in the mirror  
A voyeuristic, deer in headlights, gaze of reappraisal  
Introspection drags the lagging self towards its core.

Your eye alights on a succession of doors,  
Doorknob by open doorknob down the decades  
Each empty room beckons you to eternity.  
And you, yourself are the gatekeeper  
Slowly, ivy roots climb up from the grave

Do you have a familiar?  
Mine is a tiny homunculus  
With a face like an imp, or a gnome  
A self that never grew beyond a nut in my soul's nursery

Like the teeth and hair wombed in my brother's back  
A surgeon's knife cut those from their weird crib

Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei province,  
Soars where the Yangtze and Han rivers meet  
It's the Chicago of China,  
Older than Beijing, Xi'an, Nanjing.

## Home of the Yellow Crane Tower

At the foot of Tortoise Hill,  
Moon Lake is blossoming  
Cultural parkland, mesh of myth and future

### 'Three Towns of Wuhan'

Wuchang, Hankou, and Hanyang,  
Are linked by bridges, crossing the mighty Yangtze  
Flowing down from the high Tibetan glaciers  
Forging to Shanghai, and the China Sea

In summer, the city's a furnace  
Winter is cool and visited by snow  
In spring the city's vibrant with Mei blossoms  
Cherry, plum, and lotus flower in the sun

At East Lake, during autumn.  
Listen to the waves. Sit still. Drink tea  
At the Land of water and cloud

You want to feast your eyes on joy and colour?  
By day Jiqing Street doesn't seem unusual  
At night it clicks alive, a Chinese dragon  
A maze of street-side cafes, buskers busking  
Opera, stand-up comedy, electric!

In the old city in the Hankou district  
The night air's savoury with spicy shrimp balls  
Beef soups, duck necks, Wenchang fish and dumplings

Maybe you prefer opera, high culture?  
Visit the famed lute platform in Hanyang  
Here Yu Boya played over the grave of his friend  
Then smashed his lute in grief and desolation  
Nearby, today, men practice wushu,  
Chinese martial art, a leaping mantis

At the temple of tranquility, monks study the sutras  
In the temple precincts, under the drum and bell towers  
The Luohan Hall, the lovely lotus pond

Sakyamuni Buddha stands, carved block of jade  
A gift from Burma, near the lion statue  
Of Buddha in a previous existence

Wuhan's a hub for economy, trade, and finance,  
Optic-electronics and pharmaceuticals  
The manufacture of cars and steel manufacturing,  
Third in China for science and technology  
Here is the fastest train in all the world!

Sheena Blackhall

# Of John Lennon, Killing Fields, Turkey Etc (11 Poems)

## the Turkish Coast

At any time the wind may change,  
The Sea's low monotone become a wolfish roar.  
The ocean's a stockbroker shuffling shares on the beach  
Salt is at a premium, sands are slipping  
Driftwood and coral, the tig and tag of foam  
Turn everything over and over on the shore

The ocean's an elephant, forgetting nothing  
Ancient Kaunos, the Roman Empire slavers,  
Clip-curl'd Greeks worshipping Artemis,  
To-ing and fro-ing of jasmine, silver, gold  
Suleyman the Magnificent's warrior tide  
Nelson on his journey to the Nile  
Hollywood's African Queen, an aberration  
Bursting out of the reeds, an oily terrapin

What to salvage from this, the ancient tombs,  
The temples, studding the Turquoise Coast, like teeth? □  
The Dalyan river decants into the sea through beds of reeds  
Leaving marshes behind in breezy pools  
Where the wind's an Arab playboy racing through the rushes

Cotton fields and grasses echo aloud to the cry  
Of storks and herons heading for scrub-clad dunes  
Mosquitoes fizz and swarm, a malarial soup  
Dragonflies skim the fine white shelving sands  
Like flying brooches

Along the bay of Marmaris  
Yachts in their white marinas  
Rock like lullabies under the sickle sun.

## the Psychic Octopus

Who can foretell momentous times?  
For football teams with little fuss

Not Nostradamus, Mystic Meg,  
But Paul the Psychic Octopus

His tentacles, like pentacles  
Attune to vibes we cannot suss  
Will Harry ever rule the realm?  
Ask Paul, the Psychic Octopus

And yet, this oceanic blob  
For prestige, doesn't give a cuss  
'Just keep me off the menu, please'  
Says Paul, the Psychic Octopus

### 3. The Cost of Grief, Bengal

For wailing only...one rupee  
Wailing, rolling on the ground...five rupees  
Wailing, rolling on the ground  
And beating one's head...five rupees, two sikkas  
Wailing, beating one's breast  
Following the corpse to the pyre,  
Rolling on the ground there....six rupees  
Also, some dal, salt, oil  
A little rice  
And praises will be sung to all the kin

### 4. À la Byron

Four young Turks from Norway  
Share a hubba bubba pipe  
Hubble bubble moment  
Wee treat, but monster hype

Hand of god  
After the painting Rabbi with Cat: by Natalya Goncharova

Oh look! There's the hand of god  
Pointing, like a traffic sign from the sky



Not saving two Jews  
Fleeing a pogrom

Not stopping a pogrom  
Chasing two Jews

Just pointing, at the Rabbi holding the cat  
Maybe god thinks it's rude to interfere

Exquisite Corpse  
After the drawing, the Cadavre Exquis by André Breton

Leaves lie on the skull of the exquisite corpse  
Like the hair on a Grecian statue

A worm is slowly turning the brain to mulch  
The corpse is bearded  
Its moustache is the steam of an engine  
That roars from its dark throat

Its shoulder-blade's a sea-saw  
Holding a tilting balance

The anvil of its heart, no longer  
throbs to the pulse's rhythmic hammer

The dry funnel of its stomach  
Vanishes into a pair of grimy long johns

A testicle hangs by a thread  
Like a monocle dropped from an eye  
The corpse is losing its manhood  
Descending down the scrotum into the tomb

Killing Fields

Bones mark the killing fields. A land of Night  
Walk lightly here and do not turn away  
Pol Pot made every evil act seem right

Khmer Rouge brought a strange and wicked blight

Plunging their country into anarchy  
Bones mark the killing fields, a land of Night

Year Zero rang the death knell of the bright  
Townfolk, professionals, all led away  
Pol Pot made every evil act seem right

Children and women skewered in frantic flight  
'Depositees' mass murdered in the clay  
Bones mark the killing fields. A land of Night

Atrocities were honey to his sight  
Cambodian Hitler's warped insanity  
Pol Pot made every evil act seem right

With Brother No One's power at its height  
No use to beg, to plead, confess or pray  
Bones mark the killing fields. A land of Night  
Pol Pot made every evil act seem, right.

Lennon & Yoko Ono: The Final Picture

Inspired by the photograph by Annie Liebovitz, taken 5 hours before Lennon was  
shot by Mark Chapman

Dear John  
I am revisiting your double fantasy:  
That all you need is love  
That man can be free as a bird

Do you want to know a secret?  
You were living on borrowed time  
You should have known better  
Stepping out into the instant karma  
Of meeting a nowhere man who thought  
That happiness was a warm gun  
No time to run for your life

Rock n' Roll people set themselves up  
For scumbags, crippled inside, who fish for shadows  
Whose mind games link dead heroes with instant Fame

Before the season of glass in New York City  
You were walking on thin ice, you and  
Your wife, with her long black hair splayed out  
Like widow's weeds, her eyes inscrutable, an ocean child  
The Imperial blood of Japan in her see-through veins

Your woman, fully clothed in black and blue  
And you, bare as a new born  
Clamped to her side, happy as milk and honey  
Five hours away from Surprise Surprise,  
A meeting with Mr death.

Offering

Long fringed skirts of cones  
The green larick is lifting  
An offering to the sun

hts

Thoughts rise like bubbles  
Wearing rainbow reflections  
Each one burst by sleep

11. Scotland Lives: OK?

After The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living, An  
installation by Damien Hirst

Pickled in the formaldehyde of forever,  
Mary Queen of Scots continues to reign  
Along my synaptic clefts

Memory's a rowan tree of myths  
Neuro-transmitters cradle Flodden's angst  
The thistle, crushed and bleeding, a mighty army, crows meat.

The hemispheres of my mind  
Track Allt na Giubhsaich,  
A broken dyke, the cry of whaup and banshee

I am hard-wired to the history of a nation  
The prism of music, lighting its every crannie  
Its leafy glens flooding my mind's receptors

Time ferments the loch of lineage  
Deepens the self's connections

Each moment the soft rain of language  
Rises up from legend,  
The hynie-back, the eildritch, the un-deid

This charts my life, a backdropp of belonging  
The gritty roar of the city,  
The hush of the North Sea's incam

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Keening, Pierrepont, Magpies (29 Poems)

## 1. Keening

The invention of keening  
Is Irish, devised by Brigit  
The daughter of Dagda

For the sin of spying, her son,  
Ruadan NacBreas, was killed  
By the blacksmith Goibniu

Seeing her womb-seed speare  
The first keening ever in Ireland

All bean-sidhe thereafter  
Would keen, when mourning the dead  
Not just a wail, a lament  
As thrilling as pibroch, voiced  
For the absent soul  
(If the soul is present the Hounds of Hell may rend it)

No soul-respecting wake  
Is performed without a keening  
Professional grief, cathartic's an excised tumour

## epoint's Place

The hand that hooded the condemned,  
That adjusted the noose as deftly as knotting a tie  
Signed autographs on postcards of his pub  
To punters, over a slice of ploughman's pie.

My father, off on business, bagged this trophy.  
Pierrepont, the hangman, was affable, he said,  
Exuded bonhomie. His place was spotless.  
You could see your face in his boots.

Death's butler, he carried the poisoned chalice,  
Never spilled a drop. So skilled, he brought a lump

To the felon's throat. Who can gauge the roots  
Of such a man, seeded in human quicksand?

His autograph's survived for fifty years,  
Whereas postcards from Lossie or Butlin's  
Signed with love and kisses from Ian & Nan  
Were burned with the dripping  
Two days after reading

### 3. No.7

The collie nipping her hooves, No.7  
Followed the Milky Way to the upland byre.  
'Home Glen' sent the sheepdog barking back to her bowl  
In the warm house, her tenancy assured.

The herd, too,  
Knew its place.  
One by one each milker stepped  
Into the stall, the chain, up to the filled trough

Even their dung would feed the hungry fields.  
Sliced turnip, routine, straw, kept No 7 biddable.  
A born yielder she neither kicked nor bit  
Descendent of a Frisian Flemish line, even her hooves  
Would productively turn to glue, her sides to meat.

The six-pronged star on her brow was milky as Venus  
Her nose was a smooth stone ending up in the blue  
Wet pond of her constantly chewing mouth  
Crossed with Wastie's bull. Her urgent bridegroom  
Covered and served her fast one Sunday morning.  
Business-like, he gave her a cargo of calf.

At the birth she stood in the darkening stall and bellowed  
Fell to her knees, howled woman-like to the moon  
Her master's hand inside her, a puppeteer  
Making her great flanks shudder.

Down came a tangled slither.  
Jelly and splash and plop, bellied into the straw.

The farmer rubbed his precious new-born lively, whipping  
The phlegm from its mouth with wisps of straw.  
It fidgeted in its coat, a too-tight fit, all  
Knees and knubble and wobble.

After the labour, No 7's wages.  
Warm mash, a splash of whisky, a brisk shake down.  
An earned bonus. Two sucklings later, he pulled the calf away.

#### 4. Magpie

Out of a frosty sky  
Magpie drops  
Like mercury in a glass

#### Seven Chakras: Kundalini Rising

Two serpents sleep coiled up in their red roots  
Lam Lam the yogi chants. Slowly they stir  
Like weary houris climbing a steep stair  
Up to an orange lotus. Vam he says.

The rising serpents rest  
A crowd collects, like geckos to a glass  
To this hiatus in normality.  
His black mud-matted beard,  
Dribbles over the rib-cage of his chest  
The twisting vipers reach a yellow fire  
The belly of the place, as Ram he cries

The creatures travel on to airy green  
Yam rising upward from his hollow heart  
Causing the snakes to pleat like virgins' braids.

Untamed, two rutting pigs, hairy and black  
Topple the frangipani from a vender's cart  
Brown pipe in lap, he squats in the hot dust  
Hum he intones. The serpents writhe to reach  
Up to a higher zone of azure blue

His third eye turns to violet time. Near done,  
Om they've attained the thousand petalled crown  
Beyond, this Kundalini enters Aum  
The serpent power that makes a flame, a sun.

## 6. Body Language

While studying postural echo  
By a portrait composed by El Greco  
I drew myself tall as the man on the wall  
Then fell over. I'm human...no gecko

### Brigid's Day

On Brigid's Day,  
At the time of the ice moon, in the mud month,  
'Crazy He Calls Me' closed at the Walter Kerr Theatre,  
NYC Swiss males vetoed voting rights for woman.

On Brigid's Day,  
At the time of the ice moon, in the mud month,  
Chinese Empress Tzu-Hsi forbade  
The binding up of womens' feet.  
NY Giants and Chic White Sox  
Played exhibition basketball in Egypt

On Brigid's Day,  
At the time of the ice moon, in the mud month,  
Dmitri Shostakovitch was named professor  
At Leningrad's conservatory.  
A meteorite fell with a thump in Albuquerque.

On Brigid's Day,  
At the time o the ice moon, in the mud month  
Van Dikes broke the world butterfly record  
Bricklayers won the right to an 8 hour day  
A crocus spear- head knubbled through the dew.  
An earwig crawled from a Kildare corn dolly  
Over a book by Kafka in Padhraig's shed



On Brigid's day, as she, all- shining, walked  
Out from the cloutie tree behind the well  
Leaving the Cailleach twisting in its thorns.

ide

The Guy Fawkes' fire shrinks to a festive wick  
November. Jingle Bells ring in each store  
Yuletide arrives so slowly, goes so quick

Those envelopes to write, those stamps to stick  
For folks you seldom meet with anymore!  
Yuletide arrives so slowly goes so quick

Grandma will guzzle trifles till she's sick  
While mothers slave from Cheam to Bangalore  
Yuletide arrives so slowly, goes so quick

Why can't men watch one programme? Must they flick  
Through every channel, calling each a bore?  
Yuletide arrives so slowly, goes so quick

There's veg to peel, there's pudding spoons to lick  
The cat eyes up the turkey from the floor  
Yuletide arrives so slowly, goes so quick

It's here! The Man in Red climbs down the brick  
Chimney with goods and chattels by the score  
Children awake, thrilled by the ancient trick  
Adverts on TV mushroom fast and thick  
Yuletide arrives so quickly, goes so quick

#### 9. February on a Moor

See the sheep skull on the knoll  
Heather bells around it toll  
Lord look kindly on its soul  
Dance, the birds around it

Icicles drip in the bowl

Of a burn as black as coal  
Withered hazel, bent and droll  
Stands where snow has crowned it

Suddenly a whirring shoal  
Of birds fly up where walkers stroll  
Winter's stripped each nest, it stole  
Bird's shelter, to confound it

Blighted oak, like a Maypole  
Beside a grave, seems to cajole  
Spring, to arise and make it whole  
With growthy roots to ground it

Now is the season of the mole  
Sere Winter's blasts are ill to thole  
Each shivering hare, each shuddering vole  
Wraps tight its coat around it

#### 10. L'Image

Morning of grey skies on a wet slate roof  
Four seagulls squawk over a breakfast of crumb  
A sparrow sits on the fence, last link in the food-chain  
A magpie steals a chip from a wasted beggar

litmus-paper poem: in Praise of Andre Breton

Mandolin moments gralloch in the cheese press  
David is tumbling down from the nimbus of  
Fra Angelico's ear  
Was there ever a bramble better set in a ring for an  
Archbishop's mitre?

There was a young tiger called Kitty  
Whose jokes, though unheard, were quite witty  
She travelled first class, through no shortage of brass

But she emptied each train intercity

### 13. March of the Pylons

The pylons stride like giant metal men  
Bestriding acres, pointing to the stars  
Transmitting their electrical hosannas  
Their talk's a hiss, a babble of electrons  
More powerful than the ziggurat of Ur  
Their lay lines make electrical agendas  
A spider's web of slender humming cords  
Slung over deserts, prairies and savannahs

### 14. Climate Change

Skyscrapers play house to herring shoals  
A line of traffic's submerged in the bay  
Over a parking lot a black tide rolls

Live lobsters crawl on a drowned waiter's tray  
Cocktail glasses fill with melting ice  
Eels have eaten bare a take-away

Climate change becomes a loaded dice  
A gamble with the odds against a win  
For every asset squandered, there's a price

This city's citizens are Citroens  
Fathoms monitor its ghostly banks  
Inhabitants are stingrays and dolphins  
Cars fill the garage forecourt, rusting tanks  
No oil will fill again. They've done their worst  
Drowned I.D. cards, a muster-roll of blanks

### 15. Secrets

Half a pound of sugary sweet  
Secrets made for keeping  
Uncle comes to Melanie's room

When her mum is sleeping

Eyes like daisies, curls of gold  
Every night's a hell  
Everyone will know she is bad  
If she dares to tell

Melanie she shuts her eyes  
When the camera's watching  
Teddy's down beside the bed  
With the dirty washing  
Pray to sofa, whimper to stars  
Nobody is caring  
Still he threatens in her ears  
Secrets aren't for sharing.

Industrial Rehab Zone

Welcome to the Industrial Rehab zone  
Disabled robots, suffering metal fatigue  
Or the tremors of virtual meltdown  
Are here to be reprogrammed, reassembled

Workers will tighten their brass necks with a wrench  
The thoughts of robots are clock-tick  
Cog-clunk, cannon-crack  
Hollow's a twin-bore after the cloth's been in  
At night they dream of pistons,  
Mechanical mayhem. They are in the groove  
They have you in their sights.

17. Thirteen Uses for a Tortoise Shell

- 1.a template for an armadillo's igloo
- 2.a traffic calmer on a Bangkok highway
- 3.a bit part in a silent movie plot
- 4.a mould for a yeti's hand grenade
- 5.a muse for a turtle harbouring poetic proclivities
- 6.a mince pie cover pretending to be an ornament
- 7.a moving mine of potential combs and hair grips
- 8.a pet for an OAP in a high rise flat

- 9.a discus for training hound dogs to retrieve
- 10..a punch bowl for creme de menthe with parsley trimmings
- 11.a footbath for Oliver Cromwell's feet
- 12.a hedgehog pied a terre
- 13.a hard hat for a coconut collector.

### ents Touting their Wares

People are hung out to dry,  
In the mouths of back street gossips  
It may horrify passers-by to know  
That in tenements virgins are mounted, unmounted  
Nightly. Peepholes and boltholes  
Are witnesses to this. Tenants, go lightly.  
While an avalanche of starlings  
Fly off to lasso a cloud  
Tongues prattle and tut

The girl in the basement's a slut  
Mr O'Bryan's a paedo who drools in his sleep  
McGowan from west of the town  
Had abnormal relations with sheep

The hairline crack in the pavement  
Deepens where bluebottles buzz  
Meanwhile, the bald grow balder  
Debts grow horns and tails. Junk mail  
Sprouts like ivy along the hall  
Here's humanity, warts and all  
Huffing and bluffing and toiling at jobs  
Where for every ten who succeed  
There's fifty fail.

Here's Donovan, back from the bar  
He's not the man to encounter  
He'd break your body like bread,  
A bloody miracle. He'll make you pay  
Spitting out teeth like change.  
There's his fancy woman from two  
Doors down, crimson fingertips,  
Hips like hyacinth bulbs, speech

Like the news at ten. His wife's a druggie  
Cold turkey for tea again.  
He takes his women like some men  
Shove on shoes. Oh he's a brute all right  
But some girls court a bruise  
Rough wooing. Well, anyway  
They never tell. He's one third lover  
Two thirds sex and spite  
For many, this is the place  
For the final doch-an-dorris  
A back street waiting room  
For the heavenly chorus

tian

Sebastian is a cat of erudition  
He reads the Sunday papers, end to end  
He'll talk on rubric cubes and nuclear fission  
And stocks and shares. He sends cats round the bend  
'Sebastian!' they yowl 'You should instead  
Have thoughts of cream and kippers in your head!'

Sebastian gives a yawn and struts his stuff  
His Lord and master is an Oxford buff  
Both cat and man have horrid halitosis  
Sebastian, therefore's learning by osmosis

r & Son

His rights are few, this father with his son,  
He's half a couple that has shrunk to one  
He has a smaller car, a rented flat

One weekend out of three, into the park  
The boy steps eager, home before its dark  
Each moment crammed like clothing in a case  
In case it floods...no Noah, and no ark

They're just relieved they can still meet these two  
To talk as only dads and sons can do

Before the curfew ends, the tolling bell  
How bright the greeting, heavy the adieu

## 21. On Becoming a Train

I am sitting on my reserved seat  
I have evicted a surly boy from illegal occupancy  
I am in my 'in transit' mode,  
Neither a nor a that

A girl is seated beside me  
Her podgy fingers, layered in black chipped varnish  
Fish in her pocket, rise to slap on lippy.  
New York is stitched on her cap  
She is ticketed cargo.

We shoogle together, milk rattled in crates  
A drunk staggers, knocking her bag to the floor  
Its contents roll on display  
'All men are arseholes' she grates

Behind my eyes, zipping from left to right  
Is a black ribbon  
Gold digital letters slide across its face  
'Will passengers note, this train is potentially rowdy'

There. I have thought like a train  
I think I may be a train

Soon I may see a guard appear on my nose  
Running towards my brain, waving a red flag.

## 22. Last Kiss

After the birthing bed's red disarray  
The rack of labour, comes a breathing space  
The suckler at the nipple's come to stay  
Sackcloth or silk, however we display  
Our need (or lack of it) to garner grace  
The portals of the flesh are sensory

Before the body turns to coffin clay  
The parting spirit bends to kiss its face  
It is the sweetest touch, the Irish say.

### Black Sheep

Green tea leaves pouring streams of monsoon rain  
Into the brown cup of a valley in Ceylon  
Miles of steaming jungle, the God Ganesh,  
Pink as a baboon's bum, smiling at every corner

Frangipani, fruit bats, demon-scarers  
Cockerels found with their throats slit in the night  
The red gash splaying out the sticky feathers

Brown-legged toddy-tappers swarming up the palms  
Heavy-eyed from their sweaty marriage beds  
Bull elephants, mad in the rut  
Trampling huts to mulch, in the hot season

Months as a white stone, alone on his hill  
Surrounded by such fecundity, one day  
The planter went beyond the pale, put on  
A bright sarong. Borrowed a sleeping dictionary  
Learning the Braille of loving at her breasts  
Fathered two sons, Calvin and Kali  
Writhing in their Tamil-Scotto veins.

Past issue-date, he returned the book, dog-eared.  
Childless and bride less, he sailed off to his land of origin,  
To the fold of a Scots retirement, back to his dour kirk,  
Whose tight-kneed wives were chapters closed to him.  
Strange how feet return to the roads that cut them

### Heretic

Every Sunday morning, back stiff, straight laced, face shined  
We fed from a hellfire table, on sins and chidings dined  
My friend had a church of statues, candles, a choir of saints



Chants and incense and flowers, windows with rainbow paints

In a cupboard behind the kitchen I cobbled a makeshift store  
A shrine. My mother found it 'You'll be damned for evermore.  
God's mansions are for Protestants and nobody else' she said  
'He hates all papas and heathens. Think hard. You're a long time dead.'

I waved goodbye to the beadle, the elders, the wooden pew  
I joined the sea of acceptance. I became the lotus dew.  
Still when I look to heaven I half expect to see  
A bitter congregation, showering arrows at me

## 25. Bear at the Window

The bear presses at everyone's window  
Its wet muzzle, a threat to our safe house

One howl like Jericho could bring us down  
Will not stop that wild darkness breaking in

Seen or unseen,  
A bear is always there, on the far side of the glass  
In the whirling snow  
Its raw rules crossing continents and boundaries

## 26. Snap-shots Round Callander

Ragged robins lie with pee-the-beds in the ditch  
Through a field, a sandy road's a desert ribbon  
A rabbit scud's a shrapnel flash on a bank  
Parachuting thistledown moves with a tank's velocity  
Facing north, a crow squats on a street lamp  
A guard, wearing his Busby into the wind.

hiddler in June

Robin, perched on a Buddha carved in oak  
One so restless, one so still

A ewe like a walking table  
Overflowing with snow  
Its fringes balled and tasselled with its dung

The sky visiting hills  
Forgetting whether its home is land or air

Bee's trampoline a raspberry bush  
Half way from bounce to flight

Flowers set out their stalls of Hindi colours  
A honeybee takeaway, a fast food larder

Tiny flies are gossiping over the stamens  
Gossiping on the way from petal to leaf

g the planet

Grizzle's a lizard from Ghana  
With a lemony-sherboty tail  
She eats little children for breakfast  
Including the ones that are stale

Her greenhouse emissions are tiny  
Aside from the odd little fart  
Caused by bending to varnish her toenails  
Thereby squishing her bum to her heart

Four wheel drivers she readily savours  
With smokers and cyclists as well  
In fact she'll eat anything human  
For Grizzle's the lizard from hell

She doesn't need heating nor laundry  
Her four carbon footprints are pure  
When Grizzle descends on a city  
By morning, its folk are manure

Now science is currently trying  
To clone her, to nurture brigades  
Of Grizzles who'll prune populations

Save icebergs and green everglades

Beware of this lizard from Ghana  
Her scales are of recycled glass  
The planet composed her from plastic  
And steel, from a Dutch underpass

29. In the Costas

In the cosy Costas,  
Many-throated chars  
Count their hard-earned brass  
Into the posing pouches of Lotharios

In the cosy Costas  
Days lie like straw hats on a table  
Wanting to fill their heads  
With day-trippers, fat nippers  
Rip-offs, get-outs and set-ups

Old bodies lie on the beach  
Fallow, like white tallow candles  
Hoping the sun will suddenly  
Light their flame

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Krackow And Micro-Fictions (8 Poems)

## 1. Seven micro-fictions

His dead face pressed against hers  
Could have been snow  
A snail crawled on the wall  
Of their gutted home.

She misbehaved in public  
Took hostages from marriages  
Led men into stolen sunlit  
Miniature betrayals  
Counting the rings on the trees

The geography of culture was a con  
He spoke like a Cambridge don  
But entered Scotland  
Like a stone through treacle  
Intellect coated with years of  
Fleshing the fruits of friendship  
Digging back to his roots

Frost cracked like a pod  
The night was empty of everything but moon  
Poor ghosts, locked out from their own home  
And all for a single pomegranate

A speck of yellow pollen died on the page  
The hammock froze, mid-swing  
Behind the asylum

A blue horse with a massive head  
Whirled around in a circle  
Worms spilled from the mouth of a plastic bag  
Dreams, sluiced away  
From the head of the pregnant girl  
On the mortuary slab

Every woman carries a passport  
The sea urchins of her breasts

The oyster of her womb

2.1958

Mother twisted papers, lit the fire  
Klansmen rode out in Maxton, North Carolina.  
America launched a satellite into orbit.  
Eight footballers fell from the skies of Munich  
Crowds marched against the Atom Bomb in Britain  
Elvis Presley joined the US army  
Riots broke out in London's Notting Hill  
Every Friday our class sat a mock IQ test

The Cold War rumbled on.  
The Mau Mau rose.  
My father read 'The People'.  
Soot blew into the parlour.

Great Balls of Fire — Who's Sorry Now?  
It's Only Make Believe, claimed Conway Twitty.  
I passed the 11 plus. The street was told.  
My father pressed a fiver in my hand.  
Can I stop swotting now? I quizzed my mother.  
More books arrived. A uniform. A look.  
You'll have to speak in English, now, they warned.  
Why can't I go to Franny's school?  
I asked Franny was fun, was twelve but acted twenty.

Odd how success can leave a sour taste  
There's no free lunch. Only a treadmill creaking  
Just beyond the reach of dew and strawberries.

this Poem Came into Being

In a day of snow and sun, while my neighbour  
Put his back into shovelling a clear path  
These words welled up like blood from a cut  
And dropped fresh onto the page.

Outside, children sledged on new white hills

Words queued up from silence,  
From the mind's abyss  
And swung from a thought's birth cord  
Crying out to be heard

A wolf from a story long forgotten  
Padded quietly up and blinked his yellow eyes  
Then melted back into the brain's morass.

ing for Fish

My father swore I was a quarter fish.  
Never out of the burn all summer  
My feet became changeling flippers  
White in the pool's glass

I bent, hour after hour  
Watching clouds scud by in the waves' reflection  
Scooping minnows into a berry jar

Captured, they glowed in the sun,  
Commas of purloined gold  
Fleeter than hares on Glen Quoich  
Or the deer that spilled like wine  
From the Spital's sides.

□

A small, rapacious, Caesar,  
I bore them in triumph  
Back to the hot slab of the window sill

By morning, they were putrid  
A fleet of foundered boats  
All the bright colours faded.

r Rains

The passport into the housing scheme's one-way  
Excrement etches the pavement,  
Leeches into the ground.

Car tyres smoulder on burnt out stumps of waste-land  
A girl's mouth, studded with herpes,  
Draws on a spliff.

A church like an armoured tank  
Guards its collection box,  
Gathered for African needs.

A dead rat's head, lies on a nest of newsprint  
Nobody dies of hunger in this street

Airgun pellets control the local cats  
Road-kill carries folk off in stolen cars  
Or smack, with a knock-out punch  
They don't come round from

A girl with her skirts hitched up  
Takes her lover on, in a bus stop reeking of pee  
Outside, her bairn in its buggy  
Wails with snot-caked cheeks  
Sex is the interlude, between shopping and tea.

The CCTV cameras, conscience implants  
Preside, omnipotent  
In this land of knocked-off, knocked up  
Half-inched misery

Rottweillers dog the walks, with ball-sacks  
Fit to burst  
A thousand eyes with their lights fused  
Stare out from bleary panes  
Each heart as dark as soil  
Sodden by winter rains.

## 6. A Trip in Poland

We enter the transport; the seats are warm and soft  
We purr along the road in an upbeat gear

The small brick country houses hold no secrets  
Little black hens like nursery rhymes, pop out

From terracotta doorways, into sunshine

We pass a coal-cart hauled by two black horses  
Their toothless master's walnut-shrunk and dozy

Women with wooden rakes turn hay by hand  
A roadside shrine shows Mary's painted face  
Smiling out, an icon of bliss and mercy

A mile away from where Nazi ovens burned  
The yellow beehives could be mediaeval  
But for the bus-stop, covered in graffiti  
Defaced, perhaps by the stone-faced ancient woman  
Shriveled like a prune who sits and waits  
Impotent against the loss of beauty

Pigs like round black barrels, snuffle and grunt  
A goose reverses out from a rickety shed  
Not like the S.S., no, she widdle-waddles

A barebacked farmer, braces round his buttocks  
Pees majestically on a weeping willow  
His wife in a blue-flowered pinafore, pegs out clothes  
Behind tall cypress trees, of oats and wheat

Polish signs with letters half scored through  
Lean against peeling stucco. We're in town  
Heavy, oaken shutters, keep out spies  
Rotten ghetto tenements slowly crumble  
Crazy chimneys tilt like tiny Pisas  
A warren of alleys lead to a scholar's motto  
Plus Ratio Quam Vis: Reason Over Force  
Maximianus has the final word.

ds of Old Kracow

The Kracow bugler at the gates of dawn  
Died with a Tartar arrow in his throat

Invading Tartars sought to ravish nuns  
Cliffs opened up, like doors, to give asylum



An iron knife hangs from a Catholic tower  
Justice is sharp, the drunk tanks here fill quickly

A witch transformed a prince's train of knights  
To pigeons. Gold came raining from their wings

The cellars of the palaces are haunted  
The devil sits forever catching hen-wives

Lions loll beneath Kracow's town hall  
If virgins sit on them, they rise and roar

King Krak awoke a dragon in its cave  
A cobbler fed it sulphur stitched in sheepskin

The salt mines have 200 miles of tunnels  
With dwarves and gargoyles hewn in crystal grottos

Above St Catherine's church: her wheel of Death  
The symbol of her martyrdom, hangs grim.

Here, Oscar Schindler ran his factory  
The ghetto quarter held 20,000 Jews  
All shoe-horned into narrow streets of houses

At Remuh's cemetery, a wailing wall  
Is built from gravestones SS soldiers smashed  
(Those tombstones not recycled into roads.)

around Kracow

Under the sign of the spider,  
Kracow trams run late.  
All are on general re-routing  
Jump on, see where they'll take you!

It's sunny, and you are a tourist  
Half-drunk hedonists saunter across the square  
Off to ogle Franciscan monastery mummies

By the Square of the Fishponds, a cormorant shakes its wings  
A toddler's licking froth from a plastic dummy  
A pink straw please or else she's going to scream!

Under the Butcher's Gate, a hairy sportsman  
Knee in a stretchy bandage, the soles of his trainers  
Pumped high as his coconut muscles  
Flirts with the passing women...Give me a kiss.  
Where do you keep your dragons?

By the Inn of the Chicken's Foot  
Two lovers fondle. Her Japanese top-knot  
Lets down one sly strand.  
A girl in a cigarette kiosk chats to a mobile phone  
One-sided conversation heard at Minsk

A man with three front teeth  
(Old as sheep's cheese gone cracked)  
Holds forth to his tribe, surrounding him at table  
The youngest has legs like a sparrow with two grey socks.  
Their plates are piled with pork meat stuffed with prunes  
Cabbage, potato, bread, a lure for flies

Two streets from the Capmaker's Tower  
Three Brits in shorts and s  
Are stumped by the foreign menu  
Beetroot soup? Pig's trotters? This is a Polish thing?

Down by the River Wisla, a melancholy Slav  
Lifts his hand to his greasy pony-tail  
He is dreaming of herring in cream served up with onions,  
Before he visits the bank to seek a loan.

Under the sign of the Pear, a lugubrious Turk,  
His neck like an ancient tortoise  
Reads the Financial Times.  
His shoes are scuffed. His cup of coffee's empty.

A drunkard with an Irish wolfhound's beard Muttered:  
It's my liver. I don't care  
The clouds above are peaky white meringues  
Floating upon a sapphire sea of Vodka

A sweaty jogger, runs with bouncy breasts  
Along the busy Boulevard of Roses  
At the Professor's Steps, the Dragon's Den,  
Foreigners try out weird, Krakovian phrases  
Please may I fondle your buttocks?  
I'm having the heart attack. I think it's Tuesday.

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Marmalade, A Delhi Cow Etc (24 Poems)

## 1. Water of Life / Uisge Beatha

I am water in a glass  
I have my eye  
On the firmament of the ceiling  
The shadow land of the screen  
The world of betwixt and between

In my element, I have class.  
In one form or another  
I've been on this cranky planet  
Since its conception

I am the rainbow's sperm  
Seas' resurrection  
Opaque as fish scales  
Swallowed, I'm a disappearing treat  
Like the woman announcing  
A terrorist intervention  
As the bomb explodes at her feet

I'm water. My impact's Titanic  
Try cutting me out of your life  
I dare you. I double dare you.  
The result's Satanic

## 2. The Withering Prize of Laurels

At Delphi, where the Pythian Games  
Once rang to the shouts of victory  
Only the sun remains,  
And the bleached columns of stone  
Quiet sand where the quern of time grinds  
Challenger, winner, to bone

I touched the oracle's shrine in sun-baked Delphi,  
In the shade of laurel trees.  
Only a chorus of cricket voices spoke

I felt the wind from the feet of the dead in passing  
Rising, to take their ease,  
Needing no Sybil to foretell, soon, I'll be one of these

### 3. The Hi-Fi

Every evening, Danny, pissed as a newt  
Window open, his hi-fi giving it large  
To all the neighbours

Jo-Jo'd tell her husband  
'If you were half a man you'd set him straight'

No shrinking violet  
It was a blaring sunflower  
A dam of music bursting from its sides  
A dam-buster...a damned contraption  
Turning the cows' milk sour  
Giving the down-town cats  
The heeby-jeebies

After the flies built up on Danny's window  
After the police and the sanitary men with masks  
Only the old iron roof  
Only the old black chair  
High pressure Hi-fi finally disconnected

Only Mrs Baker, two doors down  
Missed the hi-fi's evening Doo-la-dilly-da  
Said it made her ironing chore go 'faster.

### Park

A greyhound guards the park.  
Air smells of muddy grass  
By the chute in the misty playground

In the day-shift, children feed the ducks  
Men in boiler suits unwrap their lunch

Two girls giggle at boys, walking a bandy pit-bull.  
Dossers doze, dreaming of cosy pubs

A match is struck. Two smoking mothers gossip.  
A jogger jogs, his face pitted with spots  
Knobbly as quartz, his legs are poker thin.

Skateboarders zoom down slopes  
Like Vikings on speed.

Ice-cream wobbles down cones,  
Dribbles into the cracks of crazy paving

In the night shift, in the moon hours  
When the snails slide down the walls  
On their eerie journeys  
Hoodies share booze or needles  
Teens enter the bushes  
Checking out unmarked boundaries

Up in the frosty heavens  
The Northern lights switch on their icy rainbow.

te

On the palette table there's a real apple  
Uneaten, a model, a focus,  
Thinking itself a symbol.

There's a jar with lemony water  
Holding dried honesty

Alizarin crimson seeps its blood  
Yellow ochre oozes autumn leaves  
Navy blue squirts out a small lagoon  
Where emerald green spurts up like fishy fins

Cadmium orange flares like Ulster marches  
Violet slides like a Royal negligee  
Burnt sienna smoulders like a kiln  
Ivory black, titanium white, are plotting

Making a B. movie, aiming for the Oscars

Date

It's a Blind Date. He's never seen the face  
But think's he'll view a quality of grace  
That transcends every difference of race  
Anticipation is a living Hell

He's dressed with care, the better for to brace  
Himself against this meeting in this place  
His cassock's a defensive carapace  
His every nerve becomes a jagged cell  
He's researched well. He will not court disgrace  
New cap, smart shoes. No wayward untied lace  
He's not some Pagan throwback out of Thrace  
This match was made in Heaven, he can tell.

A lamb stands at the door, without a trace  
Of fear. He rubs his eyes. Why in this space  
Should it appear? He knows he has to chase  
It off to cross this lovers' Carousel  
Into the church. A pause. A slower pace  
Beneath a Lord without a crown or mace  
A true blind date. No body to efface  
But that's the Nature of Life Spirituel

Cut

Old scars, old scabs, old storms  
How do you know when a tree has died  
Though its leaves seem green on the branch?

When the saw brings forth no resin  
Wet on the blade.  
A woman with hideous hurts  
Of the invisible kind  
Old scars, old scabs, old storms  
Looks at the skin on her forearm  
A peachy limb,

Quietly drawing a razor down her flesh.

A private act, not a spectator sport  
Blood drips from the unzipped skin  
She is alive although she feels no pain  
At all of the physical kind.

Calm, like a mighty vulture, has descended.  
An agony, that's confined and confined.

Fetishist

Ed snuggles down with a lassie from Leith  
And ...s her as often's he's able  
What's going on in Montgomery's head?  
He goes to bed with a table

Jo has relations with Susie from Cork  
Nigel makes whoopee with Mabel  
Montgomery gets no surprise from the stork  
He goes to bed with a table

Fred lusts after Julie, her hair turns him on  
It's luscious and silky and sable  
Montgomery loves a well-turned piece of oak  
He goes to bed with a table.

Adam and Eve they were at it like knives  
As you'll read of in many's the fable  
Montgomery's mistress, (a nice coffee-size)  
Was doomed...for her joints were unstable.

9.I'm Fine, how are you? (Psychiatric Ward)

The gummy shadows of the window pane  
Fall like cage bars upon the empty wall

The floor is undulating like a wave  
Cracked like an egg the sun makes its slow crawl  
Across the sky. 'I'm fine today. How're you?



Says the Queen Mother to a vacant chair  
Ophelia turns her back on the drug trolley  
Sings nursery rhymes to babies who're not there

Mary is shaking, manages to spill  
Her liquid cosh. Poor dear, she's very ill

Annie's a seal on a glacier. Jessie's a hoot  
Thelma was thumped by her man, the brute  
Shook all her senses up like a cocktail  
Betty's inside her shell, a weepy snail

`We're not so scary's people like to think'  
So says the shrink

Mirror mirror on the wall  
Who is the sanest of them all?

Outside the gates drug dealers slink like sharks  
Muggers and gangsters wait to pick them off  
Care in Community...it's sink or swim  
`I'm fine today.' Just pray that it's enough.

ck

Marie Antoinette adored its feathers  
Wore peacock plumes in her hair, roasted its flesh.  
It was a living landscape on her estates,  
Indian bird from the Himalayan heights.

Muslims thought it symbolized the Cosmos  
Standing guard at the very gates of Paradise,  
Proud bird of many wives, it watched them all  
With many eyes emblazoned on its tail

Hindus thought the bird looked like an angel,  
Sacred playfellow of blue-skinned Krishna  
Kept in Indian temples to eat the snakes

Sarasvati, goddess of poem and music,  
Rode a peacock round the firmament

Indra ruled the world from a peacock throne.

His charm is in the swish of his fanning tail  
Such beauty cursed with such an ugly call!  
Tone deaf. They say pride goes before a fall  
A screech like a stuck pig, a caterwaul

#### & Tradition

Traditional boys like paper planes  
Popping gulls' eggs into a sack  
Carrying mice beneath their shirts  
Running wolves in a hunting pack

Traditional girls like foxy clothes  
Wishing trees and a soft guitar  
Horses neighing beneath a tree  
A mermaid waving beneath a star

Traditional boys like catching fish  
Fixing an anchor to a dog  
Stoning a fleeing magpie's breast  
Mocking Timothy in a blog

Late in the night inventing myths  
Owls sit up. They're a breed apart  
Over King Neptune's watery world  
The lighthouse shines through the murky dark

#### Feet of Tiny Birds

Our civic trees are pretty but controlled  
Obey each health and safety law unrolled  
Their branches lopped to regulation height  
Lest, god forbid, they injure in the night  
Some six foot drunk who over-near them strolled

Although their green credentials are extolled  
All complements, like house of cards must fold  
If straying roots, like moles, should pavements blight

There are some truths each city must uphold  
Trees are green lungs more precious far than gold

Whose heart has never warmed to the sight  
Of leaves, like forest flags in tethered flight?  
Our sylvan heritage should not be sold

The feet of tiny birds have here patrolled  
The streets below. They've foraged `gainst the cold  
For twigs and leaves to bind their houses tight  
Leaf, wing and sun's what keeps our suburbs bright

Black-bird and song thrush, sparrows small and bold  
Robin and wren peck-pecking in the mould  
Beneath a roof of branches spilling light  
Birdsong and leaves make all the world seem right.

Old men

Six old men on a long park bench  
Two with nothing to do but think  
Tortoise necks and watery eyes  
Sixty years gone by in a blink

Six old men on a chilly day  
Two are feeding the pecking doves  
Stale bread sandwiches, piece-meal treats  
Hands vein-lumpy as knitted gloves

Six old men sit killing time  
Two read news for their racing tips  
Hooded eyes slide over the page  
There's no sound...but they move their lips

Six old men on a long park bench  
Here's where they come to pass the day  
Watching the world and his wife go by  
Age grips tight as a tourniquet

## Couple

Face to face like a pair of Irish setters  
The bones of their marriage between them  
Mr & Mrs O'Brian chew the fat

Mrs O'Brian's scrawny's a cat-walk scrag-end  
Scalloped shoulder blades and a washed out look  
Cheeks scrubbed raw and her expression, flat

Mr. O'Brian's lean and drip- nose lanky  
Hatching an ulcer, he's got egg on his face  
She's the door-knob. He's the old door mat

with Delhi Cow

Imagine a Delhi cow pretending to be graffiti  
Illegal dairies springing up over the city  
Owners letting their cattle fend for themselves.

There, cows are traffic stoppers, graze in the middle of lay-bys  
Gazing up at the cars with lustrous eyes  
Sacred beasts, no injury must harm them.  
Many are old – their udders, dry of milk.

This cow is still pretending to be graffiti.  
It does not want re-housed in a far compound  
Its horns are sharp, it has an angry look

Three hundred plastic bags lurk in its stomach  
The government will give it a ration of hay

Not being accustomed to grass, the cow's suspicious  
Does not believe some other place is greener  
Prefers its petrol fumes, its takeaways

Which is why this cow's pretending to be graffiti  
Hoping no-one will steal its bag of bones

lade Town

A blue and white zebra with orange eyes  
After a breakfast of hot mince pies  
Polished his hooves, shook himself down  
And trotted along to Marmalade town

Out of a jug, a dairymaid stepped  
How she pleaded and whined and wept  
'Oh blue and white zebra, please don't frown  
Let me come with you to Marmalade town.'

They hadn't gone far when out from the cheese J  
umped a Turk with horribly hairy knees  
Oh dairy maid, oh zebra so blue  
Please let me share the jaunt with you  
Along with my friends...they're terribly down  
There by the coffee pot, see... that clown  
With his harlequin friend, so sad, so flat  
Don't let him weep on the table mat

The dairymaid sighed and twiddled her thumbs  
Nothing was left on the plate but crumbs  
So off they galloped to Crumpet Land  
Where the Marmalade pot with its marmalade band  
Is waiting until the clock strikes three  
To welcome the world and his wife for tea

Byron

When Lady Gordon's son was eight  
He limped across the Castlegate  
Carrying schoolbag, chalk and slate  
He's sure to go a-roving

When Lady Gordon's son was ten  
His title came from dead kinsmen  
Lord Byron now, 'twas certain then  
That he would go a-roving

When Lady Gordon's son was grown  
Many's the wild seed he'd sown

Though London was this poet's own  
He longed to go a-roving

When Lady Gordon's son was dead  
All Greece put laurels on his head  
Tongue of an angel, feet of lead  
Grey death, it stopped his roving

Kirk

North of the Dee and the bay,  
Is a church adrift in a sea of souls

The high, square tower fronts up to the wind's punch.  
The wall's like a castle's defences of stony moss and heath.  
The watery sky looks down on drowned, grave men

Twilight's bled the evening dry of colour.  
Clouds seep to the lighthouse of Girdleness.  
Beyond, is Greyhope Bay where the wreck  
Of the whaler Oscar broke asunder

South of Nigg the coast is rocky and jagged,  
Narrow creeks and subterranean caves,  
Where waves make secret trysts  
With ancient crabs.

yst

A Catalan cat in a catamaran  
And a Catholic caterpillar  
Sailed for Cathay on a holiday `  
Twas the cat that held the tiller

A catastrophic catarrhal fog  
Made both of them caterwaul  
As over a cataract's foamy lip  
The ship began to fall

It slipped down into the catacombs

Like a catapult-shot on speed  
That's what I call a catalyst  
Said the cat. And his friend agreed.

s in the Trough: tune: In an English Country Garden

How many things can be got by pulling strings  
From the public purse a-buying?  
Shall we assemble a typical list  
To save MPs from lying?

Toilet seats and swimming pools  
Storm doors and house patrols  
Book cases, prams and plumbing bills  
With some pampering weekends  
And some other little spends  
Like a moat, duck house and loo roll

When you've a house or two to see you through  
Then the money flows like water  
In a credit crunch, it's the public pays the lunch  
And a home for your son or daughter

Stable lights and legal fees  
Piano tuning, groceries  
Drive-way repairs full size TVs  
Plus a chauffeur driven car  
Crates of wine to fill your bar  
And flower-beds for your wife to potter.

Life is very sweet with a parliamentary seat  
When your home's got a marble table  
A mock Tudor door, and a polished wooden floor  
Hanging baskets from each gable

Rocking chair and trouser press  
Carpets, sofa, evening dress  
Shop for as long's you're able  
Oh it's hey-tally-ho off to Harrods they will go  
For their next designer label

Social Workers' Lament:

tune: She was poor but she was honest

Mother spends the cash on bingo  
Father's in the pub again  
Little Johnny's smashed a window  
Social worker's in the frame

Chorus:

It 's the same the whole world over  
Social workers get the blame  
From the Press, TV and media  
Ain't it all a bloomin shame

Patrick's gone an broke his ASBO  
Hit his granny with a chair  
That's another for the caseload  
On the social workers care

Cuts are needed in the budget  
Which department takes the strain?  
You don't need a fortune teller  
Social workers, slashed again

Squaring up to angry clients  
Work can be a battle zone  
It's a knife edge...hard decisions  
Still they soldier on alone

s

Marquee tents have appeared at the lawn of Kings  
Like a city where knights can shelter between jousts  
The clipping of shears snips sharp across the silence

Over a rainbow bus, a copper beech  
Spreading its stately shadow, a tree's largesse

Is it a wedding? A fair? A Templars' camp?  
It's no good asking the birds, they'll only sing



Turn everything into a trill or a cantata

Now comes the whirring of wheels, the denim cyclists  
Weighted with books and jackets, notes and pens  
Every second hand is hugging a mobile  
Small umbilical cord to the wider world.

Falling Dream

Nothing to do but hope you wake up  
Prior to touching base  
Like a snapped pendulum  
Like a fly with its wings plucked off  
Like the scream from Munch's bridge  
That nobody hears

Earth, the womb for all things growing  
Earth, the tomb for all things dead  
Earth, the microcosmic oven  
For the clay that gave us birth  
Little seedlings, little seedlings  
Know your mother, and her worth

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Moths, Morticians, And Giant Hens (24 Poems)

Matter

What's under the bonnet?  
Electrics crackle in the wired up brain  
Eye-blinks spike on a graph

Positive or negative,  
It pays to be earthed  
When thought strikes  
Sudden as lightning

The mind may require recharging  
Run down like a Hornby train  
Tired of the circuit of living

Thoughts leap like monkeys  
In the track of 100 billion cells  
Neurons blink off, blink on  
In the brain's main branch lines

Three pounds in weight, as soft as gelatin  
Grey matter sets the seal on what we are

Democracy Rap

Hamas, Greenpeace, Hezbollah  
Mr Jones from Epping on a business trip  
Animal Liberation Front, Al Qaeda  
What kind of info's on that microchip?

Tom and Jan from Crieff on their honeymoon  
Neo Nazis and the Klu Klux Klan  
Mrs Diomedes on a weekend break  
IRA and ETA and the Taliban

Black Panther, BNP, the Mujahideen  
Alison MacDonald for an interview  
Mujahi, Jihadists, plan a training scheme  
Which one's plottin for the latest coup?  
Bali, Jordan, Brighton too

You never know the minute BOOM  
It's ta-ta you.

Bath  
Water is lovely,  
The liquid element  
Quicksilver slippery

On a hot day  
My body thirsts for it  
Every pore aches for it

Stepping into the bath  
Is like greeting a lover  
It caresses the intimate regions of the dark.

It holds me in its thrall  
This see-through wetness  
Again and again I return to it  
In stream, pool, bath

Entering it is like a little death  
Joyful submission into pure delight

tream Class  
In the mainstream class  
Eddies of syndromes  
Curl like hidden whirlpools

Tourettes rears up  
A kelpie, rude and raucous

ADHD white water runs  
Thunder at break neck speed  
Unstoppable, uncontainable

Autistic backwaters  
Cut off from the current  
Stagnate, each surface  
Blank and eerily unfathomable

An Asperger's ripple  
With occasional flashes of brilliance  
Disappears into a secret well

Navigating these dangers, by turns  
Avoiding or confronting them  
The waves of the fortunate  
Fight their way up river  
Bewildered by the boulders of these obstacles

The shy, the timid, fall between the weeds  
Like raindrops when the Thunder Giants roar.

A snail slowly processes up the wall  
His horns like upheld candles  
His shell like a monk's cowl

Ivy and moss abseil down its crack-cleft drop  
Sanctuary for insects and slither-tailed earwigs  
The rising sun paints shadows on its face.

ings Fetish

I knew a man who hung his hat on the Parthenon  
His love was purely platonic, but all-encompassing  
A menopausal lady fell for the Eiffel Tower  
But sadly, she was much too far beneath it

A loner, they say, made a pass at the Tower of Pisa  
He developed a crick in his neck, love petered out

A Russian diplomat felt romantically stirred  
By the Taj Mahal, but it was reciprocal

A nymphomaniac with delusions of grandeur  
Lusted after London's Nelson's column

A buyer for Leerdammer cheese  
Went cock a hoop at the sight of the Colosseum  
So many orifices! So much testosterone!

Kingdom of Graffiti

Hansel and Gretel follow the big boys and girls  
Hoping for a bit of the action  
Hanging on the coat tails of the teens  
With the spray cans, the sweat, the swears, the spits  
The voddie stolen from mummy's kitchen  
The fags, the gags, the gigs

Hansel and Gretel are being weaned away  
From the safe cocoon of home  
Rites of passage are stormy  
Hoodies, jeans, cap, drugs  
Softcore angst ...the world sucks  
Piercings, skull and crossbone tattoos  
Mohawks, ripped tops, knuckles of LOVE and HATE

Hansel & Gretel are losing their puppy fat  
Cocking at snoot at Listen With Mother  
The writing's on the wall  
Fear Piss Bravado Gobs and Dog Shit  
Transition from toys to gangland

Hansel and Gretel, pretty names like angel dust, nose candy  
Strange sweets bring something worse than rotten teeth

Vision of the Woody Messiahs  
Skies like marbled oil,  
Swirling flights of starlings  
Circle gigantic trees

Machines have shrunk to Lilliputian size  
Trees are making a comeback  
In the sea-saw tussle for survival  
Between Earth and humans  
Like woody Messiahs, the ponderous trunks  
Each crowned by a hedge of thorns.

Banger  
The great spotted woodpecker  
Inhabits broadleaved and mixed woodlands and woodland edge,  
Copses, parks and orchards.

The great spotted woodpecker requires dead wood

For nesting and feeding.

He chisels to excavate wood to reach wood-boring insects.

To declare his territory, he drums with his beak

It is more hygienic than peeing

His hearing is excellent. He can hear insects moving through timber

He will chisel to reach it, ferocious as any drill

This is repetitive behaviour,

But the great spotted woodpecker does not have OCD

He is a natural head banger unlike

The dancers at heavy metal concerts

Dazed and confused, courting a mild brain injury

Whether the up-down, the circular swing,

The full body, or the side-to-side head bang

Making them more "metal, " or deaf,

Unlike the greater spotted woodpecker

ids

Fish and tits, scaly bits

Sirens' sighs, starry skies

Times and tides, sailors' brides

Davie Jones, sea men's bones

Sea Horse Challenge

If your sea horse didn't finish in the top three

It's time to back the dolphin jumping instead

The winner, a classy little filly, stole the show

On her very first race over 20 fathoms

'It went by in a flash, ' an old timer said.

"I was happy to have been placed."

The sea horses looked battle-weary,

But there was a jolly atmosphere in the doldrums,

As they snacked on their crustaceans

The winner has been mated recently,

Her breeding partner is due to deliver next season

A thorny seahorse, he is said to be excellent mother material

The favourite fell at the first coral reef  
The sharks are totally devastated  
No killing for them today.

12. Mary Queen of Hearts  
Mary, Queen of Hearts,  
Thought it quite rum,  
Faced with poker faced Knox

She was the wild card in the pack  
A straight flush  
Diamonds all the way

But her second suitor was a Knave  
Who knocked out the Joker  
Giving the game over to a  
Jack the lad Prince of Clubs

It was a fair bet  
The Queen of Spades would win

13. A Girl called Moth  
Moth's eyes are bloodshot, she's a party girl  
She only comes out at night.

Her lipstick's smudged,  
One nostril's red from sniffing up the snow  
From a gentleman's tenner

Moth's hair hangs limp  
Like two blonde furry wings  
Battered to a standstill at a rave.  
Moth's element is moonshine  
And the whisky breath of male and female lovers

math of War  
Washed up on the shore of battle  
Casualties of friendly fire, disease, accident.  
Or suicide, neatly stacked corpses  
Grey as driftwood

Lying in orderly ranks  
Here and there  
A body intact enough to identify  
Is allotted its crowning cross  
A posthumous medal or a wooden marker

e with Care  
Shall we take the gloves off little lady?  
Your daisy yellow numbers?

What does your heart line tell,  
Your line of destiny?

Have you buffed your nails  
And are your half moons rising?

16. In the Mortician's Parlour  
Shrouded like precious furniture  
Disused in an echoing fall  
The dead lie modestly concealed

Blemishes, scratches, scabs  
Covered by stainless linen

They have already crossed  
The Rubicon of mortality

Only the flesh remains  
To be labelled, packed, despatched  
To the earth or the oven

A breeze enters the room  
A flap stirs idly  
Like a ghost ship's sail  
No-one under the shrouds  
Responds to its touch

ing Point  
Angst goes against the grain  
Clamped in the intolerable vice of strain  
The structure splinters  
Cracks appear perceptibly



A running split through the core  
Afterwards, nothing is ever the same

In a patched up job,  
The fault lines lie too deep  
To render whole

#### 18. Paper Weight

A reference. A serviette. A baby's bib. A valentine  
A Xmas card. A musical score. A graduation roll  
A prescription for methadone. A memo pad. A paper plane  
A school report. A search warrant. A mediaeval scroll

A prostitute's timetable. An invite, and an actor's script  
A shopping list. A lesson in Braille. An origami sausage  
A train ticket. A photograph. A page from 'As You Like it'  
A pregnancy scan. A Royal decree. A card. A coded message

A fax print out. A dog licence. A vet's inventory  
A Durer etching. A death certificate. A menu, a bill, a map  
A pornographer's poster. A child's comic. A legal writ. A billet-doux  
A romantic novella. A driving licence. A Times' review for 'The Mousetrap'.

#### 19. The Giant Hens

If giant hens should leave their pens  
And peck us up like seed  
How topsy-turvy it would seem  
If prey should make us bleed

And even worse, if they should herd  
Us into battery runs  
And cut us down, when in our prime  
To snack on in their buns

How hideous if women should  
Bear children to be sold  
So giant hens could spread their toast  
With human Kerry Gold

#### 20. The St Andrew's Song   tune: Pollywolly Doodle

Oh St Regulus sailed with a box of bones  
To St Andrews one fine day

And his ship was sunk, but the monk was saved  
And he never ever ever got away

Here to stay, here to stay  
They can never ever ever get away  
The ghosts of the folk who lived and died  
In St Andrews town and bay

The ship was sunk but the monk was saved  
With an arm and a tooth and a knee  
Of the famous saint who pilgrims loved  
To visit at St Andrews by the sea

Here to stay, here to stay  
They can never ever ever get away  
The ghosts of the folk who lived and died  
In St Andrews town and bay

But John Knox appeared and the bones were lost  
When he burned the Cathedral down  
Then Mary Queen of Scots discovered golf  
And a new ploy came to town

Here to stay, here to stay  
They can never ever ever get away  
The ghosts of the folk who lived and died  
In St Andrews town and bay

Once the folk of Fife bleached their linen on the course  
(Donald Trump he would never have approved)  
But that was long before TV pundits kept the score  
Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods say it's improved

Here to stay, here to stay  
They can never ever ever get away  
The ghosts of the folk who lived and died  
In St Andrews town and bay

Kate Middleton came to this varsity of Fame  
And met Wills, her Royal man  
Shall we list the names of some other graduates  
James the second, Alex Salmond, Fay Weldon

Here to stay, here to stay  
They can never ever ever get away  
The ghosts of the folk who lived and died  
In St Andrews town and bay

John Cleese and J.M. Barrie were both Rectors in this place  
And two others gained an honorary degree  
Michael Douglas and Bob Dylan, they were happy to be linked  
To St Andrew's ancient university

Here to stay, here to stay  
They can never ever ever get away  
The ghosts of the folk who lived and died  
In St Andrews town and bay

### 21. Rough Sleeper

Under the dripping roof, cars pass unseeing,  
A human maggot, lying as if dead  
Down in the tunnel's gut, from winter creeping

Just one more stain, where ooze and slime have bled,  
By day he treats the streets like a cash cow  
But darkness drives him to this poisonous bed

Amongst the pigeon shit, lit by car-glow,  
Sib to the vermin, he will drink until  
Fugitive light, and dawn's chill breezes blow.

The city's rotten underbelly's shrill  
With traffic, poisonous to breath and air  
What drove this rough sleeper so far downhill?

I saw him once, caught in the headlight's glare  
Poor discard, in his subterranean lair

A fugitive from normal ways of being,  
In the abyss where nightmare footsteps led  
Down here, poor bogieman, from muggers fleeing,

Sucking the juice of Lethe, pale, undead,  
With claws as black as any red-beaked crow

Resting on garbage, by bin-leavings fed

Your death may come at 10 degrees below,  
Poor pavement scrounger, rotten overspill  
From the great Tree of Life, dropped hard and low

What drink-befuddled thoughts arise to fill  
Your mind. Did someone ever know or care?  
You turn and let your seed on tarmac spill

(The urge to procreate is everywhere)  
The path to ruin has a rocky stair

## 22. Angry Women

Fanatics don't give a toss for collateral damage  
Nobody asked the jockey or the horse for their consent  
To promote a cause in the suffrage publicity stakes

Today, the pattern persists  
Jihadists strapped with bombs  
Blow strangers, mothers, brothers  
To Kingdom Come

Kill yourself if you will, to grab attention  
But why load Charon's boat to the bloody brim  
On a whim of your own choosing?

Less lethal, angry women fire-bomb sex shops  
Riot like painted clowns in a Russian Cathedral  
Abandon sons as Lesbian separatists  
Take part in Slut walks, or barer,  
Go topless as supporters of Femen protests

Muslim women, in backlash, rage on Facebook  
'We're sick of your colonial racist rubbish'  
A female driver in Saudi is sentenced to 10 lashes  
Saudi Clerics predict 'the end of virginity'  
For women who leave the home to take the wheel.

Undressed or overdressed, bras burned  
Or reinforced like ice cream cones  
Equality works like a powerful sucking magnet

Dragging respect into the messy equation,  
Along with little things like work, achievement.

### 23. The Love Buzz

The African carpenter bee  
On a flower, hits the note middle C  
Releasing the pollen  
From Sea Roses foreign  
In wonderful bee harmony

Tomatoes, rasps, aubergines' anthers  
(with blueberries) leap up like panthers  
When the bee hits an E  
At a force 30 G  
Pollination fills thousands of planters

### 24. Sycamore Seeds

Sycamore seeds that tumble and fall  
(The fledgling bird that drops from the nest)  
Death claims all of us, great and small  
Presidents, priests with all the rest

Some are cropped in their daisy years  
Hoppity- skippity under the grass  
Others leave in a veil of fears  
Gaunt grey shadows that stumbling pass

Some are mourned and are sadly missed  
The kind, the gentle, the good, the wise  
These are the ones that Love has kissed  
The world is poorer for their demise

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Nero, Naples, & Dead Mens' Whispers: (18 Poems)

## 1. Dead Girl Weeping

Sir William Hamilton, the hook-nosed diplomat  
Lord Nelson cuckolded, loved one thing more  
Than Emma Hart, his rabbit-randy wife

In that ménage a trois, Vesuvius stood before  
A thousand Emmas, filling his house  
With torsos, vases, carvings, bronzes, busts  
Ivories, statues, plundered from Pompeii

Prized from their ashen pyres' volcanic crusts  
King Ferdinand of Naples marched against  
That smouldering face, upholding the remains  
Of San Gennaro (who'd survived the fire  
Of Roman torture, and once stilled the flames  
Fanned by an Emperor) . This made the lava stop  
And read-hot furnace ashes cease to drop.  
Goethe climbed this Vulcan's lair three times  
Wedges between Heaven and Hell,  
God and the Fiend  
Queen Marie Antoinette, to Fontainebleau  
Brought motifs from the walls of dead girls gleaned

Primo Levi cast a Pompeii girl  
To represent lost children of the war  
Hiroshima, the Holocaust, sad ghosts  
Robbed of their future by Mars' brutal star.

It is a frame of reference spanning all  
The centuries. When the twin towers fell  
The New York Times described that horrid void  
As in Pompeii, when Eden changed to Hell

## 2. Petrified City

The Bay of Naples. Summer. Hot flowers flag  
A mountain kid tugs at its mother's teat.

The vines, so full and ripe their branches sag.  
A plume of smoke grows from a summit crag  
Ground trembles, anxious ewes begin to bleat  
Losing the race through thistle-stem and jag.  
Looters were smothered with their bags of swag  
Gold in their hands, black lava at their feet  
Caught in the red Volcano's tig and tag  
The wealthy woman gagging for a shag  
Found more than gladiators turn up heat  
Dead in their barracks like some smouldering slag  
The frozen tongues of wives who used to nag  
Lost the last argument in terror's streets  
As actors stalled the amphitheatre's brag  
A merchant with his keys and money bag  
Lies with his daughter. Now, no lover sweet  
Comes wooing. Cupid's wearing Pluto's gag.  
Fate spun its web this town to trip and snag  
In orchard, brothel, see each person meet  
Death, dressed in ashes like some horrid hag  
Now, aeons on, fresh blossoms bob and wag.

### 3. The Keeper

I am the keeper of the cage, omnipotent.  
Bobbing and scrambling my two rats scale the mesh  
I pluck one out like a peach. She trembles, soft, in my hand,

Her quick ears quiver like barley touched by a breeze  
Her claws clench, chilly and tight. I stroke her  
Free of fright, blocking each botched attempt at liberation.

Life drips through her water bottle, is rationed in the  
Scoops of food I profer. Her sibling spies a chink of opportunity,  
Leaps into nowhere like a puff of smoke.

Two days and nights I set bait round the room.  
Her pink, invisible eyes, out-watch, out-stalk me.  
Somewhere she gnaws and fattens on stolen gains  
Cunning and sly, ballooning on her booty  
She is become a threat, a predator.

The ancient horror of plague-rid vermin rises,  
Pads from the dungeon of collective memory.  
Till, with a thwack, the trap door has her fast.  
Back in her cage, her pink eyes glow like opals  
Expressionless, defying divination.

#### 4. Sectioned

The orange lies in segments, like a fear  
of the mind's slippage.  
Trepidation waits in mirrors, under the plate.  
I hear the sighs of demons who berate  
me from the crevices of walls.  
My insane drowning ghost forms twins whose fate  
is peeled and pipped. Their squeak's a lost refrain.

Henbane's the juice that's pumping in each vein.  
My sense of self is eggshell thin, is frail  
As ancient parchment under wheels.

What sieve contains a name in falling sand?  
All hail the gods of misrule, who foretold a life awry,  
As difficult as Braille  
When pictures talk, when prating shadows scold,  
My ragged mental bandages unfold  
Leaving a whistling void, an Arctic cold.

#### 5. What Kind of Person was your Latin Teacher?

The plumbing of her confidence was leaky,  
Her eyes were frightened spiders  
Running for safety into caves and wells  
Down woods and altars in her lesson books.

Poeta est in Silva. Bold girls scared her.  
More of a spoon than a knife,  
Her life was a parking meter  
Paid by the hour, more often faulty than not.



The day she cried, we laughed.  
Stop it! she pleaded. Stop it girls! Behave!

Have you ever watched a fly with one wing walking,  
Limping onwards, in hopes of a boot's reprieve?  
This is my only nod in her direction  
A title glued to a public bench of a poem.

## 6. Dead Men Talking

Tonight, the dead come trooping in, to talk  
The handsome bully, the sot, the village don  
The lecher-wolf, the dove, the shrew, the hawk  
Into the primal melting pot, all gone.

Sharp-suited Nigel, wheeler-dealer ace  
Style-icon Jackie, power-seeking John  
Won each election, lost the final race  
Into the primal melting pot, all gone.

Chewing a slice of turnip, quiet Rob  
One of the submerged tribe the land leans on  
Walked from a farm where wind's a keening sob  
Into the primal melting pot, all gone.

Andrew, who only dispossessed the whin,  
His village bones reduced to carrion  
His field, a street where change blows coldly in  
Into the primal melting pot, all gone.  
It's late, too late to mourn, or miss the lost  
The sun's true light turns counterfeit neon  
How swift the pristine snows embrace the mud!  
Into the primal melting pot, all gone.

## 7.I am Scotland, too

I am the colour of nutmeg,  
Ripening in the rainy streets of  
Crieff, Anstruther, Banff

Tomorrow I'll work beside you  
Take your fare or your pulse  
My eyes are slices of ebony

I stand beside you, patient, in the queue  
I wait my turn.  
I am Scotland too

h Mist

The bus goes whoosh through puddles of a dirty-washing shade  
The pigeons shuffle closer like guardsmen on parade  
Wet cars, by lorries halted, like cockroaches, waylaid

It's the umbrella season, beneath a Noah-sun  
When children, wearing wellies pretend they're having fun  
Wet dogs shake drips, like floor-mops tied up at cafe doors  
And trails of muddy footprints go squelching over floors

Events a year in planning, are cancelled, all rained off  
The flu bug that you conquered, becomes hay-fever cough  
And squads of ticks and midges bivouacking in the grass  
Surge out to prang the tourists and locals as they pass

It's odd...but when we travel to Portugal or Spain  
The thing all Scots folk yearn for, is misty moisty rain!

hood

I looked in my grandmother's memory and found:  
An ice cream scoop that trembled on my lip  
Nasturtiums where earwigs came to sip  
A wave that broke in cups on a beach trip

I looked in my father's memory and found:  
A toddler's feet splish -splashing in a pool  
Lessons of hawk and hound in Nature's school  
A trout that leapt and changed into a jewel

I looked in my mother's memory and found:

Red sandals that must not be scuffed or scratched  
A feeble joy that must be earned not snatched  
An autumn park where winter shadows hatched

I looked in the sun's memory and found:  
A lea of grass that rustled like a sea  
A galleon in the top branch of a tree  
Freedom to run beyond the bounds of me

#### 10. Terminal Five

Hurrah for the farce that is Terminal Five,  
It swallows up cases and eats them alive  
The Bermuda triangle of tourists and planes,  
With a chic design ceiling that leaks when it rains.

Its staff is untrained and its system's chaotic  
You sign up for Kent, but go somewhere exotic  
Your photo is taken to keep things secure,  
But the sick man of Europe, Heathrow, has no cure  
For planes which can't run when the baggage is lost,  
And like flotsam, the wreckage of travellers are tossed  
Into buses for hotels that burst at the seams,  
With no food or cold food and reams upon reams  
Of forms to fill up, in the cattle-drive rammy

That's Terminal Five. Take a bed pan for granny  
When loos cease to flush, and it's too much to bear...  
There's a multi-faith centre that's open for prayer!

#### 11. Ciao Roma

Ciao Roma! The traffic here sits in a coma  
The rain would suit Jonah, but doesn't please me  
With more than its quota, Rome's stuck on the rota  
For deluges, downpours, and dank misery.

The Tiber is swollen, the bus is awash  
With open-top puddles, umbrellas and slush  
Of black sodden tickets, timetables and stubs

Like a scoopful of swilling from washer wives' tubs

It's wet at Atlantis. There's fountains for miles  
Teeming down the piazzas, the plazas, the tiles  
There are lochs on the balconies, pools on the plates  
And the laps of the statues have turned into lakes.

Oh where are the vineyards, the olives, and the sun?  
The sky's peely-wally. The posters have run  
And even the sparrows are wearing galoshes  
Like Scotland...a country of splashes and splashes!

s

A girl is trying to eat her boyfriend's face  
She is gnawing his nose and ears  
Like a dog, nuzzling a bone.

Vesuvius lies with its torn belly  
Swallowing the clouds

From tower blocks, public washing  
Lolls like tongues

Billboards picket the harbour  
A giant trainer stamps its mark on the eye  
A woman with pearly teeth  
Dangles a sanitary towel at passing lorries

A stop sign leans like a licked lollipop  
Over a dwarf palm tree, squeezed into a pot.

A gypsy with a scab faced baby  
Begs from car to car,  
Grabbing alms in her purse of filthy nails

Here, they narrate in gesture  
Flourish their arms in dilettante movements  
Pluck invisible strawberries from the air  
Bring an unseen orchestra to crescendo  
Painting frescoes of airy explanation

One ear up, one ear down, like a half mast flag  
A feral dog sleeps in the shadow of the valley  
Of Death, that's Naples.

#### Little Bride (Crepereia Tryphaena)

Not one word escaped her lips  
The little bride, when they lifted her  
Her skull turned to her left shoulder  
Facing the ivory doll at her shoulder-blade,  
Companion down the silence of the years.

On either side of the girl's head, golden earrings  
Studded with pearls, had dropped from the withered ears.  
Mixed with her vertebrae, a pristine necklace,  
Pendants of jasper, green as the eyes of Pan.  
An amethyst Greek-style brooch  
gleamed through the rib cage  
Showing the fight of a griffin and a deer.  
By the bones of her left hand  
Her engagement-ring, engraved in blood-red jasper,  
Two hands clasped together.  
Another has Philetus cut in the stone

Close by her hip, her box of toiletries,  
Two combs, a small steel mirror  
Cosmetics, an amber hairpin, a cloth of leather,  
Fragments of a sponge.  
The little bride was wrapped in fine white linen,  
A wreath of myrtle fastened to her brow.  
Her wedding and her funeral hard together.  
Worms and not desire consumed her heart  
The doll, a bridal offering to Diana  
Unlike its mistress, kept its smiling face.

#### Tomato's Sphere

Puritans shunned the tomato,  
Thought it an aphrodisiac  
Pomme d'amour, the lovers' appellation

A member of the Solanales Order  
The Deadly Nightshade family of toxic killers  
Pomme de Maure the apple of the Moors

At noon one day an American, Robert Johnson  
Ate a basket of these red devils before an astonished crowd  
In front of a whitewashed courthouse down in Salem  
Disproving forever tomatos' evil intent.

The tomato is also the slang for a loose Woman,  
The colour of the French Revolution  
The colour of guillotine juice

Mr Tomato's Sphere should rotate on its axis  
But sadly, a human construction, has ceased to twirl  
Like a cheer leader's pom-pom.

The guide, a mini-Atlas, shoves it manually round  
Its bronze face bares its broken teeth in a sneer.

### Cassino

Half way to heaven, the abbey of Monte Cassino sits on air  
You cannot see the mountain, but it's there  
War graves surround the slopes like sticks of chalk  
You cannot see the bodies, but they're there

### Dolce Vita

On the street of the Via D'Azeglia  
Seated beside a bin-bag oozing spaghetti  
Two Romans sunbathe in the sun  
They turn their bared arms round  
Plunge a needle into rising veins.  
It is Sunday and church bells are ringing.

Three girls walk round them, sunglasses  
Raised like visors on their heads  
Shining like a beetle's carapace  
It is Sunday and church bells are ringing.

## 17. The Winds:

There's the northerly, summer, pleasant wind  
That sweeps the blue Aegean  
There's the Hurricane that whips up rain across the Caribbean  
There's the violent squall that conquers all  
In the midst of the Mediterranean  
There's the cyclone storm where the Typhoon's born  
In the sultry Indian Ocean

There's the sandy, dusty, dry trade wind that scours the hot Sahara  
And the wet monsoon on the Malabar coast that's called the Elephanta  
There's the lusty, gusty, North East wind that winters in Alaska  
There's the Bull's Eye Squall that rocks the yawl alongside Africa

There's the Rockies' friend, the warm wind,  
That's known as the Snow-Eater.  
There's the gentle breeze in the Hebrides.  
There's the gale that's the feared Nor'easter.  
There's St Francis' Lash, where hurricane's crash on the coast of Mexico  
There's the canyons of Nevada's scourge, the terrible, hot Diablo  
There's the dry Haboob of a dust storm wind that whirls around Morocco  
There's the warm soft southerly sort of a wind,  
The Spanish-Moors' Sirocco  
There's the quick white squall, in a whirlwind form  
That rises in the tropics.  
There's the cloudy wind, the muggy wind that shrouds the Adriatic

There's the doldrums-calm where the trade winds meet  
At the girth of the equator  
There's the cloudy, foggy, rainy wind that lashes around Gibraltar  
There's the westerlies and the easterlies that meet at the polar heights  
There's a strong and a violent Nordic wind  
That roars in the fjords at nights.  
There's a night-time squall with thunder and rain,  
Which sweeps the Malacca Straits  
There's the warm Sundowner downslope wind at California's gates  
But best is Zephyrus, sweet west wind, and Notus, the wind of fog,  
The friend of sorrow, he's clad in grey, the bearer of mist and smog.

## 18. Nero's Bath

I am the Emperor. Alpha and Omega, born to be adored.  
Have you seen my Golden Colossus, my Pleasure Palace?  
I am the great Dictator, the Poet, the Actor-singer,  
I am the mob's Adonis, the Lyre-player, the Charioteer.  
I am history in the making.

Lives lie in the palm of My hand like so much seed  
To spill or plant as I wish.

I am Rome. I order a bog to disappear and it happens.  
Death works for me, I have sent him to silence many  
Wives, mother, senators, lovers.

Have you seen my bath?  
My mighty porphyry bath holds fifty bathers.  
Three hundred goats are milked to fill its basin,  
Their milk is the colour of the Imperial semen,  
Which I'll bestow on all who share my ablutions

I itch, Judea winces. I shake a family tree  
And plums fall to my hand  
Christians call me the Anti-Christ  
Cannibals all, they eat the flesh of their master

Wrapped in flames, they're the highlights of my Palace  
Truly, you are now the light of world, I tell them

Sheena Blackhall



# Of New York, Roustabouts, And Metal Cows Etc (21poems)

Rain

Blind rain drives down the street. Leaves tumble, bleeding  
October's in the clouds now summer's fled  
The wormy mushroom in the ditch are breeding

Sick thoughts. They nightly crowd around my bed,  
Like rancid husks of scooped out yesterdays  
Old age has all the charm of mouldy bread

The seeds of promise have no flesh to show,  
Like poor miscarriages, they lacked the skill  
To fill with wind their lungs, their trumpets blow

Each lies within its coffin, dead yet still  
Holding its feeble claws to snatch thin air  
Its soul extinguished by the whip o will

An so I pass my time, half live, half dead,  
A rotten tree, its greenwood branches shed,  
The last oak in an urban overspill

The moon is sick. The meadowgrass is gray  
Blind rain, could you but wash this self away.

Thought Performance

No budget is required. Acts are free and are ongoing  
No ticket's needed. There's always a seat in your brain

The brain is the venue. No disused hut, church, warehouse need be hired.  
This is site specific theatre, with links to the centres of thought.

Some thoughts rehearse endlessly  
The cast can vary  
May involve relatives, colleagues, neighbours

Some walk on thoughts can blow your mind, if you're honest

Who's the director? The thoughts prefer to improvise  
They require no Publicity. Marketing's internal.  
You yourself are the audience.

Some scenes are dramatic productions, subliminal.  
Others are minimal.

Here's the punch line. Listen. No, listen...  
This is important, not in the small print  
Thoughts can lead you by the nose  
Into the Slough of Despond  
The Valley of Humiliation  
Where Giant Despair and Giant Grim  
Perform a double act

They jump upon the stage,  
Rabelaisian, trivial, petty,  
Grotesque, lurid, cringe-making

Don't fall for their game. I mean it.  
Ignore the buggers. Don't feed their need  
For emotional recognition.

Don't applaud. Don't cheer. Stone-wall them.  
Ask any actor. Lack of reaction's a killer

assers, New Deer  
The bull's eye in a North East rural compass  
Faldie's farm has a barn owl at its core  
From dawn to dusk she patrols her midnight acres  
Winged tiger of the air with the heart-shaped face  
Swooping and hooting once the great sun topples.

North, in Artamford wood,  
The short legged badger with the zebra pelt  
Huffs and puffs in her sett  
Ready to cross the borders of her tenancy  
No injunction halts her illegal entry  
Into the hen coop, baring her lethal teeth

At Mill o Auchreddie, field of the bog myrtle,

The hawk to the west has sheathed his powerful wings,  
Drawn the shutters down on his piercing eyes  
His claws tight on his perch  
By day, he seeks no courtesy of access,  
Takes it, a fascist creature smashing air

East at Pitfoskie, frosty starlings flock  
To fly like fish shoals over the chilly fields  
Joined by their distant cousins, asylum seekers  
Refugees from even colder climes

South at Goukshill, the fox pads softly out  
Like a four legged ghost, seemingly floating  
Over the earth on a sortie. No one will witness  
His stalking, killing, gorging. He is the red terror  
That voles dread in their bones

Bankers

Three bankers went to sea in a boat  
With sails of money to keep them afloat

They gambled the money, the sails flew away  
But they paid themselves bonuses anyway

abouts

Roustabouts with their ear defenders  
Lie in their cribs and dream of suspenders  
Laptop dancers and page three spreads  
Their hard hats keep their brains in their heads  
Their platform soles don't let feet spoil  
From seagull poo or dollops of oil

Conquered

Would they break our laws by sinning?  
Come to trap, to scourge, to fleece?  
In their coming our beginning  
War's a crowing cockatrice

We were wary of their winning

Shepherded like flocks of geese  
In their coming, our beginning  
Opening market, trade increase

Months on end their bombs came dinning  
From the onslaught no release  
In their coming our beginning  
Out of terror, ordered peace

#### 7.Indian Rope Trick

Have you heard of the Indian Rope Trick  
In the time of the great depression?  
Get back to work, the government cried  
It's only a small recession

Forget those lame excuses  
We want no sick-note chits  
Pull posts and jobs from empty air  
And chin up chaps, you're Brits!

#### Lovers

The house fell into dereliction  
The minister and the soldier let things slide

Forgotten secrets blocked the drains and crannies  
Irks, piled up in the corners like dried scabs

The lovers came together only to clean and cook  
The ritual of the potatoes kept them human

The soldier in his head, replaying his army days  
Like a scratched record, impotent and spent

The minister staring at stars  
Trying to seek out signs, dodge retribution

Above all this, a black bird sailed  
From a withered tree like Thor on a mission  
Into the sea-green sky, the red reyed moon  
That hadn't slept for aeons.

Rats, rats, they're smarter than cats  
See them dance in their high rise flats  
Like can-can crickets or acrobats  
Wearing their tutus and party hats!

York

Dots of data in the corporate map  
People are dwarfed by soaring masonry

Skyscraper windows screen observers out  
Consumerism has a secret face

The minarets of wealthy attract fanatics  
New York's a global power house of plenty

Huge corporations oiled by working lives  
The state's machine is geared to gain and getting

Empty Cot

Consider the empty cot.  
Am I about to arrive,  
Or newly gone?

Did my mother want me, or not?  
Was I a mistake, or planned?  
I had no say in the matter

What will my future be?  
Why can nobody answer  
The most important questions?

I encountered many dangers before arrival  
Hurled like a thunderbolt against a door  
Opening reluctantly

After all, I may not choose to stay.

## Metal Cow

On metal plated legs, a metal cow came clanking out  
'A triumph of technology, ' hear the inventor shout

'Instead of heartbeats, she has revs, she's not been known to stall  
She never has mastitis and she doesn't poo at all.  
You can keep her in the garage, she's a constant source of fuel  
Instead of milk, she lets down oil. She doesn't even drool  
Unlike her bovine sisters who all pee and belch and fart  
And need a constant feed of grass before they'll even start

I'm working on a metal bull, that's fit for mated pairings  
And for his sperm I'm giving him a bagful of ball bearings

## Wages

Rent spent hitting the shops  
Donna and Tracy are loaded with bags  
Like rifles ready to fire

They practise their posing pouts  
Their necklines drop  
Their hemlines soar  
Their bulls-eye belly buttons  
Have a silver ring  
All the better to tease boys with.

They've blown caution out of the water  
They'll paint the town red  
Cut a dash. Make a splash  
Before the playpen, the partner  
The wages needed for silly things like heating.

## Women

Like headless tailor's dummies impaled with pins  
Three statues stand wide open to conjecture

They could be Masai women, speared in a tribal war  
They could be African virgins, Womanhood

Slashed away by knife and custom

A cunning woman may have cast a spell on them  
Sympathetic magic that's anything but

One thing's certain:  
Somebody means them harm.

Penis

Is it a seahorse? Is it a flute?  
Is it a fruit or a dried up newt?  
It's a tiger's penis! The tourist's stopped  
For tiger parts are illegal, chopped.

tome Man

Dermatome man is coloured blue  
Maybe he rolled in woad  
Maybe he's one great big tattoo  
Or a bruise that grewed and grewed

Dermatome man is coloured blue  
He's freezing cold, I think  
He's a very peculiar azure hue  
Perhaps he's been dipped in ink

Dermatome man is coloured blue  
Let's find him a yellow wife  
Together they'll do what couples do  
And have them a bright green life

et's Follower

The papyrii told her two ways not to conceive  
She had plugged her small vagina with crocodile shit  
She had stuffed lint, moistened with dates  
Ground into honey, into her uterus mouth  
Despite it, her bleeding stopped. She had peed  
On wheat seeds, and the seeds had sprouted  
Proof that she was with child

Nearing her time, she waddled like a hippo  
Runnels of sweat ran over her belly's  
Rotunda, like Nile water over a boulder

The priest sold her Taweret's amulet  
Taweret, who watched over mothers  
No birth among creatures is harder  
Than that of the human

When she thought the pain too hard to bear  
Her sisters rubbed saffron powder  
Mixed in beer, into her shuddering belly

Squatting over the birthing bricks  
She raised an agonised howl to the woman's goddess

Her child leapt for life from the birth canal  
They fed her pieces of mouse  
While she thrashed with childbed fever

After her death, her cousin rubbed  
Menstrual blood on the infant's skin  
To drive away the demons that would harm it

Beetle

This group is an urban minority  
Based, for the most, in London and North East Essex

In the evening males fly to females  
Drawn by their ginger scent

The males' antler-shaped mandibles  
Are wrestling aids in mating duels  
In the capital's parks and gardens

Lewisham is their habitat of choice  
With Dulwich, Wandsworth, Beckenham  
Close on the housing market

They die by car, by jogger's heel, or magpies



Immigrants from the country  
Forming their insect enclaves in the town  
Escaping the pesticides of modern farming  
Pursuing a better life in smoggy London

Here, they have access to logs,  
Appropriate to their needs

Environmental warfare has displaced them  
Decimated their ranks. Now they cling on  
In pockets of wormy wood.

& Suicide: The Way of the Samurai  
To perform the ritual of tea drinking  
Invite guests to enter the room by ringing an evening bell

Allow your guests to purify themselves,  
Using fresh water in a stone basin

Guide each guest to their mat.  
Bring in the tea bowl, whisk, and cloth  
The tea scoop should rest across the top of the bowl.

Serve your guests sweets. Then cleanse the bowl and scoop  
Ladle hot water, afterwards, rinse the whisk.

Three scoops of tea per guest, place in the bowl  
Add sufficient water creating a paste with the whisk.  
Pass the bowl to the most important guest.

The guest should bow when accepting the bowl  
Then rotate the bowl to admire it.

After sipping some of the tea,  
And cleaning the rim of the bowl  
It is passed to the next guest.

When all are finished, rinse the whisk and scoop.  
Clean the tea container. Offer it to everyone to admire  
This concludes the Samurai tea ceremony

To perform the ritual of suicide  
First, bathe. Put on white robes

Sit down to your favourite meal.  
When you have finished,  
An attendant will bring your knife  
And place it on your plate  
Now write your death poem

With your second standing by,  
Now open your kimono  
Lift your knife by the blade.  
Plunge it into your stomach  
Making a left-to-right cut.

With a sword your second will directly after behead you  
Leaving a sliver of flesh to keep the head attached as if embraced.  
This concludes the Samurai suicide ceremony

Illes: tune-If I was a blackbird  
Versailles is a palace of 700 rooms  
With 2,000 windows, with servants and grooms  
With 67 stairs swept by oodles of brooms  
And with chimneys of best Portsoy marble

It took 6,000 horses to build this chateaux  
36,000 workers to help it to grow  
With 2,000 acres of parkland on show  
And with chimneys of best Portsoy marble

It has paintings and statues and furniture rare  
On swampland long drained for the good of the air  
It has wrought iron balconies, with lashings to spare  
And with chimneys of best Portsoy marble

Versailles has an orangerie fruitful and sweet  
With stables and outhouses...fountains replete  
With water that sparkles where sun and wet meet  
And with chimneys of best Portsoy marble

There's a Salon of Peace and a Salon of War  
Corinthian pillars. This place is the star  
That outshines all castles from Madrid to Mar  
And with chimneys of best Portsoy marble

Here noblemen plotted, adulterers met  
Here duels were arranged with full court etiquette  
Here ghosts howled at midnight, folks nerves to upset  
Up the chimneys of best Portsoy marble  
There were chamber pots ripe for aristocrats' pee  
A Great Hall of Mirrors, of great artistry  
But the wonder of wonders folk all queue to see  
Are the chimneys of best Portsoy marble

## 21. Soroptimists

Soror meaning sister  
Optima, the best  
Raising funds for children  
Outcast and oppressed

Plant sales, coffee mornings  
Transform other lives  
In the global setting  
Mending battered wives

In many war-torn countries  
Sending help to cope  
That's their greatest triumph  
Soroptimists bring hope

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Poker Game Et Al (16 Poems)

## 1. Another Flitting

Gap year. The New Grand Tour,  
Backpacking. Rats in the hotels  
And walls so thin  
Not even the fleas have secrets

Daddy's little Princess  
Has had her credit stopped  
Now her mascara's running

She wouldn't last five minutes  
By the Ganges. Who'd drop a rupee  
Into her silver spoon?

Maybe she'll pawn great-grannie's  
Diamond ring, or the ruby she had  
Studded through her navel.

On trains she's heard men sneer  
White trash.... old couples stare at her  
A girl, alone in Asia, and un-chaperoned  
It isn't an adventure anymore  
Not after the malaria and squirts  
Not after the bites, the rip offs  
The mangy dogs baring their rabid teeth

No-one's impressed by this young gad-about  
They think her mad, or else she's easy pickings.  
Her mask of confidence is starting to leak paint  
Suburbia has never seemed so fine.

## 2. The Poker Game

When hosting a poker game,  
Allow no kids, no wives, and no distractions  
Dim the lights. Have snacks for easy grazing  
Put on low background music  
Set out ashtrays. Chill some cans of beer  
Sit round a decent table with stable legs

Produce a set of casino chips  
And two or three decks of cards  
Unwrapped and ready to shuffle  
Select an honest banker  
Set house rules and stick to them  
Stop before you've lost your shirt and car

### 3. Final Journey

Balulah's final journey was a plane trip  
A failure of cabin instruments and metal  
Like meccano toppled by a rusty screw

Rowland joined the trip from a grim back alley  
Stuck by a mugger's knife above the spleen

Bailey choked on a nut at an office party  
So small a morsel, such a fatal outcome

And so the queue grows longer, the journey  
Final. No given destination, no familiar companions  
A nut, a screw, a knife, the price of the ticket

### 4. Licht Pines

Sweeping and fluid  
Spontaneous, highly treasured  
The curvature of pines

The Japanese calligraphy of lines  
Follows the law of nature  
Like Shinto shrines

The Zen of Wisdom  
Touching on the Void  
Nothing in Everything  
Bow and rebound  
Is the Pine Tree Dance  
Seed-Syllable Mandala  
Eternal transience

### 5. Ratzinger: Stimme Gottes

Ratzinger, an air force child soldier,  
Trained in the German infantry.  
Deserter and POW, entered the seminary  
When the war was over.  
These are matters of public fact

His cousin, with Down's Syndrome  
Was eliminated, life unworthy of life  
The propaganda stated, Not a beneficial gene.

When he was ordained  
'a little bird - perhaps a lark -  
flew up from the altar in the high cathedral  
and trilled a little joyful song.'  
He later recalled

Now he's become God's Voice  
A broken swastika  
Luminous eyes in a corroded face  
Where war and time have scratched their bitter mark

## 6.Edge

Border tartan, Shepherds' Plaid  
The Anglo-Scottish Border is Northumberland made  
Un-dyed white sheep with black sheep's wool  
Found on the edges of the Roman lands  
By the Antonine Wall, they disobeyed the Caesar's rule  
Where the fierce Celts rioted in tribal bands

It's been found in a peat bog in Northern Germany  
Sir Walter Scott wore trousers of it...praising tartanry  
For you've got to have an edge, of that there is no doubt  
Keeping some folks in and the other folks out

When the world was flat, when you came to the edge  
If you crossed it you dropped over, off the doom-time ledge

Don't muddy up the waters...keep things black and white  
Clear cut, boxed off, sharp and tight  
Three cheers for the edges of the world I say  
Keep things in compartments, have a boundary

7. Olympics: London 2012: the Olympic Games will feature 26 Sports  
Sailing and shooting and sprinting and hurdling  
Running and boxing and cycling and rowing  
Diving, canoeing pentathlon, taekwondo  
Tennis, weightlifting, triathlon and judo  
Football and fencing equestrian jumping  
Gymnasts artistic and rhythmically pumping  
Trampoline experts and archery too  
Badminton, basketball...what a to-do  
Handball and hockey and swimming in rows  
Volleyball, polo the wrestling shows  
Mascots and torch relays, webcams and tours  
Pay for a ticket...all this could be yours!

8. We Don't Serve Corpses Here  
There once was a jolly Jack Tar  
Who ordered a drink in a bar  
This wasn't unusual  
What caused the refusal  
He was run down and killed by a car.

9. Crossing Surrey  
Surrey: a watery sun. Buds and hawthorn blossom  
Gorse explodes in yellow under the fountaining birches

The wicker-cradle nest rests  
In an apple tree, above a lonely ladder leaning idle.

Two crows with sooty wings are flying Easter crosses  
Over a field like sifted cinnamon  
Sprouting corn as softly green as elfin maidenhair

Brambles spill down the hill  
Evening washes its ink across the landscape  
The TV forecasts snow on distant peaks  
A plane like a swooping hawk  
Drops over Hampton court palace  
Disturbing ancient ghosts, dreaming of stately deer

A mizzle thrush like a merry Mr. Macawber  
Throistles away. Setting the world to rights  
Over three plastic bags like laundry pegged in a tree

A stand of cypress, upturned witches' brooms  
Sweep the passing sky in the jostling breeze  
Clouds stand on rays of sun like angels' stalks

#### 10. Bussing from London

Along the Thames sea serpents writhe round pillars  
King Neptune glowers, dripping, stony face

Police barges drag a trail of churning waves  
Brown water furrows in the ancient river

Victoria station's where lost tourists throng  
Scanning departure boards with anxious eyes  
Clogging things up for sweaty, hot, commuters  
Where shrieking toddlers run their mothers ragged

Aboard the bus, shrill mobiles bleep and cheep  
Their ring tones a cacophony of jangles  
A couple lie entwined across a seat  
His hand plays incy-wincy on her back

Here pigeons perch upon arrival screens  
A human scavenger ransacks a bin  
Somebody's half-drunk tea kick-starts his day

#### 11. Qing goes Ping

Two vases both priceless and plush  
A visitor saw. In a rush  
He tripped over his lace  
Knocked them both into space  
Now they're 400 pieces of mush

#### 12. The Peplos Kore

The Peplos Kore is over a metre tall  
She's an Athenian from the Acropolis  
Persians wrecked her city, ravaged her shrine



Broke her arm. Flung her onto the ground  
Ripped her brooch and earrings from her body

Hundreds of years she lay in a hidden pit  
Now she's a small exhibit  
Observed, not worshipped

Poor little Peplos Kore  
In her red robe, her blue chiton  
Her small \*meniskos  
Protects her from no birdshit  
And no weather  
Poor little Peplos Kore  
Staring out at an alien time and culture  
\*umbrella

13. International Carrot Day  
The ancestor of every British carrot  
Is an Afghan. A veg that's coloured  
Yellow, red or white  
To honour the House of Orange  
In Holland, they changed its hue

In Ancient Greece it was an aphrodisiac  
Pilots in ww2 chewed them  
To boost their eyesight (true!)  
Before the great Titanic upped and sank  
Creamed carrots featured on the final menu  
Nobody ever said that they were lucky

n After the Sermon by Paul Gaugin

This is a poem based on the artist's own words concerning the fate of his picture

I have just painted a religious picture  
It interested me and I like it  
I wanted to give it  
To the church of Pont-Aven  
But they don't want it

A group of Breton women are praying

Their costumes, intense black  
Their bonnets, yellowy-white  
Like monstrous helmets

An apple tree cuts the canvas  
Dark purple, its foliage green  
The ground is pure vermilion  
The church, it darkens  
Becoming a brownish red  
The angel wrestling Jacob  
Is ultramarine

The whole things is severe  
The figures, rustic, simple, superstitious  
The cow beneath the tree is very small  
Just as I wrestle with art  
Jacob wrestles with doubt

The whole things is severe  
The figures, rustic, simple, superstitious  
Art is plagiarism or revolution.

#### 14. Pylons

They power the World,  
Stride through cornfields like giants  
Headless with powerful shoulders  
More brutal than beautiful  
They hiss their contempt  
Over the steaming cattle

Cunning and strong, straddling  
Wilderness and mountain  
Holding the destiny of nations  
Pylons tether themselves to the earth  
Sheathed lightning.  
The beach is their Valhalla  
Scrap yard for graceless scaffolds  
Shorn of crackle.

ng to be Collected

A giant, mud soaked wave  
Scooped up parents, homes,  
Streets, teddies and toys  
All that was their anchor,  
Their known, protected world  
Gone in a blink in the mindless, murderous sea

30 silent children waiting to be collected  
By those who'll never come  
No amount of wishes can make it better

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Popes, Fur Coats And Tubas (42 Poems)

## 1. Marilyn Munro's Fur

It swung from her back like a promise -  
Presidents, gangsters, hunted it in packs;  
Little furry pelts, stitched up with thread  
And moonlight, reeking of sex and Chanel.  
I wonder, did it get a decent burial,  
That second skin she shed before she lay  
Under the cut and thrust of politics?  
Did the hounds lick her, falling?  
Did they bay?

## Shy Poem

Do you write many poems? I asked  
One crept out recently, came his reply  
As if it had sneaked out of the house  
Carrying its slippers in its hand  
So as not to disturb the neighbours

And it intrigued me this shy one, this quiet one  
That didn't bang its drum  
Or jump up and down to be heard  
As I never learned what it said  
Or where it crept off to, out of the workshop door.

Maybe it went to Mull to sing with whales  
Maybe its knitting sweaters up in Shetland  
Maybe it's thumbing its nose at poetry readings  
Just sitting there being a poem  
Just sitting there

I think of it often, shy poem that crept away  
I would like it to come back  
Sit in the middle of the circle  
And explain itself

ter- Gulls

A Klu-Kux-Klan of gulls  
Savage Sopranos, hit-men of the harbour  
Have put a cloud of starlings in a stushie.

Aberdeen gulls are fearless  
They will casually slice a cod's head  
Slick's a guillotine.  
Their yellow wellies  
As lurid as Doris Day's coiffure

.  
Their mating call's a cross  
Between a foghorn and a saw  
It carries the ache of the ocean  
Feeling the weight of its ancient waters  
Turning round in its fishy bed.  
SS Aberdeen gulls, storm troopers  
Of no mean city

Corner

A seagull sits on a branch, pretending to be a hawk  
Its back is zebra-striped by a shady beech

Three donkeys crop the cropped grass into mud  
Nine rabbit families swelter in their hutch  
Trying to wriggle out of their furry pants.

A ring of toddlers is putting a brave face  
On being a target board for a charging goose.

Llama shares her pent house with two goats  
Rabbit and guinea pig in communal hutchery  
Are contemplating bestial debauchery.

Pot bellied pig, a tubby, dandruffed porker  
Slumps to a standstill, stuffed by dreams of buns  
A hen like Noah's ark, moors in the sun.

A boy in nappies barely off the breast

Giggles and coos, amazed at fur and fin.

is Always White: Cha-Nam Beach, Thailand

Thin brown fishermen  
Garish ragged shirts  
Nets flung on the sea  
Some fish are caught Some fish escape

Thin brown massage women  
Skin like seasoned teak  
Hoist torn parasols along the beach

Some trade is caught  
Some trade escapes  
Milk is always white  
Though tugged from different cows

Yen, dollar, sterling, baht,  
Money is money  
Is food  
Is drink  
Is clothes

will the Rain Come?

When will the rain come?  
The wooden doorknob creaks in its iron groove  
The summer rose opens its dragon mouth  
Foxgloves droop parched heads across a fence  
Lentils dream of water in the pot  
Too hot for walking, floppy laces trail

Mortgaged Moggy

There once was a tom cat called Wills  
Whose hunting showed marvellous skills  
On a trip up the Niger, he captured a tiger  
And sold it to pay off his bills

## 8.A Wasted Life

A cat in the high Pyrenees,  
smoked cannabis weed if you please  
When the moggy was stoned,  
very blanket she owned  
Was invaded by legions of fleas

and Stripes

Bonfire season. Dry logs cackle like witches.  
In Autumn's pyre twigs sigh, give up the ghost

Summer bounty's past its sell- by date  
Frost crackles across the lake

Where the striped badger snuffles in his set  
Hunchback hedgehog turns into a conker.

In the gloved and booted night  
Fireworks soar like shooting stars of light  
Pumpkins leap off supermarket shelves

Guy Fawkes turns in his grave  
Uncle Sam's cheerleaders whoop it up  
Trick or treating down our Old World's lanes.

growth

Breaking cover, owl unwraps his wings  
Bat drops from his hanger  
The eyes of the wood gleam slitted and slatted  
Through twigs of half light,  
Briers of concealment.

Fox walks into his paw prints  
Nosing the air aside like a delicate trowel  
Claws carve and curve

A vole is being eaten in the undergrowth  
Black velvet lined with red  
Spider descends his ladder making a sheer dropp

the Festive List

Half a pound of brussel sprouts  
Half a dozen mince pies  
Small carton of cream  
Goodwill to some men

Six Xmas crackers  
a bottle of sherry  
a large trifle  
a truce in family hostilities  
the queen's speech

Arty-farty cards for very important people boxed assorted  
Asda for everyone else and a blue robin in a bare tree

Ding dong merrily the tills  
Give one lucky beggar 20p  
Six lords a-leaping through the tabloids

in the Trossachs

Shearing the dreich days  
Like a scythe man, Winter comes  
Sweeping old fields bare

Leapfrog Spring can reinvent  
Halcyon highlands anew

mi, Galle, Sri Lanka, Boxing Day, 2004

The roads are rubbled.  
The pitiless monsoon rain  
Runs down mens' faces.  
Even their tears taste salt.



A car with its lights punched out  
Lies upside down in Galle's market square  
Torn ribbons of saris, sarongs,  
Are bloodied decorations round each tree

Hanging for dear life  
By a thread, by a fingernail.  
From a floating rooftop

Heads of families bob like cocktail cherries  
Fishing nets wrap tuk-tuks in a stranglehold.

No-one's collecting the fare  
No- one's counting the catch

A child is carried ashore  
His eyes are filled with shards of sea debris  
The sort that clings to sandals on the beach  
The sort you shower off before the buffet

Before the lobster's hoisted in, showing its dripping claws.  
Bodies lie like virgins  
They will never be touched again in a lustful way

They are wrapped and quiet, laid out in a hall  
Waiting to be identified and claimed.  
And who's going to pay for this?

Somebody, or something should certainly pay....  
Sunbathers wedge in trees like dripping fruit bats  
A market stall is fifty fathoms deep  
A teenage office worker's brown plump leg  
Protrudes from a fallen palm.  
Her mobile phone's  
Forgotten how to bleep.  
Where trains go loop-the-loop  
Where boats sail into churchyards, spewing fish  
Where the sea sails down the streets  
Like it God-damn owns the place  
Where renting a room in a posh five star hotel  
Buys no-body special favours when the sea gate-crashes the party.  
Acts of God do not discriminate

Everyone killed, the strong, the sick, the weak.

Normal service cancelled till further notice  
The earth wobbled,  
The compass cracked  
The town clock's hands stood still  
Now they sit round the table,  
Guests in their own home  
Hunger, Want, Disease  
Terror, Destruction, Dismay,  
Sucking their thumbs and rocking  
Till foreign waiters bring the aid tureen  
And the long ladle counting out the drops  
All, all, has gone to wrack  
Businesses, brides, lives,  
Nothing can dream the back.

#### 14.A Scottish Soldier

By joining up he journeyed far  
There are no jobs in Highland glens  
Other than B & B or bar  
He travelled first class into war...  
Korean and Malayan tours  
There, leeches sucked his Scottish blood  
There's no iced tea or petit fours  
Where soldiers die in monsoon mud.

Demobbed, he raised a family  
Peace pumped contentment through his veins  
Until a slug of Scotch would raise  
The spectres of his old campaigns  
How, all night long, alone, entire  
Ten comrades killed by friendly fire  
He had to guard.

Who'd think the dead  
Would lie unburied in his head?  
For 50 years, forever sealed  
The horrors of the battlefield.

at the Colosseum

Dusk deepens in the gloomy Colosseum;  
Two feral cats square up to hiss and spit  
Descendents of Queen Cleopatra's gift  
To Rome, a city suckled by a wolf.

Fifteen feet long, a lumbering crocodile,  
Scale-armoured, creeps far from his native Nile  
His queer eyes blink. Before, a pool of dust  
Is stained with blood, like powdered, drying rust.

The biggest abattoir man ever built  
Claws pulled, still bares a fang to the cold wind;  
Here, terror reigned. Here seas of blood were spilt.

Fifty thousand Romans cheer and rise...  
For this Egyptian god.  
His half-moon eyes  
Flicker acknowledgement.  
Where is his priest Shaven and oiled, to bring his daily feast?  
Today, the meal is moving...leather shod  
It nears. Sun glints on helmet and on sword.

The old arena fills with moon and night,  
Centuries blur. Nothing is black nor white;  
Everything shrinks. The ancient crocodile  
Becomes a lizard. Stone-faced Caesars smile.

Looking the Circus Maximus

Church bells from iron mouths pontificate;  
Before the world an old Pope lies in state.  
The steps, like an Aeolian harp, resound  
With echoes from the teeming crowds around;  
Lugubrious and jolly, short and tall  
Pour down the steps, a human waterfall  
All hailing taxis, haggling in the shops.  
A human mule, an ancient matron flops  
Into a chair, bags dropped, to sip a glass

Of wine, and watch frenetic pilgrims pass.

Here's noise! Here's colour Titian never knew!  
A frothing fountain, fifty shades of blue!  
Here's life in technicolour, strident, shrill!  
Here's mobile phone, no nightingale's soft trill!  
Here's ambulances' screeching, police harangue!  
Here's football flags, a hip-hooraying gang!  
Here is no place for footsore, homesick Ruth  
But surely, as the marble Mouth of Truth  
Bit off the hand of liars, death in Rome  
Must be a bubble bursting in the foam

Each flower preaches...daisy, violet, rose  
To seize the moment. All too soon, we close.

of a Pope

He has crossed the threshold of Hope,  
The Pole, John Paul II,  
The Great Communicator. The Peoples' Pope.

At Easter, the blessing stuck in his throat -  
A silent lesson on Suffering, a gain, a loss  
Jesus did not climb down from the cross.

God's athlete ran out of time,  
Age and sickness holding the finish line  
Shepherd of a cosmopolitan fold,  
He captained a billion souls in their Ship of Faith -  
Some disembarked, the course too hard too hold.

Prayers are of little use, though soft and sweet,  
Where Aids cuts down the young like fields of wheat,  
Where yet another plate upon the table  
Brings hunger when there's nothing left to eat.  
London to Lagos,  
Baghdad to Blairs,  
Calcutta to Krakow,  
Mourners queue where Michelangelo  
Mirrors the human drama down below -

Man reaching out to link with the Divine.

John Paul lies still, an island robed in red  
Around him, a weeping river, millions flow.

the Zoo: Bio Parco, Rome

Wild asses eat grasses where lechers make passes,  
In Rome this is part of the scene.  
Though massaging its rump gives a camel the hump,  
To a monkey, it's peaches and cream.

A goose seniorina's a white ballerina  
In pumps and a feathery tutu &#8209;  
With a wing in the air looking devil may care  
See her bidding a lizard adieu!

A big bison shocks with his Rasta dreadlocks  
Not as chic as the snake in its den &#8209;  
The elephant hoses dust over its toeses  
And does it again and again.  
So go to the zoo if you've nothing to do!  
You can contemplate tigers a-snoring;  
And if you ask why, they will rudely reply  
They think you're incredibly boring.

egate Gull

A large white Castlegate gull has perched on a pillar box  
Right above the slot where the letters go.  
Saturday morning, urgent mail to post,  
And he's sitting there like Napoleon's hat,  
His back hunched up, his beak a Cossack's sabre.

He could be a sunflower growing out of a pot,  
He could be a white nude painted by Matisse -  
He's neither. He's a Castlegate gull  
Perched on a pillar-box.  
Exchanging glares, we test each other's mettle;  
No surrender! he's a belligerent gull,  
With military epaulettes,

His beak is in fine fettle.

eweeder

Rolling along like tumbleweed, old blue skies roofed the day;  
Thistledown brother, blown by squalls to Canada's Great Lakes  
Neither Age nor Death can even begin to budge  
That time we fished in Lake Ontario,  
Our bare toes dangling four feet off the pier,  
Not two cross words between us, one big smile.

My day at Sainsbury's

The smell of steaming coffee fills the aisles;  
A diner feeds her money to the pay-point;  
The pouting shop assistant sucks her lip;  
Granny and toddler munch their toast triangles;  
A plasma screen fills with a swirl of fruit.

The waiting tables do not choose their guests -  
Fried eggs lie down like lambs on the white plates,  
And all the while the quiet snow falls down.

Andrew's Cathedral Ruins: March 2005

A bed, a blanket, a bowl; the luxury of a soul -  
I'm always drawn to spaces such as these.  
Sky raises birds aloft like praising saints,  
Wind's whispering its strange epiphanies...  
Five silent gulls perch on a cloister wall;  
Here, years have ticked away like rosaries.  
An orange crab shell lies beside a door,  
Stone arches span the grass, Kabbalah trees.

Here I'm invisible, do not exist,  
A barely breathing figure in the mist.  
A hallowed place, where swallows take their ease -  
I'm always drawn to spaces such as these

## Jewish Ghetto

I was trying to read the Italian for  
'Where's the station? '  
When over a street I noticed Hebrew script.  
Campo Ghetto Nuovo, Cannaregio

A Hanukkah lamp was lit in an old stone.  
There were no tourists, traders, flower-sellers &#8209;  
Paint peeling, a wall rose up, flayed like a skinned horse.

A synagogue's doors were firmly bolted shut;  
There was graffiti, but no sign of life.  
The green canal looked deep as ancient hurts  
Not given voice, closed up and festering;  
A place of absences, injustices marooned  
Outcast from the gay lagoon, its vibrant riches.

The Furies sent the former tenants packing &#8209;  
A one-way trip to Belsen, Dauchau, Auschwitz  
Slime climbs the steps to doors not used for years;  
If stones could weep these walls would run with tears.

## & Mrs Blackbird Visit the Neighbours

They have brought these gifts to our woods  
A table, a boat, a chair

He is not a gift, he is lost

Who told?

The crow. He says they keep birds in cages

How does he know?

He has seen them, and more,  
Last autumn, nailed to a post A dead hawk's wing

But they like us, dear.

When we sing, they smile and nod.  
Look there, on the woodland grass  
They have left a tyre, and a small white looking glass

We need no glass to show our woods are fair  
We need no tyre to travel the realm of air  
Crow says that when men come, they come like rain  
Unstoppable. Their coming will bring pain.

mic Migrants

Three deer flee through cactus  
Braving the hot sun in the red desert  
The grass ahead so sweet

Here to There

From a train window, I observe him,  
A distant horse.  
He's going nowhere  
Chewing a mouthful of clover  
Whisking flies from the pursed mouth of his arse.

I close my eyes.  
This stallion fills the carriage  
Travelling with me into thought's black tunnel,  
The train smells lush as meadows,  
Sweet as new-forked hay.

do Rolls

Over the soup tureen,  
Making small talk with a stranger  
A stab in the dark

I found he'd been a sailor in the war  
Raised my harpoon,  
Thinking to catch a whale of a time  
Tell me of the exciting things you've seen.



He looked discomfited.  
We paused off the Seychelles  
They looked quite nice. We never went ashore  
We refuelled other shipping, swabbed the decks  
War was a dreadful bore.  
From stern to prow, oh how our ship would gleam!

He broke a torpedo roll, refilled his plate  
Quietly chewed and didn't spill one drop.  
Then used his bread to mop it squeaky clean.

On rolling sea legs sailors hit the town  
Tars bound for bars to sink a beer or two  
A girl slides down a pole who'll quench their fire  
Throws them the old line 'You look good in blue'

on a Swing

Man on a swing.  
Paedophile, Lover? Drifter? Abandoned father?

Tap him. Maybe he's dead  
Maybe a Polaroid dreamt him  
Maybe he's stuffed.

No, he's five years old  
Inside that grown up suit  
Summer moved on and left him,  
Damaged fruit.

red

Friday Football over, five young men get hammered  
Nail their flag to the mast, four sheets to the wind.

The wind cuts like a knife.

The top and the tail of life  
For them is only this:  
It's a sore wrench to go home,  
Play with the bairn, undress and screw the wife.

### 31.A Long Stretch

The city prison stands, a stone Bastille  
Over the river leaping down below  
Lags toss in sweaty bunks  
Two hours to slop out

On a mid-stream stone  
A cormorant unshakes its neck  
Extends its tarry wings  
Black gown and beak  
Having a long stretch

s

Clowns are like owls, too-wit too-woo  
With staring eyes that cut in two  
I do not like a clown. Do you?

They're fake dissemblers.  
When they fight  
It's just to give us all a fright  
I think real claws come out at night  
Too-wit too-woo

to Preserve a Legend

Take one Spartan, a sword, a lion  
Boil the Spartan 13 hours in the slow heat of battle  
(Thermopylae, preferably)  
Once dead, leave him to turn a grisly shade of mauve.  
Eyes may be painted on or inset jewels

34.It'll soon wash out

After the screams  
Wrung from the white girl behind the gas works  
The red stains on her dress  
Were laid out to dry in a court  
Before a press-ganged jury

It was just a game, he said  
She didn't run  
And hasn't she scrubbed up well?  
Things just got out of hand  
Only a bit of fun.

sel

The ride rises, the ride falls  
The moon's sickly. The owl calls  
Girl in short skirt, red lipstick, painted nails  
Brown greasy hair pulled back in pony tail  
Waits to be mounted, to be brought to bed  
Love is not love with lies and falseness fed  
He is the one? Ah, Sharleen, Joan and Gail,  
He'll go with anything that isn't male  
The ride rises. The ride falls  
The moon's sickly. The owl calls

Sale of the Cultural Icons

Who'll start the bidding for Baird's inventive powers?  
For John Brown's sportsmanship?  
For Bruce's heart?  
Come, they're unique, they're real collectors' items!

Next under the hammer: Burns' poetic soul  
Carnegie's philanthropy.  
Glasgow's Hairy Mary, made for pleasure  
The courage of Charles the First  
Columba's piety  
A Charles Rennie Mackintosh bowl.

A job-lot any patriot would treasure  
There's a reserve on Mary Garden's voice.  
It's been withdrawn, not having reached its target.  
That's not a bid, it's an old corbie's croak  
No takers then for Thomas Glover's shrewdness,  
Kenneth Graham's wit, John Knox's faith,  
Sir Harry Lauder's cheek, Chic Murray's jokes?  
We'll throw in Lulu's luck, Queen Mary's beauty  
We'll clear the decks, add Pinkerton's resolve,  
Rob Roy's work ethic, Wallace's sword arm.  
A slice of Dundee cake that's rich and fruity  
Dolly the sheep! Sold to the man in the jumper  
Greyfriars Bobby's lead  
Goes to the lady in leathers, wearing studs.  
The sale of the cultural icons is now over.  
That unattended haggis must be exploded  
It might be Bonnie Prince Charlie under cover.  
All proceeds go to deciphering Ogham writing  
(Picts have been sighted checking Holyrood's drains)

ng Tubas

Tubas tire easily  
Their respiratory tracts need frequent draining  
Unplugged from their owner's mouths  
Stoppers at ease, they drip with pleasure  
Like redundant u-bends.  
They soak up silence  
Emit odd farts and parps  
Between performances

38.A Falling Cow

A falling cow is an act of God  
Aloe Vera butters no parsnips  
Bores should be shaken not stirred  
Two swallows do not make a vest

's Picnic

I invited John Clare.  
A rabbit sat under his tree  
All through the afternoon  
I saw it behind the bananas  
Twitching its ears  
Stuffing itself with verses  
From Mr Blake

I bet you're jealous, Ted Hughes  
I bet a rabbit never came to your picnic

#### 40. Bird (Objet Trouve)

There is no joy in touching a brown, dead bird  
You might as well stroke a coffin

I am no mortician to lay it out  
No physician's care  
Can lever wide the yellow seals of its eyes  
Unset those chits of jet.

The hinged stilts of its legs  
Drive five curved claws  
A frozen clutch no sun can prize apart

This fledgling's gallows' bait  
Its neck lolls to the side  
A budding sonata, lopped.

I extend its pinions, an aborted flight  
The engineering works, the engine's stopped.

It is docked in the brace of my hand  
This feathered hull,  
Wrecked by mistaking glass for a greener place

It is wearing its new school clothes  
Its tail is a pleated skirt  
Under its throat, a cream and fawn jabot  
Nobody taught this blackbird how to die.

Hard lesson. Or soft perhaps as thawing ice

It lived as I wrote it  
As I do, only a little

Now I have placed a stone on its lovely face  
Laid it beneath the trees where its warm brothers sing  
It will speak in whispers, whispers,  
Under the feathery moon

#### 41. Death of a Hen-Wife

Gripping the quilt  
She turned to face the wall  
Her brown hens cackled loudly  
Needing grain

#### 42. Holyrood

The average human crocodile stays a mere ten minutes  
Then scampers off to forage in the fudge,  
The Holyrood butter biscuits in the foyer.

This building's a toned, tanned schoolgirl with designer labels  
Her parents sweated blood and tax to fund.

She's looking good  
(And isn't that so important?  
Image, appearance, a city cat-walk queen?)

Today, she opens her satchel, debates breastfeeding  
Noxious emissions, beavers, health, horse passports  
Outside the hard rain hammers her mascara.

#### Tom Cat

Our Tom's the tiger of the street  
He is a lord, no mangy cur  
When he pads in on haughty feet

Our house is one enormous purr

His meow's mellifluous and sweet  
Far richer than an Irish burr  
And when he sniffs a fishy treat  
Our house is one enormous purr

He's debonair. His manner's neat  
So sleek and silky is his fur  
When he walks in from midnight beat  
Our house is one enormous purr

He sits enthroned on cushioned seat  
His green eyes slit, they seem to blur  
His bowl of happiness, replete  
Our house is one enormous purr

Our torn cat, lewd and indiscreet?  
Who'd dare to utter such a slur?  
Keep your cat in if she's in heat!  
Our house is one enormous purr

He likes to eat next door's dog meat  
The cowed Dalmatian dares not gurr  
There's not a tyke our tom can't beat  
Our house is one enormous purr

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Pylons, Phone Booths, Ash

## 1. Revolving Bookcase

Literature's pigeon-holes within this slatted case,  
Are quite a novel resting place for books

Everything, from cooking couscous to plumbing  
Are juxtaposed like strangers on the subway

You can get lost dipping into a bookcase  
Worry about rain forest depletion,  
Have lascivious thoughts about Deacon Brodie.

Other men's flowers send their scents to your brain  
Your fingers pluck their theories from thin leaves

Your head is suddenly crowded with conversations  
Marion Angus chatting to R.M. Ballantyne  
Iain M. Banks, John Barbour, Barrie, Boswell,

Because you would never dream of breaking the ranks  
Of impeccable order, in this dervish bookcase  
This nest of books, this woody nook of silence

## 2. Pylon & Phone Booth in Discourse

Their expressions are indecipherable.  
Their body language frozen

How does it feel to be high and mighty?  
The phone box asks the pylon

Don't speak to me, comes the reply  
Your grubby little problems are none of my concern  
Did you ever have a single thought  
Not poured into your ears by human callers?

At least I speak in words, sounds' daisy chains,  
I do not crackle and hiss like angry lightning



The booth retaliates

Wind Farms and pylons, you all pretend to be trees  
Metal skeletons, not warmed by mortal contact.

### 3. The Thespian: In Memoriam Annie Inglis MBE

Always the spotlight wooed her, and applause...a rising tide  
She was the mother of stagecraft, the Gods' and the Commons' bride  
The slings of outrageous fortune she sloughed off like a skin  
And rose, a golden Phoenix no trials could tether in  
But the splendid roses wither, wild encores fade away  
And the final act is the hardest, for the wise, the witty, the gay  
Death in the wings stood waiting. She did not seek his touch  
Her sin, if sin you'd call it, was loving life too much.

### 4. The Fighter

Snow, hail, rain and shine  
Father rose early  
Scraped the ash from the grate  
Twisted the papers, set the fire  
Drove off to work before the house woke up  
He took the chill from the house  
The warmth he left would linger,  
Taking the edge off the day

He was a fighter. Never gave up on a marriage  
On the ropes. Left his single bed each morning  
Went through the motions.  
Gave Life the old one/two.

At eighty, washing her soiled tights in the sink  
For better for worse, he said,  
She'd do the same for me.

After the doctor left, I opened the wallet  
He wouldn't be needing again  
The pound notes, clean and folded  
Like crisp ironed sheets, over the photograph

And there they were, two lovers,  
Ma and da, just kids, before the children came

His arms around her as if he was scared  
She'd suddenly fly away  
Next to his heart for 50 lonely years.

#### 5. Winter Massacre

For weeks, every lamp in the street  
Has worn a crow for a hat  
Raucous, their Roman beaks  
Poke holes in the day

Now, buds burst like bubbles  
Through the plastic rags on boughs  
The earth unlocks its treasury of crocii  
The hill is a porcupine  
Bristling spears of green

#### 6. New Ways to See the World

Stuck in the quicksand of celebrity  
A cowboy, half buried in sand,  
Smiles from a fading movie

In a hareless desert,  
A girl is painting a hare in watercolour  
Grey cactii look on, parched  
Panting for rain

A man, stalked by a snowstorm  
Shivers beneath the sun  
He lives in perpetual frost  
All of his own making

Mary Poppins, umbrella open,  
Drifts down to save the day  
Like cerebral candyfloss

Tumbleweeds rolls past a car with an empty tank  
A coffee mug from Starbuck's fills with sand

#### 7. Ash Wednesday: The eruption of Eyjafjallajökull.

On Ash Wednesday, a Viking Mountain  
dropped its curse on heads of state  
Crossing palms with silver cut no ice  
The stench of fire and sulphur filled the Heavens

Airflights went from a feast to a total famine  
The skies went into mourning  
The fault lines of the earth began to shake  
Norse tectonic plates clashed in their sockets  
In bitter sub-zero winds,  
New fallen snow blew coldly over magma  
The North Atlantic jet-stream ferried death

#### 8. Food for Thought

Face like mouldy dough  
The sow with the broad back saddle  
Has churned her field to a mud bath

Fat as a Sumo  
Her eyes, submerged in lard,  
peer from her pen  
one of life's wallowers  
She stares at the empty field  
Not pondering on  
The silence of the lambs.

#### 9. Starlings

Starlings fly from their roost  
Like a shower of crumbs  
Leaving the black wet buds  
Of April, trembling

## 10. Muncaster Castle

Patrick Gordon-Duff-Pennington lives in pile  
Eight hundred years old, in baronial style  
There's a bath with a lid, there's a dragonfly pond  
A Cromwellian clock, from the back of beyond  
A fool's paradise bar and a tapestry wall  
And the ghost of a jester, Tom Fool, in the hall  
There are owls from the Arctic and Mexico Way  
(When they dive to the lure please remove your toupee)  
There are acres of woodland, a bluebell bonanza  
An occasional joust that's an extravaganza  
Where cannon may fire...you might land in the stocks  
Or explore wildflower meadow for lost hollyhocks  
There's a cat on a flag with heraldic appeal  
There are herons who dine on an alfresco meal  
If you're partial to rodents, there's meadow-vale maze  
Or Creeping Kate's kitchen, with tart takeaways  
Feed the ducks, where the grassland is reedy and boggy  
Near the castle, in history so steeped, that it's soggy  
Not Manchester, Winchester, Lancaster, Devon  
It's Muncaster Ruskin named 'Gateway to Heaven'  
Why not visit the steam traction engine, or stables  
The herb/physic garden by ivy-clad gables?  
Watch out for the ancestor known as 'The Drip'  
Though he only comes out when the sun starts to slip  
And the moon rises high on camellias and Yew  
And the ghosts of knights clank from the Muncaster dew!

## 11. Pepper

Pepper was a terrier, a yapper and a snapper  
A Dandy Dinmont of a dog. A growler. A tail flapper.

With one ear north and one ear south, with tan and mustard socks, Sir  
Pepper was a terrier who should have been a boxer.

## 12. Newstead Abbey

By Byron's home where he used to stroll  
There's a million tons of high grade coal

Just think, had his Lordship dropped a match  
Underground, where the flames could catch  
Byron, his pet bear, wolf, and dogs  
Would have burned to crisps like Xmas logs!

### 13. Beatrix Potter and the Japanee

There aint no flies on Peter Rabbit  
He sees a profit and he's going to grab it!  
Forget about Sumo and Mount Fuji  
It's Little Peter Rabbit fires up the Japanee!

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Samye Ling, Winter Cricketers Etc. (19 Poems)

## Mentors

When a bird is hurt  
It cries in half - notes  
In semi quavers  
Making a grace of suffering

The fish in the loch  
Opens its tin eye  
To the great ball of the sun

The rattle of winter's hail  
Enters into the bowl of its world  
It slides through continual transformations

The cat, goes where it goes  
It accepts encounters But only on its terms  
No-one thinks less of it  
The tree produces leaves Like tiny poems  
Which fall to the forest floor

In autumn, we walk on the trees' thoughts  
Our feet, touching impermanence

## ers in Space

Speck in the planetary plan  
A grain of cosmic sand is man  
Where cold Orion stalks the skies  
Comets descend and suns arise  
Curved like a mighty Catherine wheel  
The rings of Saturn spin & reel  
And sequins in the Stellar gown  
The glittering Pleiades stare down

The plough cuts furrows in the night  
The globe that's Venus, swivels, bright  
As souls ascend the Milky Way

Star-ladder to Infinity.

Hulls flounder. Crews and cargoes slide  
The pole star shines, Galactic guide  
To weary sailors, storm-tossed  
A beacon, to the ocean's Lost.

When Earth cooled in her infancy  
The dog star prowled the galaxy  
Growled in its cold, celestial lair  
As Taurus challenged inky air.

Cold stars by untold aeons blent  
Imprinted on our firmament  
Blazing immortal from the sky  
As centuries dissolve and die  
Cannot surpass that lunar sphere  
That silver orb, majestic, near,  
That hangs, a firefly in space  
Night lantern of the human race

ry

When the roads are a-slither of break-bone ice  
In the Omega-Winter days  
The trees are sugared with crumbling snow  
And the pools have a glassy glaze

The birds go foraging, famine-thin  
The burns run breath-stop slow  
Like a man just dead, where the red blood sped  
Life's streams no longer flow.

The silent land is a brittle shroud  
That shatters beneath the heel  
And the leafless branches, pronged and forked  
Are tipped with buds of steel

In the quiet wood in the ghostly mist  
A necklace of footprints show  
Like a printed page that the nib has scratched

Where the ravening foxes go.

And clouds like a long-lost whaling fleet  
Come lurching, tempest tossed  
Through the black lagoon of a blind eyed moon  
Their rigging, ringed with frost

Mother of pearl is the gleaming wood  
Each fir is muffed in white  
With a Kossack's ermine bonnet on  
Peaked glow, in the glistening night.

It's time to huddle around the fire  
The flames in their dervish-whirl  
Like a well-mulled wine, will charm & cheer  
Old Age and the snub-nosed girl.

When dog and master and all are in  
And the coats in the hallway drip  
The imps of the hearth that scorch and spit  
Make fingers and noses nip.

And then, with cherry-ripe cheeks a-glow  
We watch from the window pane  
In gosling feathers, the sky fall down  
In snowflakes soft as rain.

Of all the planets the Heavens o'er  
How pleasant to find a berth  
In this ship of Seasons crossing Time  
Old Rolly, we call Earth!

4Subtenants

'How can you bear to share with them? My neighbours ask.  
They're such a crowd!  
Destructive, too. And for your loft,  
They pay no rent. They're thankless, loud,  
They're up at daybreak. And they squabble!  
A lazy, poor, ungrateful rabble!



I watch him, toiling out and in, to feed his brood...as large as him,  
They jostle for supremacy, as siblings do. Their rivalry  
Must wear him off he speeds, ministering to their daily needs.

Soon, I reflect, his cares will ease... My tenant, underneath the eaves,  
As one by one, they'll up and go  
How he'll rejoice! ....But will he, though?  
The mainspring of his clockwork, gone,  
No youthful chatter at the dawn  
And with him, I feel empathy...  
The starling....my co-habitee.

### Little Tree

There is a little tree in our back yard  
Twisted it is. The ground around is hard.

The merest chink of sunlight keeps it growing,  
Bitter the wintry blasts above it blowing.

It won't amount to much, so starved of all  
The good and lovely things that make trees tall.

Unwanted, suffering, never meant to be....  
Just like the boy at number 93.

### Hedonist

Humpty Dumpty, A, B, C,  
Snotty nose and scabby knee.  
Kate was the cricket in the grass  
Fat Jean, the Einstein of the class.

Goodbye childhood, Hullo teens  
That awkward age of in-betweens  
Jean swotted Tolstoy and Tchaikovsky  
Kate studied discos, fags and whisky.

Jean, read reams about osmosis,  
Had buck teeth, and halitosis.

Kate learned Anatomy first hand  
From close encounters on the land  
Bend to a touch, like any willow  
With grass or straw -bale for a pillow

Kate shrugged off scorn.. Made eyes at Fred.  
Made hay with Neil, and Nick and Ned.  
Jean's thesis gained a PhD  
On Lenin's place in History....

Kate scraped a Third. Drank Beaujolais  
With Ranjit, Guillaume, and Jose  
Cementing international relations  
In all its varied combinations.

Jean wedded well. The solid kind.  
A credit card. A cultured mind  
Marriage brought comfort and career.  
What matter if her man was queer?

Alas, poor Kate the Hedonist,  
Her liver fried from getting pissed,  
Found that the price of earthy passion,  
En plein air, a la doggy fashion,  
Brought rheumatism in its wake  
And Bacchus added bellyache!

t For Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill

Each listener was a moth to her light drawn.  
Her Irish brogue went lilting like a swan,  
Trailing its thought-wave ripple all along  
The reading room, where like a new-ploughed field,  
The loam of every mind lay opened wide.  
A golden acreage was her poem's yield,  
Ni Dhomhnaill, potent as a corn bride.  
A laugh as deep's the Shannon at her throat,  
Her heavy pleat hung down, a Celtic braid,  
Russet with copper, amber overlaid  
With bronze, it shone as sleek's a fox's coat.  
And like a torc, her wit and wisdom turned

Brilliant and bright. And like a flame, they burned.

e in the Woods

The rhododendron's dew-drenched frills and flounces  
(Chiffon corsage, pinned to a dress of green)  
Opens its pink, wet pout to pluck a feather...  
A fluttering butterfly, dropped down to preen.

The green and purple lily-pads are resting  
Their secret roots lie hidden without trace,  
A ripple stirs the glassy water-mirror  
An iris, gazes on its own gold face.

A poppy waves its torn, crimson banner.  
Trinkets of water, tinkle in a brook.  
White marble meditator in the woodland,  
You never lift a downcast eye to look,

You never see the beauty all around you  
Yet you're the peaceful guardian of this nook,  
As much as swaying swallows, sacred oak leaves,  
The honeysuckle, roses, and the rook.

-Ling.

Six am. A young nun yawns at prayers.  
Monks drone a honeyed mantra. Hand bells ching.  
Lord Buddha, gold in Langholm, contemplates  
In still unbroken thought as prayer wheels swing.

And this is Samye-Ling, is Samye-Ling, is Samye-Ling.

Shuffling in line, the laity are fed  
Behind old ivied walls, where sparrows sing.  
Porridge, molasses, tea and crumbling bread  
A duty roster flaps from greasy string.

And this is Samye-Ling, is Samye-Ling, is Samye-Ling

The rain weeps down on a pagoda's crest.  
The temple peacock trails a draggled wing  
It peers at empty shoes, at temple door,  
No tit-bits there for that exotic king!

And this is Samye-Ling, is Samye-Ling, is Samye-Ling.

Thistles claim the Esk's stinch Lallans' banks  
MacDiarmid land. These pebbles filled his sling  
(David, who matched the South's Goliath tongue)  
Scots mingles with the winds where prayer-flags cling.

And this is Samye-Ling, is Samye-Ling, is Samye-Ling.

A shrine rears up, above the river's spray.  
A Naga's home, where biting midgies sting.□  
A water-sprite. Will dour Scots kelpies choose  
To welcome this new-comer to their spring?

And this is Samye-Ling, is Samye-Ling, is Samye-Ling.

A lilypool lies in the temple grounds.  
Tall purple irises its waters ring  
Head-heavy tadpoles linger in its cool  
Where plashing raindrops plunk, and plink, and pling.

And this is Samye-Ling, is Samye-Ling, is Samye-Ling.

## 10. Aunt May

My Aunt May was a farmer's wife,  
A farmer's daughter.  
Bred in the bone, her patient, peasant ways  
Those habits carved in stone  
The sundial Seasons taught her.

Buxom in cotton dress of cornflower blue,  
I see her still, pouring a jug of milk,  
Tipping a steady stream  
Of her Ayreshires' dairy cream,  
Her herd that cropped the clover tufts

Of waving grasses on the wind-combed hill.

The peats, banked roast-leg high,  
On the spit-red hearth.  
A warm, safe nest, her home.  
Cuckoos like me she coddled.  
Her love was all-encompassing as loam.

Each word she spoke was Scots, was soft, was slow.  
Firm as a harvest scythe, rhythmic and low.

She scoured muddied flags on kitchen floor.  
Housewifery was a willing cross she bore,  
Busy's a bee from her honeyed, humming hive,  
Her face, with smiles and dimples, all alive.

Tailed by a barking dog, hands, raw and hacked,  
She carried heavy pails, taut-armed, straight-backed,  
From dark, cool, byre, her neck, sun-burned and bare,  
Where midgies danced and swam,  
In the crack-sheet, whip-dry air.

A punch of a playful breeze,  
Made blossoms bob, in the bending, bouncing, breeze.

These fifteen years, to farm and family, dead...  
Aunt May still smiles a welcome, in my head.

do Cricketers do in Winter

If you should see a man, dear, come crawling on his knees,  
Behind a freezing stag dear, behind the freezing trees,  
No cause for protestations, he doesn't mean it harm,  
He's just a winter cricketer, who wants to keep it warm.

He's taken off his jersey....He's followed it for miles...  
Through clogging drifts of snow, dear, with subterfuge and wiles,  
But when it's caught and cornered, although he's tried and tried,  
However big the jersey, the stag won't fit inside.

Its jointy, pointy antlers, that make it such a charmer,

Are awkward as attempting to fit a fir with armour.

If you should see a bird, dear, a-perching on its nest,  
And someone hurling snowballs towards that bird with zest,  
You've spied a winter bowler, a-practising his throw,  
You've wondered why the robin's red? Well, now, my friend, you know.  
A bowler's ripping fastball lit a fire upon its chest  
And that is why the robin has a VERY rosy breast.

If you should see a clothes-line with icicles like posts  
Go gently past that clothes line, it holds a wicket's ghosts.  
For wickets die all winter and resurrect in spring  
When maidens are bowled over and slips and gullies zing.  
If, through an Arctic blizzard, you think you see a frog,  
It's just a winter cricketer a-fielding on a log.  
He's catching balls of hailstones that hurtle from the skies  
In fact, he'll catch most anything, from globes to apple pies.

If you should see a snowman, with square legs and a cap,  
And all he says is 'Hat-trick' Your'e stumped sir! ' and 'How-zatt! '  
Oh, do not judge him harshly, his head is full, alas,  
Of leg-breaks and mid-overs, and fields and fields of grass.

in-ill

An aberration on unsteady feet,  
The junkie staggers, stoned, into a wall,  
A rabid mongrel no-one wants to meet.  
He is the lurching leper of the street,  
Afraid, I step aside to let him fall,  
The startled shoppers swerve like parting wheat.

His drugged realities are incomplete  
His skull rolls on the pavement like a ball,  
That feels no pain. His fixes keep him sweet.  
No policeman to be seen walking the beat,  
Clod-plodding to the rescue, black, and tall,  
Messiah of the normal. Whole, concrete.

The junkie makes a paving stone his seat,  
A shrivelled shriek, he suddenly seems small.

I hurry past, his presence to delete.  
A confrontation I attempt to cheat.  
I shut my eyes. He isn't there at all...  
I open them. He's staring, cold as sleet.

Oh wrap him tightly in a winding sheet  
This husk. This sham. This broken human doll!  
His scrambled raving is a jangled bleat.  
The dragon drags St. George to a defeat,  
On Any Corner and on Every Street.  
I am no Dalai Lama. No St. Paul.  
I stop my ears to Horror's haunting call.  
I want a world that's pretty, nice, and neat  
An Eden, where no suffering serpents crawl.

#### E-Mail to the Moon

Dear Mr Moon&#8209;  
Here is an e-mail from a far country,  
Written by a blue receptionist.  
Today, I am all smiled out. I wish to declare a curfew on the sun.  
I wish your silvery sojourn up in the heavens might never be done.

I wish you to gleam there always, like a taxidermist's trout.  
Please don't turn in at dawn like a sulky, up-tailed cat  
At the first cock me linger, dreaming and dozing,  
My thoughts like kneaded dough  
In a quiet country kitchen, steadily rising, rising,  
My eyes, tight-petal shut  
Like two sealed snowdrops....  
Let me continue to pretend  
My home is a moist and mushroomy meadow  
Where one cow moos in a jungle of tangly grass  
That could have been painted by Rousseau.  
May your lunar reign not end!  
May the hare that sits at your core  
Twitch his magic ears some more,  
In your cool, cool realm where alarm clocks never ring.

A tiger strolls through my dreams, strumming a mandolin.  
Black telephones do not sing

Their shell-like whines in my prodded, pulsing ear.

Mr Moon, when you shine, my time is totally mine,  
And my mind is calm as a Mother Superior's teeth  
In a Jubilee mug of milk,  
(That somniferous state of swaying, swaying, swaying,  
In a soft subconscious hammock of dreamy silk,  
A gossamer thread in the spinning World Wide Web,  
A flickering seaweed, clamped to the sea's deep bed  
That's soft and quiet as breathing, rhythmic, rhythmic as Rilke)

So, Mr Moon, if you just could see your way  
To declaring war upon day  
By crossing its hours off your list,  
I could stay forever in dreamtime.  
A stopped watch, with no sun. A no-one.  
A no-thing. A piece of cosmic fluff.

R.S.V.P, Mr Moon.  
Let's do it. What do you say!  
Let's stop Time, declare that enough's enough!

Sheena Blackhall



# Of Shards And Bog Kings: 16 Poems

Bog King

In Memoriam, Seamus Heaney 13th April 1939- 30th August 2013

Born in the family farmhouse of Mossbawn,  
A Derry man, first of a brood of nine  
His father dealt in cattle, his ma, a McCann's,  
Own clan made Irish linen, white and fine

He learned to read at Anahorish school  
Then boarded by a scholarship, to college  
Cream always rises up to the bowl's brim  
A pinch of learning turns gruel to porridge  
Light as the goose wing on a baking board  
Was how he treated fame, the modest kind  
No need for men to whisper 'You are mortal'  
His greatest triumphs, triumphs of the mind

From farm, to Derry, Dublin, Oxford, Harvard  
A Beltane beacon, bard of the whispered shout  
A Saoi of the Irish Aosdána  
At Blackrock, Dublin, that great fire went out

Now, he will join the Bog Queen under the sod  
Dug down beside his small boned toddler brother  
His Golden Wreath of Poetry dried to crackling  
This Irish Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres  
Will sweeten the mizzling mist of an Irish Autumn  
Magherafelt, the Moss, the Moyola river,  
Will know him as the coffin passes by  
The high horse chestnut boughs, will briefly quiver

He will lie at the world's end, with his people's tribe  
No troubles can touch him now, no storms to assail  
Out of the frantic media's caterwaul  
The tomb tells time in gentler ways and older  
By his first hill in the world, place of clear water.

llers

The sea is full of sand and salt, herring bones  
And the broken backs of shells  
The silt of fathoms churning

Here at the ocean's edge  
Travellers live in their homes of tin  
Appearing and disappearing at will  
Like gulls come out of a cloud

Today, they face the tilting seas of the North  
Tomorrow will see them parked  
On some derelict periphery  
Waiting for the dogs of disapproval  
To snap at their slip-shod heels

s  
Three otters came frolicking into a pool  
Heads like bloated tadpoles  
Shoulders shifting water  
With the ease of a six-pack mole  
Breaking the water's roof  
In kerplunking play  
A rumpus of fur and gumption  
Glorying in the heat of a cloudless June  
Hedonists, chin high in mud and spray

and Tryst  
I met an Irish boy in a ferny wood  
When I was a near grown woman  
And he was a near grown man  
And the stars in their sable heavens  
Burned like coals in a hod

Come lately into greening  
Two young beech buds,  
unsheathing their tender leaves

The aspens quivered and chattered  
But never betrayed or told  
How his lips were hard as a stone in Killarney moss

For who could think a scythe would cut down corn  
And it still green, not yet on the cusp of turning?

nter

Girl with silver earrings, bright in her copper earlobes  
Is wearing the black silk hijab of her Muslim faith

About ten, she is holding her baby brother,  
Her mother's bag of messages

A passenger pokes her back  
'Shift yer feet frae the aisle,  
Ye rude lassie', he barks

She understands the poke and the angry face.  
Clothed in vibrant reds and greens  
She is a parakeet in a bus full of seagulls

Her mother shrugs her shoulders, looks away  
'Watter aff a dyeuk' the man exclaims  
To an invisible audience

The street outside is damp with the smirr of rain  
Pawn shops, bookies, boarded up retailers  
Poundland, moneylenders, miserable beggars  
The smear of excrement where dogs have fouled

Above all this, some celebratory flags  
Drop in the limp air, like shot crows, hung as a warning

This is the year of the queen  
We are her uneasy subjects

Wood has many Doors  
The wood has many doors  
Walk in. Bring your empty day and fill it with trees

Bend down on your two stiff knees  
Stuff mushrooms or cones into a dusty bag

The owl has drawn the blinds on his wide eyes  
His window of air will open again in moonlight

Firs are talking in riddles, dropping their needles  
Onto the orange and tawny trampled path beneath

By the loch, a heron meditates on fish  
In his grey Zen cloak, one leg frozen in zazen  
Nothing is happening, nothing that you can see□  
Ants reshuffle a pack of leaves  
On the edge of your eyes' periphery

Are you surprised how old and fat you have become?  
Are you surprised how life has leaked away unnoticed?

Stay. Leave. Linger. It's all one to the stone  
By the badgers' trail. The clouds dissolve  
And reassemble, ever the same but different

m de La Vieille Dame  
To peer at the section marked 'reduced'  
She raises her turtle neck

Shoddy, in shapeless shoes  
Shrunk in size and status  
Her brown blotched hands  
Strain to retrieve what's affordable  
A 1950s stunner, she knocked men dead  
With one bat of her flirty eyebrows

Now, she shuffles along the aisles  
Elasticated stockings holding her veins together  
Wearing parfum de la vielle dame  
The only accessory age provides for free

on a Barber's Chair  
A cat jumped up on a barber's chair  
Said, 'Give me a wash and blow  
I've places to be and folks to meet  
Make it snappy, I've far to go! '

His eyes were mean and his claws were sharp  
He'd the look of a cut-throat tom  
You could tell he'd massacred tons of mice  
And the odd pet pooch with aplomb  
A cat's got to do what a cat's got to do  
The barbers hands were shaking  
This cat could spit; he'd a growl like grit  
That had most mere mortals quaking

With his slicked back fur he began to purr  
As he tossed a bird to the floor  
'Keep the change, ' he said, 'it's almost dead'  
As he strutted out from the door

I've romped with a gnu till my face turned blue  
I've wrestled a Russian bear  
But the meanest beast from west to east  
Was the cat on the barber's chair

Feared (Asylum, ww2)

They feared the terrors of reality  
They feared the night, the siren's weird refrain  
They feared the ghosts which visit the insane  
They feared all contact with humanity

They feared the bombshell of new company  
They feared hallucinations, bringing pain  
They feared electric shocks, that jolt the brain  
They feared the locked ward's frightful anarchy

They feared each shadow, glad to be un-free  
They feared the world, it's nose pressed on the pane  
They feared depression's inner misery

No time to fear the bombs that fell like rain.  
No time to fear war's bloody potency  
For some, no chance to ever fear again.

10.A Royal Baby

Though clouds bring flood, and nations clash  
There's happy news to bring  
A royal baby has been born  
To Britain's future king

And may the infant grow in love  
And walk in pleasant ways  
And may the dove of peace and joy  
Guard all its future days

#### 11.A Young Iguana

A Young Iguana called Molly  
From Asda stole a shopping trolley  
'Come back!' cried the staff  
For she'd only paid half  
Of the shopping, a crime that was folly

#### the Fruit Bat

Jack the fruit bat hangs around  
Upside down above the ground  
If he lets go, then like as not  
He will become a fruit compote

#### Otter

A dashing young otter with balls  
Jumped over Victoria Falls  
But he didn't find fame, though on learning his name  
He was pestered by internet Trolls

#### I Processions

Tribal processions enter the porch of my thought  
Grandfather, wiping his beery whiskers  
Grandmother, counting the days since her last bleed  
Their grandparents, carrying on the tracks of ghostly footprints

Forebears live on, in a certain turn of phrase,  
The odd plate from a wedding dinner service  
Bits and pieces of genetic flotsam

The family totem pole has many faces  
All of them cut from the same timber and root

#### Blue Purse

The blue purse flopped through the letterbox  
Plastic, with gilt clasps  
All the way from America  
In sunlight, it softened a little  
Stank of an unknown chemical  
That nipped the back of your nose

It belonged to the land of gas stations  
Sidewalks, tumbleweed, Charlie Chaplin

It belonged to the land of Davy Crockett and pop  
The land of chewing gum and farms the size of prairies

Like a big strange Giant standing behind a tree  
Waving the stars and stripes  
It was just too new to be loved  
It might jump out, shout 'Boo!' one day  
And pull the trigger

s  
Once upon a time  
A little glass doll  
Slipped the leash like a mongrel sniffing  
For treats or treasures

A very little girl  
From a garden of snail trails  
Tom Thumbs and briers

Like an eel wriggling into strange waters  
Ungrateful little doll  
Not content to be untouched and still

Who fell from the rainbow like Icarus  
And smashed into bloody shards

And a wicked fairy came  
With a wombful of ash  
And a mouth that spewed out terrors

At night her daddy came,  
The handsome prince,  
The soup in the pan  
Was full of bones and lies  
And the handsome prince  
Put a lock on the castle gate  
To keep the monsters out

Dreams brought snakes  
And dragons. But the glass doll  
Glued together never moved  
You could stick her with pins  
Like a witch's toy  
But she'd never cry out  
No no, that wasn't allowed

On a clear day you mightn't see her  
Invisible, quiet and secret  
A Goody two-shoes  
Wearing a crack for a smile

Sheena Blackhall



# Of Swans And Media Pussies (25 Poems)

## 1. Scottish Apocalypse

A frightened Edinburgh Bagpipe will suddenly fart  
Ten ptarmigans on Ben MacDhui will moult  
The HIghlanders will turn into kilt pins

Queer things have come to pass, Sean Connery will proclaim  
Tartan deer will leap in the sea like lemmings

Violent thistles will strangle Strathdee shortbreads  
A plate of Baxter's soup will morph into spam  
Thig a mhuir deas air a mhuir tuath  
Thomas of Erceldoune was head to say.  
Thig a mhuir deas air a mhuir tuath:  
The south sea will come upon the North Sea

Hollyrood will be the new Atlantis

## Moon on an Old White Whore

No one to stroke her bones  
No-one to wipe the tears  
From her runnelled cheeks

There's a big red moon in the cold black sky tonight  
Winter's scoffed the victuals off the trees

The old white whore's gray brains  
Know she don't quite cut the mustard

Her gravy-train's dried up  
Men look elsewhere  
Now that her trade's gone ape  
She's mothballed in old-woman spider spit

West as Materialism

Sometimes the West's like the Mary Celeste  
Skeleton hands on the tiller  
Nixon, up on the Crow's nest

Through portholes, I notice icebergs and sun,  
Like a gold biscuit  
Dipped in the sow's trough of the sea

Slaves cough in the hold of prison ships  
A junk, full to the gunnels with smack  
Rolls with the punches

Five hundred pleasure cruisers  
Sipping cocoa and shortbread  
Drift towards the Valhalla of Retirement

#### 4. Alice leaves Wonderland

Alice grew up, left Wonderland  
Enjoyed a quick tumble with a foxy-looking student  
His calloused fingers tapping the vertebrae trot

Afterwards rinsing her flimsies in the launderette  
She soaped her crannies clean

It was all downhill after that,  
Back alleys, booze, drugs,  
Shafted by all the usual fleshy pit-falls

In the end, there was nothing to do  
But shut her turtle eyes  
Breathe out the little bird of her soul  
Into the cavernous blue and empty air

Brother

My telephone rings. A man promises  
Time-shares in Nirvana  
I'm ex-directory, but he's managed to sniff me out.

I call his bluff  
Speak French, tell him the tenant  
Left on a long safari.

Yes, that's correct, I note  
When the data on a computer  
Shows me my own name  
Filed in an alien department I've never heard of

Respectable buildings behind their granite jackets,  
Watch us with James Bond eyes  
They see through credit cards, passports, saris, hubris,  
Bowler hats and ethnic sub-divisions

Inside the ministry of sin  
Somewhere it's recorded, put on an un-dead loop  
One day you'll watch it  
Again Again Again

## 6. The Media Pussies

Media pussies purr across their Pims  
Their pouty lips, trout-like,  
Are always ajar

They swallow men like bubbles  
Then spit them out  
Just for the hell of it

Cat-walking media pussies  
Eat fur-balls for breakfast

Celebrity sucks, they say  
We need our privacy  
Showing their sleek bottoms  
High-tailing off with a swish

## 7. nce's Snake

A man came to my water-trough  
on a hot, hot day, in pyjamas for the heat,

I made him wait, I was silently drinking  
Minding my own business.  
He looked at me, as poets do,  
Like a stunned sow.

I flickered my two-forked tongue at him, and mused a moment,  
I was thirsty, and first in the queue

I am a Sicilian snake. He was only a British tourist  
Grey socks beneath his sandals hiding his pasty toes

He was grinning at me like a simpleton  
Maybe the heat has got to him, I thought

I drank, lifted my head, and licked my lips,  
Looking round. He was still there  
Speaking to himself like a half-wit

I caught a word like 'honour'.  
We Sicilians know about honour,  
A Mafia thing.

Whenever my back was turned.  
He picked up a log and threw it at me with a clatter  
Honour, I thought...He doesn't know  
The meaning of the word

Now, I expect, he'll write about it  
Say he's sorry, over his gin and tonic  
Making a song and dance of petty cruelty  
□

Plants

Bloody Crane's Bill, Butcher's Broom  
Creeping Jenny, Witch's Butter  
Devil's snuff Box, Lady's Tresses  
Red Hot Poker, Jacob's Ladder

Viper's Bugloss, Good-King-Henry  
Hound's Tooth, Lamb's Ear, some Fool's Parsley  
Stinking Hellebore, Fairy Foxglove  
Water Drop Wort, and Baldmoney

I Grub

Australian's relish Parrot Pie  
The Thai love bee grubs, creamed  
Silkworms flavour Vietnam soup.  
The Turks like starlings, steamed

Romanians eat stuffed bear paw.  
Japan has snake tongues, fried  
Calf udders grace the plates of France.  
Chinese eat maggots, dried

The Scots eat sweetbreads boiled inside  
Sheep stomach. What appeals  
To Irishmen is a pig's face.  
And Englishman likes eels.

Keeper Number One

There's the Mistress of the Robes,  
There's the Queen's Raven Master  
There's the Lady of the Bedchamber,  
The Chauffeur and the Gardener  
The Ghillie, Stalker, Nanny,  
The Hereditary Grand Falconer,  
The Butler, Maids in waiting,  
The Barge Master and the Almoner

But if I had to work  
In the service of the Queen  
I'd be the Keeper of the Swans,  
And nothing in between

I'd watch them bobbing on the Thames,

A snow-fleet in the sun  
Now that's a job that's magical!  
Swan Keeper Number One!

and Chattels

The things were helpless.  
They stood in the icy hall  
Their owner, dead.  
Goods from a family with its core removed

Who bought them? What for?  
Will they be cared for?  
Collateral damage felled by the scythe of Death.

Some, stretch back to the tottering steps of Empire  
The knobkiri casting its shadow over continents  
A killing-club transformed to a child's plaything  
A trumpeting ivory elephant, shrunk to a souvenir  
The goods and chattels of my ancestors.

Things glue a home together  
Gathering them, my father never thought  
They would outlive him, inhabit other homes.  
His house is now closed up with snow and sorrow  
The worm turns in the oak.  
The things have other homes  
New masters and changed meanings

orphoses

A box of face-paints at a fair,  
A child transformed at a stroke  
From a human into a jungle beast,  
Identity is smoke.

Something unseen within me stirs  
From the mirror of mist and haar  
Something unknown stares back at me,  
Sad as a falling star

I close my eyes, I stop my ears,  
Keeping unease at bay,  
It comes to remind me Man is sand,  
His castles, shadow- play.

sses

The sun was bright on the face of my watch  
I was dining in the Leopold café  
With a casting agent, (Bollywood pays my rent) .  
Twenty died in a hail of guts and bullets  
Just as dessert arrived.

I'm the maid who used to work at Nariman House  
It was instinct. I scooped up Rabbi Holtzberg's son  
And ran. My luck was in, I saved his skin and mine.

They were just boys, the terrorist, newly bearded  
Schools that train in atrocity, do they give grades in killing  
Distinctions for murder?

Flames lit up the alabaster ceilings  
Priceless Eastern carpets sopped with blood

My ambulance was a ferry for guests and tourists  
To hospital, not quite the trip they'd paid for  
Down in the mortuary of Cama Hospital  
My friend heard screams in the wards,  
As folk were slaughtered  
More like an abattoir than a place of healing

Ms. Amarsy and her husband ...  
She owns French Princess Tam-Tam lingerie.  
I'd almost raised the courage to join her table  
When in mid-sentence, her face was blown away.

Thirty-five hours I spent in total terror  
Locked in my room inside the Taj Hotel  
I'd only come to attend a cousin's wedding.

I hid my British passport in my shoe  
British, American, we were sitting ducks,  
Picked by a foreign policy not of our making  
I am a banker. What do I know of war?

After the Commandoes kicked the door down,  
I stumbled into the lobby littered with glass  
Picking my way past shrapnel, limbs and shoes.  
I pissed myself relieved that I'd been missed.

I sell sweet fruits and flowers by Mumbai station  
Worshippers buy my blooms to dress their gods  
Before the Mumbai massacre, I had a son,  
Now I have blood stained petals, a soul of-ash.  
But I work on, for even grief must feed.

ng Requirements for a Makar

Second sight and the gift of prophecy  
Is optional. The wearing of odd socks  
May well be an asset

Bardic duties may include singing the praises (or not)  
Of kelpies, banshees, and other indigenous rarities

Visits to schools should always be made  
Without the laying on of hands  
(A makar should be wary of  
Falling through cracks in the system)

The successful applicant should be pulsing  
With sonnets, sestinas, villanelles, odes, haikus,  
And have access to copious transfusions  
Of blank verse, limericks and form of poetry  
Alive or dead

Dietary requirements are a matter of personal conscience  
When the Horsemen of the Apocalypse charge from  
Crathie to Cairo with blue sparks crackling off their hooves  
A makar must be ready with a poem  
Emergencies require immediate action



Nothing binds the bleeding soul like words.

### 15. Sao Paulo Nocturne

Always on Saturday night my brother drank  
I'd be upstairs near sleeping when it started  
'While you're beneath my roof ' our dad complained  
Con brio, bellicoso

'The hell with all of you, ' my brother's answer  
Crescendo, passionato  
Near taking the door off its stiff Victorian hinges

His music would machine gun any response  
Every window, wall and roof shook to attention  
Even the Northern Lights swayed in their sockets

One day my brother was there,  
The next, he wasn't  
A modern Conquistador  
Off to Brazil in his tailored business suit.  
Saturday nights were quiet after that.  
Talk was sotto voce

I thought about cannibals, crocodiles,  
Rainforests heavy with leaves  
In the land of drizzle Brazil

Our little battered school book told of  
Anaconda, evil vampire bats.  
He sent me home a razor-toothed piranha

He couldn't have flown further if he'd tried  
Learned Portuguese, dropped off the Grampian radar  
Gave his name to a child from a leper colony

Chameleon-like he took another culture  
Into his bed. His neighbours gunned down robbers  
Con bravura  
The rainbow's crock of gold kept disappearing  
Just one of 20 million in his city

The 19th richest city in the world  
His lovers were exotic, leggy, Latinos  
Where helicopters flew through gilt-edged clouds  
Where shanty-towns spawned infants in the gutters  
Little tadpoles, wriggling through the middens

A woman's voice, a stranger, at the end  
In broken English called.  
'What shall I do?  
Your brother, how I'll miss his grey-blue eyes!

The Old Country, for long,  
Diminuendo...  
Home's where the heart is, or the greatest grief.

## 16. Aboyne Games

Super-heroes, love-boats, Jekyll and Hydes  
Stepped from the pleasure flap of a Deeside tent  
At six I'd just discovered I loved balloons

A bat in a far tree opened one ear and sighed  
Folding its arms like a broolly dipped in tar.

A feral kitten tried to climb the flag pole  
Somebody hung a medal on a horse

A blousy woman with shoulders like epaulettes  
Picked small bones from a mackerel on a plate

Over the dyke the village dead stayed mute  
The laird took photos of the piping contest  
A girl, all legs and giggles, was declared a beauty  
Nobody looked in her mouth to study her teeth  
As they did with the shelts,  
Sots played Russian roulette with their wives' tempers.

Three sheep watched a Highland fling  
Through the visor of their pens, tall grass, and wool

A ridiculous dog bit clouds of candyfloss

Cheetah-spots of leaf-shade dappled the ground.

Maisie Macdonald sold sprigs of lucky heather  
To the minister who professed it was for charity

A young girl stared at a gypsy selling rides  
Pictured his brown limbs smeared across her freckles

Owls climbed into the soothing jar of sleep  
And slumbered till the village fair was over.

That night I dreamt of sporrans made from wild cats  
Beavers and foxes, glass eyes staring from kilts.

### 17. Yesterday's Heroes

Where were you when Kennedy was shot?  
In a classroom? Cooking the tea?  
When Lennon died, were you shopping?

TV brought them into every home.  
They shared our lives,  
We felt that they shared ours

Kennedy was everyone's rich uncle  
Powerful, suited, booted, living the dream  
Lennon, the stropic icon, family odd-ball  
Eternal student, cast ideas like coats

There have always been trolls and goblins,  
Princesses and crones  
Larger than life, reality writ large  
The saw forgets, the mighty elm remembers.

### 18. The Last Throes of Marriage

Towards the end, silence prevailed  
Two grey fish in a tank  
Circling each other soundlessly

Small betrayals leaked away all liking  
Like rain through an Amish sieve  
Actions had their sequel  
Apples fell in an orchard  
Red cheeks bruised and rotting

There was the usual parade  
Of meals and days and laundry

Too late to discourage  
The tremendous ocean  
Leaning against the crack  
In the fish tank's side

### 19. On Valentine's Day

Rain lay like rust on an old sword  
I was sitting under a great horse chestnut tree  
In the wind-farm of the woods  
Dusk fell swiftly.

A crow sang like a hinged gate  
Screeching of loss and decay  
It was February, the lovers' month  
Cupid peered from the past,  
A withered gargoyle  
A shrivelled pilgrim of sorrow

In the hills that lay to the north,  
Fingal's woman bathed in a mountain pool  
Beauty, dipped in a tarn of marvellous cold

Love lifted the wings of others  
Made kingfishers from sparrows.

I am a hunched grey heron by Glen Tilt  
A wave tossed in a storm on high Loch Duibh

hible Goods

To prepare the patient's body for family viewing:

Four Morgue sheets

Four Body tags

Four Safety pins

Remove all personal belongings.

Remove all drains, tubes, and soiled dressings.

If dentures are present but not in mouth, place in mouth.

Close eyes. Use small piece of tape

(on eyelids if necessary)

Bathe the patient's body

Remove all blood and/or body excreta.

Gently cross arms

Gently and loosely tie wrist Kling.

Loosely bind feet/ankles together

Place body I.D. tag on the big toe

Tie the outside shroud in three places:

at the head

at the mid-section

at the feet

One on the wrist/hand;

One on the outside of shroud when finished.

Place the third body I.D. tag

On the outside of the shroud

Affix it with a safety pin.

Release of the body must be noted

In the morgue sign out log book

The body is now prepared for family viewing

Respect, is attention to detail

The rituals of unbecoming

Must be observed

21. Red-Coat

He is standing, framed by the window

Staring into the house.  
Brittle with frost, snow crunches at his feet.

His black-socked foxy legs  
Rise stiffly into his heart-shaped ermine ruff  
His heavy sable tail, brushes  
The copper fronds of the feather-ferns

This lethal, dapper hunter consumes each moment  
His pulse is wired to his teeth.  
His ears drink sound,  
His eyes feed upon movement  
His tongue laps up the air,  
Reddened from recent kills

He is life, unfettered by thought  
A focused fury. Walking  
Ways of being we have forgotten,

Less than a field off, he is pure as the North Star  
Breathing Winter, softly.

## 22. Dogged

Kirk Anders, a woodcutter's precious poodle  
In Norway, wandered out into the snow  
Responding to the pressing needs of Nature  
With the temperature at minus ten below.

On icy paws, the dog returned limping  
Its jaws were tight, as if clamped in a vice  
A quick look ascertained why it was wincing  
Between its legs hung two white balls of ice

Before the stove its owner fought a battle  
(Frostbite castrates as nothing else can do)  
To thaw out little Hakan's bits and pieces  
With his gentleman's love-tackle turning blue

Oh never take a poodle dog to Norway  
Where the blizzards will assail you everywhere  
But if you must have pets to keep you company

Buy a penguin or a furry polar bear

### 23. The Octopus

I am an octopus  
Such an octopus as Hieronymus Bosch  
Might have Painted into his  
Garden of Earthly Delights

See! Another day comes  
To take little bites from me.

How daintily time feeds  
Wiping its mouth on the serviette of the past.

### 24. Fallen Lucifers

We love our Fallen Lucifers  
Lord Byron, Errol Flynn  
With their fires forever burning  
And their morals in the bin

They're so like a Xmas pudding  
With the sixpences stuffed in  
They're rich and mad and bad for us  
There's nought so sweet as sin!

### 25. Blue Pool

Six year old Daisy's a bobber,  
Popping up through a round pink dough-ring  
Of wet plastic.

Fourteen year old sister, Eloise,  
Floats like a closed umbrella  
Eyes shut tight as a corpse,  
Legs clamped like a whelk's sides

Their mother, Magdalena,

Doggy paddles inelegantly  
Arms full of imaginary messages  
Going neither forwards nor backwards  
In stagnant fury

To the right and a little above them  
Like Neptune surveying his realm  
Nikkos, walrus- headed, is treading water  
The ripple from his thighs surrounds them all.

□

Sheena Blackhall



# Of Sylvia Plath, Ted Hughes (3 Poems)

In Memory of Sylvia Plath Hughes

The Black Prince of Paradise brought you to this place,  
Where Cromwell's Ironsides were bread and buttered,  
A stone's throw from the cockpit in Church Lane  
Where Wellington's troopers gambled on the cobbles.

Rowans are a red mush upon the road.  
The orange slates of leaves roof gloomy wynds.  
Dykes with their pie crust stone keep sunlight penned.  
Families are walls, closed ranks, compacted tightly.

A woman with a whippet Belsen face  
Tells me The Overspill' is your address....  
-Boneyard where Doctor, Tossopot, Fool, St George from Sowerby,  
From Hope Street, Nest Estate lie down together

Miss Golden Lotus, did you ever guess  
Your bridlepath of Prussian dressage led  
To nettles that would sting you if they could?  
Fame's a scoop in a ladle, sourly swallowed.

A mean grave to contain such a Colossus!  
Near you, cheek by jowl with Annie Sutcliffe,  
A prickly holly stands, a dour Druid,  
Pointing to Pogley's Barn, to Chestnut Cottage,  
To Thwaites White Lion Inn, its rampant sign  
Bidding the traveller stop and sup real ale.

Your blanket is a primrose chewed by slugs,  
Riotous ferns, a shock of maidenhair  
Burned by the brands of Autumn.  
Dock-leaf quilt hides silver coins  
You're never going to spend.

A mildewed ring, a plastic string of pearls,  
A mirror, pencil, tiny cowrie shells  
Wink up through wet and weed...a keyholder  
Of Marilyn Monroe in flying skirts.

Up to the neck in centuries you lie,  
In marble vest of bone and wooden shirt,  
Stuffed with the clay of England.

This is your kingdom now,  
Your power, your glory  
Here, where the leaves fall down  
And will not stop.

Elmet: for Ted Hughes

Billows of sheep-fields curve above grey clouds.  
Only a bird would choose to winter here,  
Where homes are land-locked nests  
Driven into the turf and pith of the hill.

Only a hunger after fallen Lucifers  
Could dog the sunken river to its source,  
Where grass pours off weir walls  
Like withered hair.

Cobbett could have ridden on these roads,  
This strange, bipolar landscape.  
No half measures, you're either tumbling down or toiling up.

The blue sky seems to be a place apart  
A slice of Heaven, laid down like a lid.

Beech trees anchor their roots, unleash their rigging.  
Brambles congeal to shrunken clots of black,  
Fern fronds hunch, like hermits with the ague.  
Parson Grimshaw's Methodist legacy  
hangs fire, where dismal chapels slowly fall  
Into the heath of Haworth, Heptonstall,  
Hardcastle Craggs, Crow Hill and Abel Cross.

This landscape was a poet's crucible.  
He knew where salmon leap, why foxes call.  
It was his clearings, his complexities,  
His faults, his glories, rooted here, like oak.

## Hebden Bridge

Each house wears a sooty face of brick  
Smudged from the funeral pyres of textile mills  
The slow canal's a snail Eating its own tail  
Each road is a fair's big dipper  
That women with thighs of steel ascend like moles

Gravity flicks off clouds from mountain shoulders  
To hotter in the cauldron of the vale

The Inn of the Fox and Goose lowers its hanging basket  
Bucket of petals into the day's well

Brambles shrivel like raisins  
Like old mens' foreskins  
In the sere Season,

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Travellers: Shodo, The Seine Et Al (13 Poems)

-111.111111W

## 1. The Travellers

'I'll have a limousine, ' said Sean.  
'I'll have a plane, ' said Jill.  
'Some shelter, food and clothes, ' said John  
'I'll have a bank, ' said Bill.

'Never enough, ' said Anthony  
'Just give me more, ' said Ann  
'More money, luck, celebrity  
More everything, ' said Dan.

Possessions bring their own concerns  
A box, a lock, a key  
Of which, poor John not having much  
Was relatively free.

Old age devoured celebrity  
Ill health removed the zest  
For gawdy trinkets, time-share homes  
Grim Death dissolved the rest.

The lawyer took the limousine  
(it isn't cheap to die)  
The undertaker took the plane  
The bank, by then, was dry.

Fate lasts a moment...beauty too  
It needs no master plan  
To travel lightly through the world  
Doing the best you can.

## 2. Dinner on the Seine

The bateaux-mouches along the Seine  
Kick lacy flounces at their train.  
Warm evening. On this quay in France

Punters pay well for canned romance.  
A divertissement. All are dressed  
Faces are rouged and shirts are pressed  
The bourgeoisie are out to get  
Their money's worth. Here, each coquette  
Outshines the chandeliers...bijoux  
As thrilling as a billet-doux.

Elegant as the Tour Eiffel  
An anorexic Breton Belle  
Strolls on with her Parisian beau  
The crew weighs anchor. Off we go.

The glittering Seine, a sexual vine  
Sends waves each vessel to entwine  
A water nymph, wet limbs afloat  
With pearls of bubbles at her throat  
. . .  
With oos and ahs, blondes and brunettes  
Toy with their hair – or serviettes.  
The menu comes: gourmet cuisine  
With pumpkin soup and chestnut cream  
With Burgundy snail fricassee  
All served with charm and Chardonnay.

A roué and his young chérie  
Swap badinage and bonhomie  
I order breast of duck, well done.  
The Notre Dame dies with the sun  
Till resurrected by the day.  
It will rejoin the tapestry  
That's Gaul. Cognac and cabaret  
French Haute Couture and Haute Cuisine  
Napoleon and Josephine.  
Chateaux, gateaux, the French Bastille  
The guillotine with mouth of steel  
Cold kiss where that cruel master met  
The neck of Marie Antoinette.

Marquis de Sade and Baudelaire –  
Such ghosts hang subtle in the air.  
The Auld Alliance, French Dauphin,

Voltaire, Apollinaire, Gauguin,  
Versailles, the Louvre... The Metro:  
The frisson that is Art Nouveau;  
Seurat, Monet, Matisse, Renoir;  
Nine in a Champs Elysee bar;  
Saint Joan of Arc. Brigitte Bardot  
Tin-Tin, de Beauvoir, Pissarro  
Montmartre, where each chic boutique -  
Holds bargain hunters for a week...

The duck arrived. When sliced apart  
Beneath brown flesh, a crimson heart:

Paris, that ancient whore, that cheat,  
Even dictates how we should eat.

I cursed the chef, the boat, the band,  
The repertoire, mechanic, bland;  
The singer, too hard-boiled by half,  
And then...Mon Dieu! she sang Piaf.  
Raw, bleeding, naked, an adieu  
To all things past, from all things new.

A ruined poster on a wall  
Peeled from its berth, a fading scrawl  
Where, forty years ago, just there,  
I'd stood, with blossom in my hair

The intervening years, like rain  
Dissolved. I was that girl again  
I glanced into the champagne glass.  
A hag stared back – the coup de grace.

the Moulin Rouge

Kicking heels, no cares, no bra  
Topless hoofers, oo la la  
May be fine for Alan Whickers  
Sailor boys or city slickers  
But its bad for dicky tickers  
Watching French girls

Flash their knickers

#### 4. The Shodo Artist

In traditional blue kimono, white cotton split-toe socks  
The pint-sized Shodo artist kneels to her art.

Outside, the sun falls warm on gnarled walnut  
A Scottish sparrow chirrup on its bough

The artist flows into the ink  
It dries. She lifts her face to the crowd  
A butterfly opening its wings that's just sipped nectar.

#### First Days of Spring

That wild stampede of the leaves into the ground  
A young girl on a balcony studies herself in the mirror.

Her mahogany hair will fill with twigs and webs.  
Flowers are battering their way into the light  
Pensioners feel like tourists in this Season

Dogs wag their tails like flapping scarecrow sleeves  
Solemn Memoirs suddenly seem redundant

The world's Compass points to a jubilee  
An Orchard sprouts from a Cox's pippin chess board  
Skylarks, pigtailed skippers, love such days  
When constellations of lilies spill their gold

In car parks, countless hot affairs are started  
Misery's Hydra-head is newly outlawed  
And shepherd's tend their fields of white meringues

Myths trip out of their caves tricked out in beads  
Usherettes on the cusp of a smoky shift  
See Spring pop up behind each chocolate advert

A breath of Kashmir  
Blows in a Scots schoolroom,  
Exchanging Himalayas for high rise flats

Zoya, in kingfisher blue  
Light as a lotus  
Flutters over her charge  
A mute, autistic Jew

He is a small, stone egg  
That sometimes cracks  
Lets out a whirlwind  
She is the calm that holds him  
As a pool contains the moon

He is in this world, but not  
She is in this city, but not

Over noonday tea  
She says she studies international law...  
A PhD. which she intends to use.

Outside, a cloud darkens the summer sky  
A dark bruise.  
'My mother worries I may disappear  
When I go home. It happens.  
She wishes I'd do medicine instead.  
Of course I won't.'

Kashmir kingfisher  
Fragile, flashing wings  
Now you see it  
Now you don't.

American Bun

There was an American bun  
Who went to its work with a gun  
If people complained  
It politely explained



'If you don't like it partner, then run.'

mber, Brig o Dee

Two ducks float backwards  
Not going against the stream

There is preening of wings  
A flurry of take offs and landings

One gull is out on a limb  
A small white lighthouse  
Nobody's going to visit

A heron's hunched on a rock  
A feathered Busby  
Each bird flies solo  
Carries no surplus freight

A black shag shakes its tail  
Legs apart, like an old man at a urinal  
Its beady face is blank  
As sightless marbles

w-talk with Mussolini

In the official fever hospital,  
Windows were closed like clams.

The world was high and dry outside our walls  
The ward was a drowned Atlantis

In the next bed to mine  
An old woman, her hands like a speckled trout,  
Turned belly up and died.

It was the typhoid summer  
Under the sun's round microscope, we fried.

A schoolfriend sent me Mussolini's biography

'I saw it- thought immediately of you'....  
(Though I am not Italian nor a Fascist)

He lay beside me, Il Duce, on the pillow  
His spine so stiff, his jaw like jutting granite  
In a photo, his corpse swayed idly from the gibbet  
Like the ward curtains, over the dead flies.

Intended

This hat alone cost two weeks bloomin' wages!  
Three chiffon roses! Don't I look a swell,  
Buttoned an' bowed in ribbons, steys and laces.

I'm Mary Fanthorpe, spinster of this parish.  
My Albert's paid to have this photo done.  
He's overseas just now- he wants my likeness  
To carry when he's fightin' in the Somme.

My ma ran up this dress, all nipped and tucked,  
This parasol don't half look la-di-da  
That nice photographer, he give me props,  
A floral backdrop, like the Music Hall.

My Albert needn't take no liberties  
Because he's paid this bloke to have me took.  
I wonder if the weather there in France is sunny now?  
We've rain, in Hebdon Brook.

He's delicate is Albert, got a chest.  
His mother packed spare socks...an extra vest.  
Know what I likes about him? Albert's clean.  
He even buffs his nails...a proper gent... and what a lark!  
He's sleepin' in a trench!

We're savin' hard to put down on a place.  
It's rainin' cats and dogs out. Quite a flood!  
This weather's goin' to ruin my hairdo...  
Me with my white lace boots, in all this mud!

## 11. The Plunderers

Bone tired of rowing through the whale black waves,  
we reached that shore, through sea-surge,  
One star burning.

Crossing the harbour bar, the hull had rolled,  
The mainsail humped and cracked,  
The boats in that strange mooring dwarfed our vessel.  
Manfreid swore they'd come from Jotunheim,  
The home of giants who menaced the world of men.  
Skogdin said he dreamed wolves ate the moon.

On shore the street lights burned without a flame.  
Strange wheeled carts flew by, propelled by wizardry,  
For no beast drew them, neither horse nor ox.

We'd hoped for prizes, plunder, glory-fights.  
Instead we found their warriors slumped on the streets,  
Death in their faces, rattling begging bowls,  
Their women too, skulls rising through their wasted skin  
Like icebergs beside granaries of food  
Stacked high in glassy towers.

No sentries, soldiers...all the others staggered as if drunk,  
Shouting in strange tongues. Some horrid pestilence was here,  
And nothing worth the stealing.  
No cattle, gold, no flocks to drive away.

Fearing to catch the smit of their queer palsie  
Thorfinn told us all to flee back to the ship.

I am an old man, now, but there's no bribe  
Could stir my bones to sail that way again.

acker

My brother had it all&#8209;  
Talent, good job globetrotting up the Amazon  
Down the Seine.

He sired no offspring though, his fault, not hers.  
He needed to leave our inbred neck of the woods  
Strike out on a limb. Be his own man.  
So when they cut that man-thing from his back  
His half-made twin,  
Small sack of teeth and hair  
There were no words at hand to fit the case  
Forty years he'd lugged that inner sibling  
That backpacker he never knew was there  
That incubus from where he'd tried to leave.

Likeable Ordeal, Lumb Bank

My friends describe me as 'a likeable ordeal'  
John said, as we conducted introductions.

Andrew poured out the wine.  
Alison flashed her eyes.  
Graham drew lightning sketches.  
Tom read a poem about thighs  
(brown ones, well travelled and hairy) .

Harry cooked and cleaned.  
Mary thought of her kin,  
As the wind rattled and keened.

John, tall as a telephone post, shambled from room to garden,  
Wispy as Banquo's ghost.

Your accent's terribly strange I can't catch a word you say,  
He informed me matter of factly in his likeable ordeal way.

Up first in the raw morning,  
He carried the coal and kindling.  
You'd have thought you'd caught him praying,  
As he knelt on the stone flags, willing  
The flames to live. And lo,  
They did... and so, from rug to rafter  
The room soon magically filled with simple joy

ait with Tarot Cards

This portrait is of Miss Catriona Low.  
Her life's mapped out.  
Her way is crystal clear.  
The Tarot pack will tell her where to go.

Her cats are midnight pools.  
Their fish eyes glow.  
The alchemy of divination's here.  
She turns each card, methodical and slow.

Literature, music, cats... a lover too  
Inhabit her domain, a ship of air.  
The Tarot pack will tell her where to go.

Sheena Blackhall

# Of Tsunamis, Transplants, Lovers & Babies (13 Poems)

## 1. The Friday Tsunami

Friday arrived, a sea-born Armageddon  
Mountainous seas crashed from the ocean's peaks  
Bulldozer waves breaking machines like matchsticks

Wires wrapped their metal arms around each other  
Cities were on the move, a seething cauldron.  
A human flotilla of arms, legs, floundering, flailing

After, came names on lists. Fathers  
Rooting like boars for buried families  
The stink and sway of mincemeat masonry

Bridges were twisted braids. Ships perched on roofs  
Like cormorants watching for fish.  
'Has anyone seen my husband?' a cleaner pleaded  
'Where is my paddy field?' a farmer cried.

Victims swirled and stirred in the same salt broth  
The very air recalling Hiroshima.

No reason given, no pity and no mercy  
Nature rising up like a sick man's gorge

## 2. Suddenly, aged 35

Suddenly, aged 35  
Irretrievably lost, a piece of a family jigsaw

Suddenly, aged 35  
A fork turned its back on its knife

Suddenly, aged 35  
Hope broke into shards too sharp to fix

Suddenly, aged 35  
A wife a lover a mother entered the past tense

### 3. The Lovers of Union Square

Elderly lovers at Frankie & Benny's  
Skip the dessert as they're watching the pennies  
Students go dating at Baguette Express  
Or go Dutch at the Subway when out to impress

Proposals indecent or racy are made  
At Zizzi's before the square pizzas are paid  
At Nando's, Chiquito's & Prezzo's the girls  
Discuss latest conquests while black coffee swirls  
Whilst others break bread inside Giraffe or Peckham's  
And dream their a team like their heroes, the Beckhams

At Accessorize, Fossil and Ollie & Nic  
The would-be-date-magnets all buy to look chic  
At , n, Paperchase  
And Best Wishes, the Valentines take pride of place

For those who've been lusty, there's Mamas and Pappas  
And Costa, where Junior can shake his maracas  
At Jack & Jones, Fat Face, New Look, H & M  
The girlfriends consider the length of a hem  
Will it catch his attention? Turn off, or turn on?  
Next, Outfit...then Starbucks for Latte and scone

Wealthy oilmen descend on Pandora or Rox  
For that special something to pop in a box  
Not quite what she'd like? Lapis Gold or Azendi  
May soften her heart...think you generous and trendy.

When the courting is over, for feathering the nest  
Instyle can provide, or dropp by M & S  
And to keep love alive, why not top off the day  
At the Perfume Shop, buying an essence or spray.

Union Square welcomes Cupid, leaves nothing to chance  
For those window shopping for Love and Romance  
To woo, wine and dine your new boyfriend or girl  
The Square is unbeatable...give it a whirl!

#### 4. Love Song to a City

I love my city with its growling skies  
Its chiselled features and its trading fleet  
Its windy thoroughfares, the seagull cries  
Ringing above the clash of Union Street

I love the huddle of the Fitty Wynds  
The curlicues of Marischal's soaring spires  
The echo through the haar of ancient chants  
Sung in the smirr by dead Franciscan friars

I love the way the town clings to the tide  
The shingly, tingly, rhythmic slush of shale  
Breaking the North Sea into shining shards  
Driven by wind and salted by the hail

I love the atriums of glassy malls  
The mediaeval masonry of Kings  
Gray herons fishing on the Dee & Don  
The landward V of geese's beating wings

I love the cats on Union Terrace Bridge  
The clickity clack of speeding trains beneath  
The Mither Kirk's green lung, oasis space  
Such gems as city forefathers bequeath  
To us, as trustees of this ancient place  
This Northern Light with granite carapace

#### 5. In the Room Next Door: for Jessica, January 2011

Two gentle creatures crossed the oceans  
Exchanging Asian warmth for a Scottish Winter  
The foetus turns like a dolphin in the womb

The stars are writing her future as we wait  
Two families, one Scots, one Vietnamese  
Knitting a union in the unborn's bones

I wish this child no napalm, no Cullodens  
This grand-daughter much wished and waited for



May she never hide in fear from a soldier's gun  
Or know the gnaw of hunger in her belly  
May the dragon-lords with their drugs  
Not crush her wings, nor tear her innocence

For now, she lives in the swell and tide of her mother  
Birth will release her into a conjoined culture

Child of the ceilidh string and the Buddhist chant  
May you be as smoke in the air of a cold morning  
Dark haired and comely, deeply loved and wanted

## 6. Spare Parts

Have a Heart?

Don't be Tongue Tied

Maybe it's crossed your mind...

Cold feet? Stomach in a Knot?  
It doesn't cost an arm and a leg  
To see eye to eye  
With organ donation

Get a head start. Have a heart-to-heart  
With your nearest and dearest.  
Thumbs up to lending a hand

Don't get cold feet:  
Wimps don't have a leg to stand on  
The surgeons will be all ears  
Got green fingers? A sweet tooth?  
A big mouth? Are you a pain in the neck? Two faced?  
Don't fret. The surgeons can't transplant bad habits yet.

## 7. Tribal Trees

Nine months the newborn swam in the womb  
Her parents going about their daily business  
Now come the golden days, the princess-time

Too young to give needs speech  
Her skin is smooth and soft as Chinese silk

Her nails are paper thin as mother-of-pearl  
Her crown of hair is fluffy eiderdown  
Her tiny mouth a pout of dewy bubbles  
The child lies in the arms of a withered elder  
The veins on the ancient hands  
Rise like sailors' knots in the sun-bleached skin

Grandma's wearing the leathered neck of a turtle  
Her empty breasts hang limp in her chemise  
The rise and fall of sap in tribal trees.

□

8.▣ was a Marvellous Party

I thought you'd enjoy a party after your tour of duty  
I'm still at Camp Shorabak in my head,  
Our Afghan base, all fear and energy

Didn't you like my dress? It cost a fortune  
When you see the Afghan women, their dress is Biblical.  
It takes you back 2,000 years or more

You didn't touch a single piece of food.  
The vol au vents were Coronation prawns  
Out on patrol the food's boiled in a bag.  
The menu, love, is the last thing on your mind.

I went to so much trouble, balloons and invites  
Up at Musa Qala, lying on a rooftop  
The wadi and the mountains were astounding  
The sunset with its background, blasts and gunfire

Was the band too loud? Didn't you like the dancing?  
On foot patrol I had to watch my step  
For IEDs...a bang could mean disaster

I didn't know your best friend had been killed.  
There's always something dreadful on the news.  
I just switch off, we all do. It's so far  
From all we care about back here at home.  
He got his in a firefight, three hour skirmish.  
His wife and kiddies get a widow's pension  
But am I still your girl? You look so handsome

In your dress army tunic, with your medals.  
All manly, disciplined, cool yet repressed  
My best friend Donna's boyfriend's just a joiner.  
I tell her, 'Watch the news', you might be on  
See you tomorrow, maybe catch a film?

#### 9. The Harrowgate Hoard

If some dismal day you've got nothing to do  
You're disgruntled, unsettled and bored  
Why not purchase a metal detecting rod  
And discover a Harrowgate Hoard?

Has the cat brought in fleas? Is the baby in fits?  
Has dry rot gnawed the house you adored?  
The answer is simple. To sweeten the day  
Go discover a Harrowgate Hoard.

You planned a nice picnic outside on the sand  
It spat, then it dripped, then it poured  
And made your fake tan look like wet marzipan  
What you need is a Harrowgate Hoard

You went on a foursome arranged by two friends  
You were cucumber-cool, but ignored  
And spent the night doodling on bar mats and stools  
Get a life. Get a Harrowgate Hoard

The football team that you supported got beat  
You wept as the other side scored  
And the horse that you backed ran amuck on the course  
Change your luck. Find a Harrowgate Hoard  
When you married a wife, for the rest of your life  
She omitted to tell you she snored  
You could leave her behind, fly to Cannes to unwind  
With the help of a Harrowgate Hoard!

#### 10. Three Women circled Weirditch Well

Three Women circled Weirditch Well  
All whiskery, all whispery  
They vanished into empty air

Like the sea-echo from a shell

Three Women circled Weirditch Well  
And where they walked, the flowers died  
And where they breathed the blossoms fell  
Like bridegrooms mourning a lost bride

#### 11. The Dyslexic Laptop

I ma giong ot tepy a littr.  
I ma giong ot sand ot ty yuo  
I ma giong ot tepy a littr  
Ho, pliz well you sand mi noe ti?

#### 12. Bow to Pocket an MP

Offers of perks on tap  
Holidays at a warm, exotic villa  
An introduction to Any celebrity at all  
Offer of a prime-time TV slot  
Offer of a book deal with a tour  
A high class hooker with very discreet credentials

#### 13. Saddleworth Moor

Curlew and Merlin, Flycatcher and ouzel  
Lapwing and Plover up Pennine Peaks Soar  
Rising from Saddleworth red grouse and pheasant  
Through arching rainbow to Heaven's bright door  
Flint head and Viking shard, Morris stick dancing  
Saddleworth sheep crying lone on the moor  
Hare hunts with thudding paws, gun barrels blasting  
Saddleworth lambs dogged by Lucifer's spoor

Keith Bennet snatched near his grandmother's house  
Pauline Reade after a dance lured aside  
John Kilbride kidnapped exploring a market  
Anne Downey taken from a fairground ride  
Buried in Saddleworth under the heathland  
All of them children, that families held dear  
Hindley and Brady cut down youth and innocence  
Write in the Doomsday Book Evil stood here.

!

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Sheena Blackhall

# Of War Victims, Russia, Bruges: (19 Poems)

Petersburg

City of Multiple Identities....  
Venice of the North, St Petersburg....  
Petrograd.....Leningrad,  
Hero City.....St Petersburg again...

At its heart, Big Meadow, renamed Funny Field,  
Tsaritsa's Meadow, Field of Mars,

Currently known as Revolution Square  
Shedding more masks though time than Mata Hari  
The Church on the Spilled Blood also reinvents itself  
Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ,  
Where anarchists blew up a mighty Tsar

Topaz, lazurite, mosaics, glorious onion domes  
4 million rubles poured into this shrine  
After the seige of Leningrad it was a morgue  
And then a storage place for vegetables,  
Rechristened as 'The Saviour on Potatoes.'

A spinning boat-shaped weathervane  
On the Admiralty's spire, is driven by war and snow

Wolves once roamed these streets where serfs rebelled  
Streets of white nights and long, cold, eerie winters,  
Grey granite buildings tower by frozen lakes

Swathed in fur, People sail by in ice boats  
Here is the Winter Palace, green and white  
With its onion dome  
With its fifteen hundred rooms  
Where Tsars ruled over a hundred million people  
Here's wealth and power beyond imagining.

The parks and streets are lined with English oak,  
Green ash and silver birch,  
Norway maple, leafy limes and poplars.

Siberian larch, blue spruce,  
And grieving willow

Chirping between their boughs,  
Birds hunch and shiver.

Peter the Great, Bronze Horseman, sits forever  
Astride his rearing mount, facing the River Neva  
Lording the Baltic Sea, high on the Thunder Stone,  
Built by the sweat of serfs and Swedish prisoners.

You may choose to consider Laika  
The cosmic Barker, imprisoned in Sputnik II  
Forever going walkies round the earth

You may visit the Cathedral of Paul & Peter  
Grave of the Tsars, in their Altai jasper cells  
With its icons, bell tower, and its needle spire.  
Where a flying angel attempts to launch itself,  
Bearing an orthodox cross to a higher orbit.  
Lightning loved to strike its soaring tip

Once, the Dutch bells called 'God Save the Tsar',  
Now, they sing the hymn of the Soviet Union.

This town is the home of the great Mariinsky ballet.  
Nijunsky, Pavlova, Nureyev, graced its stage  
Dmitri Shostakovich wrote his Seventh Symphony  
While Leningrad endured the German siege.

In April, you may watch the melting ice  
Snow-rocks from Lake Ladoga  
Floating along St Petersburg's canals,  
In the steps of Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Blok.

This city isn't just a one-trick pony  
Its citizens have numbered Marc Chagall  
Peter Carl Faberge, the Royal jeweller  
Grechko, the spaceman. Kossacks.  
Lenin, Putin, Dutchman and Jew, immigrant Swede and Scot  
You'll shell out coins like Rimsky-Korsakov  
Prokofiev and sad Rachmaninoff,

For beetroot soup, sour cream, and sturgeon pie  
Perhaps you'll sit and eat beef stroganoff  
Inside a café and hear ghostly music play:  
Stravinsky's Rite of Spring, Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker  
Moustaches sprouting ice, bent over spoons

A rearing equine statue on Anichkov  
Has one ball carved in likeness of Napoleon.  
The Russian humour is akin to Scots.

Grandmasters of the game of human chess  
Cannily moved pawns to challenge kings  
White and Red Terror, chewed the town like a bone  
This town is hard to kill, just like Rasputin:  
Poisoned by plots, shot many times and beaten,

Drowned by the Neva, yet it still survives  
Rising again and again in transformation.

Dust of Life: Bui Doi

The planes flew off,  
The shells and napalm stopped.  
The break off was not clean, Left repercussions

Amerasian children, dumped on reluctant relatives,  
Orphanages, brothels, or back street shacks.  
Hands held up like rice ears, begging food or money.

Their mothers worked at military bases  
Cashiers, laundry workers, secretaries.  
Waiting on tables, chasing the Great American  
Gum-chewing dollar-drawn Dream,

Asian women, a source of sex and comfort  
For homesick guys from Brooklyn and L.A.  
Bi-racial children given the name of half-breed  
Or 'bui doi': the dust, the dirt of life.

Some were forced to de-activate the land mines



With just a knife, so cheap their human value  
Harvest what your fathers have sown in our country

Shells explode. People recover or die. Villages burn.  
Homes are rebuilt or lost  
Women weep. Crying does not heal wounds.

Time blows the dust of life into the future  
Like grit, like the passage of years,  
Like salt-nip to the eyes, unwept for collateral damage  
Neither this nor that, like commingled dead  
Steaming in the jungle's turned leaves.

ms: Tune: Oh Come Oh Come Emmanuel

Jamaludin was praying in the mosque  
Poor farmers groan at every added cost  
Word came of tankers stuck in a stream  
Free fuel for all, an Afghan peasant's dream  
For winter's cruel to those in poverty  
And fortune's crumbs they gather zealously

There was a full moon shining in the sky  
And then a huge light fell on them from high  
Assadullah was blown to the ground  
With smoke and fire and terror all around  
Through ash and mud he called on village names  
Torched and devoured by greedy leaping flames

Men formed a queue. God's handiwork undone...  
One took some flesh home, calling it his son  
For none could tell by limb, robe or face  
Which kinsman had been slaughtered in that place  
For men must grieve, above each corpse's head  
Due prayer and rites be given to the dead

The women wailed and cried to no avail  
Grief is not less though felt behind a veil  
While cultures clash in town and outpost  
It is the innocent wars injure most  
Till East and West can live in harmony

The Lord of Death will stalk both land and sea

### Beijing Widow

Two caged songbirds  
Hung in a bamboo cage.

The Beijing widow watered  
Bonsai trees in her dingy courtyard

The Beijing widow's tortoise  
Peered from a green glass tank

Her roof, pagoda-tiled  
Dripped dismal rain  
Cherry blossom stuck to the tiles  
A nervous gecko zig-zagged up a wall

Her children grown and left  
All live in high rise flats  
Canyons of void, that is the city of glass  
Thunder rolls like a stone through troubled skies

### Bishop

The apples in the orchard, round and fat —  
Emerald-leafed, sweet cheeked and ruby-eyed,  
swung just above the bishop's wide-brimmed hat

He'd stretch his arms above him, cassock-wide  
to pluck one of these treasures; heaven spread  
and chew with pleasure until satisfied

His orchard was his joy. No one else fed  
From those rich boughs, `twas a forbidden thing  
unless the bishop had expressly said  
they may do so. One day, though, wandering beneath the trees,  
temptation lingered near  
a young cathedral choirboy, practising  
His chants, pulled down a lapful, crying 'Here

Are choicest fruits.' He shared them with his friends —  
the choirboys laughed and took them with a cheer —

Small sin often in retribution ends,  
the bishop cursed the thief. No-one betrayed the choirboy,  
but the plague to his door wends  
Enters and strikes. A heavy price was paid  
the burial was miserable and gray.  
A child, for stealing apples, grave-yard laid

Next week, the monks went preaching far away  
The bishop stayed behind to guard his fruit,  
Alone beside his orchard, miserly  
The statues on the walls around him mute,  
Watched as he stepped into the cellar cold  
Some sweet communion wine to find and loot  
It wasn't far to walk — but he was old  
And with a clatter tumbled heavily

Then eyes peered from the pantry, sharp and bold.  
Rats, who'd been starved of food for many a day.  
Gnawed on his bones and stole his soul away.

Wickerman

Tightly pack the wicker bundles  
Woven round a wooden frame  
To the gods of death and famine  
Raise aloft the fatted flame

Fang of wolf and tooth of winter  
Take the sacrifice we send  
Up into the maw of midnight  
Battles win and wounded mend

Claw of raven, clasp of fever  
Do not plunder crop nor glen  
For we worship god and goddess  
Of the bog, the burn, the ben

Tightly pack the wicker bundles

Woven round a wooden frame  
To the gods of death and famine  
Raise aloft the fatted flame

Dreamer

He lay on a purple sofa, under a chandelier  
And closed his eyes to the ticking  
Of the clock on the chiffonier

Out from a scarlet rainbow, blood red, the peacocks flew  
Over a silken ocean, with the golds of dawn shot through

And a pair of swordfish breached the waves,  
Where the balmy trade winds played  
Leading to ancient Venice, and a courtier's masquerade

He had lifted Lethe's glass to his lips  
He had tossed night's loaded dice  
When the cockatrice of sleep awoke  
And the brindled cat miewed thrice

Down from the ceiling a feather fell  
From the peacock's blood red tail  
And the golden ship rolled into dawn  
With dreams in each folded sail

d

I am deep in the North East knuckle  
Not a lighthouse, not a windfarm  
Not a climber's crampon  
On the face of Lochnagar

Wherever I stand,  
Subterranean rivers of ancestors  
Run beneath my feet  
My people came from Europe  
Mercenaries, knights, pirates and engineers.  
Shipped over for wars or work

Stayed on, becoming natives  
Grafted themselves by marriage  
Onto the local shoots of Gaels and Picts.  
Root crops, that rarely moved  
Outwith their rigs. Like thistledown  
Snagged on wire, the North East  
Stopped their roaming.

Like a summer swallow,  
Echoes occasionally call me  
Over the airwaves to sample this and that  
To travel different ways by foreign skies  
As if to confirm the knowledge  
I don't belong there.

At some point in the past  
The plumb-line ceased to swing,  
The centre of the world spelt Grampian

Magpie

Dear Magpie,  
I live with a rat  
7 shelves of books  
And a rusty cooker.

My tongue is dry with silence  
My ears drink in the chatter of TV  
A child peers out from my eyes when I'm alone  
Through the gates of morning  
It watches the dew on the grass with starry wonder

Yesterday a black hearse parked on the hill  
One neighbour less along our retiring street

We sit like crows on the line  
Waiting the next gap

At intervals, we chatter like jays  
About important matters like the weather.

led Water

By impulse, I'm a jumper  
Chained to reason  
With rivets that might give  
At any time

Mid way over a bridge  
By the rail of a tall balcony  
At the rim of a cliff

I have to watch my step.

After the launch  
Would free fall bring oblivion?

After the launch  
Would free fall bring oblivion?

Walking over a bridge  
I close the eye that's nearest to the edge  
Make it my blind side

Mustn't look over  
Must batten down the hatches□  
Mustn't look over  
Must batten down the hatches  
I chant a silent mantra  
Tighten my jaw

Walk faster, firmer, faster  
No hopping  
No hopping  
Mustn't look over  
Must batten down the hatches  
It could be so easy  
So easy. So easy

The inner scales that monitor my will  
Swing up down, up down, up down  
At last, the far side reached,

A sigh of disappointment and relief

r

Under the fir tree a badger was  
Grunting and clawing the mulch in the half light

Now and then he paused and sniffed the air  
The wind shuffled the beech like a house of cards  
Something screamed in the wood

The badger's black-striped face was deeply scarred  
He had been battling, not on his own terms  
Yet his eyes betrayed no fear.  
The queer green light of the woods  
Coloured him mythic.

He scratched at his own legend  
A grizzled knight. An ancient warrior  
Wearing a visor of bristles.

A Late Marriage

Youth sees a wedding as a day of cakes  
Of rings and flounces, dresses, presents, lace  
Of photographs and favours, guests and gifts  
Needing such artifice to give it grace

But older couples take their marriage vows  
In quiet ways, needing no pipe or drum  
To mark their change of state.  
Enough to know Their day began as two, ended as one.

ing Couple

The spooning couple lie together, apart  
Like chalk on a blackboard  
Close as skin on skin  
Yet distant as constellations

He could be a stool she sits on  
Or a table for holding fruit in a cool room  
His arm rests on her neck  
As if on a sofa,  
A piece of convenient padding.

Both are facing the sinister side of the sheet  
She's fixed as a ship's prow  
The marriage figurehead  
Going nowhere, berthed in a safe harbour.

They are not young nor old,  
They are not ugly nor beautiful  
Divorce would wreck them both,  
The bleakness of bed-sit land  
Of one night stands with strangers  
Numbing loneliness.

Habits, good or ill  
Provide small comforts  
In great desolations.

They are different books,  
Hugging their unread stories  
Between closed covers  
Their only coming together  
The braille of touch.

Terminal

Termagant gulls exhale cold air  
Screeching over a paper-bag like vagrants

Monstrous clock-hands tick their remorseless way  
Over a bare-faced glass like clipping shears

An embarrassed tree is twisting its twigs  
Round denuded boughs

Waves like ripped up chits hold shreds of white



Under the wet sun's cold, myopic glare

A curmudgeonly pensioner wipes a drip from her nose  
Blaming the late arrival on council cuts  
On anything but the weather.

Solitary cars sulk behind high wire fencing  
A ferry takes an age to slide to berth  
It's three hours late, and every sick bag full.

ing

The sea looks lit from below,  
Traces of aquamarine, metallic grey  
Mother of pearl, with a hint of lemon sorbet  
Courtesy of the sun

The ferry entertainer in sequined belt  
Gyrates on a tiny stage, a shrunken star  
Recycling songs from movies ages old

A red-nosed drunk looks fit to burst from boredom  
Perms, nod over outspread hands of patience

The sky is clothed with lace  
And smoke from the mouths of dragons  
The horizon's sharp as the sudden chop of a guillotine  
We may all dropp off the edge of the world like lemmings

I am deep inside the belly of a great steel whale  
Ploughing a Viking furrow through the waves  
Rising like bare-backed dolphins through the tide

An astonished baby's eyes blink wide  
Bewildered by the endless liquid land  
People are packed away in cabin beds  
On shelves, like folded linen

Swans of Bruges

Swans drift like yachts across dark waters blown  
In the canals beneath the tall wind mill  
Pristine against the shadows monotone  
October's here. Fair-weather birds have flown  
The swans remain, impervious to chill

Silent they glide. No urban traffic drone  
Disturbs this idyll. From their silvery throne  
Each feeds on water weeds with golden bill  
In Benedictine cells, black nuns intone

Their vespers. One small feather quill  
Floats off on inky waves, the scroll its own  
In ancient Flemish churches, skull and bone  
Glisten upon black slabs, grotesque and still

They say a dying swan is mute as stone  
A wintry gust wails with a plaintive moan  
Where blood red ivy drops from window sill  
Swans swim in foam like lace around them sewn

Those graceful ballet dancers seem alone  
But watch, each graceful Jack must have his Jill  
They mate forever. Echo and repono  
From Nature's loving cup, they drink their fill

Arnolfini Portrait, by Jan van Eyck

It is summer. The cherry tree outside the window is in fruit  
The couple stand in their upstairs reception room  
Holding a pose for the painter.

Imagine calling on them, uninvited  
'Just passing by, ' you'd say  
'Dropped in for a coffee and chat'  
And them with the painter in,  
Up to their eyes in finery.

This pair would be a dead cert  
For the home security salesman  
The CCTV cameras never off.

They are richly dressed;  
His mauve silk velvet tabard, her green dress,  
Are trimmed with expensive fur.  
Sable for him. Ermine for her.

He wears a hat of pleated straw dyed black  
A doublet of silk damask. Designer gear, the works.  
His and Hers monogrammed onto the bath towels.

Their brass chandelier is large, and very costly.  
Not one of your standard fittings  
The oranges, too, on the window sill and chest,  
Are rare, exotic... a conversational coup

The red bed-hangings suspended from the ceiling,  
Are open, exposing the bed  
The centre point of marriage from time immemorial

The finial carved on the bedpost is that of St Margaret  
Patron Saint of childbirth, pre-anesthesia  
A rosary all that stood between terror and pain

There is a small Oriental carpet on the floor by the bed  
This is a merchant whose credit rating's high

His dog is a Brussels griffon, toy-pet, a prestige mutt  
His woman's aware of her role, bed warmer,  
Caretaker of the house, pre-feminism  
Part of the goods and chattels in his keeping

He stands beside the open window, nearer the outside world.  
He stares at Van Eyke, torn between pride and greed  
This portrait will immortalize him, at a cost

His wife daren't take her eyes off him for a minute  
Though he's no oil painting, with his stem cleft chin,  
His candle-wax, cleft-tipped nose  
His cold and clever eyes

The cast-off clogs are part of their wedding ceremony  
A gift from him to his bride.

She's all submission, a toppled pawn.  
Check mate. Her hand is pale as a lily and as limp  
He could be a fortune teller, holding her fate in his hand

s in October

Bruges in October – winds cut to the bone  
The restaurateurs serve fruits plucked from the sea  
A carriage driver chats on his cell phone

While geeing up his horse. The tall belfry  
Plays Danny Boy, Greensleeves.  
A siren wails Far in the distance. Harsh emergency

Seems out of place where windmills turn their sails  
Here churches, chips and chocolates reign supreme  
The hurdy gurdy man's chipped fingernails

Curl round the handle of his queer machine  
The squares are ancient, and the coffee's good  
The waitress, like some Frans Hals oyster queen

Is quick and multi-lingual. Like a brood  
Of cackling battery cocks, the milling crew  
Of tourist males would bed her if they could

The streets are narrow, cobbled. Cars are few  
House roofs are steep, like Durer hands that pray  
Bicycles circumvent the milieu

Like brown molasses, thick canal waves sway  
Passengers disembark when weather's rough  
Where autumn leaves like gold stars light the way

Children chase pigeons, toss their heads and laugh  
What mother in good conscience could refuse  
To share her gateaux, break the treat in half?

Here, where the shops are chic, the Euros lose  
Their anchorage in pouch and purse - a pair

Of boots, madam? There is so much to choose  
From fashion clogs to fur lined winter wear  
The store's cocoon is cosy but outside  
The biting winds nip at the flag poles there

Consumerism's like a turning tide  
Eventually, austerity, hard mentor  
Asserts itself. The weary cyclists ride

As in a world war film, from the town centre  
Bruges settles down, to silence given up  
Hoping that the next ferryboat to enter  
Will fill to overflowing, profit's cup.

## 19. T'Zand Square

Between statues, fountains play  
Beers brood in their tumblers  
Fermenting beery anarchy

A chocolate schmarms a smooch on warm lips  
At the L'Hotel du Singe d'Or  
Couples knit their fmgers over tables  
Making cats cradles of the love they hold

In a lip-sticked glass, a slice of lemon lies  
A hurt half moon in a sling of Gordon's Gin  
A candle performs the choreography of flame

In high-heeled boots  
Creaking in skin-tight leathers  
A girl with a homburg hat at a jaunty angle  
Is crossing the square  
Her thick blonde hair  
Is fried by shocking peroxide

She thinks she's the bees knees  
Mens eyes cup her buttocks as she passes

An empty coffee cup sits in his serviette  
Looking forlorn and frothy like Flanders lace

Some cars wink innuendoes to the night  
But overall, this Bruges has a clean face.

Sheena Blackhall

## Of Witch Girls & Midgies (28 Poems)

ings

May kindness be the star that lights you home  
May the rice gods see your bowl is never empty  
May you walk with the sounds of the song thrush in your ears  
May the dragon clouds on the mountain keep you safe.

-Shocks

When I disembarked from the ship, an aftershock,  
For some time even the land appeared to rock

When my son wed, a most auspicious week  
Quite unaccountably, my eyes began to leak

inhabitants

Leaves and wind are plaintive as harpist's strings  
The day's small gnats fly off on see-through wings

The skimmed stone falls to the loch's cool bed  
Wedded to silence by three rings of waves  
Under the brooding bulk of the drowned Ben

A tiny note from a thrush's diamond beak  
Echoes crystal pure in the evening glen

-Struck

The same whole moon that fills my upturned eyes  
Strikes polar fire in Iceland's flinty face  
Watches the tiger's leap, the Congo's dark  
The croaking frog in his lily-bellied place

Drip, drip, drip the terrible tears trip down  
The moon's pale cheeks, lamenting his alien state

Lonely and liverish, the moon's set in his ways  
Dead in the heavens, dead as a poisoned fish

e his Mother gave him  
Always clean your plate  
Think of the starving Chinese

Why not spin my plate like a juggler?  
Why not smash my plate like a Greek?  
Why not paint a bridge and willow on the plate  
Like a delicate Japanese?

Touching yourself is sinful and brings shame  
People who masturbate go mad or blind  
Hair grows on the palms of their hands

Was the man with the white stick  
One of the shameless ones?

Was John Clare, locked in his head  
One of the nameless ones?

He looked at his palms and imagined  
Forests of follicles

#### 6.A Mother's Gifts

I asked her to let me run barefoot  
She gave me sensible shoes

I asked for paints like the rainbow  
She gave me a book of sums

I asked for fabulous journeys  
She tethered the world to a house

I begged her to love me the best,  
She made me share

I asked her for joy and fun  
She gave me guilt and shame

Nothing I asked for she gave me,  
Her final gift was honesty, bitter and true



ned

I was a baby boomer  
Born two years on  
From the end of Hitler's war

Potatoes and bread, still rationed  
Petrol, sweets and sugar in short supply

A time of relief and thrift  
Love of a kind, doled out in restricted doses  
Cupboards locked with stockpiled joy and excess

When, at last, the larders were unlocked  
The joy was damp and mouldy  
Well past its sell-by date

rina Haiku

Wirms spin silk for pumps  
She dances briefly, tiptoed  
Wirms unpick her shroud

Poppy

Poppy, like a tired whore  
Flounces her flamenco skirts  
Afghan poppy at your core  
Half of all the world's hurts

Robbing children of their youth  
Deadly bloom of evil trade  
Poppy like a tired whore  
A pox on you, and ills you've made

Witch Girl

Long long, when she was flesh and blood  
And knew the power of passion's flood  
She could bewitch men at a whim  
They called her witch and named her Sin

That way she had with man and beast  
Outcast by neighbour, kin and priest  
The river took her. A dark shroud  
And held her like a fallen cloud  
And three times round she turned around  
And in the tarn, the witch-girl drowned

But such a freeborn one is meant  
To linger, like a teasing scent

a Vegan Retreat  
I come to discipline resigned  
With good intentions at the start  
The chains of samsara to bind

The principles I choose, enshrined  
By bodhisattvas who impart  
A way of life both calm and kind

All chants and rituals are designed  
To navigate life's troubled chart  
To clear a path through briars entwined

I close my eyes. I'm breathing blind  
Trying to tame the thoughts that dart  
Across my brain from past's back wynd

Daily on seeds and plants I've dined  
Peanuts with leek and mushroom tart  
Carrots and lentils, unrefined

I meditate on bacon rind  
Frailty upsets the apple cart  
For lamb and salmon, how I've pined

I try to elevate my mind  
I try to purify my heart  
To leave base instincts far behind  
But all I seem to do is fart

### 12.A Fragmented Story

A rolling stone in Siberia was kicked by a Cossack's horse  
The snow promised better horizons, a blue blanket

A small dark cave curled up like a bear full of winter  
A gaunt grey heron pooled in sunlight, poised over a ripple

Where a serpent eats its tail  
A horse plods wearily on behind its master

Blinkered by harness and custom  
We chew the bit of language

Storming out to play I climbed the mountains  
With their ears full of rubble and stones

And nobody said that Age  
Kicks Life in the gut like a burst sack  
Making a wreck of your lovely springtime idylls

### 13.A Poem of Broken Shards

A swinging gate  
A shell's throat  
A boat with muffled oars

Three voices of grief and wisdom  
The skin of the western wind

A purse of willows' warnings  
A bag of ravens' secrets

A harp of thrush's ribs  
The warmth left behind in the hare's form

The courage to take the road  
Where the toad's eyes shine

Midgie

A midgie crawling up my nose  
Expired in the phlegm  
And so, encountering the void  
He learned the bliss of Zen

hider in June  
Blue sky and russet squirrel. Mosaic of fur and cloud  
Birch trees sway their wrists. A swallow sings on a wire

Summer winds rattle the greenhouse. Plants retreat from the air's bite  
Robin's wings are two pressed leaves of feathers

Broom glows on the bank, a burst of sunbeams  
Popping out from the rowan, a candyfloss of flowers

r Haiku  
December evening  
Drunk girl falls in the gutter  
Equal rights for women

ng Sand  
How the hot sun burns!  
Truck in a sandy city  
Blows three children up

n Cough  
Autumn rakes my lungs  
Green leaves turn yellow  
Bright flags of decay

r's Block, Unblocked  
So there he was, like a goat tied to a pole  
Round and round in a groove turning into a hole  
Till at three am the big idea arrived  
Like a wee excited dog, shouting  
'Shake a leg get up and write me down! '

Squirrel

Mr Squirrel with pouncy paws  
Doesn't obey the pine tree's laws  
Not for him the stand and be still  
He's off like wildfire over the hill

21.A Sliver of June

An orange insect, unannounced, arrives  
Ragged prayer flags wilt in midgied heat  
This is a slice of happiness from June  
A sheep is bleating its note to a gray stone

Ragged prayer flags wilt in midgied heat  
Rabbits' marbles interest passing flies  
A sheep is bleating its note to a gray stone  
Far and above the scudding clouds cast shadows

Rabbits' marbles interest passing flies  
Chopped wheels of carrots simmer in the pan  
Far and above the scudding clouds cast shadows  
The shrine room echoes to the sound of om

Chopped wheels of carrots simmer in the pan  
An orange insect, unannounced, arrives  
The shrine room echoes to the sound of om  
This is a slice of happiness from June

es

Nettles I wish to thank you  
This week I ate your sisters  
So tasty, so tender!

, the Rubislaw Quarry Monster: A Bairn-Tale  
There's a hole that could hold the Titanic  
Stay away if you're wise from this lair  
For the rain filled it up like a bath tub  
And nobody knows what's down there

Old trolleys and bikes, granite tool works  
Ancient beds, the occasional lorry  
And a very mysterious creature  
Called Ruby, the Queen of the quarry

She likes to creep out for adventures  
But she's secretive, furtive and shy  
And the marvellous thing about Ruby  
She's too quick to be seen by the eye

You might catch a twitch of a whisker  
The scrape of a heel or a claw  
The swish of her wee monster sporran  
A wheech of a tail or a paw

In Januar, at the New Marcliffe  
Where the haggis is piped in with state  
In the midst of the annual Burns Supper  
Ruby cleared all the neeps from the plate

In Februar, feeling romantic  
To King's College she secretly sped  
Dabbed her eyes with the tail of her hanky  
As the groom and his dearie were wed

In March, waking up feeling chirpy  
She gave a bit skip and a dance  
She clambered up out of the quarry  
To view Union Street's silver expanse

Though the quarry is lovely for swimming  
There are times that she yearns for the sun  
In April she went to Balmoral  
In her joggers to join in the run

Her at-home month is May, when the city  
Celebrates all her quarry has made  
The buildings, the bridges the statues  
All the glories of the granite trade

There's nothing like venison burgers  
To bring Ruby up at the trot

In June, Hazlehead is a riot  
Of rowies and soup, steaming hot  
At the Aberdeen games, where the heavies  
Toss cabers like candy-floss sticks  
And there's hairy-legged tourists in tartan  
Wearing kilts, taking snapshots and pics

At the foot of the quarry are golf clubs  
Ruby's good...she'd make Sean Connery toast  
In a match, so she practises putting  
At Mr Trump's course on the coast  
In August...where better than Fittie?  
Where Scotty dogs bowf on the sands  
And the toddlers in buggies are chortling  
With ice-cream melting over their hands

Autumn's near...in the sky of an evening  
There's a hint of the Northern Lights  
As the oil exhibition is opening  
Ruby's off up to Dyce for the flights

Here she likes to imagine she's jetting  
Off to Texas or Dallas or Rome  
But she knows, though a holiday's pleasant  
It's always a joy to come home

Halloween is the month of the witches  
At the foot of the quarry's a broom  
So October's her month to go ghosting  
To Fyvie, she flies: VA-VA-VROOM

Full of bloodstains and bloodcurdling stories  
Of murders and ladies of green  
Fyvie castle's the place to be frightened  
When the moon casts its eeriest sheen

November is stormy and chilly  
To her Majesty's Theatre she's gone  
To sit in the Gods eating toffees  
When the pantomime camel comes on

Swinging fireballs around at Stonehaven

In December, while eating black bun  
For the monster of Rubislaw Quarry  
That's almost another year done

Then the ships out at sea fire their rockets  
As she dives like a great Noah's Ark  
To the bottom of Rubislaw Quarry  
With its secrets all hidden and dark

nder, Easter 2012

A stand of daffodils out-Wordsworths Wordsworth  
Their trumpets blowing golden tremeloes

Cats appear on perches, magically  
And disappear on silent, padded paws

Ker-plunk, an after-frog bestirs the pool  
A hen lolls on its back, its wings akimbo  
Closing its beady eyes in henny Heaven  
Enjoying its morning dust bath in the sun  
Like Cleopatra, dunked in asses' milk

ber

Remember the day our father died  
Like a tired old war horse, dropped in its dutiful tracks?  
His hand stretched out to the unknowable...

Remember our mother in her bitter chair  
Renouncing love and warmth, slowly  
Morphing into dementia, inconsolable?

Remember the grief, the grave, the open lair  
The world turned inside out, turned bleak and bare  
Remember the....But how could you?  
As usual, you weren't there.

hed

A swift flew into the space between two clouds  
Then vanished like the mandolin I lost



Like my friend who'd eaten the Blarney Stone  
And washed it down with a flagon of Glenmorangie  
Like the flute-man walking his tune across the horizon  
Like the heartbeat of a home where love has died

Boat

A blue boat sits on the loch  
A painted island

The only traffic's a crow  
Crossing a cloud

Two wrens shuffle  
A pack of rustling leaves

28. In the Temple of the Air  
Six books unopened on a coffee table  
Two sliced ripe lemons glistening on a plate  
A soup of insects hatching in a pond  
A vixen sniffing round a compost heap  
A cuckoo hijacking a thrush's nest  
A gate that opens on a winding path

Sheena Blackhall

# Off The Peg Et Al (18 Poems)

Mother the Gazelle  
Mother was neither a horse nor a zebra  
More of a gazelle

My uncle stole her favourite doll  
He buried it out in the field  
Grandfather thrashed him

The tom-toms beat a warning in the dark  
When grandfather died

It was a long fall from the cliff of love  
Now, my uncle was king of the family castle  
The gazelle became a rabbit in a box

Play  
I am a sparrow, a mouse, a moon  
In water, earth, and air I trust  
Rounding a corner, all too soon  
All that I am will change to dust

g on Poem Titles for Size  
The Iceberg Theory  
Cleaning the Elephant  
The Forest of Tangle  
The Lost Baby Poem  
A Tray of Eggs  
St Francis and the Sow  
I saw you Dancing Father  
The Strait-Jackets  
Forty-One, Alone, no Gerbil  
Ode to the Onion  
Mrs Midas  
The Tightrope Wedding  
The Emperor of Ice Cream  
Killing Time  
The Panic Bird  
My Father Carries me Across a Field

The Rustle of History's Wings  
A Piece of the Storm

nder June

Clouds hold rain like pressure cookers  
Will they/ won't they burst?

Ringless-fingered mothers fuss round buggies  
The bus is hot's a greenhouse cooking plants

Ankle deep in buttercups, black cattle  
Sweat in a fizz of flies, on painted shadows

I have made an appointment with June  
I have cleared my life for a week  
Half a year's slipped by, I've been  
Too busy to notices the nuances of Time

Yet I'll observe the salt content of yoghurt  
The headlines in the latest people-scandal

Degrees of Separation  
Some folk I know have met important people

A woman talked to a Beatle in a theatre  
He'd come to watch her husband's latest play

A man offered Leon Cohen a cigarette  
He didn't want it, but refused quite nicely

A girl met Sir Rolf Harris in her nightie  
(She was aged twelve, a fire in their Hotel)

A boy, waiting for fruit, saw Margaret Thatcher,  
(Briefly just behind security doors)

A man met at a famous actor at his stall.  
His wife was nice, he said, but the guy was grumpy.

A girl spied Lauren Bacall at a do in Glasgow.  
She didn't speak. A bouncer sat beside her

A man was queuing at Lord's cricket pitch  
Stephen Fry was standing two behind him

A girl's parents gave her cot away  
(It held six babies sideways) to Mother Theresa....

She also met Germaine Greer at a party...  
Too shy to speak, she'd eaten garlic fish cakes

A Doctor faced with treating Eric Morecambe,  
Couldn't put up his drip, her hands were shaking.

A girl in a London Club stood up for manners.  
Told Chelsea Clinton 'Switch your mobile off! ! '

A woman slept in the Duke of Edinburgh's bed  
(At Cambridge College, not while he was in it)

And I stood three rows back from Alec Salmond  
As he unveiled the famous 'Turra Coo'

#### 6.Inventory of Notable Things

The Lerwick lifeboat climbing the High Seas  
The orange Indian skirt that brushed my ankles  
The elephant's head, ears flapping like two fans  
The stag at the Brig o Quoich with the broken antler  
The Buddha's shining face beneath Green Tara  
The infant son who growled like a bear  
Mandolin's tearful tremolo a-quivering  
Grandmother's grave in winter, holly berries  
Hurt places that healed, and those which didn't  
The plastic deer in Callander that sings

the Peg: Bridal Fitting, June 2013

Marriage unhooks the girl from the family peg  
She'll stand alone after that, unique, in her own self  
Fashioning a conjoined future with her groom

The bridal dress shimmers with sparkles

A scalloped frothy hem  
Like Primavera rising from the sea  
Happiness glows in the girl like a lit bulb

But this is not a poem in praise of bridal props  
Rather to celebrate a daughter, ripe in loveliness  
The peach flesh of her back, her strawberry lips

She has climbed from the childhood years  
Up to her own place. Her throat is like the linnet's  
A nest of honeyed song resides there

Slowly, through the bones of her hourglass figure,  
The past recedes. The future waits to come

on Visiting Aberdeen

This is not Vienna. No feeding of pigeons or seagulls.  
They shit on the civic statues, dive-bomb travelers

We are a cold city. Don't complain.  
Wear thermal underwear or stay at home

The Bacchanalia takes place from Fridays-Mondays.  
Those of a nervous nature should stay indoors

No nudism on the beach, no smacking children  
Despite the provocation, they have rights

Don't weight us in the scales beside Ibita  
Don't treat us like Braille, with hugs or familiar touching  
We are not interactive till we grow to know you  
And that may take a year or two my friend

tine Card

I spent shed loads of money on manicures  
Dresses with cross over bras  
I was a sucker for makeovers

I wanted to look like a mannequin  
Up on the catwalk haughtily strutting her stuff

My hair was styled and bouffant  
My tights were fishnets  
Hoping to catch a beau  
I was the ad man's pushover  
After there was absolutely nothing more to be done  
In the good looks stakes  
I was still always one of the leftovers  
Nobody wanted to woo

And then the Valentine came  
Roses are red, violets are blue  
It's you for me XX and me for you

Well, I was halfway up to the moon  
Looping the loop like a loony  
When Mother whispered to Dad  
'Probably sent for a lark  
As everyone knows....  
A card's not the same as  
Actually having a lad'

10. A Day to Remember  
I once took a trip to the past  
The journey was thrilling and fast  
But where I was conveyed  
The scene I surveyed  
Was Jurassic. The day was a blast.

11. The Cry of the Summer Butterfly  
Am I beautiful?  
Am I beautiful?  
The summer butterfly cries

Yes, the flower whispers  
For today.

12. Midsummer Solstice  
On the Tomnaverie altar stone

A yellow petal of broom  
Is flashing like a star  
About to fall

### 13. Doomed Ivy

Roof high ivy  
Stripped down from the wall

A young man's plant  
Only the young can reach  
To curb its growth

### 14. C'est la Vie

One parent drunk, the other mad  
A child of ten cleans out the grate  
The only family he's had

Call it misfortune, call it sad  
Call it the roll of the dice, or fate  
Many the journey starts out bad

Monsters and perils, life's Iliad  
What would it take to clean the slate?  
Make everything jolly and nice and glad?

on a summer's Day  
The hectic beating of wings  
Mayflies, weaving their death dance

The loch opens its face  
To the shilly shally of rain drops

An aspen sifts the golden dust of summer  
A cat's eyes gleam from a mesh of honeysuckle

Tall hens breast the nettles by a duck pond

A tortoise, horny-humped  
Lumbers over a lawn to a cabbage patch

Two spotted ladybirds  
Split their wings like flamenco dancers' skirts

Midges seethe in the trees between the pines

Welcome snail as you cross the morning grass  
Like a juggernaut pulling a trail of oiled dancers

Under a two bird sky  
Loch waves shiver on shingle

Deep in a tree an invisible bird is singing

Three spits of rain drop from a frowning sky

A cat stalks by  
Mouthful of mouse to the left and right of its whiskers

Red tomato on the green chopping board  
The hour all slice and peel

White house, grey cloud, black swift  
White house, grey cloud, no swift

High summer  
In oak's worn heart it's autumn

High summer  
In oak's worn heart it's autumn

A flimsy cobweb  
The fight of one small fly  
Hangs by a thread

Sky blue forget-me-nots  
Buried in nettles

Mist moves in the wind  
Bens become No Bens

Nests are made to be filled



How sad when silent!

Fish plumps in the loch  
Nibbling last night's moon

A carved flower is weather cracked  
A craftsman's work is withering

The path to the bulrush pool  
Dreams of winter  
Free of talk and footprints

A summer syllabub  
Rose offers her nectar

Fox trots from the compost  
One bird less in Balquhider

Dead deer's belly  
Split like a pea pod  
Food for feasting flies

Grass is speaking in parables  
In the wood's cool tomb  
Hare's vertebrae clack like rosaries

Mouse scuttles under a giant yellow iris  
The pool's a broth of green

A waterfall thunders Hosannas  
From the long dark throat of the Ben

The Ben has forgotten its name  
For the wind to echo

A line of ants process between the twigs  
Bearing the crackling relics of a leaf

Dragonfly scrolls an illuminated letter  
On the gold page of the air

I raise my palms to the sun

Everyone carries hurts and ancient healings

Martin on a Wire

Its tail, the top two lines

Of a music score

The notes in the bowl of its breast

Waiting to quiver out

In a piping trill

hidder 2013

Star struck daisy, buttercup

Speedwell, yellow poppy, rose

Mist applies a cover

Where, unseen, the oak tree grows

Pinnacles of fox gloves tower

Where the fiery nettles sleep

In the kernels of their nests

Fledgling sparrows thinly cheep

Widdershins I walk the bounds

Of the morning in the glen

Gathering honey with my eyes

Hills to loch and back again

So the golden moments pass

Quickly as the flying years

Like the sun motes in the grass

Like the dew, the moonbeam's tears

ing Rights at Haddo House

Child one: I saw:

Giant redwood, an avenue of limes

A great stone mansion from Edwardian times

Rowan, sycamore, squirrel's dray

Dark green woodland where the badger's play

Chanterelle, puffball, ink caps, cherry  
Elm, pink Campion and white snowberry

Child 2: But I saw  
Meadowsweet, pignut, yellow rattle  
Frog hopper insect in its cloak of spittle

Fungi, fountain, a game larder  
A lake where the otter and the wild geese stir

Swans and cygnets, a dark bird hide  
A pipistrelle nursery with bats inside

Child 3: I heard  
An osprey visited but flew away  
From the wild flower meadow and the rookery

Child4: I spied  
Pine trees, lichen, marsh marigold  
An ancient beech tree that's centuries old

Alder, aspen, field mushroom  
Wandering willies and the golden broom

Rye grass, yarrow grass, a heron and a well  
Forget-me-nots by water and a grey wagtail

Comfrey, ragwort, woodpecker tapping  
A buzzard and a sparrow hawk above clouds, flapping

Ox-eye daisies where the damsel flies speed  
Dandelions and nettles and the white hog weed

St John's wort, beechnuts, dove cots too  
Ragged robin in the rich, wet dew

Child 5: I spied

Spiral staircase, sundial, chapel  
Birds' foot trefoil and the green oak apple

Devil's bit scabious, Kemble's seat  
Deer and grouse shoots where the hunters meet

Child 6: I spotted

Rhoddies, clover, inscribed stones  
A graveyard for horses and for small dogs' bones

Yellow flag iris, marsh orchid  
Dens in the forest where the fox lies hid

Children:

Haddo, Haddo, the things we've seen  
In the grounds and gardens of Lord Aberdeen!

of Passage

Eleven years old, going on sixteen  
School prom, pupils signing t-shirts  
First outcrop of acne on teenage cheeks

On stage, singing of angst and darkness  
Children wearing the clothes of their celeb idols  
Morphing into vamps

Grow up! Grow up! The Ad man hype  
Colours their waking moments

So young, so young, willing their lives away

Sheena Blackhall

# Oh Lovely As A Lily

Oh lovely as a lily was my son  
Tender, the cherry lip that milked my love  
A gilded cage to guard my pretty one  
I fashioned him, a rainbow for a dove

An unkind Springtime sought the lily's fall  
A stormy summer dashed the dancing prow  
His cherry lip was seared by autumn's gall  
And Winter set the thorn upon his brow

Drought twists the gentle sapling's lissom head  
The maggot, Blight, devours the cherry's heart  
A pestilence despoils the lily's bed  
Cannibal storm rends the flower apart

Oh lovely as a lily was my son  
The very dewdropp smiled to see him pass  
A robber stole his innocence, long gone  
I fear the serpent waiting in the grass

Sheena Blackhall

# Old Age

Decrepitude, dementia, old age  
The silver surfer daily counts the pills  
Stalking the spotlight on life's fleeting stage

Stents keep the heart pump-pumping in its cage  
And medication stems the surge of ills  
As sprays restrain the bugs in herbiage

When does the book attain its final page?  
When come the lawyers clutching deeds and wills?  
Now everyman can be an ancient sage

No teeth, poor vision, deaf to all but rage  
That bodies fail, wear out...no lovers' thrills  
The wreck of youth and vigour can assuage  
Time's hourglass, no longer weakly spills

Sheena Blackhall

## Old Age (3)

Decrepitude, dementia, old age  
The silver surfer daily counts the pills  
Stalking the spotlight on life's fleeting stage

Stents keep the heart pump-pumping in its cage  
And medication stems the surge of ills  
As sprays restrain the bugs in verbiage  
When does the book attain its final page?  
When lawyers rush out clutching deeds and wills?  
Now everyman can be an ancient sage

No teeth, poor vision, deaf to all but rage  
That bodies fail, wear out...no lovers' thrills  
The wreck of youth and vigour can assuage  
Time's hourglass, no longer weakly spills

Sheena Blackhall

# Old Age Is Not For Jessies

Violets are best picked young  
She no longer bends to pluck flowers  
She settles for shop-bought lilies  
Cut in anonymous greenhouses

Sometimes her eyes flash  
Like stirred ashes. A memory  
Rises like a flame  
Then collapses into the ruin of her present

She dresses slowly, wishing that  
She could vomit up Old Age like a fur ball

Death watches from her looking glass  
She is no soothsayer. Cataracts obscure him  
Though he is wanted, if his coming's quick

And easy

Sheena Blackhall



# Old School Ties

The lines of pupils enter, one by one,  
The bell rings out the start of each school day,  
For school life is one station of the path,  
It colours part of their whole destiny

And passing through in rows, the world's tomorrow,  
Novelist, poet, journalist and doctor  
Teacher and preacher, MP, media star  
Sport Ace and actress, world famous singer

And some will form friendships that will last  
And others will walk on and not look back  
And some will have warm memories of the past  
And some will take a whole contrary tack

The highlight that I hold to like a pearl  
From my schooldays: a sunny history class,  
A tiny woman, pert as William Pitt  
Who made the war dead rise from bloodied grass

And this was genius of the quiet kind  
She taught her pupils to learn empathy  
Without regard to wealth, or lucky birth,  
To understand truth and integrity.

Sheena Blackhall

# Old Woman

My udders are dry.  
I will never chew the grass of the lush future.

I am a washer of pots,  
A stroker of cats.

I am a Maypole stripped of all its ribbons.  
The red stigmata has withered between my thighs.  
My womb is a walnut,  
Age has dried it out like a dead coal.

Before the mercury drops in the empty hall,  
I may grow lavender to hide old woman smells.  
The grandfather clock that stands on the stairs to  
Heaven Chimes eleven.

Almost, it is the hour of the mole,  
The velvet tunneller who'll greet my soul.  
Perhaps they'll keep my memory in a bowl.

Sheena Blackhall

## Old Woman And Pig, Jaipur

The bus stalled at a pot-hole  
I watched through the steamed-up window  
An old woman pause to squat.  
Lifting her colourful sari  
(Fiery as Siva, golden as marigolds)  
Near to a sacred ghat,  
She exposed her withered withers,  
Assumed the excreting position.

Her body divided sharply,  
A curving scimitar slash;  
Through the thin grey gash  
A brown banana of shit  
Emerged from its peel  
A noon deposit the rooting hog would bank.

Sheena Blackhall

# Old Woman Blues

It's too late now to make big purchases  
Old things will see out my allotted span  
The fraying rope on the wash line's easy mended  
What's left of life I'll spend by paring down

I buried my menstrual cycle with no mourning  
I buried my wifehood with no qualms at all  
Age is a house that must compel downsizing  
The final residence, wooden, 6 feet small

Sheena Blackhall

# Old Woman Blues Et Al (Terzarima Pamphlet)

There is no east nor west for me  
Nor north nor south no more  
For I am old as old can be  
Drawn closer to Death's door

When I was knee-high to a wren  
The sun would shine all day  
And through my grandsire's cornfields  
I'd chase the birds in play

I'd make a crown of violets  
And string them on my brow  
Where, now the lines of weariness  
Sit, carved by Age's plough

Nose  
There was a daft nose left its face  
Ran off in search of smells  
Like baking bread and fresh cut hay  
Wild mint and Scots harebells

A wiser nose reclaimed its place  
Climbed up and went 'Atchoo'  
A nose without a face you know's  
A face without a view

Citizens of the Glen  
I am the salmon from Glen Dye  
Silver and young, my life is water

I am the owl with the turning eye  
I am the moon and midnight's daughter

I am the toad who croaks in the bog  
I am a creaking pouch of troubles  
Blink and you'll miss me. All you'll see  
Is a shining trail and a froth of bubbles

I am the stag with the branching head  
King of the rut and the mountain passes  
Timid my wives are, easy led  
Up to the heath and the moorland grasses

I am the wind that strums the trees  
Harping the leaves to make them chatter  
Bending the hare's ears in his form  
Making him leap as mad's a hatter

I am the glen where the clouds sail through  
Never we'll part. I live inside you.

The Rain's Timetable

At 6am I was a cloud on Beinn a' Bhuid  
At 7am I drifted over Balmoral  
By 8am I'd grown to a thunderstorm  
A drenching of Biblical proportions

By teatime I was on the news  
'Rain swells rivers, floods villages, warps historic bridges'

I was only doing what comes naturally,  
Rinsing out the glens to freshen them up

Train to Forres, March 2016

Stones have gathered moss in the gaps between cold trees  
Pylons are strung like fiddles playing the wind's music  
A storm-felled oak snags the clouds on its skeleton  
The train is a high speed trip where travellers fidget  
Locked down into gadgets, magnets of their souls

Pheasant à la mode

A pheasant sashays like a Bollywood starlet  
Snowdrops bend meditative heads towards the earth

Ag seinn ceoil do phócaí folamh/ Playing Music to Empty Pockets

Created in 1989 by sculptor Ronan Gillespie, the statue of Yeats was erected outside the Ulster Bank at the corner of Stephen Street and Markievicz Road (across the Garavogue River from the equally striking Glasshouse Hotel) on the 50th anniversary of the poet's death. Among other reasons for this location was

Yeats' remark on receiving his Noble Prize that the Royal Palace in Stockholm resembled the Ulster Bank in Sligo.

The statue of Yeats appears to be wearing wings  
His clothes are a weave of words, his songs are silent  
Tread softly, he's playing music to empty pockets  
And who has broken the glasses of Sligo's darling?

Tobernalt

If you step in by Tobernalt  
July, on Sunday last  
You'll see them bringing garlands there  
As folks did in the past  
Lughanasa's the pagan feast  
The Catholic Garland day  
In tinkling burn and ferny moss  
Forgotten spirits stray

And whether you believe in it  
The healing of the well  
It sings down from the woodland side  
As clear's a fairy bell

A Pushkin Stanza/ Irish Journey

We drove past miles of peat bog brown as teak  
No living creature stirred a wing or hoof  
The rough Atlantic Ocean tried to seek  
Inroads, where not one cottage wore a roof  
It seemed that centuries came here to die  
Beneath that Druid canopy of sky

Sorrowful, with brimming teats of rain  
Peat water drained like dark blood from a vein  
Bogland's a door to darkness, deep divining  
Did trees take flight, like children turned to swans?

Nebulous clouds fray thin as worn plaids  
Two bars of sun shone down like Bridgit's braids.

A Wednesday Poem

On Wednesday a cross-eyed boy  
Ate a candy floss cloud

On Wednesday the hole  
In the ozone layer, smelt of azaleas

On Wednesday a grandmother permed  
Her bald head turquoise

On Wednesday a mouse shit  
In a widow's jewel box

On Wednesday twenty buns unsold in Wexford  
Miraculously resurrected as bread puddings

Ferry from Rosythe-Larne  
The Irish sea is Emerald Green  
Shot through with silver nets  
Of waves that caught the startled spray  
Drowned moonbeams and sunsets

And clouds of mother of pearl drift by  
Where dove-grey heavens spread  
Like drying wings of cherubim  
Awaiting the newly dead

The Wit of the Irish (Irish Proverbs & Sayings)  
May you have food and raiment,  
A soft pillow for your head.  
May you be forty years in heaven  
Before the devil knows you're dead.

If you want praise, die.  
If you want blame, marry.

Here's to a long life and a merry one.  
A quick death and an easy one.  
A pretty girl and an honest one.  
A cold pint and another one!



You've got to do your own growing,  
No matter how tall your father was.

It is often that a person's mouth broke his nose.  
It's easy to halve the potato where there's love.

Here's to me, and here's to you.  
And here's to love and laughter.  
I'll be true as long as you.  
And not one moment after.

Where the tongue slips, it speaks the truth.  
A good laugh and a long sleep are the two best cures.

May the roof above you never fall in,  
And those gathered beneath it never fall out.

If it's drowning you're after,  
Don't torment yourself with shallow water.

May misfortune follow you the rest of your life,  
And never catch up.  
Lose an hour in the morning  
And you'll be looking for it all day.

Honey is sweet, but don't lick it off a briar.  
If you buy what you don't need  
You might have to sell what you do.

Forgetting a debt doesn't mean it's paid.  
Lie down with dogs and you'll rise with fleas.  
You'll never plough a field by turning it over in your mind.

Sheena Blackhall

# Old Woman's Bath Time Ritual

Four inches up the bath the water sits  
Three towels laid out,  
One on the floor in case her feet should slip.

He helps her in. She's eighty and his wife  
His patience, like his hair, is getting thin.  
They do not speak, that squeezed out long ago  
Like a dry sponge that's filling up with sand

She curls her worn hands on alternate taps  
Staring at nothing, leaning forward  
Like an old horse, over a fence.

Her wrinkled haunches sag.  
The belly that held his children,  
An empty swinging bag.  
The breasts that once delighted,  
Drop to their puckered walnut nipple stops.

He fills a plastic jug, anoints her shoulders,  
Soaps the day's detritus from her flanks

The tide mark's low.  
She has inched from chair to bath  
In tentative slippers propped upon a stick.

The plug removed, she stands like a steaming dray-horse  
Waiting the master's 'hup'  
Is hoisted up on the scaffold of his arms.

Sheena Blackhall

## On Ageing (2)

Keeping an ageing body afloat  
Is baling water from a leaking boat

My bones are glass, a slip could shatter them  
At 70, my motto's carpe diem  
Rattling with pills like a tub of coloured smarties

Sheena Blackhall

# On Brigid's Day (29 Scots Poems)

1.A Mearns Laddie's Spikk: tune: Drumdelgie. in memoriam James Leslie Mitchell: 13/2/1901, - 7/2/1935

In Auchterless ae Februar, Jeems Mitchell he wis born,  
Intae a lan o wark an tyauve, o kye an gowden corn  
At echt year auld his faimly cam tae Bloomfield in the Mearns  
A place o teuchits, win an breem an rosy chikkit bairns

Arbuthnott hid a dominie fa learned this halflin weel  
Bit oh, Steenhive an Mackie held a coarser kinda dreel  
He slippt the yoke o schule an ferm tae learn the screiver's trade  
Tae Aiberdeen. as journalist the gangrel laddie gaed

Syne on tae Glesga, far the slums an Gorbals gart him grue  
The dark nicht o the soul cam on, bit still he warssled through  
He listit in the airmy, crossed the Muslim continent  
Frae Palestine tae Persia, aa the sans that Pharoahs kent

He quit the airmy fur a whyle in stoory Lunnon toon  
Syne jyned the RAF fur sustenance, this hardy Mearns loon  
He tuik fur wife a neebor's lass, Ray Middleton bi name  
A Nor-East couple settin furth across the bridal stane.

Sune bairnies blessed their union, brocht twa mair tae claith an feed  
Jeems Mitchell, noo in civi street, maun earn their daily breid  
The novels teemin frae his eident harns war quickly spawned  
He screived a maisterpiece, an syne a modern wonder dawned

It wisna screived in English nor in Scots an thon's a fack  
An yet it seemed tae use the wye the Mither Tongue wis spakk  
An for't he tuik his mither's name, like he'd bin born anew  
For twis the birth o somethin auld rowed up in somethin new

Tae fowk fa ken the Nor East lan it lowps up aff the page  
The soss o dubs, the glent o frost, the bite o Winter's rage  
Bit whyles the brichtest fire that burns, it is the first tae dee  
Frae aisse tae aisse is aa the span o oor humanity.

Noo some leave gear an plenishin, an some leave nane ava

An ithers gyang unmurned like snaw bree meltin in the thaw  
His wirds are iver-laistin they jink the mools like rikk  
For they will dog an haunt ye, the Mearn's laddie's spikk!

Sacrifice o Inhizenia, frae Agamemnon  
An owersett in Scots frae the translation bi Ted Hughes

The prayers gyang up. Her faither  
Gies the nod. Iphigenia's  
Heisted aff her feet bi her attendants  
They haud her ower the makk-shift altar  
Like a warsslin calfie.

The win preens her lang frock tae her body  
An flichters the skirt, an rugs at her touslie heid—  
'Da! ' she skirles oot, 'Da! '-  
Her vyce is wheeched awa bi the soun o the surf  
Her faither turns aside, wi a wird  
She canna hear. She's chokin  
Hauns are stappin a cloot inno her mou.  
They fix it there wi a towe like a cuddy's bit.  
Her bonnie lips fecht wi the curb  
Sae the skreich that bi chance  
Micht hae banned the hoose o Atreus  
Is steeked inbye her body

Heistin her breists.  
Noo, roch hauns teir aff her silks  
An the win waltzes wi them  
Doon along the stran, an ower the surf.  
Her een rowe in their tears.  
She kens her killers  
Chiels fa'd grat  
Tae hear her sing in Agamemnon's hame  
Fin wine wis poored oor fur the Gods on heich.  
They grip their hairts ticht  
Dinna catch her een.  
They glower at a maisterpiece o perfeck skin  
Like hens' flesh wi the cauld.  
Peety is like a butterflee in a neive  
Its knuckles fitenin.

## ellin Sangs

At the Back o Beyond far the Divil fooled the fiddler  
I niver manged the cant, yet a piper an a diddler  
O the traivellin fowk gied ye somethin mair nor haban...  
Their sangs o the road, faith, I thocht I wis Aladdin  
Fin they stapped my lugs wi the treisur o their lore  
Ballads aulder nur Ben Neevis, tales tae jeel ye tae the core

I'd need ae slate lowse an anither ane slidin  
Nae tae open wide ma winklers at the lear they were providin  
I wis lucky, as a dilly, they were there for me tae meet  
Bit fur ithers o the hantle, fa'll set oot the stranger's seat  
If it wisna fur recordins keepin ballads tae the fore  
Noo the traivellers dinna traivel...foo'd the sangs win ower the door?

Deliverance Sang: Tune: Oh the Praties they grow small, over here

Oh the watter disna rin, in the san, in the san  
The watter disna rin in the san.  
The watter disna rin bit there's ile tae fill yer tin  
It's the vict'ry nane can win, in the san., in the san

There's the thunner o the guns, in the East, in the East  
There's the thunner o the guns in the East  
There's the thunner o the guns, mithers beeryin their sons  
Wi their tint illusions, mosque an priest, mosque an priest

Wars tae liberate should please, common fowk, common fowk  
Wars tae liberate should please common fowk  
Bit its bombs an nae disease, gar the deid drap doon like flees  
An the livin boo their knees graves tae howk, graves tae howk

Far's the wise men o the west in this sang, in this sang  
Far's the wise men o west in this sang?  
Did they chase the Gowden fleece wi their Trojan shelt o peace  
In a war o little eese tae the thrang, tae the thrang?

Fa's thon chappin at yer door, average man, average man

Fa's thon chappin at yer door, average man?  
Gin he forces his wye in, is it richt or is't a sin  
Are ye deaf as weel as blin, average man, average man?

Deer: Gloamin

The deein sun's lichtin the lowes o gloamin  
Parks raxx oot teem o fowk

Abeen an eildritch wid, a craw flees skreichin  
Rabbits cooer in the sheugh  
Their een wee crackit spunks  
Starnies flooer in the lift, like snawdraps in a dub

Auldest Profession: tune There wis a Dundee weaver

A puckle hoors frae Lunnon traivelled north tae Aiberdeen  
Ane wis a dominatrix wi tackets in her sheen  
She marched aroon the herbor bit wun nae trade ava  
Fowk tuik her fur a gutter bi the stibble in her jaw

The secunt hoor wis a masseuse she iled a loon sae weel  
He skyted aff the table jist like a sookit peel  
He broke ten metatarsals an fit wis wirst ava  
His boddom set o dentures as they skelpit aff the waa

The third hoor offered photie sessions bare's a pluckit hen  
She'd read the Kama Sutra, she'd dined at Nummer 10,  
Bit nae a single MSP atween the Dee an Don  
Wad stamp her caird an pye her fee tae pose wi naethin on

The hinmaist hoor, a dauncer, sliddered up an doon a pole  
Bit frost on her bihoochie wis mair nur she could thole  
Noo she sells double glazin...bit gin ye speir fur mair  
She'll strip doon tae her semmit an French-polish aa yer flair

Sae aa ye hoors frae Lunnon ye should niver leave the Thames  
Wi dreams o connin ilemen tae pairt wi gifts an gems  
The siller in the granite toun's nae fur the likes o ye  
The locals winna pye a maik fur somethin they get free

## Widdendreme

Foo dae ye toss at nicht auld man, unquate in yer linen sheets?  
Is it a dream o war, or wint, or wae in tribbelt breists?  
Is it a dream o luvvers tint...o reid lips in the mools?  
Is it a dream o fleein youth, o green years stown like jewels?

Syne, ye maun wauken tae hurdies shrunk, twa dweeble, wrinkled hauns  
That aince held lowdie, earned bi wit an cherm in fremmit lans  
The Angel o Daith takks mony forms in the forest o mortal men  
Whyles he's a wizzent, blaikened tree frae the foun o a pit-mirk glen.

Whyles he comes as a kindly face, an whyles as a stammygaster  
Whyles he comes as the cure fur pain, an whyles as a cruel maister  
Ae day he'll staun at yer heid, auld man. Ae day he'll staun bi mine  
Bit far ye've wauked, a greenwid grows,  
Wi tales, like dyewdraps ben its howes  
An sangs o magic ower its knowes. Sic things will niver dwine

## Sigh

Hae ye heard it, the sigh? Oh it's sleekit, sleekit...  
It lowped frae the mou o the first disjaskit luvver  
Intae a stag at the tap o cauld Glen Quoich  
The secunt a bullet stopped its whumpin hairt

It wis heard fin a wummin luiked in her keekin glaiss  
Ten meenits efter the terrorist bomb  
Dichtit the smile affo her face foriver  
The deepest sigh ava, comes fin a bairn is beeriet  
Like time's rin widdershins, o mercy, weariet.

## Heidless Hats

Fin my mither veesited the milliner  
I wis an accessory, like a pair o gloves or a bag  
Heidless hats on peglegs stude in raws



Bowls o black lace hungeret fur creashie widdas  
Plufferts o feathers set snares fur stride-legged weemin  
Fresh frae the kintra, pheasant like, fu-breistit  
Fur, furled roon on itsel like an stervin tod  
Wyted fur siller tae faa frae leather purses

Fin ma mither veesited the milliner  
Hat preens stude tae attention  
Silk turbans smeethed their faulds  
Beads an baubles chittered like pygmies' teeth

### Brier Queen

I wis the Queen o my kingdom.  
I sat in a palace o briers  
The mavis, ma mey-in-wytin,  
Brocht aa that a queen desires

An the velvet, peony roses,  
War the guid lords at ma feet  
An the Tam Thoombs war ma servents  
That daunced tae Springtime's beat

I wis the Queen o my kingdom,  
As cantie's a bairn nicht be  
Bit lang hae I tint my kingdom,  
An lang hae I tint its key.

### Train

At nicht fin ma een are steekit ticht  
A train comes thunnerin ben  
My dreams...I'm on't, tho far I'm gaun  
Is the thing I dinna ken

It wheechs through a tunnel o glentin stars  
There's passengers, ane, twa, three  
Bit on my ticket there's feint the clue  
Nor map o thon fey journey

An as I sit in the midnicht train  
The black trees unner the sky  
Raxx oot their airms, as if tae say  
Step aff tae the dark doonbye

A skreich o brakes, a trimmle, a yark  
My stop! Is it coorse or braw?  
This destination I niver reach....  
I wauken. The train's awa.

## 12.Iron Bru

Iron Bru! Iron Bru!  
Orange bubbles keekin through!  
See the lines o robots queue,  
Biddin roosty jynts adieu!

## um's Parks

A lintie licht as a cloud flew ooto its shell.  
Twa wing-shaped leaves  
Flappin ower Meldrum's parks

## nd Hill

Shaddas creep frae ilkie neuk  
Shaddas lowp frae reeshlin trees  
Shaddas drap frae steadin waas  
Far cauld Autumn takks her ease

Shaddas meevin, shaddas still,  
Warp an weft on Mormond hill

## Auld Bards o Cheena

Scots owersett o 'The Old Poets of China', by Mary Oliver

Fariver I am, the warld follaes me.  
It ettles tae inveigle me in'ts darg,

It disna believe I dinna wint it.

Noo I ken  
Foo the auld bards o Cheena  
Gaed sae hyne an heich intae the bens  
Syne creepit inno the haar

owersetts frae Auld Cheena I. Zhongnan

Retreat:  
A Scots owersett o this poem bi Wang Wei (701-762)

I'm fair thirled tae The Wye in middle age  
I've bigged a hame aside these bens, sae then  
Fine'er the speerit meeves me...aa alane  
I gyang tae see neuks ithers dinna ken

I wauk tae the burn-heid, dowp doon an watch  
The clouds rise up. Alang the widlan track  
Bi chance, I meet a bodach.  
Syne we spikk An lauch.  
I niver think o gyangin back

In Repon tae Vice-Magistrate Zhang  
A Scots owersett frae an English translation o this poem bi Wang Wei(701-7)

Late in ma life, I anely value quate  
A heeze o urgent ploys, I let them gyang  
I contemplate. I hae nae on-gaun plans  
I set aff fur the wids far I belang

Meen on the knowe. Pine breeze.  
I lowse ma belt I strum my lute.  
Ye speir...I say nae mair  
Aboot success or failure than the sang  
The fisher sings. The deep shore is its lair

n Sang  
Scots owersett o the poem bi Sylvia Plath

Luv set ye gaun like a fat gowd fob  
The howdie skelped yer fitsoles, an yer bare greet  
Tuik its place among the elements

Oor voices echo, magniffee yer comin. New statue  
In a winny museum, yer nyakitness  
Shaddas oor bield. We staun roon teem as waas.

I'm nae mair yer mither  
Then the cloud that distils a keekin-gless  
Tae show its ain slaw dichtin-oot  
At the win's haun

Aa nicht yer moch-braith  
Flichters among the flat, pink roses. I wauken tae lippen:  
A hyne sea meeves in ma lug  
Ae greet an I hyter frae bed, coo-wechty  
An flooery in ma Victorian nicht-goun

Yer moo opens clean's a cat's.  
The windae squar fitens an swallas  
The blae starnies. An noo ye try  
Yer pucklie notes;  
The snell vowels rise like balloons

Applicant  
Scots owersett o the poem bi Sylvia Plath

First aff are ye oor kinno body? Dae ye weir  
A gless ee, fause teeth or a crutch  
A brace or a hyeuk  
Rubber breists or a rubber fud  
Stitches tae show somethin's tint? Na? Na?  
Weel, foo can we gie ye onythin?  
Stop greetin. Unsteek yer haun. Teem?  
Teem. Here is a haun  
Tae stap it an ettlin  
Tae bring flycups an smeeth awa  
Sair heids An dae fitiver ye tell it.

Will ye merry it?  
It's a cert  
Tae thoomb yer een shut at the eyn  
An dissolve wi grue  
We makk new stock frae the satt  
I see yer bare-nyakit  
Foo about this suit  
Black an stiff, bit nae a bad fit  
Will ye merry it?  
It's watter-pruif, brakk-pruif, pruif  
Agin fire an bombs throw the reef  
It's true...they'll beery ye in it.  
Noo yer heid, excuse me, is teem

I hae the remeid fur thon  
Come here dearie, ooto the press  
Weel- fit dae ye think o thon?  
Nyakkit as paper tae stert  
Bit in 25 years she'll be siller  
In 50, gowd  
A livin dall, aawye ye luik  
It can shew, it can cook  
It can spik, spik, spik  
It wirks, there is naethin wrang wi it  
Ye hae a hole, it's a poultice.  
Ye hae an ee-it's a pictur.  
Lad, it's yer last resort  
Will ye merry it, merry it, merry it?

### Rotten Keg

There was a man that wadna hang  
Three times upon a tree  
Three times they strung him up aloft  
But never hang wad he

There was a bairn that sooklit lang  
Upon the briest. Its greet  
Wis niver sated. Sic a wint  
Nae eirdly wife could meet.

There wis a pillar, stoot an strang  
Felled bi a drap o dyew  
Tho dweeble, thon aybydan faa  
The hairt o steen cut throwe

There wis a bride gaed wi a sang  
Tae weir her wyndin sheet  
Her bridegroom wis the chunnerin wirm  
That twines the thrissle reet

O these are facts that winna ding  
Fate's on a shoogly peg  
Ae day it's wauchts o hinney ale  
The neist, a rotten keg

nels

O Cairngorms sae heich an blue  
I'd see the warld were't nae for you  
Bit were ye niver there ava  
Foo dreich an drear the hyne-awa!

Stinch Bens, wi star-glent in each steen  
The Nor-East's hurcheon-prod backbeen  
Ye set the compass fur my hairt  
That's thirled tae yer stormy airt

ed World

Twa wids there was afore ma een  
Bit yin lay drooned in Loch o Skeyne  
A warld unkent in kirk or psalm  
A derker warld o fey an dwaum

The larick tree I raxx tae grip  
Wummles. In runnles it'll slip  
Back tae the stank o puddock-steels  
The pit-mirk glaur o auncient puils

Staun-back. The lochan's face is fair

Touch it...like mist there's naethin there  
A cheat-the-ee frae tap tae foun  
The keekin glaisse far boundaries droon

o Daein

Dae fit yer telt  
Or I'll skelp ye... Conditioning

Dae fit yer telt  
In yer ain time laissez-faire

Dae fit yer telt  
Or ye'll fry Calvinism

Dae fit yer telt  
Or I'll greet manipulation

Sheets

She was a weet blanket  
Washed her fool washin in public  
Pit throwe the wringer  
Bi a wee squirt five sheets tae the win  
Even efter a guid airin  
The tide marks wadna shift

r Kistin, Tullich

Blin drift weets the mourner's jaikets  
Funeral claes are weirin haps o fite

The onding furls unceasin roon the beerial  
Fowk dunt their feet...the fooshun leaves their fingers  
Men blaw on their neives  
The howked grun spreids a bridal sheet o fite  
For the incomin tenant  
Waves o the Dee nearhaun the ruined kirk  
Breenge heich like shelts

The soughin win droons oot the meenister's wirts  
Towes slip frae the deid wecht o the kist  
A skitter o frozen yird strikkin its face

Wreaths are smored aneth a wecht o snaa  
There is nae newsin at the lip o the mools  
In Januar- roads, unchancy, miles o skyte an slidder  
Fowk melt awa  
Tae warmth, tae hame, tae life

Astra-Coo

Kate, a coo frae Galway Bay,  
flew up tae the Milky Way  
Naethin there for her tae chew!  
Wi as maist byordnar moo  
Back she flew, the Astra-Coo

ish Parliaments, Auld & New: An Auld Sang

When Jamie Saxth tae Lunnon gaed  
There war twa parliaments  
That kept the rose an thrissle strang  
Neebors, wi gweed intents

A puckle years gaed wheechin past  
King Charles the First wis heidit  
In Lunnon toun- tho mony Scots  
Declared they'd nae agreed it

O the twa kings that Charlie sired  
The first deid in his bed  
His secunt son, the Catholic Jeems  
Tae Europe he has fled

Thon years war ill, puir hairsts an lean  
Syne William Paterson  
Set oot a scheme tae colonise  
The Bay o Darien



Tae fund this risky enterprise  
Scots siller poored like rain  
On the onchany tide o Fate  
Five ships sailed ower the faem

Endeavour, Caledonia,  
Saint Andrew, and Dauphin  
Set oot tae brave the ocean  
Wi the gallant Unicorn

Wi near 12 hunner fowk on boord  
They sailed fur Panama  
Till drappin anchor, named the lan  
New Caledonia

They ploored the grun, an planted yams  
Bigged huts an seeded maize  
Afore a single year wis oot  
The Scots kent dowie days

Despite the care the Indians lent  
Three quarters o thon band  
War beeriet there in foreign graves  
Alang thon fever strand

The English pyed the Darien loss  
Bit this come wi a price  
Wi bribes an spies they paved the wye  
Tae load the Union dice

An syne they passed the Alien Act  
Tae outlaw Scots estates  
Held ower he border...add tae thon  
They closed their tradin gates

Nae Scottish linen, cattle, coal  
Scots micht tae England sell  
Nor could we ship oor goods ootower  
Tae lans colonial

Bit sign the Acts o Union?

(ev'n wi bribery recompensed)  
For ilkie Scotsman for it  
There war ninety-nine against

Nae ae petition socht it  
Faith, the belfry o St Giles  
Played a lament tae greet it  
Riots filled the Scottish jyles

Syne on a Mey-day, it wis signed  
The first day o Beltane  
The Scottish Parliament maun close  
Tae Westminster it's gaen

O Lunnon wis a vauntie place  
The hame o Brandy Nan  
Bit hyne awa frae Scots concerns  
The coort o fat Queen Anne

The legal system, schule an kirk  
These things alane war keepit  
The end a an auld sang  
An sae, the Scottish lion sleepit

## 27.A New Sang: 1999

Fin Devolution mornin dawned  
Auld Embro toun wis thrang  
The Officer in Chairge quo  
It's the start o a new sang'

`There shall be a Scots Parliament'  
Is screived aroon the mace  
Wi wisdom an integrity  
An justice ower its face

Tae Holyrood, 5 million fowk  
In Scotland, look for order  
Echt regions, frae the Ooter Isles  
Doon tae the English border

Food Standards, Transport, Social Work  
Fisheries, Justice, Housing  
Police, Fire Services and Health  
As well's Tourism, Sport and Training

Further and Education  
An local government  
Culture and Social Care likewise  
Care of Environment

MSPs meet campaign groups  
They visit factories  
Run surgeries for constituents  
And sit on committees

They vote upon petitions  
Meet researchers and debate  
Scribe speeches, answer mail  
And vote upon affairs of state

The media wauk aside them...  
The reporters in the press  
Ensure they dae their job richt.  
They maun aa oor needs address

For noo we hae twa parliaments,  
the Thistle telt the Rose  
The wheel has birl'd fu' circle  
and on the story goes!

McPeenge

Mr McPeenge wis a dominie...hard an lang he taught  
It wis a gey bebeck fin a littlin he'd lang forgot  
Grew up an chappt on the door  
Liftit the snib on Mr McPeenge's life.

The steeny front hid an unca stammygaster  
Ahin authority's waa, aa wis in heich disorder  
McPeenge wis an auncient monument, cad aff its stot  
Mount Olympus, the deid-chakk in its throat

A cheena cup wi tea-stains roon the border

### Cottonwool Kid of S2B

The cottonwool kid has a bra stapped fu  
Wi threids an thrummles an tooshts o oo  
Her waist is nippit, her hochs are hippit  
Her heels are stilettos, her tights are rippit  
Her mascara's mingin, her lipstick's clartit  
Her perfume guffs like a coo that's fartit

The cottonwool kid winna let ye doon  
She winna girn an she'll niver froon  
Gin vets selt friens an ye speired fur a pet  
The cottonwool kid is the best ye'd get  
She'll niver clype an if on the stair  
Gaun up tae Science, a bully's there  
She's niver feart. Na, she'll jist square up

Sheena Blackhall

# On Inviting Lord Byron Over For Nibbles At 8pm

As you sent ahead no dietary preferences  
Our canapes have been carefully crafted to make  
Provision for allergies, vitamin components  
And to limit your high cholesterol, leanest of steak

We note your sister isn't among your party  
We're liberal here (in breeding in Scotland's rife)  
But some of us draw the line at familial incest  
It's up to you of course, how you live your life

We'll forego the trip to visit the flock at pasture  
We don't believe the lies that the tabloids tell  
But bestiality's not to be encouraged  
The Bible says, for that you go straight to hell

We've provided disabled parking for your stallion  
At the Paralympic games, you'd shine, we bet  
But here please don't get up to your old mularky  
The women will blab it all on the internet

May I say your taste in fashion's quite flamboyant  
You'd fit in nicely now, as flexi-gender  
And it certainly widens your range of potential partners  
We've sent Miss Lamb's envelope back 'Return to Sender.'

A touch of madness, just the hint of scandal  
It certainly helps drive sales up in the shop  
But you well know that public favour's fickle  
And Thursday's plat de jour is Friday's slop

Sheena Blackhall

# On Telling A Werewolf Story

Being a wolf is easier than telling a wolf.  
Being a wolf is tearing flesh from bone,  
Is pant and run. Is being at home in fur.

Telling a wolf is hard. Forcing the long black hairs  
Through the back of words...  
Making the points of syntax  
Grow sharp claws.

But when the moonlight shines  
In listeners' eyes  
And you have set it there,  
Pawprint by pawprint, spoor by spoor,  
Your wolf-howl easily raises their fear's hackles  
Your story-wolf leads packs  
Like little lambs.

Sheena Blackhall

# On The Farm With My Ancestors

I notice a motion,  
The flick of a plough horse's ears  
In the hazy half-light of the stables

The stalls smell of cat piss and dung  
The air is a soup of flies

I notice my great-great grandfather  
Striding over the yard  
Rubbing a particle of grit  
From the edge of his weary eye

All day he has toiled in the fields  
A slave to labour and duty

'What's your business here? '  
He asks suspiciously

He stands like a stern verb  
His bent old back, a question mark  
Not wishing to perplex him any further  
I melt back into a world he would abhor

Part of me regrets my urban life  
Turns back, like Ruth, wishing to help the gleaners

It's a poor creature who spurns  
The place of his origins

Sheena Blackhall

# On The Fells

Hawthorn twists like the Laocoon  
Battling serpents of boughs around its loins  
It mouths a devil's shriek  
From a gnarled hole at its throat  
Its bark is strips of skin  
Charred in the burning agonies of a witch

Stinging nettles guard its writhing roots  
It is all pricks and tares  
A tree of cruel defences, drawing blood

Far beneath the Fells, those undulating mounds  
Like sleeping ruminants  
Deep in their very bowls, potholes gurgles  
Satan's twisted plumbing

This is a bleak land. Lambs kneel on stony ground  
Tugging milk from the withered teats of their dams

A six-barred gate creaks mournfully  
Under the weather. Its strings of tears  
Are wobbling, a fragile abacus  
Bone-chilled on the rutted cart-track  
A single carrion crow, caws a harsh halloo

Sheena Blackhall



# On The Nile

Men spear fish in shallows  
Sand dunes rise endless near emerging cities  
Waves are a thousand flash bulbs going off

A dhow with filthy sails  
(More holes than cloth) flaps like a goose  
Trailing a broken wing.

Urchins paddle with tin trays,  
Baling water out of a home made boat.

Cotton kaftans dry in the baking sun  
Brown boys splash in the shallows  
Round a broken pump,  
Children gather water in pots and tins.

Green grasses, gashed by waters of the Nile;  
Beyond, the desert's thighs are golden dust.  
The oxen up to their haunches in churned water,

A black handbag floats past  
A swirl of effluent follows,  
A hiccup in the green and jewelled water.  
Sheep chew under Pepsi adverts  
Taxis career on land like flying coffins

A horse, un-tethered whisks his tail by a shop.  
A donkey loaded with baggage, stoically  
Stumbles along a road of lorries.

There are splashes of red hibiscus flowers,  
The heat, like a furnace, melts the flesh from your bones.  
Herons and horses' legs are wafer thin  
Armed check points guard a honeycomb of houses.

The cobra of lower Egypt is eating its own tail  
A vulture flaps in a tree, fanning the dead air.  
By the marble pool, by the sun-flecked water  
Bikini girls are done to a slow turn.

The old men drinking tea, beneath tall palms,  
Black silhouettes on gold

Sheena Blackhall

# Once

Once I was sun-bitten legs,  
Helping to load the peats on my uncle's cart

Once I read Jane Eyre in a locked-down ward  
Where demons danced between the changeful bedknobs

Once I waded a burn, my ankles shackled in ice  
The snow-wreaths borne on the waves like Jesus thorns

Once a falling leaf skimmed past my ear  
A cobweb in a ghostly funfair tunnel,  
A frisson of fright

Once I saw a pool of starlings fly  
Spilling and pouring together again, like quicksilver

Once, I tasted honey from the hive  
I knew that bees were really fallen angels,  
Sweetening our days with buzzings and delight

Sheena Blackhall

# One Day Soon

One day soon my whole life will vanish  
Childhood, womanhood, Age  
I will be as the wind, without form  
The flick of a mouse-tail over a ferny path  
Fleeting's a raindrop on a pool  
No roots will tether me

Beyond looking, needing, or guilt  
One day soon my whole life will vanish  
Tomorrow's lives are crowding round the entrance

Sheena Blackhall

# Orange

Orange is  
Slogans, fists and drums,  
Frightened women closing windows and doors,  
Children snatched from the street.

Orange is  
Xmas morning.  
A window of frosted stars,  
A tangerine like a huge carbuncle  
Down at the toe of a woolly sock,  
Its coat tugged quickly off  
Like a fat lady's on a hot day.

Orange is a  
A magnificent mincing cat  
Walking across the room,  
Its tail erect and waving.

Orange is marmalade toast,  
Slowly melting into bread  
While roasted coffee pours.

Orange is rioting petticoats  
In a hot Brazilian fiesta.

Orange is  
Pips afloat in the moat of a squeezer,  
Launched in a squirt to soothe a streaming cold.

Orange is  
A tease.  
Not as easily won  
As a Cox's Pippin,  
It requires foreplay to get its juices flowing.

Orange is  
Cheap and plastic, a Woolworth's picnic cup,  
Or Buddhist cool in meditation robes.



# Orkney

Over the sea of Orc  
wet windy foggy  
Orkney endures  
50 miles south of Greenland,  
Level with St Petersburg  
Near treeless

At the temple of Brodgar,  
The bones of 600 cattle, slain for a feast  
800 hundred years before Stonehenge was built

Now, Aberdeen Angus beef  
Crosses the globe from the Orkneys  
To Raffles in Singapore

Harald Harfagre  
Sigurd the Mighty  
Thorfinn Skull Splitter  
Eric Bloodaxe  
Names in the island's history branded into its psyche

Orkney's national flag clings to defiant flagpoles  
Owned by Magnus, Sigurd, Erland, Helga, Thorfinn

In the years of fifty two and fifty three  
A hurricane blew 250,000 chickens over the wild Atlantic  
Here, gales decimate plastic phone booths  
Chew up anything unsubstantial  
Only Red phone kiosks withstand their force

Wind turbines whirl over the bare fields  
Soon, the strongest tides in Europe  
Will harness sea power for the grid

At Kirkwall, a road sign warns  
Beware of Otters crossing.





# Out Of The Fire

Out of the fire came ashes  
Out of the ash came air  
Ghost of my child, I seek you  
In street, wood, everywhere

Death comes with a pill, a needle  
What hurt puts that hunger there?  
Oh, may the thronging spirits  
Cherish you with more care

May your neighbours be heath and moormoth  
Beat of my heart, my son  
May the hills of your fathers around you  
Guard you till worlds be done

Sheena Blackhall

# Owl & Handbag

Owl has been shopping for sweetbreads  
She likes things rare and dripping

In her bag she has potted head of calf,  
Gullet of hare, stomach of lamb  
And two pigs' cheeks found rotting

Mouse tongue and testicles are for dessert  
And to keep her bowels regular  
Whiskers, fur and tails are all grist to her mill

Cooking will not be a problem,  
She swallows her rarebits whole  
Mice, rats, moles, squirrels, voles  
All go down the hole that is her beak

For snacks, she'll pick upon insects and worms,  
Spiders, frogs and lizards,  
Which explains why owl's bag is rather full

Sheena Blackhall

# Pain

An open gate. I toddled into the lane  
Followed a climbing cat  
To a wall top studded with glass

I straddled the wall top  
Slipped astride its teeth  
A single point of glass  
Poked sharply in

Screaming I ran home wild  
With bloodied knickers.  
A terrified toddler

There were dark looks and mutterings  
As I howled on and on  
Unstoppable as rain

Who did this to her?  
Best not call the police  
Put her to bed  
And hope the damage heals

Alone, I sobbed and sobbed in agony  
Swallowed the pills they gave  
Till drugged to sleep

For days each pee  
Brought tears and burning pain  
Blood seeped from the hidden wound  
No doctor dressed

I was the little girl  
Who was raped by glass  
They never left the gate unlocked again

Sheena Blackhall

# Pandora's Box (24 Poems In Scots)

Moo Bar, Buccleuch Street, Edinburgh

Fin wud bands roar oot reggae, hip-hop, techno  
A bull fair suits this barry Embro boozer  
Nae china-shop tip-taein ower the fleer  
This Moo Bar's nae a howf fur auld-fart fogies  
Wi mair froth roon their chooks than ower their beer.

Mithras Rules, Ok? Here, Caesar's Legions  
In this Mithraeum micht cowp copious doon  
Wi ither ghaists, fine wine.. Fa micht be suppin  
Alangside custom frae the toun an gown?

Braw Brodie, in his satin flooery sark,  
Fa bauldly stated at his public hingin  
That daith wis 'jist a sma lowp in the dark'

Takk tent ye Embro worthies, foo the feet  
Are dinged fae aa, sae makk yer boozin sweet  
An dauchle bi the Meadows fur a jar  
Ambrosia's on tap, in the Moo Bar.

ered Dug

Aathin in Crivie's fishy.  
The scunnered dug,  
Face like a skelped erse,  
tail like rats' sookins  
Is weirin thon ettin an spewed luik.

Even the washin wallops like the waves  
Dulse guffs in puils like broth that's ten days auld  
On ilkie secunt waa's a grinnin cat.

Madonna

Weirin a skurrie hat,

Flanked bi twa fishgutters,  
(Nae a smile atween them, a gurly trinity)  
The Fitty Madonna an friens glower at the dour Nor Sea.

Her triangular dugs hing doon  
They've bin throwe the wringer, same's hersel  
Like berry bags they are, near tae her knees  
Milk lang dry, sooked teem o exultation.

Blytheness squeezed tae the lees bi the coorse Sizzens  
The tcyauve o warsslin fishes frae the myavs,  
Fitty Madonna niver cracks a smile.

ish Beach

Pirn taes splash an cauld queats striddle  
Puils far minky littlins piddle

Skinnie-malinkie-lang-legs stride  
Far the contermaschious tide  
Coories roon goose-pimply fowk  
Syne ebbs, tae leave a dreepin dowp

Here ae meenit, gaen the neist  
The restless sea that canna reist.

o a Blue Siren

Wheesht siren, stop yon sabbin maen  
That sailor's ken on nichts o haar  
Fan the great cauldron o the Deep  
Sens storm tae blinn each skinklin star

Nae floer briers on yer showdin rigs  
Anely the ice far oceans sweel  
The cauldriife spray far skurries skirl  
That seamen brave, tae catch a meal

Nae perfume rises frae yer foun  
Anely the stank o rotten banes

Nae tree sweys sweetly in yer thrall  
Bit coral reefs an schmoodery stanes

Wheesht siren, sic a sooch as thon  
On sic a nicht, will widdas makk  
Fin ower doomed mastheids rows the wecht  
Wersh, wersh, o fathoms o hertbrakk

### Fine Spring Day

This fine Spring Day  
A blackie weirin his Mey feathers  
Hops along a neukit, nerra pathie  
Shrubby an reefed wi petals

He is watchin a mither an littlin  
Feedin fower dyeuks in a puil  
He is wytin fur skirps o breid  
Tae float his wye

On the cusp o the warld  
I watch him watchin  
I am wytin fur this an thon  
Tae catch ma fancy...

The blackie powkin the breid like a kebbab  
A bumbee ringin a bluebell wi his feet

, Abyne-Braemar

Fite swans like ice floes ower the loch  
Waucht ower a tarn as clear as glaiss  
The muir is sere, she's yet tae weir  
Her Mey-day braas, her Springtime dress.

The prods o Lochnagar staun pure's  
A ptarmigan in winter plumes  
His pinions skinkle ben the lift  
His briest's far the cauld snawflake blooms

Broon turrets o the mowdie's tower  
(thon sable king in velveteen)  
Rise up abeen the wyvin girse  
Far steps the stag in horned sheen.

Reid Heilan kye like ricks o hey  
Staun rikkin far cauld breezes blaa  
Atween the birks, crined drappit leaves  
Like iron arras, roost awa

By knottit aik an scraggy whin  
The ram-stam watters o the Dee  
Rin brack-neck ower the reamin linn  
Swalled wi the thawin Winter's bree.

Saft rubbits rin like flocks o lambs  
Ower Heilan knowes far erne's flee  
Fite-taiglit yowes reenge heather howes  
They bleat far burns blink bonnily  
Spring flings her saft plaid ower the lan  
An warms it wi her witcherie

the Bend

Ye'll catch a glisk o it, betimes, the wirm aneth the road  
Far larry, buggie, bus an van roar by wi stoorie load

Auld bodach, mither, shopper, bairn that wauk the city street  
Step saftly roon thon lowly wirm, ower seen his fiers ye'll meet.

er-Rap

Tuck tuck tucky tucky  
tuck tuck tuck  
Cluck cluck clucky clucky  
cluck cluck cluck  
Scrit scrat flip flap  
peckin roon the yird  
I'm a wee reid rooster  
I'm a hip-hop bird

Fermyaird Claik  
Foo's yer hens?  
Ay layin.  
Foo's yer dyeuk?  
Ay Quackin  
Foo's yer wife?  
Ay nyitterin  
Foo's yer bairns?  
Ay wintin  
Foo's yersel?  
Dinna speir  
End o tether?  
Dam't near!

I

It gies yer hairt a lift, like a kittly wirm gaun roon it,  
The bairn, takkin its name, the meenister's haun abune it.

It pits a lump in the throat, the bride in her waddin gown,  
The groom in his plaid an kilt, kirk fu fae tap tae foun.

It brings a greet tae the ee as ye staun wi the lave  
The stoor as it strukks the timmer. The auld wirlds ower the grave.

The rituals that fowk live bi, in temple, mosque or kirk  
Tend tae the rites o passage, sma lichts throw the pit mirk

r's Carousel

Brummil buss an gowden breem,  
skail ower knowes o elfin green  
Swippert swift wi forkit tail,  
soars far smuchterin shooeries sail  
Breistin mist-entaiglit knowes,  
fleein heich ower preen- prick yowes

Clover hauds its lichen lair.  
Bens wauk up their Heivenly stair



June, wi wattergaw an spell,  
birls in Simmer's Carousel

n in the Widded Glen

Lochan in the Widded glen,  
luggin in tae clishmaclavers  
Wheeplin wagtail's airy trysts,  
dimplin watter's weety havers  
Ye hae seen the lowes o dawn,  
licht the spindrift centuries  
Cauldrife Autumn teem the boughs,  
shakkin Simmer's certainties

Yoam o breem ye bring tae me,  
showdin larick's rare perfume  
In this meenit whaur I staun  
tween the cradle an the tomb

Can ye cowp the mountain ower?  
Ding doon thunner wi a door?  
Blaad sic blythness gin ye daur!  
Nochtie man's bit pish an stoor.

ra's Box

Hae ye a braw Pandora's box?  
Takk tent an keep it snibbit  
Best leave't alane, some things by-gaen  
are nae fur the lang-nebbit

Fur gin ye open't tae the warld,  
let lowse yer secret faats  
Tae the fower airts, tae win them back  
is waur nur herdin cats

ents o Sappho

This foreneen, widdershins

I wauked intae yestreen  
Inno a park o corn as heich's ma chin  
A littlin, fair bumbazed its gowden hair  
Its teenie moos war fuserin this an thon

I wauked on in a dwaum  
Like a thocht gaun barfit doon tae unquaet sleep  
Oot far the blaik trees dovered like huddrie hoolets  
Fu o storm in the world's merriematanzie  
The deep soun o its days.

Grey bawd wis a lang-lugged quine  
Vanishin inno the dowp o her ain shadda  
At the tail eyn o the year  
Makk her darin lowp withoot a glent o fear

I maun wauk alane  
Inno the teem airt Granminnie left ahin.  
Her daith brocht winter, pain  
Oh, like the meen, fu sair I lang fur seelence!

Her wyceness cam fae the wyver fa vrocht her shroud  
Wi woosewabs happin her corp richt weel  
Granminnie...coracle, cradle  
Bield fae the chunnerin derk  
Nae dweeble like a bodach.  
Nae fooshionless as ague  
Ma bairntime hinney-store.  
A seannachie o pouer, her wirts cud thrall  
She wis a hollow skull o mony dwaums  
I masel thrum yet, wi her kent echoes  
Her sans rin ben ma teemin glaiss o oors  
reeshlin ben the rigs somelike Rapunzels

nelle: The Stemless Derk

Jist fin the stemless derk dwines inno nicht  
Granmither's lowe wad flichter in the grate  
Sae comfortin a glent o frienly licht

Auld furniture is biggit tae affricht

The clock, turned ghaistly as the oors grew late  
Brocht bairn-like flegs I wis ower wee tae fecht

She'd mummle prayers, her thoomb wad my tears dicht  
She'd lull me tae a dwaumy, cosie state  
Nae angel iver held a shield sae ticht.

Aince doon a pitmerk knowe, a burnie, slicht  
O water did a crag illuminate  
Throwe hags of bog a threid of sheenin bricht

Ae gloamin I wis socht, tae ma delicht  
Wi rowth o heich heid-yins tae congregate  
Ootlined bi natur, I bedd ooto sicht,

Ae chiel wis couthie. Kent aa wisnae richt.  
He smiled at me abeen the siller plate  
Jist fin the stemless derk dwines inno nicht  
Sae comfortin a glent o frienly licht!

#### Machar's Kirkyaird on a New Year's Day

Birds fae cloud an tree cam flichterin doon  
The winged parishioners o Machar's kirk  
The congregation o the nascent year  
Takk up their ordnar pews o beech an birk.

Fae Seaton's wids the peacefu cooshie doo  
Curmurs, while reid-nebbed deevilick hoodie craas  
Merk oot a hirplin rubbit's low road hame  
Rochlin their hudderie feathers on grey waas

Cistercian flakes o sna fae Heiven's fauld  
Doondrap abeen the raws o moulderin deid  
They hap an angel's lap wi skinklin cauld  
Raxxin its wings ootower baith coorse an gweed

A sleekit spider bids doon fae its wab  
That staps the moo o Ceres teemin jug  
An naethin steers in this aul-farrant warld  
Far ghaists o Machar fuser in yer lug.

I cast a shadda ower ma great-gransire  
His shadda casts a langer inbye me  
We baith are reeted tae this Norlan neuk  
Deid fermer-chiel an his dour progeny

#### Crucifixion of the Coquette

Atween the darnin an the cookin  
Love ran aff fin she wisnae luikin  
Thon's the cross she has tae bear  
She's bin had an he disnae care.

#### the Pict Stane Said

Here, beginneth the lesson o the Pictish stane:  
Ayont the corruption o flesh  
Ayont the lowes o Autumn  
Rockabye orchards dwaum  
In their sweet, fite chaumer

Mute, in the aipple's core  
Aa mortal ferlies turn  
In the sizen's crucible o frost  
The grun's weird alchemy

Ooto the hail's jeel, ooto the win's wull  
Sucklin the breist o the brae  
Ferm an femlies growe fae runes an banes.  
By starnie, hoolet, bluid,  
By the grace o the woundit glaur, that keeps the corn  
By the kennin o quick an deid

May signs an bumbazements  
Niver lose their wunner  
May wattergaw an thunner  
Foriver staun their cats' een throwe the dark  
Tho snaaflauchts gaither heich ower toun an lan

in

Saft in the glysterie gloamin, the ghaists o tummelt trees  
Sough in the greenwid's crannies far hoolets tak their ease

Laigh wi the furlin adder, wi moss their branches jyne  
Far the reests o merle an hoolet their cloudy memories tyne

There, gollachs horned an scaley, swippert an swack an slee,  
Nest in the rotten timmers, the deid trees' tenantry.

arden fae Heldon Knowe

Heich on Heldon knowe  
Bi the vaults o the leverick's Heiven  
A mavis poors its passion  
Inno the listenin lugs o muckle beech trees

Reeshlin thegither in aisles o green an broon.  
Rich hey parks swey. By Netherbyre  
Twa pheasants brakk fae the girse  
O this Haly howe like papal prelates  
Vestments gowd an reid.

Wast o the kirk streak oot the Abbey's deid  
Neth matchstick crosses.

The size o chessmen, leevin brithers hyow  
Their kail an tatties, swallowin peas an neeps  
Turn over the yird like bannocks in the pan  
Tend thyme an parsley, rosemary an mint  
Like eident bees their hinney's hairsted here.

Nets, like tents o moosewabs  
Hap young fruit. Geans brier on showdin trees  
Eirde yields her bounty up, fulls pod an pot.  
June haps the grun wi sun, coddles grey waas wi licht.  
Shaddas play tig far nestin corbies skreich  
Their twiggy lairs biggt inno dizzy crannies  
A poppies bleezes up in a stand o nettles.  
Dykes, wechtit wi ivy, smore in the stoory heat.

Cars slip in an oot the speeritual equation  
Centuries mell like smush. Fowk pye fur plants  
Day-trippers cheek-bi-jowl wi ghaists o sancts.

The wids are hideyholes for tods,  
Squirrels an hoolets, hawks an bawds  
For beasts that creep an climm an flee  
The wids are Natur's sanctuary.

Ooto the reenge o man an gun  
Broch snochers grumphy ben the grun  
Far fern showds an nettle stings  
An blackie flaps her sable wings  
In the derk leafy taps o trees  
The rainbow dovers wi the breeze.

Here wabbit thunner seeks a reest  
Deep in the deepest widlan's breist  
Here gurly gale an raindrap bide  
An muckle stormclouds rin an hide

This is their bolt-hole an their bield  
Here they creep in fae Ben an field  
Tae rest awhile till treetaps shakk  
Till boughs wi breengin breezes brakk  
An storms roar oot fae their green lair  
Tae skelp yer claes an lift yer hair!

## 22.Impermanence

The broon-backed watter in the burn,  
Rins bibblin brakk-neck ower a stane,  
Like my wud thochts that ramstam breenge  
Ben the derk corries o my brain.

I watch the burn in peaty puils,  
Its clashin tongue turned quate's the mools,  
An ane bi ane my racin thocht,

Ferfochan, dwines an cams tae nocht,  
Like wechty draps o weety rain,  
That flash in passin, syne are gaen.

inmas in Buchan

A beef-breet roars an anthem tae the God  
O Mairtinmas, that governs hairsts an Sizzens  
Its lowin wauchts ootower the misty ley  
Tae thon stinch hoose fas steeple prods the Heivens.

Abune the sookin glaur that hauds my fit  
French hauf-breeds roar, late aff a cattle float  
Twa new-weaned calves, incomers fae the North  
Skirl mitherless an tint. Their fey French bluid  
Crossed wi a hummle-heidit douce Scots breed  
That dwaums an moos an keechs an chaws the cweed

Timmer gates wi towe are wippit roon  
Tae keep the nowt inower their ferm toun  
Ben stoory, hauf-licht byre, blae doos curmur.  
Like rikkin kettles hotterin in a neuk  
The hairy nowt chaw strae, wheech tails an glower  
Their tongues raxx oot, some sappy hey tae sook.  
Each ee neth ilkie curly powe is framed  
Bi rowth o lashes. Sharny dowps an shanks  
Turn tail far Robin reests on shilpit shanks

Sleet, late yestreen drapped bi the winter's meen  
Lies douce in bowls o glaur along the park  
The road is ruttit puils o dubby bree  
The sycamore sits in its winter sark  
Chitterin aside the stibble-bristly park  
Nyaakit o aa bit timmer-runkled bark.

Sma wechts o singin blossom, feathery neebors  
On swippert wings flee aff, a heeze o cheepers  
Hoodie craas, riggt oot in Sabbath blaiks  
Far wizzent breem showds cauldly in the sheugh  
Preen meenisterial braas wi Roman beaks  
Powk girsly dauds o carrion, dry an teuch.

The steadin lum, teem noo o grey peat-rikk' s  
A reest far jackdaas news an raxx their wings.  
A riven trunk o elm that's claucht in twa's  
The alter-staa far couthie spurgie sings.

Forcey wins hae herdit latchy leaves,  
Doon tae the lair they'll haud till resurrection.  
Phone-lines criss-cross abeen the girsy brae  
Like Pisky Bishops makkin benediction.

Spears o frost shape-chynge tae pirls o dyew  
Thrissle's tint its croon. Its preeny orb  
Jogs bi a steely line o barbit wire.  
It wytes fur Spring's soft braith tae rise anew.

Moss haps a rodden's side like velveteen  
Lichen creeps ben whorls an wrunkled snorls  
O branchin boughs, wi plaid o Lincoln green.  
The lang rigs raxx hyne aff tae ferms unseen

Doon-drappit tattie shaas on cauld rigs streekit  
Lie far the lan wi hap o cloud is theekit  
Ower sheughs far frostit rubbit hunkers doon  
The skyrie pheasant trails his Sultan's gown  
Aneth a blearie, ither-warldy sun  
Auld Autumn's beens gyang hirplin ower the grun.

d Yett

I chyned the yett o a corn park  
A corn park far a corbie flew  
Tae bar the storm an the eildrich dark  
Fae liftin the sneck an wirmin throwe

Noo, foriver the rabbit's fit  
Gaes dirdin ower the flooery braes  
Noo, foriver, the bumbees flit  
In the sunsheen yoam o simmer days

I chyned the yett o a corn park



Ringed bi wids an the yalla whin  
The bairn that tumbles among the stooks  
Will bide foraye in a littlin's skin

Sheena Blackhall

## Pass Word

Pass the words please, ' my grandmother said  
Crumbling a corner of culture into her broth.

` Pass' I replied. 'Words can be hot potatoes.'  
The word made flesh, got out  
And danced in its bones.

Sheena Blackhall

# Passchendaele 2014

Passchendaele's a rural Belgian village  
It's in West Flanders province, Famous, once...  
In 1917 the place was flattened  
Today you'd never know. Here, poppies dance

It's famous for its pale ale beer and cheeses  
Its lazy wind farms turning in the fields  
The ripening maize, the hops, the firm potatoes  
Its vines, its mules, its flax...no hidden weals

From battle sores. There's roses and bird houses  
Hydrangeas, cypress trees, a family cat  
There's terracotta tiles on every rooftop  
And underground...well, never mind all that.

Sheena Blackhall

# Passing Through

Some people die in dirty forgotten bedsits  
With a ring-wormed cat, eyeing them up like a chop

Others, take their leave on the motorway  
Cause pile ups, tail backs  
Dragging others with them

Some people die in the womb  
Runners, poised on the blocks  
Missing the starting shot

You left as a cherished guest  
The glen spread out, a feast on a good table  
The taste of your favourite poem  
Fresh in your mouth

Passing through,  
Now you've become the sky  
The smoke from last year's leaves  
That hint of sweetness in the cherry tree

Sheena Blackhall

## Past Masters (10 Scots Poems)

Brig

After The Scream, Edvard Munch (1863-1944)

Dae ye wauk forrit, or dae I step back?  
Grandsire, the space grows closer ilkie day  
I am yer seed, yer bluid an thon's a fac'.  
Deid twal lang years afore I kent yer lack  
Ye are a shard the ploo turns up frae clay I  
'm telt I'm baith yer marra an yer makk

Yet nae in aa. I niver learned the knack  
O ploo in, calvin, coortin, fechtin... they  
Are man's domain, tho I am jist as swack  
A wurdsmith an a singer as micht shakk  
A rhyme or twa, like ye, frae Natur's play  
The Sizzer's cycle, green, gowd, white an black  
This brig I staun on... aneth ilkie crack  
I see the river ragin turgidly  
The drooned, the damned, aa wheeched awa tae wrack

Sic bluid-reid skies abeen! They gar me shakk  
Ye socht some solace in Freemasonry  
Tae thole yer weird, its joys an its hairtbrakk  
Relentless I wauk doon the self-same track  
We're aa in thrall tae oor mortality  
The wheel o life birls like the zodiac  
Rummlin onwards tae posterity.

Ship of Fools

After the fragment of a triptych on wood in the Musee du Louvre, Paris,  
Hieronymus Bosch: 1450-1516

Tint on the warld's watter  
The ship o Gowks is skipperless.

Nae pynt o embarkation in its log buik  
The mast-heid's a tree, its pennants, leafy twigs

In the craw's nest, a hoolet's the luik-oot  
On the deck, there's Haly Orders, Last orders, Lower Orders  
Boozin an guzzlin, Toozlin an snoozlin  
Caird playin, dowp sweyin, Lute strummers, heid bummers  
Wee chancers, romancers  
Gropers an topers, the Sacred an Profane  
Tummlin thegither like rattens doon a drain  
The hale o humanity's smush  
Tint on the warld's watter  
Roon an roon in the ocean's hurlygush  
Alang wi Odysseus, Nelson, Da Gama, a pirate bruiser,  
Columbus, Eric the Red A Saga cruiser...  
Settin aff fur a life on the ocean brine  
Charon takks the fares at the hinnereyn

y Nicht, Balquidder  
After Starry Night, Vincent Van Gogh 1853-1890

My toon lies hyne awa in its ain licht  
Sprauchlin ower knowes an howes, grown fat wi fowk,  
Illumined bi the lichts o howf an shop.

The planets dwine tae nocht abeen sic smachrie.  
Oor nations try tae harness win an wave  
Thinkin thirsels as pouerfu as the Yird,  
Yet theirs is nae the haun that rows the Gird

Here, bi the lochan, trees are the anely pillars  
Haudin up the lift's Aybydan blue  
Stars bleeze frae birlin clouds aroon the meen

I grow baith wee an greater in their presence  
Tae be sae smaa, an ken it, isnae sair.  
Diminished, yet a pairt o aa that's hale  
An halesome in this tapsalteerie warld

Up in the Nicht wi the Crab, the Swan  
The Great Bear wauks ower the Starry Dawn  
Solomon, Caesar, Kublai Khan  
A meenit's flash in the cosmic pan  
We're aa o us sic tae the Ocean's dulse

Ane wi the beat o the primal pulse

ey tae Keith

Lowsed frae the toun the thunnerin train  
Breenges by throw the sleety rain

A hoodie craw on a post at Dyce  
Grips wi its cleuks a perch o ice

Black ploeed rigs fite sna is thiggin,  
Lie like a moat roon a ferm biggin

The Nor East spring wi its hairt o steen  
Is derk's the nicht on a weet foreneen

Glaur keeks up throw a frostit ee  
A keekin gless in the cauld sna bree

Inverurie's tashed an drookit  
Better suited tae dyeuk than teuchit

In sypin oo the dubby yowes  
Chitter like leaves on weety knowes

Insch wi its parks like weety brose  
Its lang shanked lamps wi their snawy hose

Gaes by in a splyter o muckle draps  
Its sheughs as soggy as bowls o saps

Strathbogie's by in a kirn o slush  
Like barley bree is the sleety smush

Till braw an bricht as a preen stauns Keith  
Like Bruce's sword wheeched ooto its sheath

Bring on the lichtenin, teem the lift  
Keith bides stinch an it winna shift!

Poems Owerset bi frae Gabriel Rosenstock's collection Portrait of the Artist as an

Abominable Snowman, Forest Books, London 1989  
(published in Lallans)

I open ma poem  
I open ma poem tae bricht ferlies.  
In come oranges an pee-the-beds.  
Hist ye in, an dowp ye doon, an I'll be wi ye.  
Intae ma poem comes  
A bonnie snaa-beaked gowk.  
Hist ye in.  
Fit's thon?  
A million gallons o sun.  
I open ma poem tae aa that is,  
Will be an wis,  
Or cud be wrang.

Noo tae me comes  
An auld powser,  
In its moo, a doo's shank (sic things maun happen) .  
Weel, dowp doon awhile,  
Takk tent o thon gowk, there's snaa on its beak.  
Fin space fur yersel atween oranges an pee-the-beds.  
Far dae ye come frae, auld powser?  
Far's the lave o the doo?

I open ma poem tae craiturs leevin an deid,  
An ivy comes in, an brings wi it a waa.  
The waa faas on the powser. This is a waefu poem in a wye.  
In some neuk o the world A waa draps on a powser.

I open ma poem again tae bricht ferlies,  
Bit there is naethin,  
Nae bricht ferlie left.  
An it's pyntless tae say there is.

ts! Oors!  
Wasp on a weet day,  
Her wee voice  
Smored.  
Craa  
Throw a lace curtain,  
Or its shadda.



Fresh bird keech  
Festoons  
A fyachie fitpath.  
Frae the lift's ink wal  
Trees ful  
Their nibs.  
In the blin chiel's glaisses, The settin o  
The sun.  
Mavis  
On the girse,  
Gowan-inspector.

Floors in a vase  
A kittlin walks throw  
A bare gairden.  
Connemara  
I haived a deid powser ower a hedge  
Starnies.  
Suddenty, autumn shooers,  
Butterflee coories doon  
Aneth a leaf.  
Craas  
Afore brakkfaist  
Caa caa wioot devaul.

(NB.: powser' was ma grannie's name for a cat.)

om o Speech  
Wheesht!  
The fitbaa/cricket/snooker/golf is on  
Gie's peace  
Gie's a break  
Get oot ma face  
I wish tae Christ ye'd grow up  
Get oot. Find yer ain place

Hae ye nae pals tae meet?  
Exams tae swot fur?  
Or is't yer mission in life  
Tae deave yer faither?

I wirk as wikk  
Pit meat on yer plate...

Ye sit there bumpin yer gums  
A waste o space.

Save us  
Here's yer ma  
The oracle herself  
The keech that I've heard spew  
Frae thon wummin's moo...  
Fit's this?  
Yer entitled tae yer opinion?  
Sae's Daftie Jock  
Bit naebody pyes ony heed tae him.

owerset o 'Marriage Song', a poem by Yehudah ha-Levi (1080-114) , a Sephardic Jew, born in Toledo, Spain

Bonnie's ma doo, ma dearie,  
There's none wi her compare:  
Aye langed fur like Jerusalem,  
As braw as Tirzah fair.

Shall she in tents unchancy  
A gangrel body bide,  
While in ma hairt wytes fur her  
A biggin deep an wide?

The cherm o her beauty  
Has rieved ma hairt awa:  
Nae seannachie o Egypt  
Had hauf sic pouer ower aa.

As the ay-cheengin opal  
Wi mony glimmers glows,  
Her face at ilkie meenit  
New cherms an douceness shows.

White lilies, crimson roses  
There blossom on ae stem:

Her lips, like reidest berries  
Tempt mine tae gaither them.

Bi pitmirk curls shady  
Her broo glents fair an pale,  
Like tae the sun at gloamin,  
Ahin a cloudy veil.

She's brawer than the day-star,  
She makks the derkness licht:  
Day in ma dearie's presence  
Grows seven times mair bricht.

See here, a lonely luvver!  
Come, lassie, tae ma side,  
That we'll be blythe thegither  
The bridegroom an the bride!

ered Dug  
Aathin in Crivie's fishie. The scunnered dug,  
Face like a skelped erse, tail like rats' sookins  
Is weirin thon ettin an spewed luik.

Even the washin wallop in like the waves  
Dulse guffs in pulls like broth that's ten days auld  
On ilkie secunt waa's a grinnin cat.

Queen o Sheba's Sang  
Wyled frae King Solomon's Sang o Sangs

Oh I am derk, Jerusalem  
As tents on Kedar's plain  
Atween my breists, King Solomon  
Lies doon, ma luv, ma ain.

I am the rose o Sharon  
The lily o the lea  
Awak ye wins o mornin  
An bring ma luv tae me.

He is a tree o aipples  
Aneth his shade I sit  
Amang his fruits an branches  
The singin birdies flit

A lion amang warriors  
His hair is blaik's the crow  
His cheeks are beds o spices  
Myrrh, frae his mou I draw

Ma luv is fine as merble  
As fair as Lebanon  
His een they flash wi riches  
Like fishpuils o Heshbon

I'll be a pleisunt fountain  
O hinny an o milk  
My wyme it shall awyte him  
A field o corn an silk

I'll be tae him a palm tree  
An aipple an a vine  
Fur I am my beluved's  
An Solomon is mine

Sheena Blackhall

# Past Tense For My Father

The phone was a meat hook.  
I hung from the cold receiver.  
Heavy news dripped grief in my cupped ear.

Five hours cold in his bed, my father lay tight-lipped.  
The morning paper sat in its untouched folds.  
Coals on the fire had crumbled into rust.

The bed linen beneath him was unstained.  
Wood beetles gnawed the floorboards into dust.  
Three suits, four ties, eight shoes  
Whose musty mouths gaped wide  
Black holes of silence.

Half moons beneath his nails  
Began their dark eclipse.

It was too cold for keening.  
His pillow, smelt of leather, sweat and age  
I held it close as skin, a final gleaning.

Sheena Blackhall

# Paul McCartney (Born 1942) (Planet 4148mccartney)

Once upon a Long Ago  
His mother was an Angel in Disguise  
Early Days, at 3am, she cycled through snow  
A midwife answering every baby's request

He stopped being an average person  
Stepped away from the Inner City madness  
The stranglehold of nine till five

He rinsed the raindrops of hues  
To brighten his lyrics  
The Bloody Beetroot Sky  
With Calico Clouds

He was cosmically conscious  
In fighting injustices  
He was never a backseat passenger  
In raising his voice for issues

India called out:  
'Boys, this is your teacher'  
It was a beautiful night

Big Boys Bickering,  
The Beatles spilt their wings and flew

But he could always find a cello in the ruins  
Children, children,  
Gave him the comfort of love

Daytime, Night-time suffering  
He understood, and sang it for us all  
Saw death end a marriage  
Endured the eclipse of another

Those footprints left  
A front room Liverpool parlour  
For the Mull of Kintyre  
The Strawberry Fields beyond

He captured all us haymakers  
In the swinging sixties  
Runners in the Great Cock and Seagull Race  
Otherwise known as relationships  
When Love was Lazy Dynamite  
And life was a house of wax too near the sun

A Magritte man,  
He had his feet in the clouds  
His seat on the Mersey ferry

Sheena Blackhall

# Peach Blossom Petals (13 Poems In Scots)

Ten Ca Dao (Traditional Vietnamese poems)

1. Win skelpin the banyan tree.

Win skelpin the banyan tree  
Win threwshin the banyan tree.  
Faither, thinking twis a ghaist,  
Took aff an ran.  
Three loons wi three sticks  
Brocht faither back.

2. Ox, let me tell ye somethin

Ox, let me tell ye somethin,  
Gyang oot an ploo wi me,  
Oot in the park, be a fairmer.  
Me here, ye thonner, fa's girnin?  
As lang as the rice stalks are brierin,  
There'll be blades o girse for ye tae ett.

3. Fit wye tae Mound Temple?

Booed ower a stick, a monk speired,  
'Fit wye tae Mound Temple, Nun? '  
'Gyang by Bellybutton Inn, ' fusered nun,  
'Mound Temple's yett is yonner.'

4. Open the door an let us in

Hoose still lit bi lamp or lowe, open the door an let us in,  
On the tap bed, twa dragons are birsin,  
On the boddom bed, twa dragons are wytin,  
Gyang tae the back, there's a hoose wi a tiled reef.  
Ye'll hae a jumbo, sir, an a shelt aa harnessed  
Ye'll live tae be a hunner, plus five



## 5. ♀ Hermaphrodite

Fit stooshie amang twal howdies  
Gart them haive yer love-thing awa?  
Tae hell wi thon skreichin moose.  
Tae hell wi thon bizzin wasp.  
Fa kens if it's smeeth or humphy?  
Fa kens if it's stem or bud?  
Fitiver it is, it maun dae.  
Ye'll niver be caaed a hoor.

## 6. ♀ Mairry ye an ett fit?

Seein ye, I wint tae follow ye,  
Bit I'm feart  
Yer sae puir, ye'll sell me!  
Mairry ye an ett fit?  
Manioc shoot is wersh, fig shoot's dry.  
Mairry ye an be hameless,  
Parentless. Fa will luik eftir me?

## 7. ♂ The steel brig in Vinh Thong

Faiver crosses the steel brig in Vinh Thong  
Hears the bairnies sing in the gloamin,  
Hears the craa say tae the kite,  
Mony French corpses are unner this brig.

## 8. A wumman woot a man

Shoogly, like a hat wintin a strap,  
Like a boatie wintin a rudder,  
Like a wumman woot a man.  
A mairriet wumman, like a chyne aroon the neck.  
An unmairriet wumman, like a boord wi a lowse nail.  
A boord wi a loose nail a man can fix.  
The unmairried wumman rins this wye, rins thon wye.

It is dowie tae be wioot a man, Sisters!

mairry a Scholar

Wumman: Niver mairry a scholar,  
A waste o clath. Ett, syne sleep.

Man: Wi a rattan hammock,  
The king's robe on ma back,  
An rice in the shed,  
Fo shouldn't I sleep  
Efter a meal?

### 9.A Question

Wumman: King, faither, mither, ye an me  
Are aa sittin on a boatie, about tae sink  
Durin a storm, fa wad ye save?

Man: Unner a gurly lift, I winna lee.  
I'll cairry the King on ma heid;  
Faither an mither, on ma shouders;  
An ye, ma dearie, sweem tae me;  
Wi ma hauns, I'll save the boatie.

### 10. The Secunt Wife

Ma body isnae waur nor hers,  
Bit bein the secunt wife, I sleep ootside.  
Ilkie nicht she gets the bed, she steeks the door,  
While I'm in the front bit, lying on ma side, on this straa mat.  
An in the mornin she skirls: 'Hey, Secunt, get up! '  
An I maun rise, tae slice the tatties, tae mash the lentil.  
It's aa because ma fowk war pur.  
Thon's foo I slice tatties, mash lentil.

11. A Scots owersett of "Fishing in Autumn, " ("Thu Di?u, " in the original) by  
Nguy?n Khuy?n, a 19th century Vietnamese poet

Fishin in Autumn

The puil is dreich, the watter caller  
I fish frae a wee boat showdin thonner.

Blue weet waves rowe ben the mist  
The win, the leaves flee by wi the year  
Frae a deep blue lift hing raws o clouds  
On a bamboo path, naebody appears

Knees to breist, I guide the pole,  
Mony fish rug at the seggs roon here.

12. A Scots owersett of an poem by Man Giac.

Tellin the Warld o ma Sairs

Spring gyangs, an a hunner flooers faa  
Spring comes, a hunner flooers brier  
Life passes quick afore oor een  
On ma heid, age has hunkered doon  
Dinna say flooers stop faain fin spring eyns.  
Last nicht in the coortyard, I saw a plumb branch brier!

13. Puggie Sleepin

Puggie sleepin on the shrine  
Wauken up! It's denner time

Towrists here wi fruit tae spare  
Cameras clickin, come an share!

Puggie sleepin on the shrine  
Wauken up! It's denner time

Sheena Blackhall

## Peacock (21 Scots Poems)

the Mools o Mill o Tifty's Annie: 15/5/2009

The kirkyaird steps are weet wi tummelt leaves  
Untimely rived frae their boughs bi a roch win  
It has battered them doon bi sheer breet force an pouer

Cannily, we mount the sypin stairs  
Climmin atween twa touerin, wallopin trees.

It's dark an dreich. A whiff o the warlock  
Hings in the ghaistly pooch o the sere air  
See..thon's the verra cross she lies aneth.  
A muckle black cat sits atop her banes  
An unca real an present, eildritch guairdian.

We are incomers on its stewardship.  
It hisses, flicks its tail, an wheechs awa  
Wi cushioned paw-lowps ower the dreepin stanes.

Since Charles the Secunt's reign this murdered lass  
Has fulled her nerra bed in the cauld yird  
She's nae forgotten...niver oot o mynd  
She is the thorn in Fyvie's lush, green conscience  
The public...nae her kinsmen...raised this merker

They sing it still, her tale, baith grim an black  
A tale o luver's trysts an faither's pride  
A tale o secret kisses an their price  
The brither's beatin...kicks...the brukken back.

The statue o her trumpeter still stauns  
Blawin his silent trumpet doon the years  
Frae Fyvie's turrets. Stoor has stopped her een  
He can nae Langer move his quine tae tears

eard at the Roup

Czy m6wiesz po angielsku?

Do you speak English?  
At least the sea haar's keepit aff sae far  
Fa's the auctioneer up on the larry?  
I always liked that pair of easy chairs  
A real live roup is far mair fun than e-Bay  
I bid for't first...bit it wis far ower dear!  
Niver takk a wumman tae an auction  
I'll need shore porters tae humff as this hame  
That's aa the spends for this month doon the burn!  
Hae you spare room fur tables in yer vannie?  
Fa bocht the lobster creels? Wis't yon incomers?  
We've been here 40 years....we're still called strangers  
Look yonner... is thon Jeem's cousin's partner?  
Her skirt's hauf up her dock...a racy hizzy  
I kent he'd lose his licence fit a drooth!  
Thon antique dealer's gaen an bocht the chunty!  
We gave him that gold clock for years of service  
I didna ken the wifie played the pianie  
Thon hen coop wad be rare for Kylie's rubbits!  
Is thon the time? I'm aff tae miss the traffic!  
Far did ye say they're flittin? Tillydrone?

Nellfield Cemetary William Alexander Memorial (1826-1894)

A corbie sat on a weather vane  
Abune him glimmert a gowden cock  
Ablow them baith, a cooshie doo  
Croodlin ower grave an brukken crock

` Here's lauded Gibb o Gushetneuk  
Mangst fermers, fleshers an fusiliers  
Bakers an barbers, tailors, vrichts  
Soutars, seamen an engineers  
Quate company, ' the cooshie quo  
Syne keekin up at the cockerel speired  
` Far think ye that the deid are bound  
For, in the mools, we'll share their weird? '

A pluff o win blew up frae the North  
The cockerel froze, baith tail an crest  
` Thon's aa the sense ye'll get frae him

He keeps his cairds close tae his chest.'  
The corbie craad, 'Bit dinna fash  
The sun is warm, the yews are green  
It's anely humans plant their deid  
Neth glaur an foggy kirkyaird steen  
An gin ye dee the morn, ma doo  
Yer bobbin shank grow stiff's a peg  
I gie ma wurd that I'll provide  
Sky beerial, wi ma reid neb.'

### Merriege o the Trees

The trees are gaun tae a waddin  
The geans are bridesmaids aa  
Pink blossoms' silk confetti  
Roon the weel-wishers faa

The rowan is the bonnie bride  
Her hauns fu o fite floers  
The pine tree, as the meenister,  
Heich in his pu'pit touers

The beech tree is the trimmlin groom  
The pride o aa the wid  
The birk trees are the maiden guests  
Ahin their brither, hid.

An sic a reeshlin ye will hear  
A soochin in the breeze  
The leaves aa dauncin on the day  
The merriege o the trees

The whaup has drappit his feathers ower the muir  
Ae meenit he raise like thistle-oo on the win  
Seekin the peaty dubs o an aucion tarn  
Fur wirms tae stap in the moo o his skreichin littlins  
C000-eeeeee he cried, a lilt thirled tae the bens

A halflin wi a shotgun stoppit his sang  
The pellets cleaved his breist like a thunnerclap  
The lang-nebbit craitur drapped bi a deid dunt

Nae bein human he didna greet as he fell  
Nae bein human he didna speir fit wye  
Nae bein human he didna seek revenge  
The bog claimed him, broon on broon,  
Anely his feathers he left tae the heather brae  
An the smush o fower green eggshells,  
His tribal future.

Pupil

Please Miss, Please Miss, Ryan Trotter's  
Wirlds keep lowpin aff his jotter  
Maisie Duncan's got the flu  
She winna cover her at-choo

Please Miss, Please Miss, I need watter  
Dehydration maks me hetter  
Than Mount Etna. I feel sick  
It's a winner I can spikk

Please Miss, Please Miss, I'm allergic  
Tae skweel blazers. Fetch the nurse quick

Please Miss, I hae Human Richts  
Ye canna stop me giein frichts  
Tae first year pupils. Please Miss, may  
We shut the skweel? There's nae fit spray  
In the gym an Willie's feet  
Honk sae bad they'd gar ye greet.

Please Miss...Here's guid news for you  
I'm on the skweel committee noo! ! !

n Mary

Hair in bunches, platform soles, a mini kilt, a kipper tie  
Heilan Mary at the bus stop luikin cool an unca spry  
Neil McGregor's in her Maths class. Tall an derk wi a coo's lick  
Makks her hauns gae weet an clammy, legs like ice-cream on a stick

Neil McGregor's jist chauncer...bit aa halflins need tae try  
Tells her, if she really lued her...she wad let him aa the wye  
Heilan Mary at the bus stop. Dumped. She's learned ower late  
Ony dug'll sup the porridge laid afore it on a plate.

in the Toun

Rain in the toun. Grey lift, weet macs, blaik brollies  
Traffic lichts staunin dreepin in their ain reflections  
Fit an on-ding! Hale watter, a richt doonpish!  
Seagulls paiddle their webbed feet doon the cassies  
The meen's a peppermint sookit inno a sliver  
Aabody hashin hame, heids booed,  
Splyerin throw dubs an skirpit bi larrie's wheels  
A drookit dug, its tail atween its legs,  
Nae wytin fur the Green Mannie  
Gars three wee cars an a larry  
Jink tae miss it.

Dee, headin for Derry Lodge

The Dee is heidin for Derry Lodge  
The Don is aff tae the sea  
The Denburn's slinkin aneth the grun  
Gien ower tae secrecy

The Dee's the airt fur dookin, an fun  
The Don keeps anglers cheery  
The Denburn's dwined, an creepin awa  
An auld man, crined an weary.

o Dee

The linn o Dee gangs birlin roon



An mony's the ane sleeps at its foun  
Littlin, lassie laird an loon  
Takkin a last lang drink o't.

Its waves gang tummlin ower pell-mell  
Like deevilcks drapt frae the mou o hell  
The salmon's deefent bi the knell  
The glimmin skelp, the weet o't

Like some weird cauldron frae langsyne  
Its rikk wauchts up. It's best tae myne  
Ae slip..ye'll aa yer sorras tyne  
In the deep puil, the briest o't.

Yeitie: broadcast by Robbie Shepherd, (BBC Radio Scotland's Reel Blend)

Frae the green larick's showdin bough  
A yalla yeitie sings  
This is fit men caa Paradise  
A world o flooers an wings

A peesie treetles ower the park  
Hett-fittin't ower the grun  
Wee spurgies in the brierin sheugh  
Takk stoor-baths in the sun

Nae birr o car, nae clack o claik  
Disturbs the heathery braes  
The rosit-backit Heilan coos  
Mangst the sweet clover, graze

Hyne aff the Muick gaes bickerin ower  
Broon steens o weety glent  
An lipper-lapper clap the waves  
Like bairns in merriment

O dreichsome be the lot o fowk  
Fa's lives ken nocht o this  
Far Muick an Dee thegither fill  
A reamin cup o bliss

Frae the green larick's showdin bough

A yalla yeitie sings  
This is fit men caa Paradise  
A world o flooers an wings

e in the Green

There wis a wee mannie fa cam frae the Green  
He's seen mony sights aa aroon Aiberdeen  
He stauns near the coorts, far the sheriff sens doon  
Aa the muggers an heid-bangers lowse in the toon

nalds, Aberdeen: tune Old MacDonald's Farm

Auld Macdonald made a bap  
Stapped wi meat an cheese  
An aa the bairns are cryin oot  
'Gies a burger please! '

Chorus

Wi a burger here an a burger there  
Here a Mac there a Mac aawye a big Mac  
Auld MacDonald made a bap  
Slapped wi meat an cheese

Some Big Macs are fu o fat  
Rinnin thick wi grease  
Takk a sachet o reid sauce  
An scoosh it wi a squeeze

Chorus

Mither an your Mither

My mither an your mither were hingin oot their clothes  
My mither gied your mither a dunt on the nose (traditional)  
My mither telt your mither it's quite easy seen  
Ye hae forgot it's ma day fur the green!

Jean

God Save my Aunty Jean  
Lang may she mak ice cream  
In oor back green (traditional)

Gie us a trampoline  
Shades & some sun screen  
Then we can sit an dream  
In oor back green

een in the 19th Century

Turkey Willie's sellin hens  
Tuckie Jockie's pickin pooches  
Hoastie Bain sells cough sweeties  
Jumpin Judas prigs an mooches

Snuffle Broonie's aff his face  
Eely-Betty renders whale ile  
Doon in Fittie blubber yard.  
Fortie Piggies jinks the jyle

Sanny's sellin sea girse mats  
The Parten's makkin sarks an troosers  
Ginger Blue's a gangrel chiel  
Fit a heeze o fooshts an losers!

Boys

Fa's the quines tae please the punters  
Frae the docks tae Cockie Hunters?  
Snuffy Ivy, Bubbly Snitch  
Cove Mary, Twang...hae ye an itch  
The auld professionals can scratch?  
Mind yer wallet. Hide yer watch.

Feehie drinkers, sheriffs, sodjers  
Virgins, merriet men an dodgers  
Pye yer siller, they'll nae tell  
Their moos are steeked as ticht's a shell

Cross-eed, pirn-taed, humfy-backit  
Onybody's pound, they'd takk it  
Democratic tae a faat  
Their profession? Fit'dye-ca't....

Cheers for the Month o Mey

Three cheers for the month o Mey  
Fin the rinners cast their sarks  
An dugs an bairns an grannies an mas  
Skail ower the daisied parks

Three cheers for the month o Mey  
Like tars frae a nicht on the spree  
The waves on the beach come rowin in  
Frae the breengin, briny sea

Three cheers for the month o Mey  
Fin a blink o blue keeks through  
An the trampolines come ooto the shed  
Wi the puil an the barbecue

Three cheers for the month o Mey  
The trees hae their glad rags on  
An aabodies' face is weirin a smile  
Fin ooto the clouds, lowps sun!

Gow's Lament for his Second Wife: taken from the actual inventory of Neil Gow's Possessions. Tune: Neil Gow

I hae a braw hame that's weel stockit wi gear  
I've plenishin gaithered ower mony's a year  
I hae beddin an dishes, a guid butter churn  
I wad gladly ower gie them should Maggie return

Oh the feather bed's saft..bit it's lanely my lane  
The lowe burns less cheery noo Maggie is gaen  
At ae blaw o the bellas the flame burns sae bauld  
Since my luv wis taen frae me aa Inver is cauld

The wee birds are thiggin, their nests they are biggin  
And tho my reef's thackit my hairt it is wae  
My ingleside's drearie. Nae wird frae ma dearie  
The grave stauns atween us an quaet is the clay

The stoor gathers greily, the oors they turn slowly  
The keekin glaiss derkens, nae mistress sae gay  
Preens her curls at its face wi a lauch in her mou  
It's a hoose nae a hame withoot her that I lue  
The spottit milk coo murns aneth the aik tree  
At the wint o thon merry fit crossin the lea  
An the braisse, wi nae hooswife tae polish't an shine  
Grows as dowie an cloudy as vinegar wine

Wi'oot Maggie aside me it's nae gweed ava  
The walkin stick stauns in its place in the haa  
The cloots they are wrunkled, the bowster is torn  
Ilkie day is as dreich turned as rain-draigglit corn  
Wee bairnies are lauchin, young lovers are daffin  
Throw widlan an park the broon hinneybees steer  
Bricht mochs skiff an dover ben heather an clover  
Heich simmer's aroon bit tae me aa is drear

Sweet leverocks are singin, aa throw the wids wingin  
While I bide lamentin ilk rosebud seems sere  
Till the day that in her nerra staa I shall creep  
In the airms o ma dearie, sae gently I'll sleep

City o God

There's a kirk in oor toon cad the City o God  
Fit are its office oors?  
Dis Gabriel man the reception desk?  
Fit's its judicial pouers?

Dae angels commute there ilkie day  
Frae the clouds abeen Balmedie?  
I'm thinking there's nae a pension plan  
Seein's aabody's deed already!

For overtime they micht freelance

Doon the herbour bars o a nicht  
Tae gie roch sleepers a mug o tea  
Or brakk up the antrin fecht

Is there a traffic jam each day  
Frae Paradise ower tae Torry?  
Div the ser-aphim dine on fresh air  
Insteid o an Aitken's rowie?

There's a kirk in oor toon cad the City o God  
Fit are its office oors?  
Dis Gabriel man the reception desk?  
Fit's its judicial pouers?

es Darwin

Charles Darwin sailed aroon the warld  
Wis sea-sick nearhaun ilkie day  
Sae he wis ay first aff the boat  
Fin it drapped anchor in a bay.  
On shoogly sea-legs aff he strode  
Hale swarms o beasties stapped his pooch  
An ither breets took fleg an cried  
Rin: Darwin's comin on the mooch

Syne puggies skyted up the trees  
An fish dived ower the herbour bar  
Quick...Charlie Darwin's eftir us  
Rin, or he'll plunk ye in his jar!

Sheena Blackhall

# Peak District

Peak District (3 poems)

## 1. In the Peaks

Lovefeast Barn and Fearfall Wood  
Lantern Pike and Cut Throat Bridge  
Owler Bar and Parsley Drive  
Speedwell Canyon, Rushup Edge

Poors' Piece, Sinfin, Borrowash  
Dove Holes, Winkhill, TransPennine  
Sparklow, Turnditch, Nutbrook Trail  
Marsh Lane, Hope, and Odin's Mine

## Chesterfield Spire

Chesterfield kirk's got a crooked spire  
That looks like a witch's hat  
John Hurt the actor was born there  
An I'm sure it's the better for that.

## District, April

Every ewe is flanked by knock-kneed lambs  
Methodist Chapels stand red-bricked to the wind  
Up on the moors snow lies like linen bleaching

In chilly playgrounds, empty swings creak idle  
Dykes and privet hedges, square off gardens  
Stones like Battenberg cakes run on for miles

Windy knolls of caves and treacherous potholes  
Have eaten away the shale and gritstone gorges  
Limestone pinnacles of chalky white  
Beside the crow filled woods circled by steaming rams  
Shops of bottled jams and heady ales  
Norman kees with curlews wheeling, keening  
Over the fossilised wing of a dragonfly  
Morris mummers and long dead yeomanry

Sheena Blackhall

# Pebbles, Waves, Gulls

Blisters of pebbles rise through sun-tanned sand,  
Waves topple like dynasties.  
Tonnage of salt, slippage of tide,  
The wreck of an April day  
Melting into the strand in gritty shards.  
Scabby with barnacles, ghost-posts rise from the spray  
Where gulls like crosses flex angelic wings.

Sheena Blackhall



# Penned In Prison

Prison Epistles. St. Paul,  
Imprisoned in the town of Caesarea.

Le Morte d'Arthur. Malory,  
Imprisoned in the Marshalsea prison  
Pilgrim's Progress. John Bunyan  
12 years' imprisonment. Bedford County Gaol,

Don Quixote. Cervantes  
Captured by Ottoman pirates  
Enslaved in Algiers

The Travels of Marco Polo. Rustichello da Pisa  
Prisoner in Genoa

The Prince, Machiavelli  
Arrested, tortured, imprisoned  
By the Medici

History of the World Sir Walter Raleigh  
13 years, held in the Tower of London.

To Althea from Prison Lovelace  
"Stone walls do not a prison make  
nor iron bars a cage."  
Prisoner in Gatehouse Prison

Justine the Marquis de Sade  
Imprisoned in the Bastille  
Sent by Napoleon to an insane asylum

Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte, autobiography  
Imprisoned on St. Helena  
Three weeks before his death, "I die before my time,  
Murdered by the English oligarchy and its assassin."

De .  
Two years hard labour in Reading Gaol.

The Story of My Experiments with Truth Gandhi

Served time in Yerwada Jail.

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich Alexander I. Solzhenitsyn

Eight years forced labour in a Siberian camp.

The Enormous Room (e.e. cummings) :

Held in a POW camp, the Dépôt de Triage

Letters from Birmingham Jail Martin Luther King Jr

11 days in the Alabama jail

Soul on Ice. Cleaver

Folsom State Prison and San Quentin,

Conversations with Myself Mandela

27 years in prison on Robben Island,

Pollsmoor Prison, Victor Verster Prison.

Our Lady of the Flowers. Genet

'I have made myself a soul to fit my dwelling.

My cell is so sweet.' Fresnes prison, France

The House of the Dead, Dostoyevsky

Four years in exile in a Siberian labour camp

A roll call of suffering

A roll call of writing

A roll call of writing

Out of suffering

Sheena Blackhall

# People Who Visit Woods

People who visit woods,  
Should be open as flowers  
In the bluebell night,  
In the moon-bright  
Owl-cruel hours.  
For woods are as old as oceans,  
Holy as tall cathedrals,  
Winds weave dreams and skies  
In their woody towers.

People who visit woods,  
Should go there creeping,  
Like the one-eyed worm  
Or the stripe-backed, shuffling brock.  
When the fern in the trees is sleeping  
The dew is forming  
A single, brilliant drop.

People who visit woods,  
Should go rejoicing,  
Like the ghost of the hare  
That leaps through the barley crop.

People who visit woods,  
Should come like whispers,  
Be like the ear of the corn  
That the night sings through.

People who visit woods,  
Should come like pilgrims  
Into the heart of a shrine  
That a god comes to.

Sheena Blackhall

# Peripheral

Has anyone died since I've been gone?  
Something of note occurred?

Mother, you always worry so  
We would have sent you word

Has anyone called since I've been gone?  
Left messages for me?

Mother, there's not a single one  
Your diary is free

I look outside to the empty space  
Where they felled the cypress tree  
And no bird mourns or misses its loss  
In that cold vacancy

Sheena Blackhall

# Persley Walled Garden

a walled garden surrounded by:  
one deer of an excitable disposition  
three vandals in top of the range trainers.  
a castleful of OAPs  
a constipation of traffic  
flown over by:

arthritic pigeons with iron hinges  
a plethora of planes  
a sparrow which unaccountably dropped its nest  
smelling of:

four star petrol  
assorted herbs

slithered upon by:  
a spaghetti of worms  
an ooze of snails  
with:

rising damp in the lawn  
which is shaved to a number one  
one coy tesco bag tucked under a hedge's wing  
a concrete pre-cast fountain with nozzle implants  
a thrush enjoying a cold collation of Red Thai chicken salad  
a rose's foreskin pulled back red and crinkly,  
releasing a single drop  
of wobbly  
dew

and all marked out like a freemason's apron,  
measured and made precisely,  
like the Sun King's parterres.  
live workers tribute to dead workers  
resting in peace after the final whistle.

A solitary  
ant  
crawls over a bag of crisps.

Sheena Blackhall

# Perspectives

When you're tall as a beanpole, all you see is scalps  
Bald ones, ageing ones as shiny as the Alps

Pony tails, side sweeps, short back and sides  
Corn rows, curtains, natural and dyed

Comb overs, French rolls, head lice, wigs  
Toupées, Mohicans pointing straight as twigs

Quiffs and tonsures, baseball caps  
Dreadlocks and side curls, bowler hats

Afros, dandruff, headbands and lice  
Gamin cuts, pixies, freestyle or precise

Backcombed, bouffant, permed or straight  
Frizzy, trimmed or wavy, choirboy or ornate

When you're tall as a beanpole, all you see is scalps  
Bald ones, ageing ones as shiny as the Alps

When you're very tiny all you see are knees  
Walking past above you like a herd of trees

Sheena Blackhall

# Piano

The piano is singing the blues  
Its black teeth  
Bare bruised wounds

Sheena Blackhall



# Pier In A Gale

The pier is having a panic attack  
The sea is rearing up like a juggernaut

A hooded cameraman, eyes scrunched behind wet lenses  
Films a string of flags near torn from their sockets

A woman anchors her husband with a hug  
The sky's stripped clean of gulls

Storm watchers totter about like skittles  
The storm's like a warship cracking whelks  
It has put paid to candyfloss, postcard venders,

The sun's a bleary cataract  
The wind screams like a banshee  
Clouds are snagged on lampposts

Whip-lash sand tattoos the faces  
Of yobbos taking selfies

Sheena Blackhall

# Pièta

Came like a sunburst on the dew  
Many around to love him  
Life before, an innocent babe  
No need to curb or chide him

This shining boy as he rose and grew  
Met dragons who would destroy him  
Gone, like a Mayfly passing through  
With nobody there beside him

Sheena Blackhall

# Pink

Pink

It permeates the lives of little girls  
Peach, rose, fuchsia or shocking pink  
Pretty, passive, pouting, girly, flirty,  
Pink makes the boys wink  
Audacious, salacious, it's a female hue

Breast cancer ribbon. In Nazi land  
A pink triangle pinned on the chest  
Of sexual offenders, not smelling of roses

Porky-pink preyed on by hairy wolves  
Lipsticky candy-floss ephemera  
Prawn, sticking plaster, Germolene and gum  
Pink. A contrary colour, like a baby's bum

Sheena Blackhall

# Pinto

Next to a field of cabbages they camped –  
Grandfather let them. The fee was always a horse.

Farm boys turned and sweated in their sleep  
Dreamed of hitched skirts, the fork of gypsy legs  
Foreign flesh in the fever of high summer.

Structural damage was done to unsound marriages  
Herd girls were born wearing Egyptian eyes  
Mothers tightened their curfews, locked their coops.

When the travellers left, assisted or unassisted  
Pinto remained, half mule, half circus horse,  
Aunt Sally or honest bargain fairly met.

He ate the stars in the meadow, moon carrot, pig nut  
A hornless unicorn, incarnate obstinacy,  
A fearful perverse symmetry on hooves.  
He'd kick both man and cart, an equine upstart,  
Fit for dogs' meat unless he'd mend his ways.

My father vowed he'd make him take the bit  
The weather forecast, thunderbolt and lightning  
Such eyes of smoky quartz, such smouldering flame  
Some things are hard to tame.

Then the gloved hand, the kiss, the harness of silver,  
Pinto becalmed, an island softly neighing  
Under his belly, my father lit a fire.

Singed, the creature moved to a master's will  
A wing-clipped Pegasus  
Learning that stubborn acts may carry consequences.

My father was head of the house, kind to a fault  
Nobody challenged him, or sat above his salt.

Sheena Blackhall

# Pirrens And Magnus (5 Scots Poems Thrawn Janet Et Al)

## 1. The Thocht

Neil Sangster wis a wummanizin cheil  
Fond o a dram, his pye, peed aff the waa  
His wife, lang sufferin, hid her sorras weel

His siller tongue cud cherm the verra deil  
His wumman friens aa thocht that he wis braw  
His wife tho, scraped the pot fur ilkie meal

His littlins niver kent an even keel  
Fin foo, he'd be a boozie, luvin daa  
Fin sober, they'd tae bide aneth his heel

Noo an again, she'd takk the driver's wheel  
A treat, gaun tae the Bens fite- tapped wi snaa  
The littlins paidlin in a Heilan puil

She climmed a brae, an watched three bodies kneel  
Twa lassie hikers, ane wioot a bra  
War dowed aside him, tender-saft as veal

He liked them younger. She cud see him peel  
His jaiket aff. She heard ae lassie squeal  
He'd kittlet her. His wife began tae beil

The littlins tuik nae tent, lowsed frae the skweel  
They didna see her face turn blaik's a craa  
Her man stood near the linn, it's steep doonsweel  
Ae shove, an he'd be cowpit clean awa

The meenit passed, the murder thocht wis real  
Bit wi her luck, he'd sweem like ony seal

## 2. Life on the Border, Scotlan, 1298

We're ower near the edge fur comfort  
Gin borders cheenge,  
Will rules be rippit up?  
Will the kirk be cowpit?  
Will a new kirk powk its neb in oor affairs?

Whit about fermin an fishin,  
The laws o trade?

Nailin it richt doon tae the brods,  
Whit'll becam o the ordnar chiel?  
Whit about brigs an fords,  
Ferries, cuddies an coos?

Whit o the chapman cairryin the news?  
Will new maisters makk justice a rale consarn?

Whit o wir leid?  
Will the wye we spikk be banned?  
Will oor weemin be ill-used,  
Oor bairns an halflins slauchtered?

Siller...will there be ony left tae spen?  
Will oor whisky stills be dung doon,  
Oor laddies conscriptit for wars?

Gin we bide leal tae fit has gaen afore  
Will oor weird be gweed or waur?

Daffs frae a Native's Owerview: Scots Owersett of a 'The Daffodils from a  
Native's Perspective' a poem by Sia Figiel (American Samoa) , born 1967.

Affa sorry, Maister Wirdswirth  
Bit I wanneret lanely as a cloud as weel  
Fin first I heard yer wee poem,  
Form 3, Literature class  
That floats on heich ower  
Glens an Bens.  
She gart us larn ye bi hairt!

Alang wi tiger tiger burnin bricht in the wids  
O yer ither 19th century Romantic friens.

Fin aa at aince she'd rug ma lug  
Ilkie time I glowered at the alicie buss  
Neist tae the mango tree ootby.  
Bit in the hinnereyn I grew rale smert  
On yer gowden heeze o daffs  
Aside the loch  
Aneth the trees  
Flichterin an dauncin  
Unner the piulo tree.

Eftir skweel  
Singin, singin  
The daffs,  
Yer precious daffs  
Ma precious daffs  
Ma anely gear at 15  
The anely ferly I didna hae tae share  
Nae kenning fit wis flichterin  
Fit wis dauncin.  
Bit dinna fash  
Fitiver they maun hae bin  
They maun hae bin eildritch  
Beglamoured mairower  
Because  
They pit a lauch in ma mou  
Finiver I lie on ma mat  
Aften in thochtfu mood  
Ettlin tae win some blitheness o aloneness  
Noo an then without the  
Dugs, the roosters, the eyinga,  
Ma eyinga, the clachan  
Ma clachan, the airt□  
Ma airt, the neebors  
The neebors' radio,  
Their TV,  
Their lood moued aunty, fa sweirs at the bairns  
Because they hinna sterted suca  
An it's already 5 o'clock at nicht.  
Losh be here, I hatit thon wumman!

Bit smile at her onywe,  
The anely we for us tae watch Days o Oor Lives  
Dae ye ken fit I mean Maisrer Wirdswirth?  
Dae ye ken fit I mean?

n: A Scots Owersett o the poem Memory by Nguyen Bao Chan (Vietnam) born  
1969

Myndin is playin I-spy  
Wi the things ye myne on

It fins a timmer dall  
An dwaums o the wid

It heists up a shell  
An hears the sea

It sees the mornin sunlight  
An feels warm kisses

It straiks nyaakit skin  
An is brunt bi luve's cinnors

It sups the nicht dyew  
An kens the auld drooth again

It straiks the river  
An the waves rin aff

It hides itsel  
An unhaps the lift

It turns aroon  
An faas inno the void

n Janet A ballad based on Robert Louis Stevenson's Tale of the Same name

The Reverend Murdoch Soulis  
Bedd in the Glen o Dule  
In the Pairish o Balweary



Hell-fire o the Calvin schule

His manse wis a lanely biggin  
Aneth the Hingin Shaw  
An his sermons roared frae the pulpit  
Terrifeed ane an aa

Nearhaun, there wis a cassie  
Aside a dowie burn  
Hauntit bi hyne-aff ferlies  
Spun frae the Black Airt's pirl

Langsyne as a preachin callant  
Wi a Bible claucht in his haun  
He cam, a spleet new meenister  
Tae bring the Lord tae the lan

He hired him a queer auld limmer  
Janet McClour her name  
Sib tae the Deil, the Godly thocht  
Bit he lichtlied her ill-fame

The guid wives o the kintra  
Ettled tae droon the witch  
Bit the carline focht like a hound o Hell  
The meenister saved the vratch

Neist morning, throwe the clachan  
She wauked, like her neck wis thrawn  
Wi niver a hale wird in her mou  
Bit styte like the Deil nicht spawn

At the eyn o July thon simmer  
Nae a braith o win ower the lan  
Kye, bairns an men war dwinin  
Tricks ill tae unnerstaun

Seeven craas flew ower the kirkyaird  
There sat a heich Blaik Chiel  
Fin the meenister neared, he fled awa  
Tae the wids wi brimsteen heel

Dumfounert, he socht his biggin  
Tae swallae a brandy glaisse  
Thon nicht wis hett as Hell itsel  
Near meltit steen an braise

He lichtit a trimmlin caunle  
Fand Janet, strung up deid  
Hung frae a nail on her chaumer door  
Bi a strand o darnin threid

An waur, he heard her fitsteps  
Plod, ploddin doon the stair  
An lood he skirled 'Begone ye witch  
Tae the Foul Fiend's fiery lair! '

Mony's the day the meenister  
Tossed in a fevered fret  
Bit the Deil's awa wi Janet's soul  
An it haunts Auld Soulis yet

Sheena Blackhall

# Pirrin's And Magnus (7 English Poems Of Surveillance, Cats, Blueberries)

Watchful

The city surveillance cameras never sleep  
Like the God of my fathers, they are ever watchful  
Their screens, like the multifaceted eyes of a fly  
Miss nothing

The shoplifter, the car jacker  
The mugger, hoodie and vandal  
The brawl that's brewed outside a downtown pub  
Boozers, bruisers and bouncers  
A heavy mix

In the city's surveillance centre  
The human overseers have honed in on the doorway  
Of a shop, where a girl is currently losing her virginity

Oblivious to the back up tape, someone will replay at leisure  
Again, again, again

Late it Was

How late it was, how late!  
When they opened the Pandora's Box  
Of Caledonia, and out popped  
Cone Gatherers, a Pest Maiden,  
Scar Culture, Filth,  
Some dead souls.

Such things get under your skin  
Like sounds in a dumb house

Shutters are closed on the witch wood  
Where nightmares brew like poison  
In a wasp factory

How late it was, how late!

Crock

An old crock muddles her words,  
Sour breathed, through greasy teeth  
Her veins are thick as rhubarb stalks

A rainbow shimmers over the dunghill  
Of her mind, produces an arch smile

She speaks to the windows, the street,  
The passing shop. They are her silent audience

Her stars at night are bright as coffin nails  
Days propel her towards the grassy mound  
Of moles and the feathery roots of flowers and trees

is Another Xmas

There is another Xmas  
Where broken homes and street  
Are piled in cairns of rubble  
Where death and horror meet

There is another Xmas  
No tills ring in the cheer  
Where vultures perch on cradles  
And every town's a bier

There is another Xmas  
Where war, disease or flood  
Ravage the population  
Stain earth with children's blood

There is no Xmas Angel  
To feed the dispossessed  
To pour out milk and honey  
To share the turkey breast

No Wise Men to bring comfort

With blessings all around  
Just aid that comes belated  
To corpses on the ground

erry

Scots blaeberry,  
Norwegian blåbær.  
French myrtille  
North America bleuet  
Medicine in a sphere  
Of midnight purple

Abbess Heldegard of Bingen  
Hieronymus Bock, the German herbalist;  
Treated bladder & liver ills  
With this most versatile of fruits  
Peat bred, blue blood drops  
Of wizard juice

Across the Middles Ages,  
Blaeberry, fruit of the heather,  
Cured dysentery, hemorrhoids, scurvy

Nibbled by deer and the quick red squirrel  
Watered by mist  
And the soft Highland rains of Scotland  
Its leaves helped diabetes,  
Infected eyes and burns

It is a scatter of jet beads  
At the emerald roots of ferns  
The scraggy roots of heath

It was efficacious  
When cunning women,  
Shamen, were our chemists

Ungrateful Cat

My cat Rascal scratched and pounced  
Until I punched his nose. He bounced  
But learned, to bite the hand that feeds  
May give ungrateful cats nosebleeds

and Cow

The cello slits on her nose release a melodious moo.  
Her copper pelt is soft as a maidenhair.  
Spittle sits in the silky folds of her mouth,  
Like seeds of milky dew.

Through the heavy fringe at her eyes  
A bovine Boadicea, horned and hairy  
She watches me, unblinking,  
Turns the rump of her rudder  
Snorts and leaves, ponderous as a liner  
Slipping out of a narrow harbour  
The brown tow of her tail  
Swinging medallions of dung.

Sheena Blackhall

# Please Can I Have A Pet?

Please can I have pet with a pelt like water?  
Please can I have a pet with a luscious nose  
Please can I have a pet who needs no walkies  
Please don't give me a dog...not one of those

Please can I have a pet who steps out sassy  
Like the Queen of Sheba visiting New York  
Please can I have a pet with eyes like spitfires?  
Please don't give me a pig....I don't like pork

Please can I have a pet like a high wire leaper?  
A pet that blows by, light as a summer's blouse  
A pet as supple as olive oil in a pitcher  
Please don't give me a gerbil, or a mouse!

Please can I have a pet with claws like razors  
A pet when stroked, that sings like a crystal bowl  
Please can I have a pet to share dark hours with  
Please...can I have a cat with a midnight soul?

Sheena Blackhall

# Poems About Theresienstadt

Theresienstadt Burial Scene

Inspired by Drawing 15: Burial Scene (at Terezin 1941, aged 9) Karel Sattler,  
born 16/11/1932. Died in the camps

Burial Scene

I am Karel, aged 9

See! I have drawn a skull and crossbones

This isn't a pirate picture

The bones are real

Nothing here is pretend

Where I live

Coffins are common as doors

No happy songs,

Only the chants for the dead

Fear, filth, grief

Are my close companions

It's hard, being a child

Where hunger gnaws you lean

Theresienstadt Magdeburg Barracks

Inspired by Drawing 25: Magdeburg Barracks (at Terezin 1941 aged 10) Eva  
Wollsteinerova, born 24/1/1931 Died in the Death Camps

I am Eva aged 10

Please look at my drawing

It's all that's left of me

The rest went up in smoke

My little life was lived

In crowded barracks

Afraid of guards, of sickness

Afraid of my own shadow



I didn't play hangman's noose  
Gibbets made my parents shake like leaves  
Arrests, locked doors and whispers  
The silence of ghosts  
Peek-a-boo! Here today, then gone!

People vanished like scribbles  
Rubbed out from a dirty page

### Theresienstadt Village Fair

Inspired by Drawing 26 Village Fair, (at Terezin,1941 aged 7) by Ruth Heinova,  
born 19/2/1934 Died in the death camps

I'm Ruth, I'm seven years old  
This place is not where I live!  
My real home's a pretty dream

Some strokes of my pencil  
Will bring it alive for you

The merry go round's such fun  
My ears fill up with laughter, music, joy  
The rise and fall of hooves on painted horses

If I close my eyes together and squeeze them tight  
I can taste the ice cream, sweet and white, from a stall

If I close my eyes and wrap my arms around me  
Very tight, Terezin melts like a lump of dirty snow

Whoosh! I'm up on a swing  
Almost touching the clouds

### Theresienstadt: The Land of Plenty

Inspired by Drawing 33 The Land of Plenty (at Terezin,1941 aged 9) by Ilona  
Weissova, born 6/3/1932. Died in the death camps

I am Ilona. I am 9 years old  
My neighbours harvest weeds and grass to boil  
It tastes like spinach. Mother says  
If horses eat it, I can eat it too

Valie stole three potatoes, and was thrashed  
The SS guard gave orders:  
'Beat her to death, to teach the rest a lesson, '

But Valie didn't die. Now, she's a hunchback  
Crippled and twisted. Did the food taste good?

I am drawing The Land of Plenty, entrance fee one crown  
I am drawing myself on a bench, with a bird on a fork  
Mmmmmm...I can smell the roast-flesh in my nose

There are bottles of rum and punch to keep the cold out  
And a hedgehog....every spine's impaled with fruit!

And look! Here comes a little child-angel  
Carrying a basket of hard boiled eggs!

Theresienstadt: Prisoners leaving & arriving at Terezin

Inspired by Drawing 42 Prisoners leaving & arriving at Terezin: by Dr. Karel  
Fleischmann, (Terezin, aged 45) died Auschwitz, October 1944

In my drawing, no one will recognise  
Leo Kraus, Hana Oplatkova,  
Samuel Weiner or Richard Busch

In my drawing no one will identify  
Emil Huppert, Otto Schonfeld  
Bedrich Gutwillig or Jiri Bergmann

Arrivals and departures from the transports  
Are faceless, bent, anonymous  
The arrivals lug some bedding on a cart  
All they could salvage, soaked by snow and ice  
Some memories, and rags and scraps of hope

Those leaving bear a pack,  
Stamped with a nameless number,  
Carrying with them fleas, lice, typhus, dysentery  
Starvation, the death of self

Tramping over the trampled ground  
Churned up by snow  
Go thousands of herded bodies  
Fodder for the oven's endless hunger  
The Giant German Behemoth of Auschwitz

Sheena Blackhall

# Porridge

The daily porridge simmered in the pot  
That time I spent a fortnight with my uncle  
And it was ladled out, shared round the table

My cousins sat, six hearty stepping stones  
Happy to welcome waifs into their circle

The farmhouse was alive with things to like  
Two working collies sprawled beside the fire  
Sweet honey from the hive oozed from a comb  
The wax upon the plate lay whole, entire  
Peats crumbled in the grate. Six pairs of boots  
Sat drying, damp with mud from field and byre

And now I pour my porridge from a bag  
Into a bowl, stir boiling water there  
Three stirs. It thickens, sustenance of sorts  
No peats. No boots. A solitary chair.

Sheena Blackhall

## Portree: In Memoriam, Iain Crichton Smith

The joy has gone from the glass. The ceildih's darkened.  
The pitiless threadbare rain's thin sheets fall round  
The harbour boats where shattered stars are floating,  
Dropped from their Highland heaven.  
Dropped and drowned.

The sea is ice, the waves a restless wreckage.  
Over the rocks the rending ocean pours  
Like a sundered hull. White winter stalks the Cuillin.  
Storm has emptied the street, has shut the doors.

The harbour boats are huddled, one sail slapping,  
One sail flapping, in biting rain and foam  
As if it heard the final anchor snapping,  
And a great soul rising, taking the sea-road home.

It seemed his poems had lived in my head forever  
Like wonderful birds let loose on the the moors to fly.  
I'd thought the Lewisman's flow of words would never  
Suddenly stop, like a mountain stream run dry –  
Suddenly stop, like a reel when the music's ended,  
A lily with no more petals to unfold.  
Flesh flits, like mist with the browning bracken blended,  
Only his tales remain, to be told and told.

Sheena Blackhall

# Portsoy

A yacht slices the waves like a cheese-cutter  
Off the jetty, youngsters plump  
Like porpoise-pods in the Firth  
Half-fish, these seamen's sons in seal-wet trousers  
Dive, surface, shake on the rocks like sodden shags

Lobster pots loll on the pier, drool orange ropes  
Pleasure boats like Costa Bravo toys  
Make show-off circuits speeding round the surf

The harbour water's jade and bottle green  
Aquamarine where black-shelled buckies crawl

My balls are freezing one young buck shouts out  
Chicken, his diving mermaid girlfriend counters

Each tiny craft is moored by chains and anchors,  
As each child here is tied by love and need  
To the grey stone houses climbing the slopes above  
Where gulls plonk down on lums like ice cream scoops

Sheena Blackhall

# Preparing To Meet The Minotaur

When I'm an ancient,  
A caged cockatoo with nothing to do but moult  
I'll straddle Pegasus and hitch a ride.

I'll own a mischievous zimmer  
I'll abseil down the cracks upon my forehead  
Thoughts will glissade off mountains  
There will be an avalanche of poems.  
Though they drug my Horlicks  
Though my teeth may clack like coconuts hung out to dry  
Though I may wear a beard as grey's Tiresias  
Though I spray my pshaws on the fronds of plastic vines  
I'll continue to saunter down the valley of fantasy

Visitors will come bearing alms  
Fluffy cardigans, or mint imperials  
I must wear my props then, my medical aids  
All the better to see you with, my dear  
All the better to hear you with, my dear  
All the better to eat you with my dear.  
Watching the threads on the carpet growing thinner  
Preparing to meet the Minotaur licking his bull-black lips

Sheena Blackhall

# Preparing To Meet The Minotaur (34 Scots Poems)

e: Inspired by Tussle for the Keg - John Pettie

Gimmit  
Makk me  
Gimmit.  
Buy it  
Canna. Gimmit or I'll takk it  
Try it an ye'll brakk it  
Gie it here ye nyaff  
Or fit?  
Skelp.  
Dunt.  
Scrat  
Scram! I'm the winner o the dram!

ts on Meevement

I meeve throwe the warld wi ma harns.  
Ma thochts are swippert an swack, slee an sleekit.

Cannie! Ane o ma thochts is teetin ahin yer lug  
Is takkin aathin in. Is giein naethin oot.

Yon wee leaf that flichters aff the birk at the waa's eyn,  
Birlin an furlin micht be as teem's a shell efter the snail's gaen.  
Ye dinna ken. Ye canna tell. Anely the snail can tell.

Craas an the Law o Karma

Takk tent o karma. Dinna deave the craas!  
Blaik as deevilicks,  
Craas are flang in yer face  
Like seet back-blawn fae the lum.

Thon craas'll gar ye jink.  
Foo daur ye wag yer neive  
At three direct descendents



O the corbies fa theekt their nest  
Wi a deid knight's hair?

Did ye nae ken thon three birds  
Is the Morrigan resurrectit?  
Takk a thocht tae yersel  
Awa an fleg a doo.

Fite Rose

May this, the day ye chose,  
be as the wee white rose  
A joy preened tae the briest,  
hallowed bi Hope an priest

An fin the floer is deen,  
may luv pruve evergreen  
The vows ye freely makk,  
bide true till sun turns black

Stoot be yer reef an waa,  
a bield fin Storms blaw  
Sweet are the ties that bind  
for those that Luv has jyned

May ye as man an wife,  
ken nocht o dule an strife  
The path ye wauk be clear  
as larksang ower the muir

riar's Bobby Discovers Balquidder

Nae traffic.  
Nae fowk.  
Nae tour.  
His barkin fulls the glen!

day Boy

(3 year-old, overheard on a bus)  
Fit a lot o flags are oot the day!  
The flags are makkin the sky happy!  
Even the sun' s smilin!

Wisn't that nice o the Queen, Ma,  
Gettin thon flags oot fur me.  
Someb'dy must hae telt her It's ma birthday!

Co-ordinates

Join the co-ordinates, quo she  
I luiked at her cardi.  
A raw o rompin rhombuses  
Lowpin ower twa globes.

tly Dauncers

These are the ghaisties in the glen  
The flooers that Winter disnae ken  
Vetch an speedwell, harebell, ling,  
Blossoms that brier in sonsie Spring.

Each petal gies an oorrie skreich  
A sab that fulls the muirlan dreich  
The tabor beat ben brittle reed's  
The ghaistie-daunce o flooers that's deid.

Tessa Ransford

`The word bites like fish.  
Shall I throw it back free  
Arrowing to that sea  
Where thoughts lash and fin  
Or shall I pull it in? (Stephen Spender)

Lang years her wummin's hams vrocht siller nets,  
Wi smeddum, skeelieness an sweirity.  
Ben pit-mirk oors she planned an manned a fleet,

Tae gaither wirds...a nation's barderie.

Noo that she's catched an keepit yon rich hairst,  
Mapped oot the fertile banks o yon great sea,  
Far poems are thochts that kythe an mell an steer,  
Flichterin like fire-flauchts in yon Norlan bree.

Like Ulysses her boat can hamewird run,  
Wechtit wi honours, aa its victories won,  
An as the anchor draps tae herbour foon,  
May poems like sunbeams, daunce aboot its croon.

### Migraine

Ma een are Aunty Mable's.  
Ma moo is Uncle Jim's  
An frae ma faither's cousin  
I hae twa double chins.

Ma lug's a rabbit's burrow.  
He lowps in frae the rain  
An thumps aroon ma cranium.  
I caa him Bugs Migraine.

### Scottish Year

The month o Januar comes in  
Wi droothy Hogmanay,  
Auld Eel we'll fete wi reamin plate  
Syne neist it's Bums' Day.

The month o Februar is cauld  
The weeks rin faister yet  
St Valentine brings floers an wine  
Let nane their luv forget.□

In Merch, the bannock's in the pan,  
Tae mithers, gifts are gien  
The Teuchit Storm howls roon the barn,  
The parks are brierin green.

Feel's Day takks in the Easter month  
Fin eggs rowe doon the brae  
There's sun, there's win, there's caul, there's rain  
The skies weir hodden grey.

The first o Mey's a magic time  
Gyang wash yer face wi dew  
Ne'er cast a clot till Mey be oot  
Or cauld will gar ye grue.

In mony's a toon the month o June  
Brings merriege tae the fore  
For auld langsyne, the Solstice myne  
The mountain taps explore!

In saft July the showdin hey  
Is dried afore the weet  
For gin St Swithin draps his tears  
Fur forty days it's weet!

In August, guns are cleaned an iled  
The corn begins tae fill  
At Games an Fairs, fowk shakk aff cares  
An daunce wi richt gweed will.

September's sere. The deein year  
Brings Autumn's equinox  
Fin hairst is cut, an windaes shut  
An sleekit slides the fox

October: eildritch Halloween  
An neepie lanterns bricht  
Fin bogles steer wi faces queer  
An guizers brave the nicht.

November. Bonfires licht the lift  
Reid Poppies noo are thrang.  
St Andrew's Day takks oot the month  
Wi poem an Scottish sang.

December's here. Yule's near at haun

Wi bubblyjock an cheer  
Takk up a dram baith maid an man  
Tae toast the Scottish year.

e Rules, OK?

Ca cannie stranger...I'm a nettle  
I'm as saft as heavy metal  
I staun here sae ye'll recaa  
In ilkie life some rain maun faa  
I'm the sting by beauty's side  
Pu me friens...I'll scrat yer hide!

Burnin Brand For Flora Garry 1900- 2000

A waxen caunle- stump, rikk trails abeen  
An oot-blawn braith, aa darg, aa poetry deen.  
Stoor sattles. Midgies heeze in simmer heat.  
Thochts steer far shiftin recollections meet.

I speired her eence 'Fit wye did ye stert late  
Wi sic a gift, oor leid tae celebrate? '  
Back cam nae slick repon, nae leein styte,  
O writer's block or latchy Muses's wyte.

` Fin I wis young, I shone in King's grey airt..  
My winsome face won mony a laddie's hairt.  
Fin ye are happy, ye hae mair adee  
Than spenn sweet oors on lanely poetry.'

Fierce pride in yon! A floer, smert an braa,  
Her reets ran ben the derk side o the waa,  
A Buchan booer, far complex shaddas faa.  
Murray an Garry...brilliance in the mools,  
The yin an yang o literary jewels  
Used wirds they niver learned in scholar-street,  
Bi turns, could gar ye rage..or lauch..or greet.

Their Scots, a burnin brand passed haun tae haun,  
Kinnelt a line o lichts throw oor thrawn lan,

A bleeze o wirds nae even daith could smore,  
As lang as een may read, and thocht explore.

air: for the late Alistair Taylor, former Preses o the Aiberdeen Branch o the Scots  
Language Society, Secretar o the Saltire Society

Furl o the fusky in the glaiss, braid haun, an lauchin ee  
Kenspeckle chiel... a scholar's hams, a gyangin fit, an free.

I'd raise a dram o Lochnagar in memory o his name...  
Wioot his glaiss tae clink agint it wadnae be the same.

Fin I gyang ower the Cluny brig, I'll dauchle bi the burn  
An luik doon in its peaty face an bide awhile, tae murn.

A derker place is Beinn a Buird without its quate star,  
His fitstep lued the springy peat, the bywyes o Braemar.

There's mony's the nesty, nippy tyke I'd gledly clart wi clay  
Ahin the dubby kirkyaird dyke than yon gweed dominie.

Wi fearie tales o oorie glens, an Gaelic Bens sae wild  
At his command - a lesser chiel Daith surely cud hae wyled.

Torphins without his sparklin wird is broth wioot the satt  
Fur he wis smeddum, virr an spunk, an kindness, tae a faut.

e-Barrelled

The carrot wis scunnered wi life en plein air  
Foo she wished she cud cheenge tae a paw-paw or pear  
Foo she girmed an banned at her cauld kailyaird hame  
Sae tae seem mair important, she tuik a new name:  
Miss Caroline Farquharson-Gordon of Finzean  
(Bit they still drapped her intae the broth wi the ingin)

e

We're the ghaisties in the contract.

We're the ink ye dinna see  
We're the telephone, the e-mail.  
We're the perks some dinna gie

We're the muckle photocopier, the paper an the fax  
We're the poems fae competitions cairtit oot the door in sacks  
We're the heatin, we're the seatin, we're the kettle on the byle  
We're a quate wee oasis oot the hassle, fur a whyle

If ye think we dinna maitter...Cut us aff, an see foo far  
The ghaisties in the contract contribute tae fit ye are!

ache

Dirlin teeth hae got a stang, as thrang's a beezer o a bummer.  
A blichtit gum...a fooshtie fang, wad gie a verra deil the scunner.

A hoast can set yer throat ableeze. A neb can dleep like leakin wallie,  
Bit ice cream on a fillin..Jeeze! Can gar ye skirl at ilkie swallie.

Tantalus, tho deaved wi drooth, Prometheus, ett bi a vulture,  
Wad baith agree a stoonin tooth's the torture-king in ony culture.

An alligator bi the Nile needs far mair teeth than me, tae smile.  
Near sixty fillins - mair he'd need, tae stop teeth dirlin in his heid.

The Inquistion's rack micht raxx yer verra shanks frae oot their sockets.  
Far coarser is an achin gum, fin reets flare up...explodin rockets

Wi nae remeid an nae relief  
fit Sorra's loon inventit teeth?

Supply

Alpha, Beta, Charlie, Delta,  
I wid like an air raid shelter,  
In each classroom biggit wide,  
far teachers on supply can hide.

Echo, Foxtrot, Golf, Hotel,

Dante'd reinvent his Hell  
Gin he wis faced wi Primary 3,  
on a mental wreckin spree.

India, Juliet, Kilo, Lima,  
timetable's a concertina,  
Squeezed tae pack new targets in...  
Takk redundancy an rin!

Mike, November, Oscar, Papa,  
Quebec, Romeo, Sierra,  
Roon the rafters watch them swing.  
Tell me Daith: Far is thy sting?

Tango, Uniform an Victor,  
watch oot fur the schools inspector!  
X-ray, Yankee, Zulu- Noo  
I'm signin aff. I'm on the Broo  
It wad takk the S.A.S.  
tae rule a classroom wi success!

amus Igitur

The kilt's taen ooto mothbaas, fur Pride maun hae its sway  
An aa because a graduate is gettin capped the day.

Yer nae a gype, ye've prued it, shown there's mair tae ye than oo.  
It's wirth aa the years o warsslin tae reap the honours noo

Noo yer upwird an yer mobile... Ay, an sae are aa yer fiers  
An ye niver thocht they'd families like yours, yer student peers.

Look! There stauns Fiona's faither...Nae a letter tae his name  
Bit a millionaire twice ower sellin herrin fae the faem.

Lack o siller, lack o confidence sets goals ayont fowk's reach  
Washes mony's the likely fitpreint fae Ambition's bonnie beach

An fur ilkie plum that's ripened, there are twenty sittin soor  
Niver coddlit nur encouraged...Gaudeamus Igitur



## Computer's Day Oot

I thocht that my computer'd like a cheenge  
(It hid bin luikin unca peely wally)  
I tuik it tae the Gallery tae view  
The wirks o Miro, Mondrian an Dali  
I tuik it on an ootin tae the park,  
Raither than typin poetry in the hoose  
It sat an chittered in its plastic sark,

It winted hame. The cat played wi its moose.  
It spat oot aa its discs. It wisna pleased.  
An cairriet on like a wud thing, diseased.  
I learned ma lesson. It is plain tae see  
Ye canna butter up technology.

## Tinkers

Three tinkers chapt at the haa door, the lan frae far they cam,  
Has riveries reid wi human bluid, that nae fish iver swam.

Day niver daws in thon fey lan. The raindraps frae abeen,  
Are as the tears o bitterness that faa frae human een.

There is nae springtime in thon place, nae simmer, saft an braw.  
There winter reigns eternally. The Sizzen o the craa.

## Description

Fit wye div ye nae like cookin?  
Aa mas are supposed tae like cookin.  
I didna ken ony ma bit you that disnae cook.

Darren Buchan's ma makks stovies, skirlie, clottie  
AND she cleans his sheen.  
It isnae pairt o the job description?  
Fit kinno a spikk is thon?

run Fecht

I wint tae be yer frien  
A whine. A plea.  
Nae respite, nae let up  
A deave, a secunt shadda

I warned her, fair an square  
I like tae be alane  
Bit thrawn or daft  
She didna takk it in.

I skelped her hard on the neb  
Rugged oot a daud o hair  
Fecht! Fecht, the ithers skirled  
Eekin me on.

The upshot wis, I won  
Some kind o victory  
Yet, ma neive wis stounin

Brithers at Seaton Chippie

Johnny! Dicht yer face! Yer chikks is manky.  
Ma nose is rinnin Dannie...  
Use yer hanky.

Gie me a pickelt ingin wi ma chips?  
Yer moo is aywis bigger nor yer belly!

Can I ging oot tae play? Ma's on a date!  
It's dark. We'll jist ging hame an watch the telly.

Dan, can I hae a coke? I wint it! Wint it!  
Yer jist a flamin scunner. No, ye canna.

Dan, can I clap yon big Alsation dug?  
Nuh. Stuff yer face wi this. Here's a banana.

Yon mannie gien's a penny fur ma bankie.  
Yon wifie says I'm jist a cheeky monkey.

It's affa caal. I wish I cud get cosie.  
Climm up then, an I'll heat ye in ma bosie.

#### n Toast

Guid health tae the newly wad couple!  
May their merriege be merry an lang,  
As a weel-wuvven coracle, rhythmic and close,  
bob-bobbin life's oceans alang.

Guid gear, tae the newly wad couple!  
May their kist be weel-stappit an braw.  
May their littlins be fair as the rose in its lair  
in the glimmer an glisk o the daw!

Guid crack tae the newly wad couple!  
May they mver be crabbit or soor  
Bit keep sweet as the peat-heather hinney  
that's cupped in yon heich mountain floer!

Kind friens, tae the newly wad couple!  
May Sorra and Tribble be niver  
Allowed ower the length o the lintel,  
o the hame they hae biggit thegither!

Guid luck tae the newly wad couple!  
May the sun wi a fecht niver set!  
May the ring on the bride's merriege finger  
niver tarnish wi wae nor regret!

#### Sangster

The heidy wine in ilkie haun, a glitterin company  
Fur fyew cud string the shinin wird, my love, sae weel as ye.

An tho aroon the steerin room like fireflauchts fowk did flit  
Inbye my hairt as ye stept ben a thoosan caunles, lit.

I watched ye movin back an fore..Gin ye hid bin a swan  
I wished that I hid bin the loch lay neist tae ye at dawn.

I watched ye movin back an fore. Gin ye hid bin a reed  
I wad hae bin the pearlin dyew that sattled on yer heid

They say a robin sings its best wi'ts briest pressed tae the thorn  
Tae see it wither bi yer side an ill thing tae be borne.

Oh I hae sung in hoose an haa, bit ne'er sae sweet or strang  
I wis a flame fur ye alane because ye prigged a sang.

### Rocher Brew

The stoppered bottles, whyles, we meet,  
the contents maun be scanned wi care  
'Colleague'Employer'Doctor'Priest'  
afore we pree the contents there.

Stranger, acquaintance, Onyman  
afore we chuse tae ken them better  
Maun first be sipped tae wyle the taste,  
be't soor or sweet, be't cauld, or hetter.

The stoppered bottles that we meet  
(Weel-kept, nae moosewabs ye can see)  
Micht serve tae pass a meenit's space.  
The rocher brew micht kinder be.

There's vintage wine - ye ken the kyne  
decants wi pomp an siller speen  
The rocher brew, sweet Natur's dew□  
will aywis pruve the better frien

### n in the Coffin

Luikin in the coffin, he thocht  
She wis naethin special.  
Naethin special, luikin at naethin special

### Gracefu Trinity

Far pine wid trees staun Tam-Linn green,  
three veesitors in velveteen  
(Rich russet coloured ilkie coat,  
wi ruffs o fur croon the throat)  
Arrived ae gloamintide tae dine,  
their liquid een like Spanish wine.

Mony's the gweedly company  
has met in fine festivity  
On yon snod lawn, bit nane sae fair  
as thon three graces gaithered there.

Like quines dressed fur a glitterin ball,  
the mist clung tae them like a shawl.  
Dew-drookit floeries at their feet,  
keekt up at them, wi nectar, weet.

The birk let doon her tresses braw.  
The creepin cat drew in her claw,  
As frae the misty gloamin air,  
they stepped frae ither-wardly lair.

The deein sun flashed firey-reid,  
stars lichtit up abeen each heid.  
Swippert's a swan wis each ladye  
within thon eildreich Trinity.  
As hauntin as a loveseek sang,  
the deer, that tae the pinewid cam.

tons off Prince's Street

Abeen the cream jug, fite as a carnation,  
They claikt on culture, literature an nation,  
Twa weemin newsin aboot hames an wars,  
Checked oot domestic minefields, battle scars.

Skeletons hing like jaikets in fowk's presses.  
Whyles wi a stranger, fowk micht try them on,  
If they nae langer frichten or dismay,  
Their ghaisties bit the shadda o a dwaum.

Mebbe thon wis the bait that lured her oot,  
Thon Handsel / Gretel crumbs o the irrational,  
Like Darnley's silken face mask, drappin aff,  
Barin the pox, the blether turned confessional.

Fa'd sung her aince, a lullaby o frost  
This exile. in the shaddas o the lost?  
Her life wis crystal, cracked ayont remeid.  
Let slip an shattered, chaos in her heid.

Nae meenit's claik can mend the evil oor  
Hope smashed inbye. A single haimmer cloor.

Primary Source: in search of linguistic purity

He tuik Intercity tae Embro,  
(mair beasts in thon zoo than the Ark)  
Tae see Kali the Bengali tiger,  
wi her cleuks an her braw strippit sark,  
Bit he wisna impressed bi her antics,  
tho she roared wi a hurricane's force,  
Fur fin he broke doon her semantics,  
weel, she wisna a primary source.

Withoot wishin tae seem ower pedantic,  
she wis Scots, wi a thochtie o Norse.  
Neist he gaed tae a show at the theatre,  
far the star wis a pantomine horse.  
It could whinney an trot...bit he caredna a jot,  
fur it wisna a primary source,  
As he kent, fm it rent doon the middle, a  
nd its halves tuik an instant divorce.

A soprano frae bella Milano,  
sang her hairt oot until she grew hoarse,  
Bit he shot doon her sang wi a critical bang,  
fur she wisna a primary source.  
Na, her ma wis a gutter frae Fitty,  
which diluted the aria's force.

At the interval, platters o oysters,  
war served as a maitter o course...  
Bit they didna tempt him, they cam ooto a tin,  
fur they warn a primary source.

A ventriloquist chiel frae Findochty,  
spakk in Cantonese, Zulu an Morse.  
His claik wis as fake as a soya bean steak,  
fur it wisna a primary source  
Twis the ugh in a caveman's polemic,  
wis the birth o phonetics, of course.

Be as dreich as Methuselah's dandruff,  
fowk will queue up tae hear yer discourse  
As lang as yer sure the linguistics are pure  
an they cam fae a primary source!

### Balloon

Ma heid floats on the loch.  
Deid balloon on a slop o wattery clouds

### Crocs

Birk trees raxx up.  
Their trunks, like auld crocs' hides  
Caught in a larry's lichts  
Are yalla, oorie. Swamp flop-belly deid.

### Singin Gallawa Hills: for the late John Watt Stewart, Cotton Street

The frost sat in my cauldribe hairt, ice glittered in ma een  
The driftin sna in the deid thraa blew ben my thochts yestreen  
An ilkie note like jagged scree I climmed as I'd bin telt  
A ghaistie's fitpreints merked the wye,  
Lear, neither bocht nor selt

An as the muckle sang swallt up, the weary wastes o sna  
Sougheed ben each limb. Unseen, the linn roared ben the packit haa.

I didna sing fur praise nur cheer, nur did I sing frae need  
I sang tae pass the ballad on.. A gift frae ane lang deid.

Sheena Blackhall



# Preparing To Spawn

Four mermaids with hair the colour of sunset's flame  
Powered by the need to spawn  
Slim-waisted above their scales of emerald green  
With teeth like mother of pearl  
With ears as small and shapely as soft white mice  
With darting tongues as pink as sea anemones  
Sail to the lighthouse, there to careen  
The lighthouse keepers into coupling

Half fish, half mortal their wombs  
Like conch shells swilling the milk of humankind  
With the salt of the shifting sea

Their breasts like the foamy white of a seagull's rest  
Their breath like popping bubbles of champagne

They will tryst the men from the top of the lighthouse tower  
Into the clash of the waves, with sensual movements

They will bring them ancient ecstasies.  
Enchantments pour from the back of their silver throats

When the lighthouse men return to their stodgy brides  
They will not speak of their offshore infidelity  
But will turn in their beds with skin that burns for the tide.

Sheena Blackhall

# President Washington's Tale

Everywhere needs its little piece of fame.  
Let Parson Weems, a first class maker of myths  
Pull back the screen of history  
(A curtain fringed with cherries, for the clueless)

'I cannot tell a lie'  
Was one of the ripest sayings  
Ever to make a hero.  
Fables maketh the man.

Pa Washington has had his tree chopped down  
Red-handed, George is standing, holding hatchet

Storm clouds hang in the air  
There may be trouble ahead  
Let's face the music and dance  
Doesn't fit with the gnome-like face  
The reluctance to give up the axe.

And how humiliating,  
There in the background  
A beautiful black son  
Is holding a ladder up for his  
Equally graceful mama  
To pick the cherries

It's a wonder Papa Washington  
Didn't choke upon the stones

Sheena Blackhall

# Psalm Of The Old Woman

I dose and dream of cornflowers, daisied air  
I've long renounced Ambition's slippery stair

I have discarded pride in my December  
I blow on Past's forgotten Springtime ember

I whisper to my children, 'Don't be preening  
Look for the deeper truths in life and meaning'

I listen to the owl, am reconciled  
To creatures meek and cruel, tame and wild

I am at times by a great breeze possessed  
That shakes my branches, mutters 'Soon comes rest'

I walk through Summer where the world is hatching  
At night, the dead rise up, at my door scratching

Sheena Blackhall

# Puning Palace, Chengde, China

The Puning Si Temple, of Universal Peace (built 1755) beside the Putuo Zongcheng Temple, is modelled after the Tibetan Potala Palace.

A World Heritage site, it's an active temple  
Buddhist monks of the Tibet Yellow Hat school  
Go calmly about their tasks  
Weaving out and in through wreaths of tourists

It is alive with worshippers,  
Young Chinese pray and offer flowers and incense  
At many shrines and alters, where sparrows chirrup  
Dowdy beside the red robed monastery tenants

Here is the wooden statue of Kwan-yin,  
s tall, flanked by a guardian and a dragon girl  
Pine, cypress, elm, fir, linden, are Her composites

Here are lama pagodas, copper gold tiled roofs,  
Imperial eaves and elephants cut in stone  
Skull drinking bowls, the constant whirr of the prayer wheels  
Pouring blessings into the mountain air

To be a Buddhist in Britain's to be an oddity  
But here, amongst the chanting, churning stream  
Of pilgrim worshippers, is to feel very much  
For once, like coming home

Sheena Blackhall

# Queen Elizabeth's Letter Bearer 1597

I have it almost first hand for a fact  
(My cousin's sword-maker, heard it straight  
From an ambassador who bore her mail)  
The queen does not age well,  
And should, forsooth,  
Cover those attributes young women flaunt.

I'm told that from a distance she appeared  
Like a Toledo jewel, all pearly gold  
Her red wig glittering with silver thread  
Great russet locks around her shoulders curled

But mark you, she is sixty years of age  
And 40 years have passed since she was crowned  
Though on her forehead lay a drop of pearls  
Her face is ancient, long and sunken in  
Her yellow teeth, ill spaced with many missing  
Such marks of time all beauty must confound

The front of her high-collared dress was open  
Ajar, to show her bare from breast to throat  
The lining, bright with tiny rubies, pearls  
Her breasts on show, once delicate and white  
Were wrinkled like the dugs of an old goat

(But keep this to yourself, for like her sire  
Her critics seldom keep their heads for long)  
Life's little cobble's ill to keep afloat

Sheena Blackhall

# Queerieorrals (8 Scots Poems)

h an Wry

Scotch corpse: a cairryoot  
Scotch thrift: darn it  
Scotch summer: ower in a wunner  
Scotch caber: Heilan fling  
Scotch tenor: giein't laldy, tartan baldy

Rev. Ian MacPhail's plus fours  
Cam fae a noble pedigree.  
Their mither, Grizzel the yowe,  
Wis kent ower ten green braes  
As a swack an douce-like quine.

The discipline o the spinnin wheel an loom  
They hae tholed... these scrapins o their mither.  
The future o her oo has noo bin shaped  
Shank-warmers  
Dowp-hauders  
Coddlers o haly baas.

3. Montrose Song   Tune: Will ye Go tae Sheriffmuir

Hae ye seen the great Montrose,  
wi a rooser fur a nose  
Iron teeth tae chaw his foes,  
steppin up sae vauntie?

Fin they full'd his christenin mug,  
a coo wis bairned bi a dug  
A wummin tried tae kiss a slug,  
an ither things sae clarty.

Fin he crossed the Brig o Dee,  
sign the Covenant said he

Or I'll set the musketry  
tae drub yer burgh sairly

Black the day Montrose cam back,  
Irish bloodhounds at his back  
Fur oor bonnie toun tae sack,  
in the name o glory.

This is foo an army thrives,  
makkin widdas ooto wives  
Loadin cannon, grindin knives,  
ready fur the stooshie

Wad ye like a cure fur ague?  
Leprosy the pox or plague?  
Tie a ribbon roon yer craig.  
Jyne Montrose's pairty.

Bold dragoons war firin shots,  
made frae Fyvie's chunty pots  
Trampin roses an shallots  
roon the Howes o Fyvie

Syllabub an buttered wine,  
there's a sodjer o the line  
Won the fecht bit nae the quine,  
the bonnie lass o Fyvie.

Covenanter, Cavalier,  
soun the drum an they'll appear  
Sell yer coo, lock up yer meer,  
for aathin they will spulzie

Catched an caged, wi feint a care,  
he wrote poem an caimbed his hair  
He steppit up the gibbet stair,  
intae the page o history.

Hung an drawn, the butcher's cairt,  
rowed him roon tae ilkie airt  
Fur playin o the lion's pairt,  
roon oor noble country

Efter he'd been hoodie bait,  
Gweed King Charles, oor potentate  
Gaithered him tae lie in state  
an kistit him wi glory.

Charles I 19/11/1600, Dunfermline Castle - 30/1/1649, Whitehall scaffold  
Tune: Barbara Allan.

Written during a visit to Fyvie Castle, organised by the NTS

King Charles rose up thon hinmaist morn,  
twa sarks he chose tae weir,  
Lest he should shakk, an fowk mistakk  
pure cauld, fur signs o fear.

They brocht his littlins tae his room,  
sae they micht takk their leave,  
An he has pressed them tae his breist,  
an telt them nae tae grieve.

The anely soun, the beatin drum,  
the craikin o a craa,  
As past the silent crowds they lead  
their monarch tae his faa.

Afore the scaffold happt in black,  
(the hooded heidsman's airt)  
The boughs war bauld,  
the Thames rowed cauld, t  
hrough Lunnon's frozen hairt.

The first step tae the scaffold bare,  
he stamped his fit wi rage,  
For aa unfair, he saw aince mair,  
the mock trial o the age.

The second step King Charles took,  
he faltered wi his fit,  
He felt the stangs o Civil War,  
an kent the waste o it.



The third step forrit that he gaed,  
his brither Scots sae quick,  
Tae save their kirk, drew sword an dirk,  
afore his prayers they'd spikk.

The fourth step that the Monarch tuik,  
his een luiked hyne awa,  
On war wi France, on war wi Spain,  
that brocht nae gain ava.

The fifth step syne, he brocht tae min',  
wi ile they did anoint him,  
In costly gown, he wore the croon,  
as king they did appoint him.

The saxth step ben the scaffold stair,  
he welcomed hame his queen,  
A fleur-de-lis brocht ower frae France,  
sweet maid o new saxteen.

The seventh step, nearhaun Daith's yett,  
his hairt wis like tae brakk,  
He stude at Fyvie's castle waa,  
the Ythan at its back.

In Fyvie's green an pleisunt lan,  
the infant king wis free,  
Tae rin its braw, blink-bonnie braes  
wi Seton's faimily.

The hinmaist step! He faced his foes,  
an spakk oot lood an clear.  
The sodjers drave the crowds awa,  
for fear o fit they'd hear.

An syne, thon slicht an cultured man,  
luiked Terror in the ee,  
Tae show the leal, fu brave an weel  
a Stewart King could dee.

He's laid him doon, raxxed oot his airms,  
like Christ on Calvary,

The swingin blade a martyr made  
tae greet Eternity.

## 5. Deevilick, Deevilick

Deevilick, deevilick far hae ye been?  
Fae the birssle o Hades tae cauld Aiberdeen.

Did ye lowp in the Denburn tae frichten the fowk?  
Na, tae cweel doon ma hornies, ma hochs an ma dowp.

Wirds war framed tae strikk a spark,  
Tae licht man's thochts along the dark,  
Gods war ferlies fowk cud see:  
Sun, and meen and fish and tree.

Roon the circle o a flame  
Early hunters tied a name  
Tae the speerits steerin by  
Wid an watter, stane an sky.

In the dyew the ocean saw  
Heiven in a wattergaw.  
Shaddas raxx frae evil deen,  
Like the drappin o a steen,  
Deep inbye a lochan's pot  
Ooto sicht, bit nae forgot.

In the mantra o the hairt,  
Dreams an desolations stert,  
Een an tongue an lug are gates,  
Here pass mervels, myths an hates,

Ken them fur the stuff o play,  
Masks an mummers fur a day.  
Spittin wild cat, douce blue-bell  
Fellow-traivellers like yersel.

## 7. The Dream

A dream cam teetin roon ma door,  
'Can I come?' said he,  
I fixed him wi a glaissy ee,  
An speired him questions three.

'Oh dae ye bring a happy dream  
O bonnie simmer days?  
Or dae ye bring a widden-dream  
O bogies, ghaists, an waes?  
Or dae ye bring a prophecy  
Tae tell o roads I'll rin?  
Oh tell me truly, chappin dream  
Afore I let ye in! '

## 8. The Worry

A Worry the size of a midgie or flee, .  
Creepit inno the bosie: o, Teenie McGee.  
It grew through the nicht big 's a were-wolf sae furry,  
Nae twa winks o sleep could she get for the Worry.

Next mornin, at brakkfaist, she drew up a cheer,  
An saw, tae her horror, the Worry; sat there.  
It treetled ahin her fin she wauked, tae class,  
Sae big noo, the teacher could hardly win past.

Fariver she gaed it wid lowp like a troot,  
Frae bus stop tae hame blottin as the warld oot!  
She'd staun in the street 'I've a Worry! ' she'd yell.  
Be quate' fowk roared back 'We've got Worries wirsel! '

Sae she gaed tae her granny, an grat on her lap.  
(The Worry cam tae, big 's an elephant's bap) .  
Granny tuik oot her glaisses, the Worry tae see,  
Bit noo Teenie'd shared it, the Worry grew wee.

It shrank an it shrank till it dwinnlit awa  
A Worry, eence shared's nae a Worry ava!

Sheena Blackhall

# Rainbows

'I'm six whole years alive! ' my budding daughter said.  
I watched her. It was true.  
At skippety-six all clouds have rainbows  
Every sky is blue.

I hope the joy behind her tiny shout  
Will never end as mine did, when the evening stars  
Pulled down their shutters, blinked  
And very quietly, went out.

Sheena Blackhall

# Rat

Into the well of his hearing  
Go mouse squeaks, barn creaks  
Hootings and whirrings and scratchings.  
The crunch of a cow's long teeth  
Mashing the grass to milk.

If I hold him, a throbbing parcel,  
His delicate innards ripple across my palm  
Like busy continents.  
His Geisha nails are manicured and sharp  
You could pluck a harp  
With a set of talons like those.  
Rat, are you a useful species?  
Can we pet you, ride you, eat you?  
Can we skin you, rule you, fleece you?  
No? Well you'll have to go.

Mr Tufty squirrel's cute... He'll suit.  
But rat, with your tail  
As trollopy as raffia,  
You're just about as welcome as The Mafia.

Your eyes are rubies  
Set in a snow-white face.  
Forgetting you're taboo,  
I stroke you, hear the whisper of your breathing  
The stigma that you carry  
Snaps in two.

Sheena Blackhall

# Ravens

The raven is the national bird of Bhutan  
It is worn in the royal hat.

The raven is the official bird of the Yukon  
And of the city of Yellowknife

King Harald Hardrada carried a raven banner  
Called land-waster, a Viking boast

In Sweden the raven is known  
As the ghost of a murdered person

In Scotland, a raven's a corbie  
Feasting on knights and gallow's meat

The ravens, Hugin and Mugin  
Sit upon Odin's shoulders  
Their names are Thought and Memory

The raven is the trickster god  
Of the Inuit and the Koyukons  
The Kingdom of England will fall  
If the Tower of London ravens fly away

Hail to the raven,  
The Wizard of Skene's familiar  
Wise were his ways who had the gift of speech

Sheena Blackhall

# Recycling

Recycling

I heave the window up  
Clouds flee by like ghosts

How old is the rain  
Trapped in the endless cycle of recycling?

Tomorrow's shower...did it fall  
On a Pharaoh's head?

Our oceans swill around in the cargo hold of gravity  
Coral reefs loosen their grip of pulsating life

Remember when cars were fewer, people were less?  
Listen. Do starlings complain  
When we poison the air they breathe?

On a hay wain to destruction  
We roller coast on the road to climate change

Trees scratch at the sour air  
Like drowning sailors

Sheena Blackhall



# Relics Of My Parents' Marriage

A heavy metal stew pot  
Which survived a war

The last of the dining room chairs  
Dark thick varnish  
Legs like marathon runners

These are all that outlived the clocks  
Those martinets of time

His shotgun, his braces, the purplish peony roses  
The mousetraps primed to decapitate small rodents  
The rolling pin, her frocks, the gas mask  
And the rusting tin of Vic  
The keys that locked the cupboards of their kingdom

Diaspora of the grave goods  
Where are you now?  
Grandmother's Highland cattle painted in mist  
The wireless with the wonky on/off switch?

Sheena Blackhall

# Remember The Dead

In terms of goods:

Small change, pitiful payday loans

Maxxed out credit cards

A passport, rarely used

Bills and reminders of debts

Threats of sheriff's officers

Official demands, crumpled, torn in a corner

A laptop, second hand,

The ghost of a face, in focus

The skeleton of a book not yet fleshed out

Keys for a vandalised car

A run down watch□

Patched sofa, threadbare curtains

In terms of love

Remember the dead

They are so much more than their things

They are part of the fabric of family

The laughter, tears of mischance

Remember the dead

And mourn them, if ever

You cared for them in life

Remember the dead

They've stepped away from their sorrows,

May the next step into the dark

Prove kinder to them

Sheena Blackhall

# Remembering

Some things are pleasant, remembered.  
Some things are not

It's the not-pleasant things  
That hang in my thoughts like bats

That crash I caused  
That time I nearly drowned  
That corpse I saw  
The flies buzzing around

Such things can be a cancer in the mind  
Evil can be regretted, not undone  
It's consequences cruel as acid, flung

Sheena Blackhall

# Requiem For My Son

A loving heart has ceased to beat  
So many friends he won  
The stars in heaven should drown in tears  
For Death has stolen my son

Fortune's scales are seldom fair  
He lived life hard and fast  
His was ever the rebel's way  
His storms have stilled at last

The saddest time of all is this  
When Life's door shuts forever  
We'll meet again. Sleep well my love  
Will I stop grieving? Never.

Sheena Blackhall

# Retrospective

He'd an Arab tattoo on his shoulder  
He'd hair the colour of crow  
He was a natural athlete  
His hug was a warm glow

His work mates called him a legend  
He played golf like a pro  
He will never be older than 40  
He wasn't your average Joe

He had his anxious moments  
Against the current he'd row  
He sang like a honeyed lyre  
His skin was white as snow

He went too many rounds with trouble  
One day he just let go  
A large heart stopped its beating  
He met Death toe to toe

Now I visit his ashes  
Where his dust, with his kin, lies low  
I stand six feet above him  
And grief's like a hammer blow

Sheena Blackhall

# Return Of A Child

A month the room lay empty  
Of all but cot and toys  
Like a barren field, unstirred by wind  
Or the passing of changing clouds

It was a cave without an echo,  
Blank canvas. A useless space,  
Littered with unused things  
Cold to the touch  
And hard as plastic flowers

And then a plane touched down  
Morning brought a taxi to the door  
And the room, like a shrivelled Phoenix  
Fattened and flapped its wings

A human infant danced again in its midst  
Swaying, a lissom lotus  
Smiling up like a butter lamp to a shrine  
Bringing the room alive with tiny cries

Sheena Blackhall

# Rickit-Ticki-Tavi, Jaipur

Brave heart Mongoose  
Short-legged mesmerist  
Speckled grey coat,  
Cruncher of scorpions,  
Scourge of beetles and rats  
Bush-tailed David  
Defying jungle Goliaths  
You never have egg on your face

Tiger-blood in a weasel skin  
Face pointed with hunches  
Sniffing a quick munch  
You shoot up trees like a monkey  
Whose tail is on fire  
But slicker, quicker.

Little lithe mongoose  
Who can lay King Cobra low  
You need no armour,  
No wonderful silver lance  
As you reel your victim in  
With your deadly dance

Sheena Blackhall

# Ringo Starr (Born 1940)

Richard Starkey, MBE,  
an only child with rhythm in his bones  
In and out of hospital, caught TB,  
here's what he said of his early homes

You kept your head down  
You kept your eyes open  
You didn't get in anyone's way'

Started as a drummer in the hospital band  
The beat in his blood was there to stay

Rory Storm & the Hurricanes played  
Starr on the drums, their anchor man  
Gigs in Butlins, France, Berlin  
A non-stop party, San Ferry Ann

Rock n'Roll lifestyle, drink, divorce  
Barbara Back & Lynsey de Paul  
Voice over magic on kids' TV

4150, a planet called Starr  
Names for a drummer whose fame went far

Sheena Blackhall



# Roundabout

That wedding day they left me with an aunt  
One at a time, stole surreptitiously  
Into the Ford. 'You stay. We simply can't  
Take children too.'

They packed me off to play  
Down at the pleasure park.  
The dismayed sun  
Soft as an orange, gave the game away

Squirreling up the chute at first was fun  
Or watching others swallow-tail on swings  
Slumped on a roundabout that barely spun  
Creaking as mayflies rose from pools in rings  
A slow procession in the sultry heat  
Late afternoon. The world was hatching wings  
The roundabout revolved.  
On foxy feet  
Dark padded from the trees below the hill  
Others went home. Left on the turning seat  
I watched the harebells shiver in the chill  
The night airs rattle at the barley's ear

It seemed I sat a century until  
'We might have known you'd still be sitting here  
Your aunt was worried stiff '

Now, all are dead  
Their speech, their ways, dry flowers on a bier  
Live in the roundabout inside my head.

Sheena Blackhall

# Salmon Leap

Old riverman comes diving into air.  
Boundaries break in his meteoric rise,  
An explosive act of arrival.  
From the tip of his back-lash-tail  
To his shot-grey-silver nose,  
A surprise in suspension;  
An adept at simple survival.

Sun-catcher, mouth agape  
As a bubble-cave, his eyes  
Are points of perception  
Couched in pearl,  
Wide and awake as wonder.

He arcs his rainbow-fins,  
A delicate, flying bridge  
Of continuous flow,  
Till, tense-bow-snapped,  
He arrows below the wave  
In a rumbling, tumbling, thunder  
Of underwaterling drop,  
Into a lane of fleet, torpedoing fish.

Leap, leap, aquatic brother!  
Even a man might wish  
To gulp each moment,  
Fill each second,  
Real, and alive as Now.  
But, never looking forward,  
Ever back,  
I have forgotten how.

Sheena Blackhall

# Salvador Dali

Salvador Dali examined his poo  
An unusual thing for a genius to do  
He rode in a taxi with cauliflowers filled  
His moustache, like antennae, his followers thrilled

The reincarnation of his elder brother  
(as claimed by his do-lally father and mother)  
He once bit a bat being eaten by ants  
Yoko Ono was one of his famed sycophants  
She paid ten thousand dollars for some of his hair  
He despatched her dried grass, con-man extr'ordinaire

He made adverts for lollipops, chocolate and chips  
Was known for his strangeness, his talent, his quips  
He painted boiled beans, elephants, melting clocks  
His wife Gala, draped off the Catalan rocks  
He made surreal raptures...the face of Mae West  
As a room...lips, the sofa, was one of his best

His works were his children. He held them with string  
When he travelled, like dogs on their leads. Amazing!

Sheena Blackhall

# Salvador Dali's Sofa

I would like to be Salvador Dali's sofa.  
The part entails no movement  
People would come from afar  
Just to admire me.  
The ultimate objet trouve in upholstery.

Sheena Blackhall

# Sanctuary Wood

Where will you go when fear comes calling?  
He won't take no. He's not for stalling...  
Where will you go, with sleep filled eyes,  
When the ghosts of sorrow and anger rise  
And all of them slither along your street  
With chains of savagery round their feet?

Where will you go when no one cares?  
When pain and poverty climb your stairs?  
They'll bar your window...your exit block,  
And they'll stand at the gate of your world and knock

I have a stronghold, tall and good  
In the tangled heart of Sanctuary wood;  
I cross its moat, and its drawbridge close,  
And it shuts up tight as a midnight rose.

There, for a little it's safe to stay□  
Out of the world and its worries way;  
Imagination's a strong defence:  
Nurture its power, guard its fence□

Solace and peace and respite find  
In the sanctuary of a quiet mind.

Sheena Blackhall

# Saying The Unsayable

Once in a strange-think place  
In a land where few folk go  
And only some return from  
Pictures moved in their frames  
Van Gogh rose from the cornfield  
Scaring the crows that flew off cackling  
And I could feel his terror  
The thunder, threatening

Once I stood on an airy balcony  
Wondering would it be easy  
To dive from alive to dead  
And a dark thing like an incubus  
Whispered, 'Jump. It'll all be done.'

Then it vanished. The moment passed  
Trembling, I walked out into the high-noon sun

Sheena Blackhall

# School Journey

I'm a mouse, a mouse  
Nervously leaving the cavernous hall of the house

Five steps down from the door  
School bag straps half-mast  
Blazer sleeves touching my knuckles  
I am all buttons and buckles.

A cobbled road to cross and then the church –  
Episcopalian – they're pagans, like the Pope, my mother says.

I mustn't drag my feet  
I mustn't tell a lie  
I must do well  
I mustn't speak to strangers  
I mustn't walk on the cracks  
Or I'll go straight to Hell.

Coming back  
I balance on wall-tops,  
I am Blondin on the Niagara  
Walking the wire.

I go leaping down the hill  
Higher and higher  
Lighter and lighter  
I'm a bird, a bird  
I'm Daedalus, Hermes, a swan  
I fold my wings when I reach the top of my street  
Flying's my secret. It wouldn't do to tell  
I must put my earth-self on.

Five steps up into the cavernous hallway of the house  
Now I'm a mouse, I'm a mouse.

Sheena Blackhall

# School Visit Of A Scots Specialist

Good morning, I am Mrs X, Head Teacher  
I believe you have contacted the school wishing to visit?

What would you bring to our classes here?  
What would you come to tell?  
I'd bring ye a leid baith stoot an guid  
Aince spak bi the king himsel.

Is there a need to sow such seed  
By stories, poems and words?  
Fin Scots steps oot tae the nation's youth  
It rins on Sangs an girds.

Maybe a poem, once a year Lip-service to the past?  
T'will come like a loon in a scarlet goon,  
Nae some sair-made ootcast.

But what of the cost should we welcome it  
Through Education's door?  
Fit ye gie, ye get. Fit price d'ye set  
On a kintra's leid an lore?

The firmament ower the birlin warld  
Hauds multiple constellations;  
Like a wattergaw foo rare an braw  
Are the leids o different nations!

Sheena Blackhall



# Scotland

Bennachie  
Don an Dee

St Andrew's flag  
Muckle stag

Fish n' Chips  
Whisky nips

Irn Bru  
Rangers blue

Arbroath smokies  
Sweetie pyokies

Cairngorm  
Hairy Sporran

Wee Free Kirk  
Heilan stirk

Burns Sonnet  
Tartan Bunnet

Hotch potch  
Double Scotch

CapercaiIzie  
Forkietailie

Largs, Dunblane  
Sleet an Rain

North Sea Ile  
Barlinnie Jyle

Dark Culloden  
Scarlet rodden

Nessy's hame  
Curler's game

Midgies heezin  
Salmon season

Athole Brose  
Wee Fite Rose

Drivin snaa  
Hadrian's Waa

Whuppity Stoory  
Bannocks, floory

Buts n' Bens  
Misty Glens

Oor Willie  
Jabots, frilly

Granny's sookers,  
Littlins' dookers

Glesga Toun  
Dingin doon

Grandpa Broon  
Gowf at Troon

Robert Bruce  
Harvest Moose

Kent his faither  
Grouse n' Heather

Peer Man's Stovies  
Buttered rowies

Shetland seals  
Echtsome reels

William Wallace  
Yowes on Harris

Parridge Pot  
Sir Walter Scott

Tattie Dreel  
Herrin Creel

Fitba match  
Herrin catch

John Knox  
Torry Rocks

Princes Street  
Dreepin weet

Sheena Blackhall

# Scotland's Gulag: Peterhead Prison 1987

A riot, a rampage, an explosion of human rage  
Fifty hardened criminals seized D block  
Anarchy loosed from its cage

Determined to leave their mark  
Murderers, rapists, knifers  
Bedding and bed pans wrecked  
Knuckles and skulls bruised black  
Jackie Stuart, officer, snatched  
Fifty six years old, hauled up on the open roof

And then, four days of terror tactics  
The cons, in balaclavas made of rags  
Barricades, booby-traps, flung slates, aerobatics  
The hostage, leashed like a dog  
Paraded before the press. A hood on his head  
A blade at his throat. Cruel torture antics

Fifteen minutes overturned the odds  
Twenty SAS men in fatigues, gas masked  
Flash-bang canisters, with cudgels  
Ladders, ropes and high explosives  
Rescued the warder, the horror passed

The day given back to order, The foghorn wail  
The crash of the heaving waves  
Tons of water, pummelling sand and rock

Sheena Blackhall

# Scots Owerset Of A Poem By Abraham Sutzkever

A Cairt o Sheen

The wheels they lair an furl,  
Bit fit is piled abeen?  
They bring alang a cairtload  
Stap fu o livin sheen.

The cairt like a waddin canopy  
In gloamin lowe, enchants:  
The sheen paired up in boorichs,  
Like couples in a daunce.

A holiday, a waddin?  
Cud grace a decked oot haa!  
The sheen — weel kent, weel myndit,  
I recognize them aa.

The heels tap wi nae coorseness:  
Their hames are left ahin  
Frae auncient Vilna bywyes,  
They're drivin tae Berlin.

I mauna speir 'fa ains ye? '  
Ma hairt, it skips a beat:  
'Tell me the truth, sheen, clearly  
Far are yer owners feet? '

The feet o pumps sae bauchelt,  
Wi buttondraps, dyew -lain  
Far is the shipit body?  
Far has the wumman gaen?

An bairnies's sheen— blythe littlins  
Far are the bairnie's feet?  
Foo is the bride nae weirin  
Her sheen sae bricht an neat?

Mangst clogs an littlins' sandals,  
Ma Mither's sheen I see!

On Sabbath, like the caunles,  
She'd pit them on in glee.

The heels tap oot nae coorseness  
Their hames lie far ahin  
Frae auncient Vilna bywyes,  
They're drive tae Berlin.

Vilna Ghetto, January 1,1943

Sheena Blackhall

# Scots Owersets In Scots Of Poems By Tagaki Kyozo

## Waddin Nicht

Thon's anely the saughs reeshlin  
Blawn bi the win  
Dinna greet  
Dinna greet  
Brides shouldna greet  
Are ye greetin because we've nae siller?  
Foo did we mairry in this dowie wye?  
We can makk on we're playin at hoosies

We haud oor shargeret bodies thegither  
Bit dinna get hett  
Ochone, we're like a pair o flees warsslin eftir the sun  
Frae the morn ye'll gang back tae the clachan cooncil offices again  
In purple hakama an blaik shawl,  
Waesome bride an groom!  
Dinna greet  
Dinna greet  
There's naethin tae be frichtened o  
Thon's anely the saughs pairtin,  
Blawn bi the win

## Sea Rose

I thocht  
I wad get ma ain back on the bullies  
Bit I hidna the smeddum  
Aneth the sea rose bi the boat hoose  
I beeriet ma knife an grat

Ochone, the green fruit o the sea rose tastit soor  
As I glowered at the fite-tippit waves  
Far oot at sea

## Stanes

Oh ma raivelled harns!  
Stanes, steppit on, bide quaet  
Gin I kept quaet  
Could I be a stane as weel?

This scunnerin life: aneth the kitchie sink  
We can spy wirms wummlin  
Is there naebody fa'll  
Haive me intae the lift  
Like a stane?

The Winter Meen

I cloored ma wife an gaed oot an saw  
The meen like ten thoosan lichties

Ower the saft sna eftir a sna stom  
I'm waukin wi nae thocht tae far I'm gaun

Fit makks me hate sae forcie?  
Fin we hate, we're mair serious than fin we lue  
Sae noo, foo dae I stert feelin like I lue her again?

Aathin's like thon sna storm  
Fin it's ower, we see  
The meen like a thoosan lichties

Puir Hairst

This cauld rain sune turns tae sna  
Foo dweeble thon rice shoots!  
Yet we hae tae keep duntin an auld ile can  
Tae fleg aff thon screichin spurgies  
The sea souns as if a storm's blawin up  
A heeze o scurries skirlin abune aa  
A faither is readin wi teem een a letter frae  
His dother, wirkin at a cottin-spinnin mill  
The mither is ettlin tae mak a meal frae chappit tatties  
She scrattit up frae the parks  
Bit the lowe winna takk, it jist smuchters



The bairn's squallichin.  
Fit a scunner o a nicht!

Fairm-lad

I blew frae ma snoot  
Snotters green as rice-pests

Fisher-lad

I canna get a keek at the quines  
For yer muckle bihoochie

Sna storm

Bairns  
Hash on an coorie doon  
D'ye hear thon?  
It's a fite wolf yowlin  
As he rins roon the hoose.

Frae a derk neuk up in the laft  
Yer deid granma an granda  
Are glowerin at ye  
Bairns  
Hash on an gyang tae bed

Dawn

I can hear somebody piddlin  
Is it ye, mither?  
Throw the thick haar  
Faither's cam back  
Wi fish scales aa owerhis hide  
'We've got a muckle catch! '

Autumn

A dragonflee  
On a washin line o hippens  
(she wis merriet last year)  
The corn-staaks- brukken skeletons  
Soun o new claith bein threwshed  
Gart ma heid stoon

Leverick

The colour o the lift I saw frae ma cradle wis  
The colour o a penny fussle ma mither gied me

Seety Calendar

On the day ma sister wis merriet  
Siller berries in the gairden war reid as reid

On the day oor mither deed  
A weetie sna wis faain

On the day oor faither deed  
The ice on the reef had sterted tae thaw

On the evenin I left hame for gweed  
It wis the simmer fireworks festival

Early Spring (at Gappo Park)

Thon park bi the sea far anely pine trees thrive  
Is fey an teem  
Nae young quines play here

Camin oot on the beach  
We fin the east win blawin roch

The tang o fizzy ale  
Yet haunts ma tongue

Ma frien, dowpit doon on the brukken bench  
Is tellin me orra jokes, bit  
His wirds are snatched  
Awa bi the win

Shooer

Didn't I tell ye thon merriege widna be gweed?  
-Thon hair gee-gaw got brukken  
There's nae eese girnin aboot it noo  
-Thrissles blawin in the sheugh  
Gweedman, foo divn't ye spikk?  
-Shooer passin ower the bare knowe parks  
Ye needna cam rinnin hame tae us, dother  
-The bus cairres her awa ahin the pine wid

Lichtnin ower beds o Rice Seedlins  
Puddock are craikin an whyles  
There are flashes o lichtnin ower the rigs o rice seedlins

She still hisna cam oot

Rain starts tae faa  
I'm like a droont ratten  
Bit I'm nae shiftin frae here

The rain's growin heavier  
An the puddocks hae stoppit craikin

It's seems gey late noo  
The lichts in her hoose hae aa bin turned aff

Mither

O a suddenty, I winted a sook o milk  
An I breenged inno the hoose  
Mither wis washin her fite skin  
In the dim kitchie  
Fin I chawed on her briests

Her milk tasted unca satty  
(Ye washed in seawater, didn't ye mammy?)

Sune eftir thin, she deed  
Nae lang eftir she'd gaen me her satty milk tae drink

Lowe in the Park

Noo, jist eftir the sna his thawed  
In the park neist tae the pine wid  
Bairns hae stertit a bonfire  
The deid girse has kinnelt  
An spreid its flames  
The bairns like the bonfire  
Are lowpin heelstergowdie, tapsalteerie

Sheena Blackhall

# Scots Owersets Of Poems By Miklós Radnóti

The Scots Owersetts of Radnóti's poems were made from the English versions of translators named in each of the following poems

Postcard 1 written August 30,1944. From an English translation by Michael R. Burch

Oot o Bulgaria, the muckle wud skelloch o the artillery thunners,  
rick-ma-ticks on the craggy Bens, echoes, syne dwines tae seelence

The whyles, men, breets, cairts an imaginins aa growe greater  
the road neighs an breenges, nicherin; the maned lift gallops;  
an ye are aywis wi me, ma dearie, aybydan amids the stooshie,  
glimmerin inbye ma better sel —sheenin, stinch.

Somewye inbye me, ma dearie, ye bide foraye —  
quaet, unmeevin, mute, like an angel knelled tae seelence bi daith  
or an emerteen bidin in the hairt o a blichtit tree.

Postcard 2 written October 6,1944 near Crvenka, Serbia. From an English translation by Michael R. Burch

A fyew miles aff they're burnin  
the rucks an the hooses,  
while dowped doon here on the side of this blythe lea,  
the shell-shocked fermers quaet-like sook their pipes.

Noo, here, paiddlin in this still puil, the wee shepherd quine  
sets the siller watter a-jigglin

betimes, leanin ower tae drink, her wooly yowes  
seem tae sweem like wauchtin clouds.

Postcard 3 written October 24,1944 near Mohács, Hungary From an English translation by Michael R. Burch

The kye slivver bluidy spit;  
the men pee bluid in their stoor.

Oor stinkin squad devauls, a heeze o swytin breets,  
addin oor guff tae daith's soor ugsome stink

Postcard 4 his final poem, written October 31, 1944 near Szentkirályszabadja,  
Hungary From an English translation by Michael R. Burch

I cowped aside him — corp already stiff,  
ticht as a string pued, richt afore it brakks,  
shot in the back o the heid.

'This is foo ye'll end tae; lie quaet here, '  
I fusered tae masel,  
patience brierin frae ma risin dreid.

'Yon ane's aye meevin, " the voice abune me said  
I hardy hear it throwe a yirdy plug  
O dubby bluid slaw steekin up ma lug.

'Number 4 of the 'Razglednicak' poems was written on October 31, the day that  
Radnóti's friend, the violinist Miklós Lovsi, suffered that fate. It is the last poem  
Radnóti wrote. On November 9, 1944, near the village of Abda, he too was shot  
on the roadside by guards.'

And so will I wonder...? —Smajd így tudodöm...? , from an English translation by  
Gina Gönczi

I lived, bit syne in livin I wis dweeble  
I aywis kent they'd beery me here in the eyn,  
that year biggs upon year, daud on daud, stane on stane,  
that the corp swalls an in the cweel, wirm-  
wummlin derkness, the nyakit bane will chitter.  
That abune, pammerin time is rummlin throwe ma poems  
an that I'll sink deeper inno the grun.  
Aa this I kent.

Bit tell me, ma work—ma poems- did they live on?

Lines from 'Maybe'— From an English translation by Steven Polgár, Stephen Berg  
and S. J. Marks

... Bit dinna leave me, dweeble mind!  
Dinna let me gae gyte.  
Sweet bladdit reason, dinna  
leave me noo.

Dinna leave me. Let me dee wioot fear,  
a clean, braw daith,  
like Empedocles, fa smiled as he drapped  
intae the mawe o Etna.

Peace, Dread— From an English translation by Zsuzsanna Ozsváth and Frederick  
Turner

I gaed oot, steeked the street yett, an the clock struck ten,  
on sheenin wheels the baker dirded by an bummed,  
a plane bizzed in the lift, sun shone, an it struck ten,  
I thocht o ma deid aunt an in a glisk it seemed  
aa the unleevin I'd lued flew ower ma heid

wi hunners o seelent deid the lift wis derkened syne  
o a suddenty, alang the waa a shadda fell.

Seelence. The mornin warld stude still. The clock struck ten,  
ower the street peace flichtered: cauld dreid wis its daith-knell

Foamy sky—Tajtékos ég, From an English translation by Gina Gönczi

The meen swyes on a faemy lift,  
I am bumbazed that I live.  
Owerzealous daith searches this age  
those it sikks oot aa luik sae unca pale.

Betimes the year keeks roon aboot an skirls  
Keeks roon, syne dwines awa.  
Sic an Autumn cooers ahin me again  
Sic a Winter, bladdit bi sic pain.

The widlans bled an in the furls o  
time bluid ran frae ilkie oor.

Muckle hauntit nummers wir  
screived bi the win on the snaa.

I lived tae see this an thon,  
the air wyes wechty on me.  
War's soun-filled seelence bosies me  
as afore ma nativity.

I stop here at the fit o a tree,  
its croon swyin angeret  
A branch raxxes doon — tae grab ma neck?  
I'm nae a cooard, nor am I dweeble,

jist wabbit. I listen. The frichtened  
branch explores ma hair.  
Tae forget wid be best,  
Bit I've niver forgot a thing yet.

Faem poors ower the meen an the pyson  
draws a derk green line on the hyne-awa horizon.

Slowly, cannily, I live  
I rowe maself anither cigarette.

Lines from 'Eclogue VII'— From an English translation by Steven Polgár

Wioot commas, ae line teetle the other  
I screive poems the wye I live, in derkness,  
blin, crossin the paper like a wirm.  
Flashlichts, buiks — the guairds tuik aathin.  
There's nae mail, anely haar wauchts ower the barracks.

Forced March— From an English translation by George Szirtes

He's daft, fan aince he's drapped, resterts his trauchlet beat,  
A meevin heeze o cramps on foonert human feet,

Fa rises frae the grun as if on borraed wings,



Spurnin the dubs tae which he daurna cling,

Fa, gin ye speir fit wye, haives back at ye a wurd  
O foo the thocht o luve makks deein less absurd.

Puir glekit gype, the cheil is bit a feel  
About his hame anely the scorched wins reel,

His brukken waas lie flat, his orchard gies no fruit,  
His ilkie nicht is rigged in terror's wrinkled suit.

Ochone, cud I believe that sic dreams had a stert  
Ither than in ma hairt, some local reistin airt;  
Gin anely aince again I heard the quaet thrum  
O bees bi the sitooterie, the jar o orchard plums

Cweelin wi late simmer, the gairdens hauf asleep,  
Sappy fruit hingin on branches dreepin deep,

An she afore the hedgerow stude wi sun-bleached hair,  
The latchy mornin screivin flim-flam shaddas on the air...

Foo nae? The meen is fu, her cercle is complete.  
Dinna leave me, frien, skreich oot, an see! I'm on ma feet!

3 poems from War Diary— From an English translation by Lucy Helen Boling

### 1. Tuesday Evening

Noo I sleep peacefu  
an gyang slaw aboot ma wirk—  
gas, airplanes, bombs are raised agin me,  
I can neither be feart, nor greet;  
sae I live hard, like the road biggers  
among the cauld Bens,

fa, gin their dweeble hoose  
crummles ower them with age,  
pit up a new ane, an betimes  
sleep deep on scentit wid shavins,

an in the morn, splyter their faces  
in the cauld an sheenin burns.

I live heich up, an teet aboot:  
it is growin derker.  
As fan frae a ship's prow  
at the glimmer o lichtnin  
the watchie skreichs oot, thinkin he sees lan,  
sae I believe in the lan as weel—an still I skirl oot life!  
wi a fitened voice.

An the soun o ma voice brichtens  
an is cairriet hyne awa  
wi a cweel starnie an a cweel evenin win.

2.□

## 2. Weary Afternoon

A deein wasp flees in at the windae,  
ma dwaumin wife spikks in her sleep,  
an the hems o the broonin clouds  
are blawn tae fringes bi a saftsome breeze.

Fit can I spikk aboot? Winter is comin, an war is comin;  
sune I will lie brukken, seen bi naebody;  
wirm-etten yird will stap ma mou an een  
an reets will pierce ben ma corp.

Ah, doucely sweyin eftirneen, gie me peace—  
I will lie doon tae, an wirk later.  
The licht o yer sun is already hingin on the hedges,  
an yonner the gloamin cams ower the knowes

They hae killed a cloud, its bluid is faain on the lift;  
aneth, on the stems o the glimmerin leaves  
sit wine-scentit yalla berries.

## 3. Evening Approaches

Ben the sheeny lift the sun is climmin doon  
an the gloamin is comin early along the road.

Its comin is watched in vain bi the sherp-eed meen—  
wee tooshts o mist are gaitherin.

The hedgerow is waukenin, it catches at a trauchelt gangrel;  
the gloamin is spinnin amang the tree branches  
an thrummin looder an looder, the whiles these lines bigg up  
an lean on ane anither.

A frichtened squirrel lowps inno ma quaet chaumer,  
an here a six-fittit iambic couplet pammers by.  
Frae the waa tae the windae, a broon meenit—  
an it's gane wi feint a trace.

The fleein peace gyangs by. Seelent  
wirms wummle ower the hyne aff parks  
an slawly chaa tae smush the eynless  
raws o the streakt oot deid.

original poem title and English translator unknown

The poem gaithers its makk like the  
raindrap. The water gaithers,  
takks form, growes langer  
syne it faas aff an while faain,  
it makks a perfeck drap.

Fragment: from an English translation by Thomas Ország-Land

I lived upon this Eirde in sic an age  
fin man wis sae breet-like he socht tae kill  
for pleisur, nae jist tae follae orders,  
his faith in fausehoods drave him tae corruption,  
his life wis ruled bi ravin sel-deceptions.

I lived upon this Eirde in sic an age  
that idolised the sleekit polis clypes,  
fas heroes wir the killers, spies, the reivers –  
an the fyew fa held their wheesht or anely failed  
tae cheer wir loathed like victims o the pest.

I lived upon this Eirde in sic an age  
fan they fa risked complaint wir wyse tae hide  
an gnaa their neives in self-consumin shame –  
the wud fowk grinned aboot their terrifeein  
weird, wud an fu on bluid an yird.

I lived upon this Eirde in sic an age  
fan the mither o a bairnie wis a curse,  
fan pregnant weemen wir gled tae abort,  
the leevin envied the corps in the mools  
whyles on the brods faemed their pysoned cup.  
I lived upon this Eirde in sic an age  
fan even the bard fell quaet an wyted in hope  
for an auncient, awfu voice tae rise again –  
for nane cud spikk a better curse o horror  
bit the scholar o dreidfu wirds, Isaiah the prophet

Sheena Blackhall

# Scots Owersets Of Poems By Tagaki Kyozo

Owersets in Scots of Poems by Tagaki Kyozo (b.1903 in Aomari city, who graduated in medicine in a Manchurian University. He wrote entirely in the Tsugura dialect. James Kirkup stayed for years in the Tohoku area. The English translations by James Kirkup and Nakano Michio, appeared in Modern Poetry in Translation 1971 (Editors Ted Hughes and Daniel Weissbort.)

Waddin Nicht

Thon's anely the saughs reeshlin  
Blawn bi the win  
Dinna greet  
Dinna greet  
Brides shouldna greet  
Are ye greetin because we've nae siller?  
Foo did we mairry in this dowie wye?  
We can makk on we're playin at hoosies

We haud oor shargeret bodies thegither  
Bit dinna get hett  
Ochone, we're like a pair o flees warsslin eftir the sun  
Frae the morn ye'll gang back tae the clachan council offices again  
In purple hakama an blaik shawl,  
Waesome bride an groom!  
Dinna greet  
Dinna greet  
There's naethin tae be frichtened o  
Thon's anely the saughs pairtin,  
Blawn bi the win

Sea Rose

I thocht  
I wad get ma ain back on the bullies  
Bit I hidna the smeddum  
Aneth the sea rose bi the boat hoose  
I beeriet ma knife an grat

Ochone, the green fruit o the sea rose tastit soor  
As I glowered at the fite-tippit waves  
Far oot at sea

Stanes

Oh ma raivelled harns!

Stanes, steppit on, bide quaet

Gin I kept quaet

Could I be a stane as weel?

This scunnerin life: aneth the kitchie sink

We can spy wirms wummlin

Is there naebody fa'll

Haive me intae the lift

Like a stane?

The Winter Meen

I cloored ma wife an gaed oot an saw

The meen like ten thoosan lichties

Ower the saft sna eftir a sna stom

I'm waukin wi nae thocht tae far I'm gaun

Fit makks me hate sae forcie?

Fin we hate, we're mair serious than fin we lue

Sae noo, foo dae I stert feelin like I lue her again?

Aathin's like thon sna storm

Fin it's ower, we see

The meen like a thoosan lichties

Puir Hairst

This cauld rain sune turns tae sna

Foo dweeble thon rice shoots!

Yet we hae tae keep duntin an auld ile can

Tae fleg aff thon screichin spurgies

The sea souns as if a storm's blawin up

A heeze o scurries skirlin abune aa

A faither is readin wi teem een a letter frae

His dother, wirkin at a cottin-spinnin mill

The mither is ettlin tae mak a meal frae chappit tatties

She scrattit up frae the parks

Bit the lowe winna takk, it jist smuchters  
The bairn's squallichin.  
Fit a scunner o a nicht!

Fairm-lad  
I blew frae ma snoot  
Snotters green as rice-pests

Fisher-lad  
I canna get a keek at the quines  
For yer muckle bihoochie

Sna storm  
Bairns  
Hash on an coorie doon  
D'ye hear thon?  
It's a fite wolf yowlin  
As he rins roon the hoose.

Frae a derk neuk up in the laft  
Yer deid granma an granda  
Are glowerin at ye  
Bairns  
Hash on an gyang tae bed

Dawn  
I can hear somebody piddlin  
Is it ye, mither?  
Throw the thick haar  
Faither's cam back  
Wi fish scales aa owerhis hide  
'We've got a muckle catch! '

Autumn  
A dragonflee  
On a washin line o hippens  
(she wis merriet last year)

The corn-staaks- brukken skeletons  
Soun o new claith bein threwshed  
Gart ma heid stoon

Leverick

The colour o the lift I saw frae ma cradle wis  
The colour o a penny fussle ma mither gied me

Seety Calendar

On the day ma sister wis merriet  
Siller berries in the gairden war reid as reid

On the day oor mither deed  
A weetie sna wis faain

On the day oor faither deed  
The ice on the reef had sterted tae thaw

On the evenin I left hame for gweed  
It wis the simmer fireworks festival

Early Spring (at Gappo Park)

Thon park bi the sea far anely pine trees thrive  
Is fey an teem  
Nae young quines play here

Camin oot on the beach  
We fin the east win blawin roch

The tang o fizzy ale  
Yet haunts ma tongue

Ma frien, dowpit doon on the brukken bench  
Is tellin me orra jokes, bit  
His wirds are snatched  
Awa bi the win

Shooer



Didn't I tell ye thon merriege widna be gweed?  
-Thon hair gee-gaw got brukken  
There's nae eese girnin aboot it noo  
-Thrissles blawin in the sheugh  
Gweedman, foo divn't ye spikk?  
-Shooer passin ower the bare knowe parks  
Ye needna cam rinnin hame tae us, dother  
-The bus cairres her awa ahin the pine wid

Lichtnin ower beds o Rice Seedlins  
Puddock are craikin an whyles  
There are flashes o lichtnin ower the rigs o rice seedlins

She still hisna cam oot

Rain starts tae faa  
I'm like a droont ratten  
Bit I'm nae shiftin frae here

The rain's growin heavier  
An the puddocks hae stoppit craikin

It's seems gey late noo  
The lichts in her hoose hae aa bin turned aff

Mither  
O a suddenty, I winted a sook o milk  
An I breenged inno the hoose  
Mither wis washin her fite skin  
In the dim kitchie  
Fin I chawed on her briests  
Her milk tasted unca satty  
(Ye washed in seawater, didn't ye mammy?)

Sune eftir thin, she deed  
Nae lang eftir she'd gaen me her satty milk tae drink

Lowe in the Park  
Noo, jist eftir the sna his thawed  
In the park neist tae the pine wid

Bairns hae stertit a bonfire  
The deid girse has kinnelt  
An spreid its flames  
The bairns like the bonfire  
Are lowpin heelstergowdie, tapsalteerie

Sheena Blackhall

# Scots Poems (Witnessing)

## The Druid Stane

A scutter it wis tae ploo the grun  
Roon rock wi its granite grain  
Far better, he thocht, tae howk it up  
Sae he liftit the Druid Stane

He flittit it tae a nearhaun wid  
Fowk queriet fit he'd dane  
He lauched at thon fur the styte it wis  
Thocht nocht o the pouer o stane

The cheil fa chaunced his life an luck  
Bi shiftin the Druid Stane  
E'er three short years had passed an fled  
His fortunes gaed on the wane

E'er five derk years gaed ower the lan  
His banes they lay alane  
A warnin tae aa fa'd raise the wrath  
O the ghaists o the Druid Stane

Spree Book Offer, Evening Express: Half Leg Waxing for £10.00

I wauked the streets o Aiberdeen  
(Ae hairy leg, ane bauld)  
A chiel cried 'Quine are ye fur real-  
Dis ae leg feel the cauld? '

I sat doon by the Mither Kirk  
(Ae bauld leg, an ane hairey)  
'It's alolpoecia, ' some said,  
'It's hermless, tho it's scary.'

A bizzim in McDonald's, quo  
'Thon bauld leg wi ane hairy  
It makks ye luik, I hae tae say  
Like some hauf-shaved canary.

An noo I'm savin up tae buy  
A wig, fur my puir bauldy leg  
An nere again will I be seen  
Wi ae bare-nyaakit peg.

### Winter Beach

Win-cairdit clouds blaa ben the cauld rife lift  
Syne quaeten. Hog-reek hunkers in san-dunes  
Grey mirled watter-lumps o jeelin waves  
Splooter tae smush like Norseman's drappit runes

Bedrizzled scurries skreich abeen the tide  
A glaisterie foreneen, , snaa draps weety doon  
The stran is teem o aa bit fish an birds  
As ane bi ane, the meenits pass, an droon

### Scots Owersetts of Vietnamese Poems

To Love: Ngô Xuân Di?u

#### Tae Lue

Tae luv is tae dee a thochtie in the hairt,  
for fin ye lue, can ye be sure yer lued?  
Ye gie sae muckle, sae little ye get back -  
the ither lets ye doon or luiks awa.  
Thegither or apairt, it's aye the same

The meen turns fite, flooers dwine, the soul's forehooied,  
for fan ye lue, can ye be sure yer lued?  
To lue is tae dee a thochtie in the hairt.

They'll be tint inbye a derk dowie lan,  
thon passionate sowels fa gang in search o luv.  
An life will be a desert teemed o blytheness,  
an luv will tie the knot that hauds tae sorra.  
Tae luv is tae dee a thochtie in the hairt.

The Dress Of Ha Dong Silk: Nguyen Sa, (1932 - 1998)

The Dress o Ha Dong Silk

In Saigon heat o a suddenty I feel cweel  
because ye weir a dress o Ha Dong silk  
I've aywis lued thon colour in a dress -  
ma poems are still vrocht o raw fite silk.

I still can mynd ye dowpit thonner, short-haired,  
whyle aa aroon me autumn seemed sae lang.  
In ma heid I drew yer portrait there an then,  
unsteekin yetts, I displayed it in ma sowel.

Trystin wi ye aince, I fand it perfeck blytheness  
trystin wi ye twice was heiven for ma sowel.  
Ma student poems, like a knowe, grew up- -  
yer een becam the wine tae makk me foo.

Ye spakk nae wird: I heard a tune.  
Ye gied nae a glisk: I saw a braid blue lift.  
Upwird I luikit tae ye, wi prayerfu een,  
an in pure barderie raxxed for yer fite sleeve.

Ye cam, ye gaed - nae warnin. Aye, I ken  
that it will rain or sheen wi nae excuse.  
Bit foo takk aff wioot a wird? I'm left  
tae caa ye in waefu poems, echoed souns.

I'm left tae bann ma een that didna spikk,  
tae misca ma poems that said eeseless wirds.  
Yer gaen- -regret noo fuspers on ma lips,  
an on ma shouders days wye wechtier yet.

Far are ye noo, ma autumn wi short hair?  
For me please keep the dress o Ha Dong silk.  
I've aywis lued that colour in a dress -  
please keep it, ma luv poem o fite silk

Oh Stone: Nguyen Do (1959-)

Ochone, Stane

I staun in meditation afore the smush o Ankor,  
Gin stane can be blootered like thon, shattered, fit aboot human life?  
Ochone, stane,  
let me etch a plea for peace.

In the eyn, in ilkie war,  
faiver wins, the fowk aywis lose.

Tree Colours Throwe Rikk: H? Dz?nh (1916-1991)

The Tree Colours Throwe Rikk

Wechty wi memories on ma wye hame  
I saw the gloamin slawly smore oot the sun.  
A waefu maen echoed amangst the clouds.  
An the birdies still devauled in the wids  
While blin-foo wins were stapped wi blythesome luve.

Is this the age-auld stang o grue  
That drives ma sowel deep doon the nicht?

Jist as a gangrel I am  
I fin nae comfort in the derkenin hues.  
Takkin ma hairt tae be the wids,  
Thinkin ma sowel maun be the lift.

Hamedrauchtit, syne, I kinnle a smoke  
Lattin blae plufferts rise tae the trees.

Scots Owersetts of Four Yiddish poems

.Where Do The Words Disappear?  
By Reyzi Zhikhlinski,

Far dae the wirts gae  
O the fowk fa spikk tae thirsels  
On the streets o New York?

Dae they jist drap on the cassies  
As nochtie stoor?  
Or mebbe they stravaig about  
Aywis forehooied amang the planets  
As fite, lanely starnies?

Far dae the wirds gae  
O aa the lanely fowk fa spikk tae thirsels  
In the muckle toons o the warld?

□

Snow

By Reyzl Zhikhlinski,

It's snaain  
Draps o bluid grow feinter  
On the butcher's fite peenie  
Letters leave fite signs  
Leave ma thochts  
A fite, teem park

The Violin Clock

By Rivke Kope.

I hae a wag at the waa  
In the makk o a fiddle  
Wi a haun like a bow.  
The oorn gangs by wi a sang  
Times rows intae music

It his its ain orchestra o screws  
Steekit bi a gowden yett  
Aathin is redd up wycely  
Fur the bandmaister o the warld

Play wag at the aa  
Wi the wheel o time  
I'll ower gie ma langins tae ye  
An bliss the haun that sows  
The bliss o souns

On the Tip of the Knife  
By Rivke Kope.

Ma sangs raxx oot on a pilla o shadda  
Like auld vergins.  
Whyles, I takk them ooto their hidie-hole  
An I read.  
Bit I canna thole that they should gae tae naebody!

A sang maun depairt frae its makkar  
Like a bairn frae its parents' cercle  
Nae lie hunkered in a shadda  
Wytin fur a wee birdie  
Tae cam oot an catch the notes  
Inbye its reenge

An the Dee cam roarin wildly

Twa yowes stude claikin ahin the waa,  
'Fan'll this onding weir awa?  
Gin we arena droont, we'll be smored in snaa! '  
An the Dee cam roarin wildly.

A pucklie coos, clean sypit wi rain  
Watched a caravan wintin a windae pane,  
Gyang sailin alang the dreepin glen  
An the Dee cam roarin wildly

The waves they chappit at hoose an ha,  
Gaed lowpin in ower yet an waa  
An aye the win wis wallopin aa  
An the Dee cam roarin wildly.  
The kirkyaird, thrang wi the local deid,  
Swalled up as the watter reached each heid  
Auld beens gaed rattlin, gey near freed  
An the Dee cam roarin wildly

The auld wife lookit on wi a girn  
'I played an swam in this bonnie burn  
Yet faist as a blink can Natur turn



An the Dee cam roarin wildly

Claude Monet: The Magpie

The pyot cocks on a cauldrieffe yett  
Aa its lane in the mids o Yule  
A bunnet o snaa's on ilkie stane  
Sae cauld it cud freeze the hairt o Dule  
The branches craik wi their wecht o fite  
The shaddas raxx ower the happit grun  
The pyot rochles its feathers aince  
Ae wattery ee on the snaa-blin sun

Aa its lane on a cauldrieffe yett  
A single pyot... Daith is near  
A drap o the Deil's bluid on his tongue  
Fit is he craikin? Dinna speir!

Ode Tae A Haggis

Here's tae oor Scottish haggis bag  
We lue tae reese ye oot an brag  
Aboot yer pouer; as guid as parritch  
Fa'd think, ye wir a Grecian sausage  
Explodin in The Clouds ae day  
In Aristophanes auld play!

The Lion Rampant

We Scots are a free reenge breed  
See the diaspora? Like thrissle seeds in a gale  
We're aawye, ony wee crack or neuk'll dae  
Fur us tae saddle, trailin oor reets  
Like navel towes, tied tae Mither Caledonia

Stirling, Bannockburn, Falkirk,  
Otterburn, Flodden, Culloden  
The bluid o a warrior tribe rins ben oor veins  
Bratach rìoghail na h-Alba's

The sail that steers oor boatie.

Hector MacKay in Quebec weirs  
The Lion rampant on his t-shirt,  
Proodly on Hogmanay

Elroy Zanzibar-Farquharson in Jamaicay  
Has stukken a lion magnet on his fridge  
'Och ay the noo' he says  
As he cracks open anither tinnie

Felicity Menzies jogs aroon New York  
Wi a lion rampant frontin the peak o her cap  
She ains twa cds o the Glesga polis pipe band

In Majorca, Rab C. Buchan  
Dichts the san frae his taes  
Wi a Lion rampant tool

Thon lion gaes aawye  
Pencils, shortbreid tinnies, car stickers  
It's aa tae dae wi attitude  
Nemo me impune lacessit  
Mess wi me an I'll batter ye.

The Leck, Lancashire

Gaun reeshlin bi the schule o Cowan Brig  
Wee burn wi muckle stanes set in its foun  
Alang its banks bairns eesed tae wanner lowse,  
Tuik aff their sheen an hose, dooked up an doon

An airt tae dream, tae dwaum, tae takk the air  
Far the wee burn teems ower intae the plain  
Boortree & saughs, an hazel busses growe  
Grippin their secrets, sylvan an arcane

Sheena Blackhall

# Scots Poems From Flashback

ies Rule OK!

Scurries skyte aroon the schules  
Fleggin bairns an brakkin rules  
Pooon on the teachers' cars  
Chorin chips an candy bars

Some fowk caa them rats wi wings  
See them lowp like burst bedsprings  
Scurries divin doon the road  
Niver heed the highway code

Scots Owersetts of Early Irish (From English Translation)

Sliabh gCua: Irish, Anon, 9thC  
Sliabh gCua, bield o wolves  
Roch an derk  
The win keens roon its glens  
Wolves skirl doon its corries  
The wud broon deer bells in Autumn, aroon it  
The heron skreichs ower its crags

Blackie's Sang: Irish Anon 8-9thC

The bird has gien a fussle  
Frae the tap o its bricht yalla beak  
The blackie frae the yalla-tufted bough  
Cheeps oot its cry ower Loch Loígh

The Randy: Irish Anon, 9th C

I dinna ken fa Edan will lie wi the nicht  
Bit I dae ken  
That fair Edan winna lie alane

Daith: Irish. Anon 9th C

Whether foreneen or gloaming,  
Whether lan or sea  
Tho I ken I'll dee

Ochone, I dinna ken fan.

The Monk's Tryst: Irish Anon,9thC?

The douce wee bell  
That rings on a winny nicht-  
I'd rather tryst wi it  
Than tryst wi a jaad

On Mael Mhuu, the Poet: Irish, Anon,887

The sweet yird hasnae yet happit  
There hisnae yet cam tae the Tours o Tara  
(Nor has Ireland in its mony fields  
Yet enfaulded) a chiel  
Like the pure, kind, Mael Mhuru.

There hasnae ane drunk brave o Daith  
There hasnae ane reached the sibness o the Deid  
The plooeed yird hisnae yet closed  
Ower a sheannachie mair winnerfu than he.

Storm: Irish. Anon 8-9thC

Cauld is the nicht in the muckle Muir  
The rain dings doon  
Nae hauf-meisurs;  
A roar bi the caller win  
Delichts an skreich ower the bield o the wid

Flood-tide: Irish 'Finian' 9th C

Luik afore ye tae the Nor East  
At the sea's glamourie  
Hame o craiturs  
Hame o selkies  
Reamin wi ferlies  
It has taen on flood-tide

The Win: Irish Anon 8-9th C

It has brukken us  
It has caad us tae smithereens  
It has droned us  
O King o the Star Bricht Kingdom

The win has etten us up  
Like twigs, in the crammosie Lowe o Heiven

Yuletide Cauld: Irish Anon 11thC  
Cauld, cauld, jeelin this nicht in braid Moylurg,  
The snaw is heicher than a Ben  
The deer canna win at its meat.

Aybydaun cauld! The storm has spreid on ilkie side  
The ploood brae is a burn, an ilkie ford is a reamin mere

Ilkie teemin loch is a muckle sea  
Ilkie mere is a reamin loch  
Shelts canna cross the ford o Ross  
Nae mair can twa feet win ower

The fishies o Ireland are traivellin  
There isnae a stran far the waves dinna clatter  
There's nae a toun left in the lan  
Nae a bell is heard, nae a heron skreichs

The wolves o Cuan Wid  
Dinna get peace tae sleep in their lair  
The Jenny Wren fins nae bield for her nest  
On the tap o Lon

Wae faas on the boorich o wee birds  
Frae the coorse win, the cauld ice!  
The blackie wi its pit-mirk back  
Fins nae bank tae its likin  
Nae a bield for it, in the wids o Cuan.

Warm is oor pottie on its hyeuk  
Hitherin-thitherin the blackie on Leitir Cró  
Snaw has blattered the wid here  
It's hard tae sclimm up Ben Bó

The erne o broon Glen Rye  
Maun thole the wersh, wud win  
Great is its wae an sorra  
The ice will steek its beak

It's daft for ye- takk tent o't-  
Tae rise frae yer bed an bowster  
There's a rowth o ice on ilkie ford  
Thon's the wye I cry 'Cauld'

### 3. Three Scots Owersetts made in Trinity College

An 11thC poem in honour of St Colum Cille (521-597)

Ma hairt is trauchelt wi screivin  
Ma sherp quill isnae steady  
Ma thin-beakit pen powks forrit  
A blaik skelp o sheenin derk blue ink

A burn o the wyceness o Blissed God  
Rins frae ma fair-broon bonnie haun  
On the page it draps its load o ink  
Vrocht frae the green-skinnt holly

Ma wee dreepin pen traivels  
Aroon the acres o sheenin buiks  
Wioot devaul, for the wealth o the great  
An ma haun's fair ferfochan wi screivin

16thC Irish Riddle on the Makkin o Vellum

Ane o ma faes eyndit ma life  
Sapped ma warldy virr,  
Eftirwards, steeped me watted in watter  
Laid me doon in the sun, far I sune tint  
The hairs I eased tae hae. An syne  
The hard knife edge cuttit me

Fingers faulded me and a birdie's feather  
Screived aa ower ma licht broon physog  
Wi draps o delicht

Syne, for the lave, a cheil  
Raxxed me ower a boord, bood hide ower me  
Paintit me wi gowd, and sae I glimmered  
Winnerfu in smith-wark, wire ringed roon.

Say fit I'm caad, eesefu tae men  
Mystery's ma name,  
A help tae heroes an Haly, sae I am.

The Screiver: screived in Priscian's Latin Grammar by an Irish monk at St.  
Gallen, Switzerland, mid 9thC  
A hedge o trees rings me roon  
A blackie sings sae doucely  
Abeen ma weel-ruled buik  
The birds sing far an wide

In a green hap o leafy branches  
The gowk sings her bonnie chant  
Hain me, Lord, on Judgement Day  
Blythely I screive aneth the trees.

#### 4. The Fiddle:

Fa canna be meeved bi music  
Is a daud o ice or stane  
Fin a fiddlers boos his bowstring  
He has me, bluid an bane

Fin first I heard a fiddle  
Ma hairt it sae inspired  
Ma fingers sterted clackin  
Ma feet, they gaed on fire

Fin neist I heard fiddle,  
Tears in a een did stert  
For it telt o grue an sorra  
Fin luvvers brakk apairt

Scots owersett of an Irish poem translated by James Stephen

A Glaiss o Beer  
The skinnymalinkie She in the howf ower thonner  
Near killt me for speirin the len o a glaiss o beer  
May Auld Cloutie grup the fite faced hoor bi the hair  
An threwsh ill mainner ooto her hide fur a year

Thon hauf-baked vratch wi the teuchest jaa ye'll see  
On Vertue's road, wi a voice that wad roose the deid  
Cam skirlin an skreichin the meenit she luikit at me  
An haived me ooto the hoose on the back o ma heid!

Gin I socht her maister, he'd gie me a coggie a day  
Bit She, wi the beer at haun nae a pick wad arrange!  
May she mairry a ghaist gie birth tae a kittlin an may  
The Heich King o Glory see that it catches the mangle!

Sheena Blackhall



# Scots Poems From Terzarima

## Embro's Trams

Auld Reekie toun has a famous castle  
Nae langer dae its chanties rassle  
Better than charabangs an prams  
Noo Embro toun is rinnin trams

Oor parliament's near Holyrood  
Far mony a queen in Embro stude  
Takkin sedan chairs, gigs an drams  
They didna ken the joys o trams

In closes, pends, the antrin neuk  
The ghaist o Walter Scott steps oot  
Wi Burke an Hare, kent fur ill scams  
Wid killers be convoyed on trams?

Hear, fowk frae Troon an Gretna Green  
Glesga, Dundee an Aiberdeen  
Yer taxes helped (did ye hae qualms?)  
Tae gie oor Capital its trams

Noo Edinburgh fowk are vauntie  
Each Edinburgher an his auntie  
He disna traivel like us bams  
He wheechs aroon in genteel trams!

## Craiturs

There wis an ambidextrous ant fa juggled for a leevin  
Fa wed a brosie brock an set up hame in Kinlochleven

There wis a contermaschious coo fa stude as an MP  
She wis beaten bi a dowie dyeuk, (a Tory, an Wee Free)

There wis an Ecclefechan eel fa tied itsel in knots  
Fin spikkin tae a fyauchie fish wi Glesga glottal stops

There wis a gallus gollach wi a pair o tartan trews  
Fin he saw a Heilen chucken he wid aywis stop tae news

There wis an Isla Islander, a jinkin jeelyfish  
For brakkfest she enjoyed a daud o kale upon a dish

There wis a lowpin lobster wi nesty snappin cleuks  
Fa liked tae fleg the midgies heezin roon about sea neuks

There wis a mighty moose fa daunced a polkie in Dunoon  
Wi a newt o sonsie hurdies, they near caad the toun clock doon

There wis a mochy ostrich fa bedd in Embro zoo  
She shared a scone an cuppie wi a ringle-eed pea-doo

At Troon there wis a quail fa hid the orra trick o spittin  
An a rotten fa liked roller skatin roon Rosythe while knittin

There wis a teenie troot fa dreamt o cheengin tae a silkie  
Awa near Ullapool far mists are mizzlin an milkie

There wis a veecious vulture, he wis jist an orra vratch  
Till a wasp stung his bihoochie, noo he his a baldie patch

There wis a xylophone, far Willie Wagtail made a stooshie  
While a yokie yalla, yeitie keepit time on a bazouki

There wis a zig-zag zebra (a puir genetic fluke)  
An thon's the beastie alphabet, for aa fa care tae look!

Owersett of Twa poems by John Clare

Flood

On Lolham Brigs, in wud an lanesome mood  
I've seen the Yuletide floods their pliskies play  
Ower ilkie arch that trimmled far I stude  
Booed ower its waas tae watch the splooterin spray  
As their auld stations wid be washed agley  
Dunt cam the ice agin the jambs an syne  
A judder jarred the arches...yet aince mair  
It breisted bosky waves an stude richt fine  
Tae wyte the on-ding, thrawn like as afore

Fite faem broon tappit wi the roosty yird  
Aa washed frae new-ploeed lans wad flee aneth  
Syne roon a thoosan eddies flee like girds  
Birl tae the ither side far they draw braith  
Ae meenit swallaed syne, like life in daith  
Fa's wrackit merks flee on the flood sae braw  
Faister than shaddas that in storms doonfaa  
Straes treetle, birl, an steady aa fur nocht  
The brig's stinch arches sheet them quick awa  
The feather daunces, flichters, freedom socht  
Derts ben the deepest dangers, aye afloat  
As gin wee feys hae wheeched it ooto sicht  
An daunced it ower the waves as pleisur's boat  
Licht hairtit as a thocht in pearlin may  
Trees uprived busses, fence upretted rails  
Wechtit wi seggs in latchy meevements gae  
Like watter kelpies, tint, each wynds a trails  
Till near the arches, syne as in affricht  
It dives, it reels, it trimmles ooto sicht

Waves dwaum lowp back an ram stam byle again  
Like breengin bogles risin in aneth  
Fin at the tap, unfurl a hudderie mane  
Ae meenit raxxin a mair siccar braith  
Syne divin heidlang doon an doon an on  
An ilke ane byles in the steps o last  
An ither bogles rise fin they are gaen  
Brier their torn waves- lowp forrit an are passed  
The cauld air cams tae jeel an worrit me  
Frae bank tae bank the watter-war is spreid  
Fey birds like spindrifft ower the howlin sea  
Hing far the wud dyeuks hashed on by an fled  
On roars the flood aye tcyauvin tae be free  
Like tribble, wannerin tae Eternity

#### Moose's Nest

I fand a baa o girse amangst the hey  
An powked it as I passed an daunert by  
An fin I looked I thocht a ferlie steered  
An turned again in hopes tae see a bird  
Fin oot an auld moose treetlit frae the wheats

Wi aa her littlins hingin frae her teats  
She looked sae unca an sae fey tae me  
I ran an winnert fit this thing could be  
An pairtit knapwid divots far I stude  
The moose syne flew aff frae her skreichin brood  
The littlins squeaked as I gaed on ma wye  
She fand her nest again amang the hey  
The watter ower the stanes could scarce be fun  
An braid auld stankpuils glimmered in the sun

Three Scots Owersetts of poems translated into English of the Poet Hoàng Hưng  
(1942-) , Vietnamese, born in Bac Ninh Province

### 1.A Cheil Gaun Hame

He is hame frae THON  
His wife greets aa nicht, his bairns are dumfounert aa day  
Hame frae THON  
Fin he wauks throw the yett, his friens' physogs are aisse-like  
Hame frae THON  
He feels yokie, at the back o his heid  
In the mids o a boorich o fowk  
As if somebody's watchin

Ae year eftir, he chokes o a suddenty at a pairty  
Twa years eftir he swytes frae his widdendremes  
Three years eftir, he peeties a lizard  
Years eftir, he's taen a the tig o sittin alane in the derk

Whyles bi day he feels the glower o fremmit een  
Whyles bi nicht an aimless vyce speires questions  
He lowps Aa a touch tae his shouder

Daftie  
Cairryin a brukken brick on her heid  
She wauks an sings  
Gloamin cams gradual at the eyn o the street  
She wauks an sings  
Bitticks o a calmin sang  
Brakk ma hairt

Ochone, the wudness o tile an brick

Please sing an sing again  
O aa the brukken smush  
Ye cairry in her heid

Dae the Stairs Lead Us?  
Far dae the stairs lead us?  
The peint is poorple; pairt o the brick waa shaws throw the stucco  
Far dae the stairs lead us?  
The coffee's rikk an a bumshayvelt shoppie

The hoose fell doon langsyne  
Leavin anely its stairs  
Murnin the feet that hid steppit up an up  
Up tae catch the treelips o fite rikk  
Up tae catch flocks o wud birdies  
Catch glamouries, catch lichtheidedness  
Catch the resshlin soun o the toun's life

The hoose fell doon langsyne  
Leavin anely the stairs  
Far dae the stairs lead us?  
The haar in the lift, nae wings in flicht  
The stairs o a suddenty stop  
The anely wye is back  
Frae the mids o the street  
A lanely bairn keeks up

Scots Owersett of an English translation of a poem by Nguyen Khoa Diem (1942)  
Vietnamese

A Kintra Airt  
Gyaun back, a sickle meen  
In the eynless gloamin fug o the lea  
The puddocks sang ripens in the hett girse  
Rice is saft as a luvver's shooder

Spring- this same spring  
That lowsers birdies in the perfumed girse o hame  
Crossin a lane a herd o buffalo wi strippit wymes  
Drum their horns at the sickle meen

Wytin evidently, a thochtie jittery  
Eichteen kintra quines fa miss their sodjer laddies affa sair  
Warm thisels wi thochts o them

Syne the strang win blows  
At the clachan's wellie an riverbank  
The pure singin o quines  
Risin like crystal tae the sickle meen

Scots Owersett of an English translation of a poem by Y Nhi (1944)

Sang Lyric  
I am a Khuyen  
Lyin happit in the ooie girse  
Its singin bides in yer sang

I'm a spunk  
Lyin quaet in the aisse-bowl  
Its lowe fleers in yer fingers

I'm a boatie  
Cowped aneth a raw o pins  
Its sea  
Flowed hyne awa frae ye

Aywis I'm haived back  
Aywis in ma dwaumin I see  
The lowe  
The singin  
The sea

Legend o the Three Deid an the Three Leevin

The legend o the three leevin an the three deid cams frae France. The plot o 'the legend' is plain: three corpses (three kirk bodies) meet wi three leevin (a duke, a count, an a prince) . The latter are terrifeed bi this tryst. The deid spikk tae the three rich fowk, garrin them takk tent: 'Such as I was you are, and such as I am you will be. Wealth, honor and power are of no value at the hour of your death.' In the Master of the Book of Reasons, peintit at the eyn o the 15th century, they are ridin shelts an set tae gyang huntin. Their frichtenet tykes cercle them. The deid dinna seem tae be memmers o the clergy, bit raiher the doubles o the three leevin. 'The legend' wis aften peintit al fresco in kirks to gyang wi a daunce o

death.

Three Deid, Three Leevin  
Sic as I wis, frien, tho ye be  
Sic as I am's the weird ye'll dree  
Wealth an honour, pith an pouer  
In daith, nae comfort gie

Financier, wi rowth o gowd  
Ye rule the lives o mony  
There are nae pooches in a shroud  
The mools are far frae bonnie

Sic as I wis, frien, tho ye be  
Sic as I am's the weird ye'll dree  
Wealth an honour, pith an pouer  
In daith, nae comfort gie

Media mogul, bigsy, braw  
Aa fowk prig fur scraps o fame  
Frae ye tae toss frae yer great paw  
The grave cares nocht for name

Sic as I wis, frien, tho ye be  
Sic as I am's the weird ye'll dree  
Wealth an honour, pith an pouer  
In daith, nae comfort gie

Fin yer sax fit deep in yird  
Member o the parliament  
In the glaur ye'll spak nae wird  
Pouer an influence aa spent

Owerset Poem: Paris at Nicht

Déjeuner Du Matin  
Il a mis le café  
Dans la tasse de café  
Il a mis le lait  
Dans la tasse de café  
Il a mis le sucre  
Dans le café au lait

Avec la petite cuiller  
Il a tourné  
Il a bu le café au lait  
Et il a reposé la tasse  
Sans me parler  
Il a allumé  
Une cigarette  
Il a fait des ronds  
Avec la fumée  
Il a mis les cendres  
Dans le cendrier  
Sans me parler  
Sans me regarder  
Il s'est levé  
Il a mis  
Son chapeau sur sa tête  
Il a mis  
Son manteau de pluie  
Parce qu'il pleuvait  
Et il est parti  
Sous la pluie  
Sans une parole  
Sans me regarder  
Et moi j'ai pris  
Ma tête dans ma main  
Et j'ai pleuré.

Jacques Prevert  
Brakkfaist  
He poored the coffee  
Inno the cup  
He poored the milk  
Inno the cup  
He teemed in the sugar  
Tae the coffee an milk  
He steered it  
Wi a teaspeen  
He supped the coffee  
An pit back the cup  
Wioot spikkin tae me  
He kinnlit a fag  
He blew a puckle rings



Wi the rikk  
He dunted the aisse  
Inno the aissetray  
Wioot spikkin tae me  
Wioot luikin at me  
He raise up  
He pit his bunnet on his heid  
He pit on  
His raincoat  
Because it wis a doonpish  
He gaed oot  
Inno the weet  
Wioot a wird  
Wioot luikin at me  
See me?  
I tuik my heid  
In ma hauns  
An I grat

Makkin the Tattiebogle  
Colin Massie, frae Glen Dye's banks  
On the Warlock Stane he held his pranks  
Nearhaun Potarch, far the kelpie bides  
Fa droons the gype that on her back rides  
Here, Janet, the witch frae Sundayswells  
An Margret Davidson cast their spells  
Wi Helen Rogie o Findtrack fame  
Fa stobbit a dallie tae bring fowk pain  
Wi Margret Ogg fa bewitched men's kye  
An Janet Lucas gley-eed an sly  
Fa practised her airts in Lumphanan's kirk  
Wi Isobel Ogg, as tanned's a Turk  
They cud cheenge tae a bawd, or a futterat faist  
An this is the cantrip they likit best:  
Rugg a neep frae a park, unseen  
Howk oot holes fur its mou an een  
Frae the heid o a hoolet staned tae daith  
Pyke oot een fur the craitur's sicht  
Noo, the craa-man needs a mou o its ain  
Cut the lips frae a bairn bi smallpox slain

Plunked in the neep they'll sune takk reet  
Heist the heid on a pole that's blaik as seet  
A tattiebogle ye'll hae that spikks  
An gey far ben wi the Deevil's tricks  
Makk a hole in the cross wi a jaiket gray  
Wi breek an buits, aa stappit wi strae  
Frae the gibbet, howk a murderer's hairt  
Cut aff his hauns afore he's lairt  
Pit the hairt in the jaiket, the hauns on the pole  
The tattiebogle's the Deevil's soul  
Frae sivven corpses as deid as mutton  
Pyke an ee frae each for a jaiket button  
Frae a mappie, a coo, a snake, a deer  
A salmon, a brock an a wild cat drear  
Tae gar him lowp, daunce heich three times  
Roon the tattiebogle, an spikk these lines:  
A laird, a lord, a lily, a leaf  
A piper a drummer a hummer a thief  
Bit staun weel back, makk set tae flee  
Fur the deil kens fit fey weird ye'll dree!

Letter tae a Lochan

Dear Loch Builg,  
Ye haud ma faither's luv in yer jeelin watters  
There is nae gravesteen here,  
Nae foggy inscription in the lappin waves

The lift is rikk,  
Risn ooto the smooed aisse o the Bens' cauldron

Ma faither larned me here tae skim the stanes  
Kerplunk, skippin abune the lochan till they drooned  
Yer ripples circlin roon them, syne at peace  
Like steppin stanes they war, tae the Aybydan

Mony's the stormy meen sleeps in yer hairt  
As fite as lithium.  
Yer harns hae bin aa raivelled bi the win  
Cercled bi heather, glorious in purple  
A secret kept bi keepers, ernes an deer

The crack o a stikk ahin me,  
Raises the ghaist o ma faither in its wake.

He bred the heath in me, the coontless starnies  
Lochan, ma faither's dearie  
His best likit  
He is the win that boos tae kiss yer broo

#### Clean Sweep

Ae day I ma mither rippit aa her photies  
The faimly's past, like it wis nochtie dirt  
Like she wintit tae dicht awa the hale kiboodle..  
Bairntime, merriege, waddins, holidays  
Like chakk-stoor frae the blackboord o her life

The Tide o Time wis creepin tae her taes  
Mebbe she wintit the san tae swallae her up  
Mebbe she wintit tae blaw awa like rikk,  
A caunle meltin doon its seelent thrapple.

Daith, the moose-trap, seeks nae extra gear

#### Granite

Granite. It's fit this toon is bigg't on  
Granite laists wi its steely sheen  
Hewn frae the quarry, `twis gey sair won  
The grey foundation o Aiberdeen

Granite's the thing that draws ye back  
It shapes the landscape, it spikks o place  
Granite's the stane that winna brakk  
It pits the grit in the North East race  
Granite glint fires an inner langin  
The wannerlust tae gyang hyne awa  
Bit ay there's the need tae be belangin  
Back, far the Northern breezes blaw

The blocks that biggit oor past, oor hame  
That shapes oor future's the granite stane

Aa Things Scottish

Here's tae roastit bubblyjock, tae morphine an lawnmowers  
Tae bowlin greens, Gleneagles, an the Aviemore snaa-blowers

Here's tae photocopiers, tae Bovril, Gretna Green  
Tae Glenmorangie, Arisaig, Tae Glamis an Aiberdeen

Here's tae Dolly, marmalade, Glen Lyon, Embro Toun  
Tae gas masks an tae insulan, the Reekie Linn an Troon

Here's tae penicillin, an the Northern Lights, ablaze  
The Clyde, the Wallace monument an Tobermory's braes  
Here's tae tar an overdraft, tae Forres, Wick an Skye  
Balmoral, Ballachulish far the midgies fing on by

Here's tae anaesthesia, thermometers, the bus  
Crieff Hydro, an Glenfinnan Stirlin Castle...aa o us

Weety Oot: County Mayo

It's weety oot. Skin's watterproof  
A coo's weirin a pail  
Like a fez on its dubby snoot

A yowe wi dreepin l; ugs  
Glowers ben the smirr  
Hooses like haciendas, skyrie-harled  
Hug roadsides like tidemerks

It's Tuesday. Mayo's teem  
The car-less tarmac rins mids girse an breem

The Roads Untaen  
It's far ower late tae traivel the roads nae taen  
The roads ower fearie, ower roch that I micht hae gaen

I hae blawn ben life like a fooshunless toosht o strae  
Heelstergowdie, contermaschiously

Noo I'm a shoogly leaf tit-tittin a shakkin twig  
I'll niver see Tir nan Og, or cross its brig

Civic Cows

Angus, Hamish, Faquhar, Campbell  
Cooncil-ained bi Dundee toon  
Heilian coos...pyed fur bi taxes  
Jist like gweed roads. A towrist boon

Owersett in Scots: Poem by Pablo Neruda

Ode tae the Claes

Ilkie morning ye wyte  
Claes, ower ma cheer  
Fur ma vauntieness  
Ma luv  
Ma hope  
Ma corp  
Tae full ye  
I hae scarce  
Waukent up  
I say ta ta tae the watter  
An enter yer sleeves  
Ma shanks luik fur  
The teemness o yer legs  
An noo enfaulded  
Bi yer unweariet leal-ness  
I gae oot tae walk for maet  
I meeve inno barderie  
I teet throwe windaes  
At ferlies  
Chiels, weemen,  
daeins an tcyauuves  
Keep makkin me fit I am  
Gaun agin me  
Makkin eese o ma hauns  
Unsteekin ma een  
Pittin taste in ma mou  
An syne  
Claes  
I makk ye fit ye are  
Pushin oot yer elbucks

Raxxin yer seams  
An sae yer life swalls  
The marra o ma life  
Ye flap  
An skelp in the win  
As though ye war ma soul  
At coorse times  
Ye hug  
Ma beens  
Teem, at nicht  
The derk sleep  
Fowk wi their ghaisties  
Yer wings an mine  
I spear  
Whether ae day  
A bullet  
Frae a fae  
Will merk ye wi ma bluid  
an syne  
ye will dee wi me  
or mebbe  
it winna be  
sae dramatic  
bit simple  
an ye'll dwine gradual  
claes  
wi me, wi ma corp  
an thegither  
we'll enter  
the yird  
at the thocht o this  
ilkie day  
I greet ye  
Wi reveraunce an syne  
Ye enfauld me an I forget ye  
Because we are ane  
An will gae on facin  
The win thegither, the nicht  
The streets or the warssele  
Ae corp  
Mebbe, mebbe, ae day unmeevin



# Scots Poems From The Sanctuary Knocker

The Sanctuary Knocker

I've chapped at the sanctuary knocker  
I've priggitt tae be let in  
Tho I'm nae frien nor foe tae ye  
Nae sib....nae kith nor kin

Ma kintra's riven apairt bi war  
Ma bairnies greet at nicht  
An ye hae peace an breid tae spare  
I claim alms as a richt

I hinna steepit ma hauns in bluid  
Nor bombed bairns in their bed  
Tho cauld's yer kintra, fey's yer wyes  
It's tae yer yetts I've fled

I've chapped at the sanctuary knocker  
Stranger, aneth the skin  
I hae a hairt that beats like yours  
Stranger, can I step in?

Easter Wids

Catkins in their foggy hoods  
Fite an saft as Angels' snoods  
Nod as breezes daunce alang  
Girse is fair wi gowans thrang  
An the incense o the trees  
Aa the widlan purifees

Idioticals

Wioot wids, watter, flooers, natural ferlies  
Touns an aa inbye them  
Are idioticals ? hotterels o soun an stramash  
The Japanee caa it Wid-dookin, Shinrin-Yoku  
Wauken ben wids, yer sheen  
Kickin the tatterwallops o leaves  
Bricht harrigals o Autumn



Lippenin tae the leerickie-laricrichie  
Sweeshle o larick, rowan, birk  
The skreich o a collieshangie o craws  
Or keekin up at the shelts'-tails in the lift  
O a saumon gloamin  
The branches hung wi the perlin o dyewy moosewabs

Evenin in Yule, in the queeriesome colours o cauld  
It's gledsome tae watch the burns  
Breenge heigh-ma-nannie doon the bens  
Scoorin panjotterls o leaves frae the puils sides  
Feelin the shmoodrichs o sna  
Faa saft on yer jeeled chikks

Smoke

A puff of smoke, grey fluff and feather  
Bursts from a hedge  
On a clumsy fledgling flight

Nature has dressed the braes around in gold  
A glut of glorious daffodils

Snowdrifts beneath the tree  
Are a distant memory

The clock ticks on  
Round the changing face of seasons  
The mirror shows late winter all year round

Cheenge is Lichtsome  
Cheenge is lichtsome, whyles onchancy  
Heelstergowdie, muckle an least  
Aa the world's gaun tapsalteeerie  
Ozymandias, wha'll faa neist?

Stars an stripes, nae hugger-muggery  
Oh, wi lauched at fey ongauns!  
Like a B Movie, wi skulduggery  
Showbiz, sabre-rattlin, cons

Cheenge is lichtsme, whyles onchancy  
Naeboddy's lauchin here, this day  
Thon wins o cheenge will they blaw lichtly  
Ower the seas frae the U.S.A?

Between the Cemetary & MacDonalds  
Tattered memories blow across the pavement  
A toddler cries fat tears down chubby cheeks

Seagulls are active ingredients in this cityscape  
Sirens wail by, opening wounds in the ear of day  
Millions of birds have slipped through the back door of night

This street, these centuries, this city  
How many winters will pass before they crumble?

Will pestilence, war, or global warming prove fatal  
Before more than birds pass through the door of night?

Easter Bairnie: for Skye-Marie Anderson  
The April trees are wauchts o green  
New-glimmerin in the glentin sun  
The rikk o barbecues soochs by  
Ris in ootower the flooery grun

A heron stauns abeen the Don  
Far waves rin by like liquid glaiss  
It makks o steen a nat'ral plinth  
It's like a statue, motionless

A tyke dooks at the watter's edge  
Dowp wags like a clock pendulum  
Wee birdies in the hedge's mids  
In hidden hoosies, threip an thrum

Students wauk coortin haun in haun  
Ithers stravaig, een glued tae phones  
Ye hear the crack o beer-tin taps  
An early foggy bumper drones

A fisher yarks his sheenin line  
Alang the current, trystin troot  
A bairnie's Easter days are catched  
In a prood parent's photo shoot  
Treisur mair dear than that o Kings  
The joy tae failmies new life brings

The Corp in the Coouncil Meetin  
Coouncil meetins, it is said  
Are scunnersome an borin  
As Mr Bentham could attest  
Wis he asleep an snorin?

Na, na, his spirit micht hae bin  
His mummy niver spakk  
In fact, the perfeck cooncillor  
I think they'll seek him back!

Princess Mary's Xmas tin  
The Princess Mary Xmas tin  
Wis vrocht wi siller for officers,  
Braise for the ordnar sodjers,  
Tae be giftit on Xmas Day,1914

Ilkie tin wis peintit wi her pictur  
An stapped wi a swatch o baccy,  
A pack o fags in a yalla monogrammed paper,  
A lichter, a Xmas caird  
A photie frae the Princess hersel. Forbye,  
Puckles o tinnies hid sweets, chocs, lemon sookers

Anely 400,000 wir at the Front fur Christmas  
Bi then, the Deid Man's Penny  
Fower inches in diameter, wis sent instead  
Tae the murnin neist o kin  
A wee braise tin, fur the shell-shocked  
The blichtit, the gassed, the blin

The Tortie

Some fowk are killt bi fire an sword  
Aeschylus daith indeed  
Wis fey: frae oot the Heivens drappt  
A tortie on his heid

Cadail, Mo Ghaoil - 'Sleep, Darling, Sleep' Regimental Pipe Tune  
'Sodger, lie doon on yer wee pickle straa,  
It's nae very broad, and it's nae very braa  
But, sodger, it's better than naethin at aa,  
Sae sleep, sodger, sleep.&quot;

Requiem for a Coo  
A rocket fae the USA drappt on a Cuban coo  
Alas, thon douce-like bovine breet  
Deid faist, wioot a moo

The Cubans beeriet it wi state,  
A maist sincere procession  
A victim, politeecians said  
0 imperialist aggression

In Church  
Twa auld caileachs dover on their pews  
The kirk is cauld, the seats as hard as steen  
Their hair, like rattens' tails,  
Faas oot aneth their fake fur bunnets  
Their glaisses slide tae the eyn o their nebs  
They are rowed like buckies  
Booed ower their fooshty Bibles

Oh, the wershness o auld age  
Beens like spunk-sticks  
Ye could crack in a meenit  
Dried up like the river beds o Afric  
Drouthy fur rain.

They were born fin wee fite tykes  
Glowered intae gramophones  
Fin trams gaed rick-ma-tick along the rails  
The psalms are their pop tunes  
Naethin tae dae bit staun in the queue

Wythin tae enter God's mansions  
Up in the lift

The Wesley bone folk tradition  
Fit micht ye dae tae pass the time?  
Peint on a horse vertebrae of course!  
A Methodist preacher raxxin his airms  
Listen, or thole Damnation's curse!

Dunfermline Toun  
The coach parked in Dunfermline toun  
Sae passengers could dine  
An ilkie floor-pot in thon caff  
Sproutit a plastic vine

The tatties, hard as hinneran  
Wis granite-like an teuch  
An beeriet aneth greenery  
Bit they war chaip eneuch

Auld bodachs weirin basebaa caps  
Wis pushin cairts like Zimmers  
A heeze o European leids  
Wis heard ower gairden strimmers

Wee knickums skirled like banshees  
Aroon hydrangeas an heather  
An Fifers ower a mug o tea  
Cried, 'My, thon's affae weather! '

An sic a rowth o geegaws there  
Tae tryst cash frae the pooch  
An halflins deavin faithers  
(Bairns are aywis on the mooch)

Ay, bluid-reid wine wis drunken  
Ower the olives an broon breid  
Bit nae in unca quantities  
Na, temperance ruled the heid

Ah, weel-a-wat Dunfermline  
The kintra's fate's decidit  
At Burger King, or Dobbie's  
Britain jyned or else dividit  
Ower panini, pizza, curry  
Latte, watter, Chardonnay  
The Fifers argy-bargy  
Vote for Sturgeon or fur May?

Funeral for a Shank  
There aince wis a shank amputatit  
That in Mexico City wis fêted  
Its funeral wis lang  
An byordnar lang  
Fur a shank tae be sae celebratit

Bit it didna bide lang in its lair  
It vanished ae day tae thin air  
Did it lowp aff itsel?  
Did it drap doon a well?  
Thon shank isna seen onymair!

Byron's Waddin  
A jeelin win blew frae the sea  
The snaa cloud gurly flew  
Tae County Durham's, Seaham haa  
A waddin pairty drew  
This twa days intae Januar  
The year, echten fifteen  
The bride, Sir Milbanke's dother  
A virgin, fair an clean

Young Annabella stude unveiled  
Snod in a muslin dress  
Her een war glentin, bricht an blue  
Her bridegroom tae impress

The groom, fite-face an curly powed  
The lad o her desirin  
Cam hirplin, gammy-fittit in,

George Gordon, sixth Lord Byron

At his command, the bridal richts  
War keepit quaet an quick  
Her dowry, less than he'd hae liked  
Luve, thin as caunle-rikk

The bride pit on her traivellin claes  
The coach wis fussed up  
Far kirk bells pealed an muskets fired  
George dooned the stirrup cup

An first they cam tae Rushyford  
The groom wis stern an dour  
The bride sat winnerin, fearie-faced  
Fit merriege held in store

At Halnaby, throw drivin drift  
Baith lay at last in bed  
Lord Byron, throw a nichtmare cried  
'I am in Hell! ' he said

Daybrakk wis cauld, The groom stepped oot  
His mainner...jibes an sneers  
Young Annabella kept inbye  
Her pilla wat wi tears

Ego-Trip  
Am I braa?  
Am I winnerfu?  
Tell me. I wint tae ken

Am I a stoater? A bobbydazzler?  
Text me. Snapchat me twitter me  
Naebodys takkin me on!

Ma phone hisnae pinged in five meenits  
Nae ony hits?  
I Facebook, therefore I am....

Toun-Soun(2)  
Fitbaa supporters argy-bargyin  
Teethless junkies priggin  
Protestors giein it laldy  
Cars birrin  
Taxis tootin  
Scurries skreichin fit tae burst yer lugs  
Bussies hotterin  
Boozers singin  
Steer aa thegither an ye hae a toun

Lament From a Special Unit  
Ither bairnies see the stars  
Aa I see are fuckin bars

Magic mushies gart me spin  
Reefers let the madness in  
'Keeps him quaet' they telly my ma  
Life set me up tae watch me faa

Locked up. Keepit ooto sicht  
Halflin caged in eynless night

The Mither  
Washed the plates an walked the dug  
Pared the tatties, raiked the aisse  
Teemed the chunty...skelped the rug  
Scoored the steps an buffed the braisse  
Bleached the hippens, manglit sheets  
Preened the linen on the line  
Hoovered neuks, fed girnin geats  
Beddit ilkie night at nine

Prayed tae God in kirk on Sunday  
Prayed that he micht keep a place  
In his mansion up in Heiven  
Fin at last, she'd see his face

At the Hinnereyn, turned scunnered  
Bairns grew unbelieving, up



Aa her tellins gaen fur naethin  
Tears in her communion cup

An English Yowe  
An English yowe is a genteel yowe  
It disnae baa it beys  
It weirs a coat like a judge's wig  
As it minces doon the braes

Like a curly poodle escaped frae Crufts  
It looks doon its neb gin ye meet it  
The thing tae dae wis an English yowe  
Is tae cut its thrapple an eat it

The Yett  
I'm a yett.  
Langsyne I micht hae bin a tree

Throw the aix-man, I tint ma reets  
An the jyner jurmummed me  
Wi his plane, his saw, his nails  
Till I wis aa o a mixer-maxter

Noo I'm a yett  
The Sizzens dinna bother me

Gin I'm feelin contermaschous  
I skreich, fur I'm stiff in the jynts

I'm a kirk yett  
Sae nooadays I'm anely in eese on the antrin Sabbath  
A waddin, a kistin, a chirstenin  
Or a programme on Sangs o Praise  
Ne'er dae weels peint me whyles  
Fur community service...nae pride in thon darg

In Spring fin I see the trees in the kirkyaird  
Fu o leaves, an din-raisin egg-hatchin birds  
I'm gled I'm a yett

Noo, ma congregation's cheenged  
'Happy-clappies' the grave-digger caas them.  
Nae mair lang langamachies o sermons  
The meenister's Nigerian.  
I hear I'm tae be peintit baby pink

#### The Saltire Rap

John Knox, Darnley, Annie Lennox  
Burns, Ma Broon, Macbeth, the Krankies  
Bishop Elphinstone, Doon, kilt socks  
Calvin, Wallace, Bruce, the Kelpies

Nichola Sturgeon, Jackie Kay  
The Big Yin,007, a rowie  
Tam o Shanter, Troon, the Tay  
Nessie, Silkies, Greyfriar's Bobby

Irn Bru, Glen Fiddich fusky  
Byron, Scott, Mars bars in batter  
Gorbals, hame o mony a plisky  
Embroidure, Glesga patter  
Up yer kilt an doon the watter  
Vikings, Romans, Picts, the lave  
Scots wirts bubble up an hotter  
Tattieboggles...Sawney's cave

#### Easter Sabbath

Daffs dwine, a deein, dowie yalla show  
Wee lammies hunker bi their mithers' wymes  
Gean blossoms faa as fite as Winter snaa  
The breem's in bloom, the birks are elfin green  
Douce bluebells nod their bonnie fairy snoods  
A bigsie cockerel waukkens aa frae sleep  
A cloud rowes like a steen frae Heiven's moo  
The pea-the-beds are thrang in ilkie sheugh

#### Fur a deid Son

At the risin o the sun an its gaun doon  
I mynd on ye

At the blawin o the win an the cauld o Winter  
I mynd on ye  
At the brierin o buds in Spring's rebirth  
I mynd on ye  
At the blueness o the lift an Simmer's warmth  
I mynd on ye  
At the reeshlin o the leaves an the brawnness o Autumn  
I mynd on ye  
At the stertin o the year an in its eyndin  
I mynd on ye  
As lang as I live, ye'll live  
For noo ye are a pairt o me  
Fin I'm trauchelt an short o smeddum  
I mynd on ye  
Fin I'm sick an sair-hairtit  
I mynd on ye  
Fin I've teuch decisions tae makk  
I mynd on ye  
Fin I hae blitheness I'd yearn tae share  
I mynd on ye  
Fur as lang as I live, ye'll live  
Fur noo ye are a pairt o me  
Foriver an ay, my son

Owersett intae Scots o The Jackfruit by Ho Xuan Huong  
I'm like a jackfruit on the tree.  
Tae taste, ye maun plug me quick, while fresh:  
the skin roch, the pulp thick, aye,  
bit oh, I warn ye agin touchin -  
the rich juice will poor oot stainin yer hauns

Owersett intae Scots o 'Spring Watching Pavilion; by Ho Xuan Huong  
Doucely Spring gloamin cams tae the pavilion,  
Unclouded in the least bi warldly sins.  
Three times the temple's bell rowes like a wave  
Unsettlin the puil far lift an watter mell.  
I' faith, the sea o Luve canna be teemed  
An the burnie o Grace flows easy aawy.  
Noo, far, far is Nirvana?  
Nirvana's here, nine pairts in ten.

Scots Owersett o Weaving At Night - by Ho Xuan Huong

Licht's wick turned up, the chaumer glows fite.

The loom meeves easy aa nicht lang

As feet wirk an push aneth.

Glegly the shuttle flees in an oot,

Braid or nerra, muckle or wee, skytin in snug.

Lang or short, it glides oot smeethly.

Quines fa dae it richt, let it steep.

The claith colour winna dwine afore three hale years.

Scots Owersett o On Sharing A Husband - by Ho Xuan Huong

Be damned the weird that gars ye share a man.

Ane kinoodles aneth cotton blankets; t'ither's cauld.

Iklie noo an then, weel, mebbe or mebbe nae,

Aince or twice a month, och, it's like naethin.

Ye tyyaave tae stick tae it like a flee on rice

Bit the rice is blichtit. Ye slave like the skiffy,

Bit wioot pye. If I'd kent foo things wid be

I think I'd hae bidden alane.

Scots Owersett o Autumn Landscape by Ho Xuan Huong

Drap bi drap rain skelps the banana leaves.

Praise faiver sketched this dowie scene:

The lush, derk canopies o the wizzent trees,

The lang, lang river, slidderin smeeth an fite.

I heist ma wine glaiss, drunk wi rivers an Bens.

Ma pyoke, breathin meenlicht, stappit wi poems.

Luik, an lue aabody.

Faiver sees this landscape is bumbazed.

Scots Owersett of If You Forget Me - by Pablo Neruda

I wint ye tae ken ae thing.

Ye ken foo this is:

Gin I keek at the crystal meen, at the reid branch

O the slaw autumn at ma windae,

Gin I touch near the lowe the shadda-like aisse

Or the wrunkled corp o the log,

Aathin cairries me tae ye,

As if aathin that lives,

Guffs, licht, metals,

Wir wee boaties

That sail

Tae thon isles o yours that wyte for me.

Weel, noo, if bittie bi bittie ye stop lovin me

I'll stop lovin you bittie by bittie.

Gin o a suddenty ye forget me

Dinna luik for me,

Fur I'll already hae forgotten ye.

Gin ye think it lang an wud,

The win o banners that blaws ben ma life,

An ye decide tae leave me at the shore

O the hairt far I hae reets,

Takk tent

That on thon day, at thon oor,

I shall heist ma airms

An ma reets will set aff

Tae seek anither lan.

Bit gin ilkie day, ilkie oor,

Ye feel that yer weird lies wi me

Wi unyieldin douceness,

Gin ilkie day a flooer

Clims up tae yer lips tae seek me,

Ah ma luve, ah ma ain,

In me aa that lowe is rekinnlit,

In me naethin is stamped oot or forgotten,

Ma luve feeds on yer love, ma dearie,

And as lang as ye live it'll be in yer airms

Withoot leavin mine.



# Scots Poems From Thursdays

Februar, The Garioch  
The lift is blae, the trees staun bare  
Their nails o buds are pyntit sherp  
The sheuchs are stappt wi weety leaves  
Yowes chaw the girse in gaitherin derk

The mist lies wechty on the howes  
Grey hooses hunker cauldly doon  
There's dubs an glaur in kirned parks  
Far tractors flatten corn rigs' croon

Deep in the win a chitterin bawd  
Lays back its lugs fin storms lower  
It's gloamin time, the deein sun  
Sees car lights leam wi yalla glower

The lift is teem. The birds are tint  
Frae eildritch rowans in the lan  
Nae cheerie cheep tae sweet the wids  
Aa's dour an dreich. Like ghaists trees staun

Sydney Goodsir Smith (26 October 1915 - 15 January 1975)

Whit o the Warks o Sydney Goodsir Smith  
A Lallans, poet, artist, dramatist?  
A mighty screiver o the Scots Renaissance  
A pouerfu playwricht an a novelist

Born in New Zealand, as a halfin lad  
Moved ower tae Embro wi his faimily  
At Oxford, studied History...wine, in France  
An practised Art in blithesome Italy

His wirds ye'll find in mony skeely buiks  
Skail Wind, The Wallace, Under the Eildon Tree  
Carotid Cornucopius, Lines Review  
Kynd Kittock's land aired on the BBC

The Grace of God and the Meth-Drinker's much lued

The Wanderer, The Deevil's Waltz read weel  
So Late into the Night and Figs and Thistles  
An wirds on Robert Ferguson, puir cheil

His drawins edited bi Chapman Press  
Orpheus an Eurydice, his poems, colleckit  
An mony screivins upon Scottish lear  
An ither buiks, wi doucest wirks, selecktit

Ye'll fin his wirds set doon in Makar's Coort  
His banes lie quaet in cauldribe Dean kirkyaird  
Kent as 'the kilted kiwi' or 'The Auk'  
Kenspeckle body an a mighty bard

Scots Owersett o Twa Poems bi James Wright (1927-1980)

1) This bonnie wee life faas taes  
Touched the fite san frae san tae side  
Foo doucely naebody kens  
Creepit frae his alaneness, an dees

Frae deep watters lang miles awa  
He wannert, luikin fur his name  
An aa he fand wis ye an me  
A faist life an a caunle lowe

The day, ye arenae here  
I'm dowpit here in the ragin bell  
The toun o the deid, alane  
Haudin a wee teem shell

I raxx oot an flick oot the licht  
Derkly, I touch his dweeble scars  
Sae hyne awa, sae perjink  
Starnies in a muckle heeze o starnies

2) Haein Tint Ma Sons, I face The Wrack O The Meen: Yule, 1960  
Efter derk  
Nearhaun the Sooth Dakota border,  
The meen is oot huntin, aawywe  
Deliverin fire,



An waukin doon haufweys  
O a diamond.

Ahin a tree,  
It lichts on the wrack  
O a fite toon  
Cranreuch, cranreuch.

Far are they gaen  
Fa bedd there?

Happit awa aneth wings  
An derk faces.

I am sick  
O it, an I gae on  
Bidin, alane, alane,  
By the brunt silos, by the hidden graves  
O Chippewas an Norwegians.

This cauld winter  
Meen cowps the inhuman fire  
O jewels  
Intae ma haums.

Deid riches, deid hauns, the meen  
Derkens,  
An I am tint in the bonnie fite wrack  
O America.

Naethin Bit Daith frae a poem bi Pablo Neruda  
There are kirkyairds that are lanely,  
mools fu o banes that dinna makk a soun,  
the hairt meevin throw a tunnel,  
in it derkness, derkness, derkness,  
like a shipwrack we dee gaun intae oorsels,  
as though we wir droonin inbye oor hairts,  
as though we lived faain oot o the skin inno the sowel.

An there are corpses,  
feet vrocht o cauld an clorty clay,

daith is inbye the banes,  
like a barkin far there are nae tykes,  
comin oot frae bells somewye, frae graves somewye,  
growin in the weet air like greetin rain.

Whyles I see alane  
kists unner sail,  
embarkin with the pale deid, wi weemen that hae deid hair,  
wi bakers fa are as fite as angels,  
an thochtfu young quines merried tae notary publics,  
kists sailin up the vertical river o the deid,  
the river o derk purple,  
meevin upstream wi sails fullid oot bi the soun o daith,  
fullid bi the soun o daith which is seelence.

Daith arrives amang aa thon soun  
like a shee wi nae fit in it, like a jaiket wi nae cheil in it,  
cams an chaps, usin a ring wi no stane in it, wi nae  
finger in it,  
cams an skreichs wi nae mou, wi nae tongue, wi nae  
thrapple.  
Hoosaeiver its steps can be heard  
an its claes makk a hushed soun, like a tree.

I'm nae sure, I unnerstaun anely a bittie, I can hardly see,  
bit it seems tae me that its singin has the colour o weet violets,  
o violets that are at hame in the yird,  
because the physog o daith is green,  
an the luik daith gies is green,  
wi the penetratin weetness o a violet leaf  
an the dowie colour o wersh winter.

Bit daith likewise gaes throw the warld rigged oot as a breem,  
lickin the fleer, luikin fur deid bodies,  
daith is inbye the breem,  
the breem is the tongue o daith luikin fur corpses,  
it is the needle o daith luikin fur threid.

Daith is inbye the fauldin cradles:  
it spens its life sleepin on the slaw mattresses,  
in the blaik blankets, an whyles breathes oot:  
it blows oot a mournful soun that swalls the sheets,

an the beds gae sailin towards a port  
far daith is wytin, rigged oot like an admiral.

#### Idioticals

Wioot wids, watter, flooers, natural ferlies  
Touns an aa inbye them  
Are idioticals...hotterels o soun an stramash

The Japanee caa it Wid-dookin, Shinrin-Yoku  
Wauken ben wids, yer sheen  
Kickin the tatterwallops o leaves  
Bricht harrigals o Autumn  
Lippenin tae the leerickie-laricrichie  
Sweeshle o larick, rowan, birk  
The skreich o a collieshangie o craws  
Or keekin up at the shelts'-tails in the lift  
O a saumon gloamin  
The branches hung wi the perlin o dyewy moosewabs

Evenin in Yule, in the queeriousome colours o cauld  
It's gledsome tae watch the burns  
Breenge heigh-ma-nannie doon the bens  
Scoorin panjotterls o leaves frae the puils sides  
Feelin the shmoodrichs o sna  
Faa saft on yer jeeled chikks

#### Beowulf's Kistin: Owersett in Scots

Syne the fowk o Geats vrocht fur him  
Stinch on the yird a kistin-bier,  
an hung it wi helmets an harness o war  
an breistplates bricht, as the boon he socht;  
an they laid amids it the mighty chieftain,  
heroes murnin their weel-lued maister.  
Syne on the knowe thon muckle lowe  
waukened the warriors. Wid-rikk raise  
blaik ower bleeze, an blent wis the roar  
o flame wi greetin (the win wis still) ,  
till the lowe had brukken the frame o banes,  
hett at the hairt. In dowie mood  
they maened their wae ower their maister's daith.

Keenin her sorra, the auld widda  
her hair bun up for Beowulf's daith  
sang in her dule, an said fu aft  
she dreided the dowie days tae cam,  
daiths eenow, an the weird o battle,  
an shame. - The rikk wis swallaed by the lift  
The fowk o the Weders vrocht there  
on the heidlan a barra braid an heich,  
by sea-farers far descried:  
in ten days' time their darg had raised it,  
the battle-brave's lowe. Roun brands o the pyre  
they biggit a waa, the worthiest iver  
that wit could tryst frae their wycest chiels.  
They pit in the barra thon precious body,  
the rouns an the rings they had reft erewhile,  
hardy heroes, frae hoard in cave, -  
trustin the grun wi treisur o thanes,  
gowd in the yird, far iver it lies  
eeseless tae men as it wis afore.  
Syne about thon barra the battle-keen rade,  
athelin-born, a ban o twal,  
lament tae makk, tae murn their king,  
chant their dirge, an gie their chieftain honour.  
They reesed oot his earlship, his acts o pouer  
wirthily witnessed: an weel it is  
that chiels micht praise their maister-frien  
wi hairy love, fin syne he gaes  
frae life in the corp, forlorn awa.

Aiberdeen's Braa!    Tune: Bonnie Dundee  
Gweed fowk o the city the council agree  
Ye should redd up yer paths tae the umpteenth degree  
On a Setterday night fin yer oot on the spree  
Dinna fecht dinna cowk on the street dinna pee

Chorus:

For Aiberdeen's bonnie an Aiberdeen's braa  
Its fine granite hooses its seagulls anna  
Wi oor Tolbooth oor Toon Hoose oor gran Music Haa  
We're the Cock o the North sae let's up an let's craa!

We're bilingual, Doric an English we spikk  
An we're cleanin oor toun, noo the lums dinna rikk  
If ye wint tae see history ye'd better come quick  
We're aa for the Future, malls rise brick bi brick

Chorus

Wi hae parks an museums an theatres as weel  
We win prizes for flooers in basket & creel  
The Dee & the Don ye can fish line an reel  
Wi hae twa universities, fegs, we're nae feel

Chorus

If it's dark up abeen luik for the Northern Lichts  
Or watch dolphins in herbour, a richt bonnie sicht  
Or tae Filthy McNasty's eat weel on cauld nichts  
At the Castlegate, rest, set the warld tae richts

Chorus

Oor kintra aroon is beloved o the Queen  
There's castles an mountains an golf courses green  
If yer swytin in Palma ye'll wish ye hae gaen  
Tae the fine bracin breezes o great Aiberdeen

The Haar o the Sea

The haar o the sea is the braith o the sea  
An the braith o the sea is cauld  
The haar o the sea, an the wersh sea bree  
Grey, grey, aa the sans enfauld

January 2017

A cauld month, eftir a coorse year  
And thocht's a flee rubbin its hauns  
At the verra mou o Hades  
The meen floats in forgotten fitprents  
Mist creeps frae the deid ee socket o a craa  
Yird guffs o foosht, o damp, o dowieness  
O wirmy maggots, fite as leprosy

Echt months tae the day I phoned ma son  
Far he lay in his chaumer three days deid  
The wikks are cauld rife noo  
I gyang throw ma wee daunce o leevin  
Like a stane, skimmed on a loch  
An yearn fur the hinmaist splash,  
Bringin reunion wi't, or annihilation

Lament for a First-Born, Tint.  
Fin he wis young I tuik his haun  
An led him far the dog-rose grew  
He wis ma warld, an I wis his  
And whaup abune the heather flew

I sat wi him, my kistit son  
Seelent, rowed in his windin sheet  
Grief roared inbye, a drumly linn  
Far sorra, guilt, an langin meet

Craa will forsakk the bosky win  
The sea, shrug aff the leaden tide  
The bonnie Dee will turn tae bluid  
Afore ma son wauks by ma side

#### Twa Brithers

Ae brither bedd bi the Great lakes aneth rich maple trees  
Couthie, an leal an lovin, in the lan o the wolf an Crees  
Tither bedd in Sao Paulo, he claiked in Portugues  
His life wis hard an hurtit, ticht's the anaconda's squeeze

An anew is blythe an couthie, born wrang side o the bed  
Tither wis born in wadlock, baith bi ae faither bred  
Music it wis their heirskip, twa sides o the same sword  
For ane lued kintra guitar, tither, the clavichord

Nane iver met the tither, twa brithers neth the mools  
Seeds blawn across the oceans. Twa brithers, different rules

Dahlia Ravikovitch (1936 - 2005) Mechanical Dallie

An thon nicht I wis a mechanical dallie  
an I turned richt an left, tae aa the airts  
an I drapt on ma physog an brakk tae smush,  
an they vrocht tae pit me thegither wi skeely hauns  
An syne I gaed back tae bein a proper dallie  
an aa ma mainners wis cannie an compleeant.  
Bit by thon time I wis anither kind o dallie  
like a hurtit twig hingin bi a threid.  
An syne I gaed tae daunce at a ball,  
bit they left me wi a boorach o kittlins an tykes  
even tho aa ma steps wis meisured an patternt.  
An I hid gowd hair an I hid blue een  
an I hid a frock the colour o the flooers in the gairden  
an I hid a strae hat tappit wi a gear.

The Windae Dahlia Ravikovitch

Sae fit did I manage tae dae?  
Me—fur years I did naethin.  
Jist lookit oot the windae.  
Raindraps sypit inno the lawn,  
year in, year oot...  
Yule an simmer cercled amang blades o girse.  
I sleepit as muckle as possible.  
Thon windae wis as big as it nott tae be.  
Fitiver wis nott  
I saw in thon windae.

Testimony by: Dan Pagis (1930-1986)

Na na: they definitely wis  
human beins: uniforms, buits.  
Foo tae explain? They wis vrocht  
in the image.  
I wis a shadda.  
A different Makker vrocht me.  
An he in his mercy left naethin o me that wid dee.  
An I flew tae him, raise wechtless, blue,  
forgiein - I wid even say: apologizin -

rikk tae aa pouerfu rikk  
wioot makk or likeness.

Instructions fur Crossin the Border: by Dan Pagis  
Makkie-on cheil, gyang. Here's yer passport.  
Ye arenae allooed tae myne.  
Ye hae tae match the pictur:  
yer een are already blue.  
Dinna escape wi the spirks  
inbye the lum:  
yer a cheil, yer dowpit doon in the train.  
Sit comfie.  
Yev got a braa jaiket noo,  
a sained corp, a new name  
ready in yer thrapple.  
Gyang. Ye mauna forget.

Ma Faither: Dan Pagis  
The myndin o ma faither is rowed up in  
fite paper, like sannies taen fur a day at wirk.

Jist as a magician takks touers an mappies  
oot o his hat, he drew luv frae his wee corp,

an the burns o his hauns  
reamed ower wi gweed wirks.

God takks peety on littlins: Yehuda Amichai  
God takks peety on littlins  
He peeties schule bairns - less.  
Bit adults he disna peety ava

He affcasts them,  
An whyles they hae tae creep on aa fowers  
In the birsslin san  
Tae reach the dressin station,  
Rinnin wi bluid.  
Bit mebbe  
He'll hae peety on they fa lue truly



An takk tent o them  
An gie them a bield  
Like a tree ower the dosser on the public bench.

Mebbe we'll even spen on them  
Oor hinmaist coins o kindness  
Inherited frae mither,

Sae that their ain blytheness will proteck us  
Noo an on ither days.

Blue Bird: by Agi Mishol. (Romania,1946)

On the kitchie  
coonter  
the goat-eed  
powser  
cairries a blue-feathered  
birdie  
already deid  
the beak still  
in a partan grip  
on a pomegranate twig  
ilkie ain o us hauds  
somethin  
in oor moos.

Ma Dug Libby: by Agi Mishol.

The auld dug his already forgotten fa she is.  
Canna hear, canna see, anely her snoot  
chitters at the dowp o a guff.  
She stauns in the mids o naewye  
like a stane, a tree  
a palin - canna hear, canna see  
her shanks already booin bit  
forgettin tae hunker doon.  
&quot;Cercling, &quot; quo the vet -  
Cerclin aimless,  
gypit, like humans  
he explains.  
The switch o her life is aneth ma finger

bit I canna be sure whether it's she fa suffers  
or masel.  
Sae I jist straik her heid  
an gyang tae veesit  
the wumman fas life switch is aneth the finger  
o some ither body.

Three Scots Owersets o poems bi Osip Mandelstam

Dinna Tell onybody  
Dinna tell onybody-  
Forget aa ye saw  
The birdie, the auld wife, the jyle,  
An ony ither ferlie

Or as the day draws nearhaun  
An ye pairt yer lips  
The laigh chitter o pine preens  
Will owercam ye

An ye will myne the wasp at the simmer-hoose  
A bairn's ink-clartit pencil-kist  
Or the blueberries in the wids  
That ye niver pued.

Alexander Herzowitz  
Aince langsyne there wis  
A Jewish musician caad Alexander Herzowitz.  
He dichtit his Schubert  
As gin it war a skinklin jewel

Frae morn till nicht  
He played withoot devaul  
Ae aybydan sonata  
That he'd larned bi hairt

Isn't it derk ootby,  
Alexander Herzowitz?  
Gie it up[, Aleksander Scherzowitz

Fit's the eese?

Let the Italian quine  
Flee eftir Schubert  
On the nerra sled  
Ben the crunchin sna

We're nae feart tae dee  
Wi the doo music  
An syne tae hing like a blaik  
Jaiket on the hyeuk

Alexander Herzowitz,  
It's aa bin played afore.  
Gie it up, Alexander Scherzowitz  
Fit's the eese?

Wee Starnie  
Ochone, foo I wish  
I cud flee alang a starnie's licht  
Unkent tae onybody  
Far I widnae be leevin at aa  
An ye, ye maun shine in a cercle  
There is nae ither blytheness  
An larn frae a star  
The meanin o licht

It is anely a beam  
It is anely licht  
Because it has the pouer o a fuser  
An the warmth o mummlit wirts

An I wint tae say tae ye  
That I am fuserin  
That I owergie ye, ma bairn  
Tae the starnie-licht wi this fuser

Inglenooks, thin forest of souls in extremis  
Openness is key, unlockin the soaring clouds



# Scots Version Of A Poem By Nguyen Tan Hieu

Poem by Nguyen Tan Hieu

Lên lên rồi rồi xa tay mẹ.  
Mẹ vẫn cười nghiêng theo bóng đời con.  
Khi vấp ngã, gọi "mẹ ơi!" rất khẽ.  
Đời con lên, mẹ hỏi "có đau không";  
Từ ngàn xưa nuớc mắt luôn rơi xuống  
Hết mua sa đâu chớ nước lên nước?  
Trên đường đời mẹ bao lần vấp ngã.  
Có bao giờ con hỏi "mẹ đau không";

English Translation from the Vietnamese by Nga le Blackhall

Growing up, I leave your hand  
You still smile, following in the shadow of my life  
When falling, I call out 'Mum!' It's so very quiet

'Hold me up! '  
Mum asks "Does it hurt? "  
From time immemorial, tears always drop.

A raindrop ever flows backward to the riverhead  
In your life, so many times you stumble  
Haven't I ever asked, "Does it hurt you mum? '

Scots Owersett: Sheena Blackhall

Growin up, I drap yer haun  
Yer aye smilin, follaein the shadda o ma life  
Fin faain, I cry oot 'Mam!' It's sae unca quaet

'Haud me up! '  
Mam speirs, 'Is it sair? '  
Frae langsyne, tears aywis doonfaa

A raindrop iver rins backwyes tae the burn heid  
In yer life, aft times ye hyter  
Hae I niver speired, 'Are ye hurtit mam? '



# Scottish Country Walk

Midgies bite a family of hirsute Celts  
Pa's a bald Professor of ethnology  
With hair combed over his pate  
Like seaweed on a boulder  
His sprogs play in the heather like rooting pigs  
Grunting in brutish glee  
Somewhere, there's a tin of irn bru  
A packet of shortbread purchased in Dunoon  
A book about the Druid lesser deities

Sheena Blackhall

# Scraps From A Wedding Album

Blue square from a bridesmaid's underskirt;  
Two bricks from the left wall of a granite church,  
Predominantly grey, shot through with silver;  
A third of a cloud with one bird stalled in it;  
One guest's hat of multi-coloured feathers;  
Half a bride's bouquet in quick-film petals;  
The tip of a minister's scrubbed pink earlobe.  
A cousin's sliced off laughter;  
Two nostrils white as icing on the cake;  
The half moon of a torn sun;  
Two sunbeams knitting ladders by a font;  
Aunt Janet's suede gloves drumming on a pew,  
Costing more than an arm and a leg.

Sheena Blackhall



# Sea Dog

Judy throws a mean Punch  
Sand in sandals. Ice cream dripping  
Noses plugged with phlegm,  
A lemonade audience drinks in family fun  
Whack! Punch! Wallop! Matinee S & M.

Sheena Blackhall

# Seamus Heaney's Pen

Tho I've never met it, I know that Heaney's pen  
Is whimsical. It's got a mind of its own,  
One of those lyrical trap door minds  
You walk across, and Poof you're in the basement.  
All you hear is Seamus Heaney's pen,  
Irishly laughing.

Sheena Blackhall

# Seaside Hotel, Off Season

The street is a throwback to a less critical age  
Poor man's playground in the between wars thirties

It is like setting foot on the set of a cowboy movie,  
Hotel billboards peel and sag in rows

The hotel is wind and watertight, but ageing  
Rips in the paper run along the skirting

The keys are dispensed by a clutch of gnarled fingers  
Like barnacles on a crab, her flashy jewels

The jaded carpets, pressed into service by decades of trippers  
The treads ingrained with stains

Lampshades, circa 1960, hold a suspicion of spiders  
The off white screens hang creased, in rucked suspension

Stairs are steep and narrow, claustrophobic  
A single slice of turkey shivers on a plate  
Beside three ghostly potatoes

Seaside hotels, off season  
Go off quicker than a three week old banana

Sheena Blackhall

# Sea-Washed

If oceans of shark and fin,  
Torn rigging and splintered prow,  
Should suddenly widen, sea pour everywhere -

If the hairbreadth crack in the side of all that's real  
Should swamp the cosy world of the here and now,  
Watcher, high and dry on the gallery floor,  
Would you simply stare?

What if the canvas tears?  
The breakneck tide  
Come tumbling out from the frame,  
And fathoms of gales,  
Would you hear the screech of whales  
As your eyes roll back and your dry mouth fills with brine?

Sheena Blackhall

# Self-Portrait As A Landscape

Often I let the world slip off my edges  
Like an old mountain. Heave life from my ledges  
Into the Past's morass of bogs and sedges

But I am drawn to thresh-holds under bridges  
Where waves flash fins, those star-struck tinny ridges  
Where river doors swing wide, on giving hinges

No mountain peak for me. Horizons shrink  
To what is do-able. An old cat's wink  
At speeding mice. The moon has turned its face  
Sphinx-like, to marble, beyond Time and Place

Sheena Blackhall

# Senescence

My children float away in the flood of youth  
My life is winding down.  
The house of life slowly subsides  
Amidst cracks and weeds

The rain beats wearily drearily  
Over the fog-backed river.  
The maggot knocks in the night

Dog eared moments  
Always come back to Highland burns  
Hosannahing down the Bens of distant childhood  
Lately the badger woods shrivel away like leaves

Late in the ghost season,  
Those who were flesh come oftener in my dreams

Wedded I was a poor crop  
A meagre harvest under sodden skies  
Talking to stones and moonshine

I am the parent of my discontent  
The sermons of infancy roar in my ears

But I can say, and this most truthfully  
I have loved the fox and the shy quick darting bird  
And wish them many blessings  
In the name of the wren,  
the sun,  
and the salmon under the rock

Sheena Blackhall

# Serendipity (18 Scots Poems, Ceylon Et Al)

## 1.A Song of Two Islands

Neep an tattie, ingin, leek  
Frost pits roses in yer cheek  
Geans an aipples on the bough  
Heilan kye an wolly yowe

Ginger, nutmeg, cardamom  
Pepper mace an cinnamon  
Tea an rubber, fenugreek  
Rice an rubies, saffron teak

Piz meal brose an Cullen skink  
Chips wi Irn Bru tae drink  
Boozer, bingo haa, computer  
Larry, TV, wirk-commuter

Passion fruit an papaya  
Melon, limes, malaria  
Elephants an wud monsoons  
Coconuts an big baboons

Seagull, spurgie, blackie, doo  
Microwave an pouered ploo  
Bairns that's niver kent a da  
Diets, stress, bulimia

Tuk-tuks fire waukers an snakes  
Lagoons, leeches, lotus, lakes  
Buddhist, scorpions, buffalo  
Rabies, demons, sweet mango

Misty bens an cweelin breeze  
Wauchtin softsome ben the trees  
Watterfaas that's like wir ain  
Mak Sri Lanka hame fae hame.

Tea Estates (On the Colombo-Nuwara-Eliya road)

As I cam doon bi Ythanside I saw a fruit bat hingin  
Twis barbequed bi pouer lines far bamboo trees war swingin

As I cam ower bi Logie's braes the tea pickers war thrang  
Roon Hatton toon they aa boosed doon the Earl Grey amang

They pued the leaves at Kennilworth an roon bi Abbotsford  
Claikin in tamil dialect sae I kent feint a wurd

While in the car the driver-chiel newsed constantly o cricket  
A watter buffalo in dubs wis battin flees mid-wicket.

We skirted Deeside's misty braes nae far fae Lonach lan  
Till hashin on bi braid Strathdon tae Edinburgh cam

A cobra hunkered up its heid far Aiberdeen cowps doon  
An roon bi Faithlie, pelicans flew ben the gaitherin gloom

The rich reid stoor o Serendip is mony the Scotsman's shroud  
At rainbow's eyn they rest at last, fae chasin furreign gowd.

### 3. Nuwara Eliya (City of Light)

Fit's it like in the lan o tea an roses?  
Mochy corridors, bat keech glaurs the waas.  
At ilkie neuk, ye think tae catch a glisk  
O some lang-deid colonial planter's wife  
Ficherin wi pearls, poorin oot the gin.  
Hard on the ootskirts, shacks o wid an tin  
Sell fruit an ingins, tatties, neep an leeks  
A butcher wi twa teeth, stauns, knife in haun.  
Ahin him, flees hug meat hung fae a hook  
Tattiebogles guaird, nae parks, bit fowk  
Tae fleg coorse jungle demons fae the toun.  
Termite mounds, whaur ooto sicht an soun  
Mongoose an cobra fecht their deadly war  
Stags heads, deid orchids dwinin in a jar  
Aabody smiles an says the Tamil Tigers  
Are peaceful noo, that strife is aa ahin them  
The quaet termite mound gies nocht awa.



Photies o Brits in full-rigged evenin dress  
Elephant feet umbrella stands, nearhaun  
Rifles an kills recordit, tae impress  
Tennis coort intrigues, gowf, neth misty Bens  
Auld Frozen Mutton's peintins roon the waa  
Deeside's bunnet lairds in palm-tree glens  
Hill station jist like Kent or Banchory  
Windsor, Ascot, braw Victoria Park  
Tudor an Georgian hooses, Earl Gray tea.  
Weel wattered lawns, rose buss an mellow sun  
Mossy gravesteens tell in hidden howes  
Foo mony Scots hae fertilized this grun.

#### 4. Major Rogers

Here lies Major Rogers  
Fa thocht it sport tae sheet  
Hunners o hermless elephants  
He cudnae even eat

His hauns war reid an gory  
Like ithers fa hae sodjered  
The endin o his story?  
Twice bi lichtenin he wis Rogered.

#### 5. The Savage Celt

Nae winner the Auncient Romans nearly fyled thirsels wi fleg!  
Oor savage Celts cud skail mair bluid than a supersonic gleg!  
Wi hair that's spiked like hedgehog's prods, aa pierced, tattooed an peintit  
Ae gweed gaun luik at a wud Celts plook an twinty legions feintit!

On illicit booze they're quick tae roose.  
They skreich, they curse they skirl  
They hunt in packs, they dish oot slaps  
Wad makk even a mammoth dirl

It's a gey brave body that hauds the road  
Fin the clock chimes ten by fower  
Fur thon's the time the Academy throws open wide its door.

## 6. Tinkee the Porcupine

Far ye have a kittlin, a dug or a moose  
Kanthi's got a porcupine pet in her hoose  
It'll pose fur its photo: 'Twa hunner rupees? '  
An without bein telt, at the flash it says 'cheese'

## 7. Tea-Ceremony

Blin-drift furls roon the steadins  
Nowt chaw their new-hashed neeps,  
Their strang braith rikks like twinty bylin kettles.  
Slivvers hing frae the sides o each sappy moo

The collie hoggin the seat ower in the hoose  
Cocks up his lugs at the turn o the ootbye key,  
Lowps onno the fleer wi a cheery wallop in tail  
His maister's buits dunt snaa abeen the rug

The fermer's dowpit doon. The tea's brocht ben,  
Aywis the same fite mug,  
The speen left in, near staunin up itsel  
Wi the wecht o fower sugars, tarry bree.  
He raxxes in his pooch fur the fusky flask  
Cowps ae stiff jeelip in an steers it weel.

Draas Capstan full strength ooto his dungarees  
Taps oot a smoke, kinnles a spunk  
Syne sooks a lang waucht in,  
Hoasts aince an pyocvhers a gob o glut  
Inno the spirkin fire, heists the mug tae his moo  
Wi fingers braid as puddens, brooned wi rikk.

Takks the first sip, sighs, raxxes, eyn o day  
Darg feenished, he enjoys his strang Birse-tay.

## 8. Watterbuffalo

Up tae the oxters in glaury dubs  
The watterbuffalo yarks the ploo  
Yoked tae the will o the fermin chiel  
Fin he cries wheep, its Micht maun boo.

An boo it dis, as it breenges on  
A muckle breet wi its wudness tame  
Like a fire that's kept in a crofter's hairth  
(Foo cauld, thon crafttie without the flame)  
Warsslin on baith breet an man  
Daein the darg tae full their wame

#### 9. Aside the Lagoon

A bonnie wird, thon wird lagoon  
Bit nae tae bide aside at noon  
There's riftin taeds aneth each tree  
An turtles hotchin ben the bree

A preyin mantis cocks its een  
Ae meter fae yer TV screen  
An fin ye takk a shooer ye'll meet  
Ten lizards baskin in the weet

There's hornygollachs on the fleer  
A millipede hauf up the stair  
An hauf a hunner mozzies croon  
Aa nicht aside yer braw lagoon.  
Bit fegs, nae waur nur Heilan loch  
That's naethin bit a midgie troch!

#### 10. At the Hinnereyn

At the hinnereyn  
On the plane gaun hame  
I fell tae winnerin, as ye dae in a sardine tin  
Wi wings an a toytoon shitehoose  
Fit's in a kintra name?

Gin ye trepan a Scot

Like a stick o Embro rock  
Place rins richt throw us  
Harns an hairt an wame

#### 11. The Green an Pleisunt Lan

Tune: can be sung to a variation of 'To be a Farmer's Boy.'

Ten generations o my fowk hae vrocht the North East lan  
They hyewed the neeps they stooked the corn,  
The rigs ran straicht an gran  
The steadins stappt wi kye, were swypit bare o soss  
Until a kurn commuter hames war biggit roon the closs.

The gutsy toun claims aa aroon, the green belt's noo a street  
Far barley wyved abune the brae, suburb an city meet  
An this is progress we are telt... Mair trees are felled fur hames  
As skalin like an ile slick gyangs shops an wynds an lanes.

I sit amang the traffic birr, far thunnerin larries roar  
I lang tae hear the leverick sing, or see the lintie soar  
Bit fin the lans aa smored, we'll hae a film tae haun  
Tae show that this aince eesed tae be a green an pleisunt lan.

#### 12. The Ghaists o the Nor East Neuk

Tune: The Lincolnshire Poacher

In the auction ring at the Thainstone Mart  
The dowps o the tabbies lies  
Wi tooshts o sharn fae glebe an barn  
Fur the sale is ower an by  
Bit gin ye sit in the seelence there  
The bleat o the yows that's gaen  
Wauchts ben the pen far fermin men  
Stepped oot tae the dark an rain

Stepped oot tae the dark an rain ma lad  
Like the stooks in the parks o auld  
Far mighty shelts atween the stilts  
O the ploo wirked ben the cauld  
The fusslin peesie on the brae

Gaed wheeplin ower the mill  
Bit as lang's there's fowk tae sing the sangs  
Thon stooks'll be staunin still

Sae here's tae fowk like the bothy king  
That's keepit the memory bricht  
O cornkist an tattie shaw  
O harness stinch an ticht  
The sizzens cheenge an sae maun we  
Bit fyles wi a backwird luik  
At the lan wir forebears vrocht sae weel  
The ghaists o the Nor East neuk

### 13. Faither an Son:

Tune: Immortal, Invisible, God only wise

My faither wis a fermer an he tcyauved on the lan  
Raised sons an gowd barley far the heich mountains staun  
The Sizzens war his maisters bit the wins they blew free  
It's a gran life bit a hard life said ma faither tae me.

The corn it micht wither an the tatties takk blicht  
We'd bide at a calvin throw the rigs o the nicht  
The frost it wad freeze us an the snaa blaa cruelly  
We're thirled tae these acres, said ma faither tae me.

Fowk said we wir wealthy, bit oor siller wis tied  
Tae the tractor, an the combine an the steadins outside  
It wis brose fur oor brakkfast, it wis breid fur oor tea,  
Son, it's wirth aa the warsslin, said ma faither tae me.

I gaed tae the skweel an fin ctober wun roon  
I bood tae pu tatties like a gweed fermer's loon  
Till ma hauns they war hackit, fur a wee token fee,  
Sune my lan will be your lan, said ma faither tae me.

Oh, the rigs they sook ile up, far the dark oceans sleep  
Far the siller is certain, wirkers' pooches are deep  
It's the hale world I see noo, nae the lan's tyranny  
Buyin pleisurs fur ma family that war ne'er gaen tae me.

I wauk ben the byre noo, far the nowt aff the brae  
Wi subsidies faain, they are skimpit o strae  
Quit this life fur some leisur, is the coonsel I gie  
Easy earned, quicker spent lad, said ma faither tae me

Coonsel tae a Frien...

A Scots Owersettin o a Poems by Catullus

Frien Furius, 'fa ains nae slaves nur gowd'  
Nae sonsie flee in the press.  
Nae wyver. Nae bricht hairth-lowe  
Anely a da an a stepminnie  
Fas strang teeth snap up aathin ye pit afore them,  
Auld buits an nails.

Coont yersel weel-saird  
Yer faither, his shilpit wife, yersel  
In fine trim  
Nar twa faul wi the bellyrive  
Nae vexed about reivers, floodin, or fire  
Thon bogles that fleg the weel-aff  
Fa wad ettle tae pooshun ye?  
Yer three bodies clean as a bane  
Byornar dried bi cauld, heat, hunger  
Fit mair cud ye sikk?  
Swyte, pyochers, slivvers...aa snochers  
Unkent bi yersels  
Fegs, yer as clean as fussles  
Even yer erses are dry  
As weel wirkin satt-poorers  
Wirkin 10 times a year at maist.

Yer keech's like steens or  
Braid beans lang in the sun,  
Easy crummlit tae stoor atween the fingers,  
Leavin ahin nae sossy skitter skyte.  
Thon blissins are nae tae be lichtlified  
Ye should stop deavin fowk  
Bi priggin fur haund oots  
Ye've mair nur eneuch as it is  
Gin ye anely kent it.

## 15.A Warlock Visits the Doctor's.

Hoastin an snocherin! Hap yer moos! Keep yer germs tae yersels!  
I anely cam in cause I lost the pooer o castin magic spells!

Ma kyte's bin sair since Wednesday last- it micht be the puddock stew  
I hinna bin richt since Halloween...I'm needin a cure richt noo!

There's peely wally fowk in here wi dizzens o different bugs-  
Aathin fae wattery een an plooks tae stoonin taes an lugs!

They hirple in an ye dinna ken if they've plague or a fuzzy heid,  
An I see them glowerin at ma veins, cause its green, ye ken ma bluid.

I think I'll leave, I'll gyang tae the vet, that's mair fur the likes o me,  
Fur since ma pooers hae dwinnlit awa I canna whoosh nur flee.

He plaisters the birdies brukken wings, he bandages partans' shells  
Sae surely a vet can gie me back the pooer o makkin spells!

## Bogles' Ceilidh at Blethertoun Kirkyaird

At the ghaists' an bogles' ceilidh, tae win in ye maun be deid  
Clankin chynes, or in a gounie wi a green licht roon yer heid.

Broonies, kelpies, ghaists an bogles, poltergeist fae graveyaird glaur  
Silkies, skeletons an banshees proppin up the potion bar.

Zombie, alien, broomstick rider- fiddles bow an bagpipes skirl  
Up the steeple, roon the yew tree, tak their partners, wheech an birl.

Voodoo, viper, cat an corbie, roon the gravesteens hooch an prance  
See them lowpin, hear them lauchin, lowpin in the ghaisties' daunce.

## Castlegate Unicorn Spikks

A unicorn's hame's in the cauld an weet  
The hurly-burly o spire an street

Wi the skirlin gull an the cooshie doo  
Neigh say I an the doo says croo

Aa the gossip an sklaik wi hear  
Tittle tattle fae far an near  
We ken aa the hullabaloo  
Neigh say I an the doo says croo

Fas bin chorin an fas bin hired  
Fas promoted an fas bin fired  
I ken mair nur the police HQ  
Neigh say I an the doo says croo

### 18. This Braif Toun

Eerily wearily rins the tide, washin the shores o a Norlan toun  
Up in the sky far starnies bide, sits the meen in her siller gown

Doon the derkness the Northern Lichts cast their magic on crest an flag  
Stepping ooto their civic frame, city unicorn, leopard, stag

Sae in a nicht o stars an frost, the market cross like a caunle shines  
The unicorn, stag an leopard lowp, oot ower the city's streets an wynds.

They're the heralds o history, telling the tales o bluid an sword  
Up the Castlegate, doon the Green, the glory symbols o Bon Accord.

Sheena Blackhall



# Serjeant Buchan's Jacket (32 Scots Poems)

## Gweedman's Craft

Shaman, seannachie, deevilock, Deil  
Cloutie, Hornie, shameless cheil  
Gweedman's Craft is an eildritch airt  
A neuk in a path that's set apairt  
For ootlined things frae the fermer's lan  
For aathin lued bi the Great God Pan

## Steadins

Auld steadins hae the cherm o teem cathedrals  
The Breid, the Lamb, the Ram  
A bield ahin the lichtenin an the storm  
Anely the antrin moose or rotten's een  
Teetin ooto the mirk, wee chinks o licht

## ins

A kittlin is a miew that wauks,  
it neither wirks nur wints  
Gin there's nae meat upon its mat,  
it rubs yer leg an hints

Perfidious, pernickety, it's fyky tae a faut  
Bit it's a dowie kinna hoose that disnae ain a cat!

I like daffs, wee nyaffs that growe  
Like dandelions ben the howe  
They're chaip an cheerful. Wordsworth tee  
Admired the daffs tremendously  
An he could makk them seem real posh  
Mair haute cuisine than common nosh  
Stapt in a pot they bring the sun

Inno yer chaumer. Daffs are fun.

Fresco lunch

Dauchlin in the gowans, nebbin up a moch  
Five an twenty corbies at an al fresco troch  
Sun abeen their feathers, a buttery kind o sheen  
Five an twenty corbies on a tablecloth o green.

Wild, Sae Weet

Luely the saftsome win  
Shoogles the booin seggs

On timmer legs  
The pier wauks inno the loch  
A world o green an blue  
Sae weet, sae wild

s

A sunseekin banker caad Stan,  
Bocht the Daily Gazette in Milan  
He read aa the news withoot weirin his trows  
An feenished the page wi a tan

Sisters

Three sisters traivelled tae the toon  
The yalla, green an reid  
The fair-haired quine drank deep o wine  
An slept gin she'd bin deid.

The green ladye she pierced a vein  
Tae draa the dragon's flame  
The roses dwined upon her cheeks  
An wi them, her gweed name.

The third tuik ony man tae bed  
An caught an orra smit  
That's caused sic grief ower Africa  
There's nane can cradle it.

Three sisters traivelled tae the toon  
The yalla, reid an green  
Bit wersh the pleisurs they fand there  
An solace, they got nane.

Dwaumin Street

A kirk spire dwaums o pews  
Full tae the gunnels, aa roads leadin tae God.

Waas guaird their territory, ettle tae be Chinese  
Raxx ben continents

Hooses sikk tae be teem o stoor an stooshie  
Anely the antrin street licht teetin in

Wynd

The wynd curves like a heuk.  
Fit's wytin roon the neuk?  
The haar an the mochie rain,  
rin doon each windae pane

The bluid lowps in the hairt  
as the wheels o a creakin cairt  
Are swallaed up bi the nicht  
in an airt far aa's nae richt

Dinna step oot an luik  
in the wynd wi the nerra neuk  
Mony hae gaen afore  
bide in an snib the door!

and fae a Flee's Richt Ee

Bzzzzzz

I'm fleein hyne ower Hampden's girse  
Thon's nae a meen, a fitbaa hings ower Glesga

Wid traffic leavin Troon takk extra care?  
A zebra's bein air-liftit tae Crieff

At Archeolink a Pict wi bowfin oxters  
Is howkin eels an dolphins on a steen

A corbie's pykin at a nyakkit knight  
Liftin the skin like lid aff pizza boxie

Police are takkin hoofprints frae a kelpie  
Accused o keechin ower George's Square.

The witnesses, a puddock an a Druid  
Swore blin the culprit's really Desperate Dan

Cloutie Tree

Ae tree maun thole a wecht o wae  
fur as the tears that's skailed  
Aroon the warld ilkie day  
tae its roch boughs are nailed.

The win that wheechs along its glen's  
the sab o misery  
An dowie, dowie is the wish  
hings on the Cloutie Tree

The antrin leaves are tipped wi gowd,  
wishes that hae been met  
Fur ane that's gien, there's ten unseen  
at Lamentation's yett.

les in Fife

A shoal o mackerel sweem in the clouds ower Fife

Herrin are on the horizon, skytin doon wattergaws

Waves hae appeared, fell like a seagull armada  
An ilkie secunt rock is growin fuskers.

Wids

Oh Fyvie's wids are sweet an braw  
Bit dinna bide ower lang  
There's twa that dauchle bi the burn  
Far witcherie is thrang

They keep the tryst they pledged in life  
That Fate decreed they manna  
The mools sit licht on restless banes  
That fain wad sleep, bit canna.

Oh Fyvie's wids are sweet an braw  
Bit Sorra's wintry blast  
Like a cauld dyew cams rushin throwe  
The deid haun o the past

wood Inventory

The gurly sea haives sleet an hail  
Far boats are sindered bi the gale  
For writ in watter's ilkie name  
The angeret waves intend tae claim  
The strand is far the tides gie back  
The smaa receipts frae ilkie wrack

a Scottish Beach

The Lido raises Euros,  
The Scots beach raises plooks  
Wi rinny snoots an noses  
An caul in aa yer nyeuks

## Boaties' Lullaby

A bourach o boats are hunkered doon  
Chyned tae the herbour neth the meen  
A hugmahush o a hoor gyangs by  
Miniskirt an stiletto sheen

Fair ferfochan, the tide rowes ower  
The deck is teem an the nets are bare  
Wi raggedy duds the hameless creep  
Aff tae the glaur o a nameless lair

Hushie-ba sings the herbour waa  
Even the scurrie steeks its moo  
The haar that's happin the herbour bar  
Sleeps tae the watter's saft balloo

## hin's Fishy

Somethin fishy's on the stran  
Skeleton o shag an shark  
Fish heid orrals left ahin  
Herrin wymes without the sark

Guddlin like a vicious watch  
Daith's bin paiddlin bi the tide  
Luikin fur a human catch  
Mithers, takk yer bairns an hide

## e Whale, Blue Kirk

Ooto the moo o a whale  
Cam a blue kirk spewin oot a heeze o tracts  
Washed ashore nearhaun tae the Butt o Lewis.

The Leviathan skelped its tail, cried 'Hallelujah'  
Precentors ran tae catch the soun in nets.

## Wolf an the Lamb: Tune, Mill o Tiftv's Annie

Pluscarden Abbey's ringed wi sang  
Frae the green wids blithe an bonnie  
Its howe's a crucible o sang  
Sweet upon the lug as hinney

The faither's gie their life's wark ower  
Tae the god they haud as maister  
For ilkie step on the road they takk  
There's anither fit gyangs faister

Fite roses lowp far the breem flooers cowp  
In the sheuch a blue bell's dwinin  
Its doverin heid is a wizenin weed  
Simmer growth, bit ae flooer's crinin

The gorblie smaa an the craikin craa  
Ay the Wolf an Lamb thegither  
Auld Bane-Shanks wyles them ane an as  
For the black pyoke ower his shooder

The Leevin wauk ben a story road  
Till the day they maun be cairriet  
In this mortal warld tae the licht be thirled  
Wi the mools ye'll lang be merriet

Day I adopted a Balloon

Bill Breenger wis a bosker o a balloon  
He wis a birthday loon if ye iver kent ane

Al Catraz wis a bruiser, a wee Zeppelin  
Sure tae gyang oot wi a bang  
Sophie-Marie wis jist a puffed up midden

Sae I adopted Dod, a green balloon  
On the peely-wally side.  
I kent that I cud twist him roon ma finger

Thamsan's Bairns: A Scottish Cliché

An alien's drappit fae Planet Z  
Wi twa green plooks fur een  
He slivves an snochers- a minky Ted  
An he cams frae ayont the meen

Bit dinna be fleggit bi sic-like things  
He'll nae gie cause fur concerns  
Fur jumbos, Jehosephas, bugs wi lugs  
We're as Jock Thamsan's bairns.

The moocher, the prigger, the druggie, the chore  
The cyard wi the clarty claes  
The malagaroozed an the three quarts boozed  
Wi the gweed maun share their days

We shoogle alang, the hale jing-bang  
On the rickety cairt thegither  
A twa three turns on the craikin wheel  
Aa's stoor, baith sanct an sinner

Tae the Glory-Hole o Eternity, Nirvana an Tir nan Og  
The yalla, the reid, the near-haun deid  
Maun wauk ben the trimmlin bog  
O flegs bumbazement an ootricht joy  
Frae Rome tae the Howe o Mearns  
There's nane can swick Valhalla's rick  
Fur we're as Jock Thamsan's bairns!

Things I Ken Tae be sung in the mainer o a kirk precentor on a weet Sabbath in  
damp breek's yoamin o mochbaas

Herrin are best fried flat bi anxious mothers  
The Dalai Lama weirs ma faither's scarf  
Cras niver haud their parliaments in Embro  
The flees in Washington rin roon yer sark  
Crocodiles niver brakk win efter stovies  
A restin greenhouse is a bonnie sicht

Muckle Bear



This bear's a stoater.  
He's a literary breet.  
He dis his daunce tae oos an ahs o winner

Fowk speir as he shauchles alang  
Humfin his literary eerins,  
His wikk's wecht o wirds:  
'Are ye the anely black bear in yer family?  
Can onybody larn tae be a bear?

Hae ye a favourite bear?  
Jist wave yer paws again...  
Gie us a roar...  
Ae mair time....ye ken, the wye we like

See yon muckle bear? I kent his faither.'

## 25.A Thoosan Steps: Balquidder

There is a swack yett in a seely airt,  
Wi a knot-hole the wud bee fussles throw,  
Far foxglove plays her cairds close tae her chest,  
Her thummles steeked tae keep her hinney-dyew.

Ootbye, the tar-faced lammies peengin bleet  
Mells wi the lintie's upsy-doonsy sang.  
A gash o watter breenges ben twa skelps,  
O girssy bank that merk the burns wae gaun.

The lochan wummles like an efterstang.  
In a tin troch, roost watter fulls wi cloud.  
Treelips o strae waucht in the sonsie breeze.  
Ben the roch air three laricks showdy powd.

Anither hiunner steps. The loch boos roon  
Like some young, glekit, dwaumin luv-seek quine  
Barin her showders tae her lover's haun,  
The stanes, her rig bane raxxin tae her wyme.

Hauf-wye. Twa Druid aiks makk nae repon

As I wauk fusslin tae their timmer lair.  
A ruined steadin's nyakkit tae the win,  
An open door tae aa that waunner there.

Waves wash their bobbin coracles o licht  
Aroon a tree struck doon in a deid dreel,  
Its dry limbs skeletal, its skaith sae deep  
Nae aa the tears o Heiven cud wash it weel.

A burnie treetles in aneth the road,  
A happit drooth its gluggeran is slee,  
Till breengin oot, a drukken ne'er dae weel  
It poors the loch a dram o peaty bree.

A yowe keechs on the brae, aside a sign  
That says ye mauna picnic on the lan...  
Bit keech awa... there's nane tae care or myne,  
Nocht bit the shmoodrie smashrie o the san.

A thoosdan steps. A conservation airt  
Here free-reenge ferns wi pee-the-beds aboon  
A doonpish in the affin. Natur soors  
Sae ae smaa cloud can marr the mapamoun

the Hinmaist Trump

The caterpillar on the leaf  
Repeats to thee thy mother's grief  
Kill not the moth nor butterfly  
For the last Judgement draweth nigh—William Blake

Hell's Bells, it's the hinmaist trump  
Hieronymus Bosch's Haywain's stappt wi sowels  
Graves are teemin frae Leuchars tae Hindustan

Lucifers lichtin their fags  
A hantle o seraphim, cherubim,  
Hudderie hawks, are hitchin a hurl tae Heiven  
Ahin Hell's angels revvin up Jacob's laidder  
Daein a ton.

Me? I'll be pykin moosewabs ooto ma teeth  
I'll be caimbin the yird frae ma hair  
Sae stiff auld beens can turn  
A Millenium or ten in a sax fit kist  
Alang wi ma forebears, efterbears,  
Bugbears et cetera stappt inno the cosie kirn  
O a kirkyaird.

Oh isn't it rare, thon sense o communal rot  
Fin yer richt jowl crummles inno yer grannie's crannie?

We'll cowp the daffs frae their bowls  
Shakk hauns wi Freud an Plato,  
Hae an induction tour o the ooter galaxies  
Oh ma dysfunctional genes, we'll as hae a gran day oot  
Nae doot there'll be punch ups, blaw oots, makk ups, faa oots  
Afore we traivel alaft or doon ablow,

Quasimodo ma lugs are ringin wi thon clattervengeance o soun  
Siccan a steer, the eyn o warld an the eyn o the warld's miner!

I merriet a fermer's loon  
Lan wis sib tae ma clan  
Near far ma race began  
I merriet a fermer's loon

Noo, I bide in a toon  
Steen streets on ilkie haun  
I merriet a fermer's loon  
Lan wis sib tae ma clan

Scots Leid

The Auld Scots Leid's a bonnie sailin ship  
Its cargo's cairriet at its kintra's hairt  
The spikk o Kings an Commons, joy an maen  
The Auld Scots Leid's a bonnie sailin ship

Stinch vrocht tae veesit mony's the unca airt  
Sweire, thrawn an swippert, breistin the snell faem,  
The Auld Scots Leid's a bonnie sailin ship  
Its cargo's cairriet at its kintra's hairt

Makker's Smit

Daybrakk's like a straucht-backed gentle quine  
That rises in a wid o weel-faired suitors

I am the carlin cooriet in the cave  
Steerin the spirkin hotterel o the leid  
It is my curse, my blissin an my weird

An sae, the warld claims me. I claim it  
Frae fremmit fowk, gley-eed, I sidlins shift  
Foraye I wad amang wud craiturs sit  
Like a grey stag descreivit in auld lays  
An there's the verra knob, the peety o't  
He wauks alane fae takks the Makker's smit

er & Dother Veesit the Sale-room

F) Thon's a gran kist. A kistie's aywis eesefu  
D) Is it tae keep things in, or haud things oot?  
F) An oor-gless wi't... An sic a bonnie time-piece!  
D) Ouchone, foo fest the san rins throwe its face...  
F) There's a pine door. It's got a braisse name-plate  
An flesh o mine, luik cannie at the date..  
D) Yer nae tae buy it. Ony kist bit thon.  
An fit'll cam o me gin yer awa?  
F) I'm haein it. I've made the final bid.  
Fegs quine, a da growes weariet at the eyn.  
I lue ye, Bit there's whyles ye've bin a tcyauve.  
I canna staun aa day an chaa the cwid.  
It fits me snug. A bosie lass, ta ta.  
Noo bugger aff an let me steek the lid.

Glisks o a Glen

I saw a heron this foreneen  
Cloud ower the trootie's lair  
He nicht hae bin a Buddha-steen  
He didna meeve a hair.

At noon, day brocht a thing unsocht  
A mavis bi the shingle  
Hairt warmin as the Shiva flame  
That lowps aroon the ingle

Noo gloam gaes rikkin aff the Ben  
June's wa-gaun fae Balquidder  
The ghaistie-claes o Beltane's days  
Rise in a heeze thegither

Aa spirks o rain drapt ower the glen  
Lulled in the lochan's briest  
Ferfochan traivellers frae the lift  
Gaen solace, an a reest.

-Sang

I am the fite steen by the loch  
I am the watter's bride  
He lues me weel my cauldribe lord  
Sae leal tae him I bide

Tho we hae neither lum nor reef  
Nor lintel tae oor hame  
Throw smirr an weet, throw sun an sleet  
I offer him ma wame

Sheena Blackhall

# Serpent

Serpent in its bitter coils, twined around the tree of sin  
Whispered in the woman's ear, 'Pretty lady, let me in  
I shall show you caves of gold...  
Pamphlets with enchantments old

I shall tell you such sweet tales,  
of harbours filled with silken sails  
Rose will spring from dewy grass,  
where your dainty footsteps pass  
From your blind eyes I'll lift the skin.  
Pretty lady, let me in.'

Snake by cunning Satan sent,  
Woman's weaknesses to tempt,  
So that Adam might despise  
Eve, when seen through Bible eyes.

Written in God's master plan,  
Woman caused the Fall of Man

Angel with the sullied wing,  
is it you who pulls the string  
Of the disobedient rib?  
Are Serpent, Eve and Satan sib?

In the story of the Fall,  
many voices rise and call  
Knowledge whether bad or good,  
is not cursed by womanhood  
From your blind eyes I'll lift the skin.  
Pretty Lady, let me in

Sheena Blackhall

# Seven Random Things

A goose performs tai chi above a loch  
A furious beetle's looking for a crack  
Hello John Clare! laughed Merry Mr Fox  
An unexpected encounter with a quince  
The wind inflicts hysteria in wisteria  
A multi-storey fungi climbs a stump  
Barn owl's peripheral vision clocks a mouse

Sheena Blackhall

# Seven Scottish Inventions

John Logie Baird 1888-1946

Checking out the weather, the traffic or the news,  
We switch on the TV for fun and current views  
We can watch a polar bear in our living room  
See an avalanche, a war, a movie, or cartoon

It's just a screen where pictures move, funny sad or grave  
Plato long ago in Greece watched shadows in a cave  
Invented by John Logie Baird a Helensburgh boy  
Along with under socks and jams and soap, another ploy

His first TV was cobbled from a tea chest, a washstand,  
A biscuit tin, string, sealing wax. How carefully he planned!

His TV was too cumbersome in 1935  
The BBC devised a test...the best one would survive  
Marconi's all electric / Baird's mechanical device  
Marconi's won but still today Baird's Thermal Under socks  
Are worn by climbers far and wide who like to climb up rocks

Dolly the sheep

What a scoop! What a leap!  
When Dolly the sheep  
as cloned from a cell, quite undaunted  
A nucleus drawn from another sheep's udder  
(A Finn Dorset Ewe) was implanted

Thirteen surrogate ewes first created the news  
That a team by Professor Keith Campbell  
Had succeeded with one. In the oven a bun  
In one ewe. What a coup! What a gamble!

This black faced Scot Dolly (ne'er chased by a collie)  
In the Roslin Institute stayed  
And the press o the world were all duly enthralled  
What a stooshie the first cloning made!



Robert Brown years before found there lived at the core  
A small body in each tiny cell  
This find brought him fame, with 'the nucleus', its name  
The Latin for nut or for kernel

When Frankenstein's tale was created to thrill  
To terrify, scare and dismay  
Who'd have thought that a sheep from a test tube would creep  
To make fact out of fiction today?

Alexander Graham Bell: 1847- 1922

Young Alexander Graham Bell  
Began by teaching elocution  
His mother and his wife were deaf  
Speech therapy was one solution

He built a head like a machine  
Pumped air into its lips and throat  
Using a bellows. It could voice  
Quite clearly. Yes, the machine spoke

His next experiment..his dog  
Was taught to growl. Oh what a drama!  
Toggling its lips and vocal chords  
He made it say 'How are you mama? '

From Scotland, off to Canada  
His family sailed, where winters glisten  
Here Alec linked a dead man's ear  
To a contraption made to listen  
It wrote what his deaf pupils said  
A pattern all the teachers read

Then sponsors funded his research  
Bell and his helper Watson, found  
By reeds and electricity  
He could transmit an early sound

In June, a reed stuck. It was plucked

He'd made an early telephone  
Now he refined this piece of luck  
Just like a dog that gnaws a bone  
Try try again and even you  
Might one day build a marvel too!

James Young Simpson 1811-1870

Once your local barber  
Was a sawbones to be feared  
He could amputate your limbs  
As well as trim your beard

With no anaesthetic,  
All you could do was pray  
When 5 men held you screaming down  
Your leg was sawn away  
Loss of blood might weaken  
Shock could kill straightway  
Simpson set himself the goal  
Of keeping pain at bay

He had heard that ether  
Used in the USA  
Irritated nose and throat  
He sought a better way

He learned that chloroform it was  
A solvent with a taint  
If factory workers sniffed it  
It would leave them feeling faint

He took it home and tested it  
Eureka! When he sniffed it  
He fell unconscious to the floor  
Soon after he had whiffed it

When Queen Victoria gave birth  
To Leopard the prince  
James Simpson's chloroform ensured  
The monarch didn't wince

So when you go under the knife  
To have your tonsils out  
Cry 'Thank you James Young Simpson'  
When you're well enough to shout!

The Anatomists: Ian Donald, 1910-1987 Ultra Sound, rd, 1927- MRI Scanner

In Egypt, pharaoh's organs, in Coptic jars were kept  
Gods weighed the heart for Honesty, when mummies 'bodies slept

The Greeks were famed physicians but they diagnosed with 'Humours'  
And didn't have the knowledge to locate and cut out tumours

But would be doctors must be trained, so body snatchers stole  
New buried dead to fill the need to map from head to sole

Bats, fish and pregnant mothers all use ultra sound and sonar  
Ian Donald's scanners used the facts he learned in wartime radar

It scanned an unborn foetus and its worth was quickly shared  
And another great invention in the science world appeared

John Mallard's body scanner, first designed in Aberdeen  
This MRI's huge doughnut is a science fiction dream

The patient slides inside it, his internal organs yield  
A sliced picture to the viewer in this huge magnetic field

Here's to Mallard! Here's to Donald! With their windows looking in  
So our doctors do not open us, to look under our skin!

James Clerk Maxwell 1831-1879

The microwave, the cell phone, and colour photography  
We owe to J. C. Maxwell and his new technology  
He found electric gave out waves in different frequency  
His childhoods name was 'Dafty' a misnomer as you'll see

Radio waves are longer, and microwaves are short  
The first gives information off, the second makes meals hot  
By agitating molecules in porridge, chicken cream  
If you rub your hands together you'll discover what we mean

He used a tartan ribbon when he took a colour snap  
Projected through 3 filters this photograph to trap

He studied rings of Saturn, learned that sunlight with its heat  
Can harm if we stay long in it, we'll cook like roasting meat!

John Shepherd-Barron 1925-2010

John Shepherd-Barron, of Scottish descent  
Worked in London, a bank note producer  
To read codes that the customer typed in himself  
He tweaked a new type of dispenser

The pin number is 4, though at first it was 6  
But his wife really couldn't remember  
All 6 numbers so he, lopped off 2 and now we  
Get our cash out from Jan. to December!

Sheena Blackhall

# Shades Of Grief

Shades of Grief

Death comes as a thief or a friend,  
A fiend or an angel

All deaths are unique  
All mourning's unique  
This isn't happening, this can't be happening,  
Ah, but it is, unstoppable as snow

Nothing buffers the shock of death  
Nothing blocks the horrid facts  
No-one's ever ready to bury a loved one  
To sever the ties that bind

Recriminations multiply in the dark  
Fester in raw wounds of desolation

Nobody walks the self-same road of grief  
The bitter cup of sorrow, guilt and loss  
Must be drunk to the lees  
All flesh must fade. A path we all must cross.

Sheena Blackhall

# Shakespeare Revisited

Will Shakespeare was born suckling the English language  
Draining its dugs of phrases, verses, verbs  
Words dripped in his ears the livelong day

He lapped up colonies of creatures, characters, categories  
Odes, lyrics, legends, myths, fattened his flesh

Similes, metaphors dogged his infant steps  
Prospective tragedies, the stuff of Tudor childhood  
Born in a village recently plague depleted

Genius thickened his porridge  
He would sneak off into the forest from the hayfield  
Where blackbirds sang, to woo his wealthy wife

Honeysuckle drowned the meadow hedges  
Hollyhocks head high flourished in this Eden

Here on the threshing floor of youth  
He grew in symbolism, a peacock rising  
From a peck of sparrows.  
Chameleon dramatist, a man of many masks

Sheena Blackhall

# Sharing A Retreat

Alice was once my room mate for a week.  
As silent as a feather, and as light.  
Her hair was clipped and pale as lotus petals,  
Her face was pretty, oval, egg shell white.

Proust, Sartre, Heaney, Gray, her daily bread,  
Poetry was food to feed her sparrow bones  
Alice's voice was snuffled undertones

Cat-like she'd clutch and pick loose jersey thread.  
And round her bed, a litter-line of cups  
Stone cold, half drunk, abandoned herbal tea  
Her wisp of gold hair round the bathroom plug,  
The Anti-christ to tidy folk like me.

She held her breakfast bowl, like a hot coal  
Warming her two cool hands  
Wrapped slimly round the base like pleated bands.  
She was a china doll, pale beauty at the dining room's periphery  
Yet when she rose and walked across the floor  
Men's eyes looked up above the buttered toast  
Followed her flip-flop exit, most attentively.

Someone had walked straight into Alice's soul.  
Maybe they knocked, or not.  
But they'd been in  
Smashed happiness, self worth, self confidence  
Peed on the precious flame of innocence  
Oh they'd enjoyed themselves, a right old wrecking spree  
Trashing a gentle Alice, all too easy,  
Easy as kicking a weakling, cowering, pup.  
I didn't choose to look behind her eyes  
Wasn't my job, my mess, to tidy up.

I'd hear her breathing deepen, rasp, and catch.  
The lock of dream was turning in its latch  
Falling asleep for Alice must have been  
Like walking into a tunnel towards a train  
And being hit...Again. Again. Again

She whimpered such unspoken, private pain  
Like a cold cur, rejected in the rain.

Should I have crossed the floor, to comfort, hold her?  
Shattered the nightmare. Simply touched her shoulder?  
Somebody else's problem-student daughter?  
Contained, restrained, unbending,  
I was relieved the holiday was ending.

Yet, I often remember Alice, as you'd recall  
A scratched plate on a tray, flat note in a song.  
A picture, squint, a wet umbrella dripping in a hall

I did not knock, shake hands and meet her grief  
But in each sob, I knew her heart was rending.  
Where Alice is today, I hope she's mending.

Sheena Blackhall



# Sheep

Sheep know their limitations.  
They do not attempt to fly  
They do not examine the sky.  
They go from munch to munch  
With a sideways crunch  
On permanent lunch.

Sheep are untroubled by  
Existential matters  
As to when they are going to die.

The highlight of their week  
Is having a leak.

And have you noticed  
That sheep have grotty bums,  
Which is why they usually choose  
To face their chums.

Left to grow like hedges,  
Would flocks of sheep balloon,  
Would they float off up to the moon  
With their tight permed hair  
And their black tap-dancing shoes,  
Like little old ladies visiting the angels?  
Grazing the clouds, white cumuli on stalks.

Sheena Blackhall

# Shelf Life

My life is a shelf  
On Monday, Thursday, Friday  
A bus sits at one end, work at the other  
In the middle's a sachet of porridge  
I am a stickler for habit

On Tuesdays and Wednesdays  
The shelf is cleared for appointments  
Teeth hair the usual vanities

On Saturdays and Sundays  
I make a clean sweep. The shelf is bare  
For me to wind down, rest, relax, repair.

It's getting late  
My body now has passed its shelf life date

Sheena Blackhall

# Shoe-Case Auschwitz

Shoe-Case, Auschwitz

Clogs, boots and shoes built to the skies  
They stun the mind and glut the eyes  
All plundered due to human guile  
In every shape and cut and style  
That speak of old atrocities

Where were the good, the kind, the wise  
Who should have counted human sighs?  
The empty clogs on this grim pile  
Those crimes unmask.

Why did their God not heed their cries  
That from such torment did arise?  
Selection. To an ending vile  
Their frightened feet walked the long mile  
Why did no soldier sympathise?  
Just shoes to ask!

Sheena Blackhall

## Shoes(3)

Shoes (3)

Winkle pickers, brothel creepers

Polished fore and aft

Leather, crepe soled, vinyl

Cobblers ply their craft

Buckskin, canvas, trainer

Brogues, and Jesus sandals

Correspondent's soft shoes

For tiptoeing through scandals

Subversive, rebellious,

Fashions of the Teds

Bovver boots for numpties

Hooligans and neds

Stilettos for go-getters

Powering to the bar

Women wobble ouch ouch

Fashion gets them far

Men's feet age quite nicely

Flat and sensible

Women need podiatry

And a clinician's skill

Hammer toes and bunions

Callouses and corns

As you sow so shall ye reap

Beauty brings its thorns

Sheena Blackhall

# Shopping Trolley

I am a shopping trolley.  
I am hooked on pushers  
They strip the shelves like locusts.

Bikers zoom me round with granite fists  
Pensioners slump over me like caterpillars  
Babies are dumped in me like pupae  
I whizz through plastic jungles of bananas  
To the surprisingly friendly cackle of plastic hens

I am a shopping trolley I am heavily into Zen.  
I am a metal meditator  
One day I may levitate  
Over the drinks aisle  
Frightening the alkies.

I am a water carrier,  
This bottle on my spars  
Contains the following:  
(Please read before swallowing)  
Calcium quinine magnesium  
Chloride sodium potassium  
Sulphate nitrate  
If you've a dicky prostate  
Avoid this mineral water at all costs.  
It harbours aluminium and iron  
The ideal drink for  
Thirsty horse shoes  
Parched park railings  
Dehydrated nests of non-stick pans

Sheena Blackhall

# Shot At Dawn: (From Eye Witness Accounts)

He was tied up head to toe like a German sausage  
A thick bandage covered his eyes, and on his chest  
A square of cloth was placed above his heart

The padre mumbled some words and went off for breakfast  
The guns lay on the ground.

The condemned man was tethered to a post  
At a silent gesture, we all picked up our guns,  
Abruptly turned about, aimed, at the order, fired

Then we wheeled round. The sergeant barked 'Quick march! '  
We marched right past the body, not turning our heads.

No parade, no music,  
A hideous death without pipes, or drums or trumpets.

Back at the Battalion Orderly Room  
We all got a tumbler of rum, with the rest of the day off.  
I live with knowing I didn't fire the blank.

Sheena Blackhall

# Show Me Your Shining Teeth

Splatter-red droplets  
Crimson my snow-white thoughts.  
So empty a cold mind, you wouldn't believe.

Wolf, I even wish  
You'd jump between my ears,  
Squat in my inner landscape,  
Show me your shining teeth

Sheena Blackhall

# Silence

Have you ever shared a table  
Dribbling, drooling a succession  
Of platitudes, as monkeys grunt  
Whilst sociably delousing?

Have you ever sat on the bus  
Surrounded by squeaks and squeals  
Leaking from i-pods and i-pads  
As head bangers twitch and squirm  
Like patients being administered ECT?

□

Have you ever cringed at work  
Like a badger, worried by dogs baying full volume?  
The constant assault on your senses  
Shouting perform compete improve

Communal silence lightens the heart  
Till it's just one single beat

Silence is the forgotten gift  
Nobody gives anymore

It charms the ear  
It lets the natural world be heard  
The birdsong, the raindrop

Sheena Blackhall



# Siskins

Siskin

Siskin, little siskin, pleasant is your trill  
Barley bird, dainty one, sweet aberdevine  
Yellow face, yellow breast, neat black cap  
Trusting, sociable, airy columbine

Acrobatic feeder, hanging upside-down  
Rapid, bounding, flight soaring, restless little bird  
Do you guard a magic stone, hidden in your nest  
Making you invisible, unseen but overheard?

Dining upon thistle seeds, dandelions, sorrel  
's wort, meadowsweet, insects, knapweed  
House made of grasses, lichen, down and twigs  
Chirrup chirrup songster, aerobatic breed

Sheena Blackhall

# Six For The Children

of War

Dog, snapping at foam  
Waves chasing its leaping paws  
Sea's wet tug of war

Taste of Summer

Pink globe on a cone  
Ice on a hot tongue tingling  
Summer goes so fast

Cat's Birthday

On our cat's birthday I gave her a hat  
A fish cake, a saucer of milk and a mat

She spat in my eye, she ate the fish  
She jumped in the air and broke the dish

e

Sophie is a little girl with very nasty habits  
She feeds her collie caramels  
And terrifies pet rabbits

She stole her granny dentures  
And gave her grandpa fits  
She put detergent in the soup  
She gave her brother nits

And just this very Monday  
Upon her trampoline  
She bounced the neighbour's baby  
So she could hear it scream

But if you think she's scarey  
She's not as bad as some  
Yes, Sophie is a monster  
But you haven't met her Mum!

I Assembly Guest

We're having a special guest today  
She's large and Scottish made  
She's partial to water and loves to swim  
She works in the tourist trade

She's a TV personality  
Children, you'll never guess  
Put your hands together & give three cheers  
For the Monster of Loch Ness

Where do swallows go in winter?  
Do they visit polar bears?  
Do they hide in granny's cupboard?  
With the books beneath the stairs?

Where do thunder storms come from?  
Are they just a cloud's brass band?  
Cymbals clash and drum rolls patter  
Bringing raindrops to the land

Where does Mr Moon slip off to?  
Is it true he's made of cheese?  
Where have all my daydreams hidden?  
Help me find them, daddy, please!

Sheena Blackhall

# Skin Balaclavas And Bringing Up The Tail (35 Scots Poems)

Skin Balaclavas and Bringing Up the Tail

WYE O THE WIRM

The win is roch, the wauks are weet,  
Still I maun hae ma bite tae eat,  
An humankind's as guid a fare,  
As drappit bird or glaiss-eed hare.

My wummlin wye's far bluid turns cauld,  
I lowse the veins o young an auld.  
Last rites I gie, the grave-stoor priest,  
I strip reid claith frae steen-caal briest.

Atween the lugs o scholar chiel,  
Or glekit tyke, I dine fu weel,  
Takk wings an flee, some like the braith  
That's sookit frae the sowel, bi Daith.

2.A FLATULENCE O PUDDOCKS

Tiddly tiddly tartan,  
Gaun ben the watter farten,  
A plump o puddocks parpin,  
The bubbles brakk in partin.

CASTLEGATE DOO

Cast yer een up eenoo  
Frae the cassies an styew,  
Tae the Tolbooth. The view  
Fairly scunners a doo.

I luik doon on the foo,  
Watch them hyter an spew,

Michty fit a to-do!  
The St Nicholas crew,  
Fecht in ower a pew,  
In the kirkyaird... Croo Croo.

Aa the coortrooms are fu.  
Sic a hullabaloo!  
I'm awa tae the Broo,  
Fur ma brakkfast the noo.  
Will I fin a bit stew,  
Wi a sup Irn Bru?  
Heh...I'm only a doo,  
Min, I hinna a clue!

BAWD

I am the bawd that breenges ben  
The erne's dreams, the erne's dreams,  
I am the bawd as auld's a ring  
O staunin steens, o staunin steens.

I am the bawd, I rise each Spring  
Like brierin corn, like brierin corn.  
I am the bawd, I daunce wi Daith  
Each Simmer morn, each Simmer morn.

I am the bawd, the meen shines in  
My glistenin een, my glistenin een.  
My fit's the hairtbeat o the lea,  
Till warlds be deen, till warlds be deen.

I am the bawd, the fuser in  
The barley's beard, the barley's beard.  
O sud ye drive me frae the lan  
Derk be yer weird, derk be yer weird!

ITOR'S CENTRE UNICORN

I belang tae a pourfu Trade Union,  
The Alliance o Mythical Beasts.

The Executive's run bi a dragon,  
An a puckle heretical priests.

I maun ludge a complaint tae ma maisters —  
At a Cultural Conference on Celts  
Wi a kelpie, I draftit a paper,  
On the symbolic influence o shelts.

Bit they wadna allow us tae read it...  
(Tae the feminists, horns are imprudent  
Forby the unfortunate maitter  
O the kelpie devourin a student) .

Sae I sit an I huff at the centre,  
Wi ma hooves abune St Andra's flag,  
As the great an the mighty wauk by me,  
Wi their thochts in a briefcase or bag.

I ken mair about Law, Science, Dogma,  
Than dons, doctors, peers an the lave.  
I am fully as auld as Cuchulainn,  
Tho I'm chyned tae this steen, like a slave.

I wad raither bi stroked bi a vergin,  
Or tryst wi Greek cuddies wi wings,  
Than sit on ma dowp at the portals,  
O the veesitor centre at Kings.

I strikk aff ma shackles ae midnicht,  
The nicht o the Halloween star,  
Wi the breets frae the Aiberdeen bestiary,  
An a twa, three wud kelpies frae Mar.

We convene on the reef o the cloisters,  
Fur a corporate ootin tae Greece,  
Far Pegasus takks ower the caterin,  
Doric wine, an a fine buttered piece.

Syne it's fareweel tae Centaurs an Furies,  
In their valleys o heliotrope,  
Me, fa eence wis the confier o Merlin...  
Staunin guaird ower a cafe an shop!

## CHANONRY

Knee heich tae a chunty, I gaed tae takk tea,  
At a muckle great hoose in the auld Chanonry,  
Far a heidless ghaist glowered frae unner a tree,  
An Tilly jist ower the road frae't.

The heid o the hoose, he wis stumpie an roon,  
He wis reamin wi music frae bauchles tae croon,  
He sat at a pianie an thumpit a tune,  
An Tilly jist ower the road frae't.

A kirkyaird fur neebor, a hantle o lums,  
A historical gairden far musical crumbs,  
Wauchtit ooto the windaes in threeples an thrums,  
An Tilly jist ower the road frae't.

Fin his wife steered the broth wi a clort o a speen,  
He played Bartok an Chopin wi Bach in atween,  
As a huddrie black collie wis chawin a been,  
An Tilly jist ower the road frae't.

Far the lave hae a rubbit, a moose or kittlin,  
Thon fowk kept an otter that swam in a tin.  
Its fuskers cocked oot fin a fish it stappt in,  
An Tilly jist ower the road frae't.

The museecian's lang deid, his pianie lid's steekit,  
His grandson's a maestro, sae something wis keepit,  
Tho the hairse drave awa wi a rowth o flooers theekit,  
An Tilly jist ower the road frae't.

I've veesited hooses frae Echt tae Portree,  
I've sup't frae bone cheena an crackit plates tee,  
Bit nane haud a spunk tae the Auld Chanonry,  
An Tilly jist ower the road frae't!

## 7. THE BISHOP'S BELLS.

Peals frae Trinity's muckle moo,  
Sonorous knell o Gabriel,  
Douce Maria's Hallelu,  
Ring the matins wi Raphael.

Bishop's bells in the infant toon,  
Sweetened the braw new college air,  
Caain physeecian, lawyer, priest,  
Novice scholar an aa tae prayer.

Plainsang melled wi the derk merle's notes,  
Lavender, parsley, mint and thyme,  
Sweyed tae the tune frae the great bells' throats,  
Violet, nettle an columbine.

Trinity, Gabriel, Raphael,  
Maria, dung frae their cloudy bouer,  
The heich an the mighty...short's their reign,  
Gaen like girse in a puff o stoor.

Ae wee bell cam hame tae reest,  
Hings in its eyrie, fair bumbazed.  
Gaen are the cuddies, cassies, loch,  
Traffic birrs far the milk-kye grazed.

Trinity, Gabriel, Raphael's  
Haly threips langsyne tuik wings,  
An douce Maria...her sweet lay,  
Lies foraye in the dyew o King's.

## 8. SWING HIGH, SWING LOW

Swing high, swing low,  
Diamond mesh for human net,  
Fencin aff the cooncil scheme,  
The high rise hames they canna let.

Swing high, swing low,  
Peint it black's a miner's pit.  
Peint it tartan...makks nae odds.  
Naeb'dy wints tae bide in it!



Swing high, swing low,  
Wee bairn oot in nicht o jet,  
Aa his lane on cooncil scheme,  
Far a littlin's jist mair debt.

Swing high, swing low,  
Full yer pooch wi stars, ma pet,  
There's nae a siller speen fur ye,  
Stars are as the gowd ye'll get

## 9. CULLERLIE WID

The sough frae the forest's throat's like a great Amen,  
The western win on ma broo's a balmin burn,  
The wid his stoppit its lugs tae the wurd o men,  
An hyne in a pearlin cloud, hawks raxx an turn.

Mair lear lies here than ye'll read in a scholar's buik,  
In the flat, fite page o the sky, the buzzard's pen,  
Is screivin a tale o daith, fur the rubbit's neuk,  
Far a wechtit bummer wearily bizzes ben.

In the breist o the wid, ye micht hear a drappin preen,  
The throb o a furry pulse in the mou o the grun,  
Fine, tae droon life's clash in a mossy wame,  
Alane wi the wheeplin birds an the piebald sun.

Pearl in the oyster, this smaa oor's hiatus,  
Drappt frae the map o circumstance an time,  
Here, far the doo braks breid wi the flichterin mavis,  
Solitude is a waucht o communion wine.

Here, the aipple o knowledge slowly ripens.  
Here, the clivver chiel gaes back tae skweel.  
Here, the innermaist ee sees signs an wonders.  
Here, far the wid birls roon on the Sizzer's wheel.

Foo deep, foo deep is't doon tae the forest's foun?  
An echain sang, that rises throw itsel...  
Seed and saplin and sap's in the timmer smush,

Far it's feenished or sterts, nae man can tell.

Lichen, feather an web... steen, stick an reet,  
Like a birdie's brood held ticht in the fir-wid's haun,  
Russet and amber, deid leaves pale as wheat,  
Steer in thon bouer far birks like sisters staun.

I lie like a cross ootraxxed, a nailed Barabbus,  
Palms tae the lift that poors doon streams o grace.  
An aa the thorns bear floers, in the forest's glory,  
An the pure clear note o the leverick fulls the place.

#### 10. THE MEENLICHT LOCHAN

The firs are shakkin in the win,  
Their taigit reets, throw bracken, rinnin.  
The birks raxx oot their cobwebbed airms,  
Like darklin nets the wid's bin spinnin.

The runkled watter's widenin rings,  
Chit-chitter in the caal win's wailin.  
The sickle meen hings ower the puil,  
A coracle, throw storm-cloud sailin.

An nicht that steeks the ee o day,  
Haps doverin birdies far they swey,  
In a raft goon o starns an sleep,  
Fin dwaums like fish rise frae the deep  
Mind's ocean....yon unfaddomed tide,  
Far joys, an fears, an sorras bide.

#### 11. BERVIE BRAES

Coos propped on two times table legs, offer their backs fur flees tae dine. The lift  
rests lichtly on the sea, far sunlight's siller pennants shine.  
Like midnicht in the dowie wid, the sable corbie craiks an faas.  
New hairstit parks like clippit yowes, staun gowd an glistenin, sheared in raws.

The kintra's like a darned clout, aa patched wi thrift, hemmed in aboot.  
Weet sea-wins skelp the corn flat... an in their spit's the hint o satt,

Whyle in the wast, the thunner hings, a doo wi opals on its wings.

## 12. COTTAR HOOSE

Moosies shared the tenancy, reared a squeak o littlins in the waas,  
Fuskered an faist. A streak o fleein claws,  
A snake o a broon tail, skinnymalinkie thin as liquorice string.  
Wins fussed in, like thin bats on the wing,  
Throw rickety ill-fittin windae peens,  
That lookit ower a dubby, glaury kingdom...green neeps, an sharny steens.

The hairth wis wee, a hoastin, rosit fauld,  
Far kinnlers spirkt an spat in a nippit neuk,  
An reid flames waged a lossin war wi cauld.

Ootbye, the rowan wagged its raggedy duds.  
Or shook its neives, a runkled clutch o buds.  
The stoor o park, coort, visited each day,  
Unsocht, aneth the door. Driftin skirp o strae

Swypt oot, it ay returned, unwinted guest.  
Black gowd is yird, a fairm toon's treisur chest!  
Smugglit inbye pooches, in on a jaiket's foun,  
Trampit in wi the clarty soles o beets,  
Sikkin admittance...acceptance...wintin kept, an ained.  
Like the misty rigs far the doonpish faas an faas,  
Ay wintin claimed, an named.

Aa simmer, the cottar hoose wis wauchts o hey,  
The dry, warm smell o tousled, cuttit girse.  
Aa simmer, the meen wis bricht as gowden bales.  
Alang the windae ledge, reid jars o jam  
War magnets fur antennaed nebs o wasps.  
Aa simmer, cherry-ripe as a young bride,  
The rowan reeshled in its emerald brows.

Aa simmer, an agein fairmer wyed the scales.  
In winter, blin drift huddled ben the dykes,  
Haimmered the hoose's waas like Jesus nails,  
Slid like tears doon windaes, smored the waas.

Dram in the New Year glaiss brocht little cheer,  
A roup crept nearer yet, on preyin paws.  
Swallas bide there noo. Their nests wi littlins reamin,  
Hinneycaimb hames, tint fairm wi birdies, teemin.  
Perfect, teenie feathers pave the fleer.  
The kitchie cracks. Gowd dandelions brier.

### 13. BRAES O SKENE: Tune: Plooman Laddies

Fan first I cam tae the Braes o Skene,  
The corn parks they stood thick an green.

Chorus:

Noo ferm rigs, they growe hooses gray,  
Anither change comes wi ilkie day.

The milkin kye gaed frae park tae byre,  
An Hillie's wids fed a lowpin fire.

Chorus:

Noo ferm rigs, they growe hooses gray,  
Anither change comes wi ilkie day.

The bramble buss fulled the berry pan,  
The chaumer bed held the orra man.

Chorus:

Noo ferm rigs, they growe hooses gray,  
Anither change comes wi ilkie day.

Noo cottar bairns they hae roved awa,  
An swallas bigg in the kitchie waa.

Chorus:

Noo ferm rigs, they growe hooses gray,  
Anither change comes wi ilkie day.

The toon creeps oot like a swallowin tide,  
Haps steen an lime ower the kintraside.

Chorus:

Noo ferm rigs, they growe hooses gray,  
Anither change comes wi ilkie day.

Fin last I cam tae the Braes o Skene,  
The fowk war gaen an the fermhoose teem.

Chorus:

Noo ferm rigs, they growe hooses gray,  
Anither change comes wi ilkie day.

## IMATION/ EROS AND THE MUSE

Bumbazed, we hear anither famous man  
Played wi himsel aneth his desk,  
Rattled his ain tin can.

He, didna tryst wee quines up Terror's lanes,  
Nor preen a Voyeur's neb gainst windae panes,  
Nor peddle heroin, tae pyson halflins' veins.

His public darg... wis't spylt bi yon pursuit?  
I dinna ken.  
If Burns hid sublimated as his groin's dictates,  
Poems wad hae poored in torrents frae his pen.

Salvador Dali aften eesed tae craw,  
He'd come afore his canvas. Claimed that he  
Wis blessed wi supra-creativity  
A topic wirthy o a PhD.  
Except maist fowk wad lee...includin me.

Sae fit's perversion? Queen, tricked oot as tart?  
A German peinter chiel, oot tae impress  
Ejaculated in a public gallery,  
Caain this 'Seed Bed' an 'Performance Art'.  
A thochtie avant-guard, I maun confess,  
Fin Eros lies doon cauldly wi the Muse,  
Tae prove Libido's Inspiration's fuse.  
(I've niver seen a cuddy in suspenders  
I've niver seen a puddock in a basque  
For sado-masochism, bondage, flashin's

The kick-start in humanity's hip-flask)

Flesh turned tae wurd, the sexual made sublime's  
The oil in the lamp that gars it shine.

INT VALENTINE'S DAY, GLESGA (An Extract)

The khaki Kelvin's reamin fu,  
Wi thawin frost an dubs the noo.  
Twid freeze a bear in an igloo,  
In Glesga, on this lovers' day.

Blue doos flee up the Heivenly stair,  
As free as odes bi Baudelaire,  
Their feathery oxters beat the air,  
O Glesga, on this lovers' day.

Twa magpies coortin in the park,  
Flee aff, at gallus collie's bark.  
A beech tree chitters in her sark,  
In Glesga, on this lovers' day.

Watter is dreepin doon ma lug,  
Yet here I staun, hairt-strings tae rug,  
Tae gie St Valentine a plug,  
In Glesga on this lovers' day.

A biker tattooed wi graffiti,  
His pectorals say 'I lue Rosie'  
Stauns wi a quine fa sooks a sweetie,  
As sangs are sung, this lovers' day.

An as the while a Japanee,  
Made paper birds fur us tae flee,  
The things that ither cultures dee,  
Tae shaw they care, this lovers' day!

A lassie in a navy jaiket,  
The hale performance filmed an tapit,  
The Internet maun nae be swickit,  
Doon-load yer lust, this lovers' day!

Ach weel...fowk didna boo, nur sweir.  
Twa lovers, woin on a cheer,  
War that engrossed they didna hear  
Ma barderie, on this lovers' day.

## 16. THE AENEID: VI: THE VEESIT TAE THE UNDERWARLD

Frae this neuk, sterts the road tae Acheron,  
Yonner in dubs an glaur seethes the Abyss.  
It teems its orra clart in Cocytus,  
Far stauns the dreided Charon at yon crossin,  
An ugsome tyke in yirdy, raggie cloots,  
Fite hair an touslie beard faa ower his chin.  
Een, spirkin flame, a roch cape ower his back,  
He rows the boatie, thon grim shores atween,  
Ferries sowls ower in thon dreich coracle,  
Tho he be auld an teuch, he is Divine,  
A god, an as a god, is evergreen.

Here aa the hasty sowls race tae the bank,  
Mithers an warriors,  
Strang men rank on rank,  
Loons, unwed quines, sons, premature cremated,  
Sic shortened lives, brute meat, fur Daith created,  
As mony's Autumn leaves, grown dreich an broon,  
That in first frost turn sere an flichter doon.  
Like sea birds gaithered restless bi the stran,  
Fin cauld gars them seek oot a hetter lan,  
The sowls stude priggin tae be ferried ower,  
Raxxed oot their airms, in langin fur yon shore.

Bit Charon wis a choosy carl, an sae  
Wad anely takk a puckle ilkie day.  
Dumfounert bi the steer, Aeneas speired `  
Here on the bank, sae mony crooded in!  
Fit dae they sikk? Oh say, fit it is their weird?  
Foo are some ferried ower, some left ahin?

A auncient priestess telt him, naething laith  
`Ye see the peels o Cocytus, the Styx

Thon bog bi fa's dreid pouer Gods bind an aith,  
An daurna brakk it. Here, unbeeriet mix  
Wi sowels fa's mortal beens are kistit richt.  
Peer vratches, they maun bide a hunner year,  
Flitterin about the bank, these shaddas steer,  
Until a place is fand, there's nae remeid.  
They mauna cross the river o the Deid.

#### 17. FEY FERLIES

Ye hinna tint yer magic, aik, lochan, larick, been,  
Tho ships hae conquered oceans, tho man has wauked the meen.  
For, as the heich bullrashes are reeted in the glaur  
Ye are the world's elders, oh lichtlie that, fa daur.

The lochan kythes wi kelpies, the silkie breists the tide  
The Beltane dyew's bin bairned. Hett Simmer's in its side.  
An ilkie leaf is lowpin wi centuries o green  
Wi ferlies fu o winnerment, the wyceness o the steen

The cauld that broons the bracken, the rain that briers the wheat,  
Hae aulder wyes o kennin..The wud, the fey, the weet.

Step saftly ben the barley. Wauk cannie bi the corn.  
Leave Natur as ye fin it, fur craiturs yet unborn.  
Sae fin Daith's neive comes chappin an wi the mools ye mel!  
The wirm will greet ye kindly, a traiveller like itsel.

#### 18. DUTHIE PARK

Dipple-dapple watter, bumbees bizzin,  
Mey-buds brierin in the daff-day sizzen,  
Catkins ripplin like dreadlocks, doon.  
Three dyeuks fleein far the waves slide roon.  
Hingin-luggit spaniels, pert wee pugs,  
Twa swans showdin like a pair o tugs,  
Wee Willie Wagtail wigglin his dowp,  
Midgies jiggin far the spurgies lowp.  
Buds pop leaves like candy in the pan,  
Skreich! There's a plap-fit seagull on the s Craun.



Winkers, stinkers, love-seek cheaters,  
Buggies fu o squallachers an ice cream eaters,  
Waddlers, pechers, dossin on the gress,  
Grazin throw the tit-bits in the Sunday Press,

Cheep-cheepin blackies, rochle-rochle doos,  
Lang-nebbit craas that ye anely see in zoos,  
Black toon leopards in their ceevic dress,  
Ring-pierced lassies, tryin tae impress,  
Stirlins reestin on a lang park fence,  
Stucca dinosaurs, in pulis o pence.

Pensioners dauchlin, terrapins splashin,  
Bumbazed loons watchin goldfish flashin,  
Beech tree shakks in her timmer sark,  
Haudin up the Heivens is gey hard wark!

Cyclists cycle, cricketers crack,  
A wee roon baa wi a lang hard bat.  
Heinz 99 varieties o fowk,  
Far the haikus slumber an the cactii powk.  
Glesga, Embro, Aiberdonian,  
Aa brocht thegither bi a blink o sun.  
Toddlers hodgin, babblin, greetin,  
Auld wives lauchin in a mithers' meetin.

Cacklers, quackers, sky-bound wingers,  
Birds are airy-fairy webbed humdingers,  
Breengers, barkers, dugs are larkers,  
Lowpin intae bum-freeze watter, starkers.  
Dyeuks dive, cockin up their dowps tae Heiven,  
Coortin couples practise first-aid breathin,  
Deep throated howl o the fitbaa players,  
The stamp o the CD music swayers.

Smirkers, shirkers, loiterers an lags,  
Joggers, hoggers, wifies humphin bags,  
Littlins, halflins, growin up or doon,  
Aa lue the park in their grey steen toon  
Wi the river, its neebor, the great broon Dee,  
Wallopin its wye tae the slap-beach sea.

## 19. JUSTICE NEUK: THE CASTLEGATE, ABERDEEN

Up the steep brae frae herbor's snowy gulls,  
Solicitors flap by like hoodie craas,  
Past biggins moored like three great, granite hulls,  
Toon Cooncil, Sheriff Coort, dour Tolbooth waas.

The auncient merket cross, squats green as dulse,  
A unicorn rears twa hooves frae its croon,  
A steen's throw frae the steerie burgh's pulse,  
As if it socht tae flee the mapamoun.

Ceres luiks doon on stoorie traffic jams,  
By-passin bank, howf, bookie, chaip-john shops,  
Fowk nip inbye fur pints or swift hett drams,  
Or race green men tae wyte in glaiss bus-stops,  
Near the Toon's Hoose, far ceevic scrolls are keepit,  
An public seats, far drooths sit, hudderie-heidit.

Here, Byron coorted quines. Here, dignatories  
Newsed, while Grey friars coonted their Hail Maries  
Here, rikk o burnin witches jyned wi fish,  
Sea yoams, the fyachie guff o dryin pish  
Frae flechy craiturs in a Tolbooth cell,  
Wytin fur sentencin bi Buik an Bell.

The Maiden, Aiberdeen' s ain femme fatale  
Launched mony a sowl intae Damnation's faul.  
Here, Aiberdonians cheered an clapped an gowped,  
As at a raip's eyn some puir divil lowped.

The Tolbooth's closed, its sentence passed langsyne.  
A bygaen age o manacle an chyne,  
O birsslit witch, scauld's bridle, nerra slit  
O windae, far a jyled man nicht sit  
Anely his thochts allowed tae wanner free.  
Thinkin on foo he tint his liberty.

A lion hunkers doon abune a shield,  
Far Scottish justice bides in thorny bield,  
Here, ne'er dae weels an lassies o ill fame,

Hing roon the Sheriff Coort, their secunt hame,  
Sweir, sook their haun-rowed fags an hodge about,  
Clype about far some limmer's stashed his loot.

At chap o twa, the great doors swing ajee,  
Admit the coort an the justiciary.  
In the High Coort, twa bobbies, handcuffed, staun  
On either side o caught-reid-haundit-man,  
In his best suit, ill-suited tae impress  
A jury. Murder's best in a plain dress.

Computers click an whirr aside a mace,  
Tradition pitten on a modern face,  
Fite bow-tie an cravat, grey wig, black gown  
Gie pleas in his defence afore the Croun.  
The murderer gets ten year. Oot in five.  
Unlike his victim, gled tae be alive.  
His bidie-in turns fiter than the snaa  
Fin sentenced, tae the cells he's led awa.  
Aneth saft lowe o lamps in braise an glaiss  
The scales o justice balance, mair or less.

Debt, damages, divorce an custody  
Fit can the guilty ain afford tae gie?  
Fine or probation served fur thievery  
Files wechtit doon wi lees an misery  
Files fullid wi buggery an muggery  
An twenty different kins o doon-toon thuggery  
An aa discussed on carpets o rich burgandy  
Aneth the coats o airms ower a steen balcony.  
Solicitors, in horny-gollach blaik  
Black-winged, staun deep in argyment an claik. `  
No fixed abode', wi drugs his lane defence,  
Is fand a billet at the toon's expense.  
Gaes `over the watter' fur incarceration,  
Is wheechid awa fur speedy transportation.

King Dragon reigns...an ile-induced pollution  
His price is heich: ryped hames an prostitution  
A trail o connached lives, abused abusers  
Fixed fix, far there's nae winners. Anely losers.

## 20. GLOBAL HOGMANAY

Midnicht the Linesman, wytes tae blaw the fussle.  
Acorns, aidders, cuddies an alligators,  
Chinchillas, oranges, puddocks,  
Technocrats, French fry waiters,  
Aa revv up fur the aff,  
Wi polismen, plebs an debs,  
Lions, wifies in leotards,  
Amoebas, squirrels an doos,  
An a hale clanjamfrie o speeritual bodies  
Jynin the hullabaloo,  
Frae Mecca, the Vatican, Embro an Katmandu.  
They're as queuein up at the New Year frontier  
Cairryin cairryoots o usquebaugh, jubilation,  
Misgieins, a pucklie doots, a tide o traivellers braid as the Mississippi  
(Assets an ambiguities stashed in the gear  
O potentates, prelates, the antrin MSP steppin inno the fire New Year  
Merlin, the Wizard o Oz, an Nostradamus  
John Knox, a richt soor-puss  
War langsyne left ahin wi the Angles, Jutes an Saxons in history's bin  
Countesses drap aff the map like redundant jewels,  
As muckle eese in the space age as fossil fuels.

The world birls like a peerie.  
Firecrackers deefen the lug,  
In pairtyin pandemonium.  
Like watter gaun doon the plug,  
Aabody takks the plunge  
Intae the New Year frigidarium.\*

## 21. THE TUNE THAT LOWPED AFF O THE FIDDLE TUNE: THE RAKES O KILDARE

Cape Breton an Orkney an Norway an aa  
There wis fiddlers frae aawye at Elphinstane haa  
The portraits war jiggin near affo the waa  
Like hens on an Irishman's griddle  
There wis Jan-Petter Blom, Carl MacKenzie an Ling  
Wi Feintuch an Murray baith bendin a string  
Liz Docherty's fiddlin it fairly tuik wing

Aa pairt o the Elphinstane idyll.

Fin Fraser an Anderson stepped on the stage  
Each scholar an luvver an skiffie an sage  
Took their een frae the table or affo the page  
Fin they heard their bra airs on the fiddle  
Ae tune lowpit aff o its, rosy bow  
Made students cry hooch an professor cry wow  
It kinnelt a thrill that set Kings in a lowe  
It made even the unicorn diddle.

Scott Skinner he heard it far Angels takk flicht  
An yarked it an played it wi smeddum an nicht  
Neil Gow tuik his bow an he gaed it a dicht  
Fur the tune that lowped affo the fiddle.  
Neist time that thon bonnie wee tune it wis seen  
The seagulls war dauncin tilt ower the Green  
It's been tae Balmoral an booed tae the queen  
The tune that lowped aff o the fiddle  
Its met Swedish poiskis an Scottish strathspeys  
Wi fowk frae the Faroos, gaen missin fur days  
It likit the fey Appalachian ways  
The tune that lowped aff o the fiddle

It pairtied at Sivell's it ceilidhed at Kings  
Wi whisky an lager it swackened its strings  
It's step-daunced at Marischal, it's daunced Heilan flings  
The tune that lowped aff o the fiddle

They tell me it's coortin a slow air frae Mar  
They've played a duet in a Castlegate bar  
It's gotten an agent sae it'll gyang far  
The tune that lowped aff o the fiddle

It's buskit it's boozed an it's gaen on the spree  
It's lined up engagements far ower the North Sea  
Ye ken tell yer acquaintance ye heard it frae me  
The tune that lowped aff o the fiddle.

## 22. ANGEL-FACE

Angel-face, short sock, straicht cut fringe,  
Oot on a veesit tae a frien on the scheme  
'Gonna watch a video, eat some crisps,  
Hame afore it's dark Ma, by 9.15'

Bring gings the telephone, cord like an eel,  
Hett braith catches in the mooth-piece net.  
Lug like a clam. Yer quine's nae weel.  
Casualty calling. Are ye as richt, pet?

Doon on the rail line stray dugs bark  
Glue sniffers dauchle far it's ile-can dark  
Wee quine playin wi her toys an dalls  
Follaein the teenage bairns, her pals.

Voddie in a bottle o the Irn Bru,  
Fizzed up, screwed up, she is stottin fu  
Wee quine dauncin tae a strange new beat  
Like a runawa peenie on pure mental feet

Wee quine faain like a coin gaun plop  
Screich gings the ambulance come tae mop her up  
Angel face, short sock, straicht cut fringe,  
Tubes in her veins like straas in a jar.  
Heid fu o monsters, a doctor's syringe,  
Bangs inno bruises that are black as tar.

Wee tottie lassie, blootered on the road,  
Picked up an patched, like an auld torn clot  
Played hide n' seek by the auld rail line  
Thank God they fand her, or she'd be oot.

### 23. SIMMER BI GARLOGIE

The wandrin willies waucht in the win,  
The burnie's merrily tinklin,  
The great green sycamores nod an news,  
Ower waves far the sun is skinklin.

Garlogie neuk's far the harbell hings,  
An the hett taeds parp an sprauchle,

An the nettle sweys wi her firey stings,  
An the swack-tailed bandies dauchle.

A cricket's yatterin deep in the girse  
Far the crummlin rasps are bidin,  
An the clover hides like a wee shy bride,  
Far the lang-legged coos are wydin.

The daisies open their hauns like stars,  
The preen-ee'd blackie sings,  
An ower the glug o the reedy glaur,  
Flap a muir-moch's skirps o wings.

The dyke o steens that the saft moss hugs  
It catches a peesie's skirlin,  
In its shaddowy cracks like lang black lugs  
Far an eident spider's birlin.

An trysted oot bi the smilin sun  
Swack littlins lauch an race,  
Men pu their berries an dell their grun  
Neth Simmer's sonsie face.

There's nae a steer frae Garlogie's muir  
Tae the dam, in its cweel green harbour,  
Jist a lift sae blue ye cud near sweem throw  
Aa the wye tae Heiven's herbour.

#### 24. THE ROSEBUD TUNE: THE DUCHESS TREE, by Scott Skinner,

In a rashy den, doon a floery glen, a rosebud raised her heid,  
As a blackie's sang, wheeped loud an lang,  
Stringin notes ower the fuserin reed.  
Fortune smiled on her, sair beguillin her,  
Gentle bud o the white brier seed  
Till the tender floer, in her maiden boer, her hairt it wis tint indeed.

His sable briest tae her velvet reest, he wad press like a drap o dew  
As the bud uncurled, ilkie leaf unfurled,  
Fur she thocht that his luv wis true.  
Foo he haunted her, fair enchanted her, an tae him her thochts war thirled.

Wi his glancin een, an his sang sae keen,  
He brocht Heaven tae her ain wee warld.

Nae anither bird, wi its tinklin wird, could draw oot her rich perfume,  
An her thorns sae strang, should hae saved frae wrang,  
She wad sheath fin she heard his tune.  
Foo he played wi her, fair enslavin her, as aroon her lair he flew  
Till the rosebud sweet, fell in luv ower deep,  
Wi the bird o the midnight hue.

Bit anither booe, an anither flooe, caught the blackbird's wanton een  
She micht prigg an plead, bit he tuik nae heed, tae anither airt he's gaen.  
As he soared awa, wi his sang sae braw, tae the wide, wide, mapamoun  
Fur an oor wi him, this flooeriy gem, wad hae laid her young life doon.

O a sang in Spring, it should pleisur bring, fin it hauds a luv refrain.  
Bit fin luv's bin stown, like a rose hauf blawn,  
Then the tune brings nocht bit pain  
The rosebud fair, in her thorny lair, ceased tae bloom fin luv wis past  
Wi a hairt o snaw, see her petals faa, in the bitterness o Winter's blast.

## GOD

A God o the sea's amang us.  
Dinna ye see the sheen  
O faddoms o dulse an siller cod  
In the glent o his wintry een?

A God o the sea's amang us.  
His wirds hae the storm's wheep  
An the skelp o the satt-tailed herrin  
Fished up frae the glaiss-green deep.

A God o the sea's amang us.  
His hair is derk's a shag.  
Frae the belt o his ice-cauld middle  
A when fouled anchors drag.

A God o the sea's amang us.  
His thunner an lichtenin rage,  
Can skail wi the blast o wasterie



A skipper's hard-won wage

A God o the sea's amang us.  
D'ye feel the warld showd  
Like the deck o a tiltin trawler  
As he wauks throwe the teemin crowd?

The glitterin tide turns bonnie  
As a train o skirlin gulls,  
Herald their mister's comin  
Wings white as drooned men's skulls.

The clouds lower blae an gurlly  
Fin he leaves his partan's berth  
An raiks wi his icey fingers  
The vertebrae o earth.

He caas tae crocanation wi the pouer o his wattery cleuk  
Aa nerra thochts an nippit, in their shilpit, shargeret neuk  
Takk tent fin he draws near ye, wersh, wersh wi spindrift years  
For the sea god's nets are wechty, wi shattered hairts an tears

26. FUSSLIN JOCK Inspired by An Idyll: a painting by Giovanni Segatini.

Fussle fussle Jocky, an I'll gie ye a flooer  
Fit guid is a sic a giftie? Twid wither in an oor!

Fussle fussle Jocky, an I'll gie ye ma sheen.  
Fit guid is sic a giftie? They're bauchled an they're dane!

Fussle fussle Jocky an I'll gie ye a kiss.  
Cauld kail hett again, for yer a wanton Miss.

Fussle fussle Jocky I'll rowe ye in ma plaid  
Feech, an that ye winna. Ower mony there ye've laid.

27. FOO MONY HOOLETS?

Foo mony hoolets hoot roon aboot the hoose?  
There is hungeret Horace Hoolet on the look oot fur a moose

There is genteel Harry Hoolet suppen denner wi a speen  
There is sossy Hackit Hoolet wi his platie fooshty green  
There is sleekit Hamish Hoolet wi a doocot fur a nest  
There is sleisterie Hetty Hoolet wi her pudden doon her vest  
There is Hooligan the Hoolet luikin fur some glaiss tae smash  
There is Hannibal the Hoolet, could be daein wi a wash  
There is skinny Helen Hoolet, there is Hetty big an broon  
There's a hoolet caad Horatio fa aye hings upside doon  
Foo mony hoolets hoot roon about the hoose?  
As mony as the bubbles in a tin o orange juice!

28. TOUN JUNCTION Toun Junction was written as part of a joint project with the artist Irene Leake.

A boorich o birdies, blaik an birlin, heezin an furlin.  
A skyte o skurries slidderin doon the win.  
A breenge o shoppers hashin ower the road.  
A bleeze o boozers hyterin doon the brae.  
A chaw o chuddies stukken doon like bannocks.  
A craik o corbies wallopin ower the howfs.  
A skid o schule quines swingin pyokes o buiks.  
A doonpish dribblin doon the cassies croon.  
A bauchle o auldies shauchlin ower the crossin.  
A birr o larries hotterin on the tarmac.  
A skitter o stirlins jinkin like confetti.  
A wheech o ambulances stappt wi skaith.  
A dauchle o wardens keekin inno cars.  
A puckle o office quines on teeterin sheen.  
A bleep o mobiles clapt tae meevin lugs.  
A sniff o mongrels peein ower wheelies.  
Bumfus o buggies bumpin ower branders.  
A shoogle o artics dirdin ower lowse chukkies.  
A wacht o cushies bobbin ower the cassies.  
A stooshie o spurgies chitterin on the lums.  
A shargaret tree its branches showdie powdin.  
A dunt o drillers rivin up the road.  
A reeshle o papers. Get yer Dailies here!  
A splat o dug keech splytered on a steen.  
A stride o loons wi gallus sark tails flappin.  
A hoaster hackin oot a glob o glut.  
A beggar in a doorwye priggs fur siller.

A pirn-taed wifie humfin hame her eerins.  
A van wi ledders jinkin roon a neuk.  
A trawl o taxies slinkin doon back wynds.  
A cowkin quinie cowpin ower a cash pynt.  
A twa-fauld bodach, neb near tae the grun.  
The provost's limo poorin through the toon.  
A skoosh o watter skytin frae a dub.  
A trail o tabbies trampit in the glaur.

29. THE HERRIN FLEET Inspired by The Herring Fleet leaving the Dee, Aberdeen, painted by David Farquharson.

Far are ye gaun, min?  
Fishin, fishin.  
Fit are ye efter?  
Herrin, herrin.  
Fit are ye thinkin?  
Wishin, wishin  
Oor nets will rise fu fin they're pued frae the ocean.

30. GHOST STORY HEARD AT A BUS STOP

My ma jist canna sleep if that cat's oot.  
Fit cat? Ye hinna got a cat.  
Ye hinna seen the cat. It isna real.  
Ma took a feelie fin she saw the brute.  
Fit happened? Dis it scrat this feerie cat?  
Oh no, the divil's far ower fly fur that!  
It's jist a shadda...creeps sae quaetly  
Ma bides awake tae see fit it'll dae  
Weel tell me then. Dis it sprout wings an flee?  
Na na. It's jist a shadda. It's nae real.  
That makks it war ye see, because ye feel...  
it could dae onythin, a shadda lowse like that.  
I dinna unnerstaun... Ye hinna got a cat...  
Bit we've a shadda creepin roon the mat!

31. ICONS O SCOTLAND

I'm a furry Loch Ness Monster,  
Frae Bangladesh tae Brighton  
I'm up for sale by road, sea, rail,  
I'm a mail order item.

My name is Bonnie Prince Charlie,  
I'm the tap o a shortbreid tin  
I weir ma wig cause ma hair fell oot  
Wi drinkin ower much gin.

I'm the auld wife tenors sing o,  
In Granny's Heilan hame  
Wi a pail an an ootside lavvie  
An nae twa socks the same.

I'm the Burns ye hear fin the haggis  
Is piped in on the plate  
The poem afore the ceilidh  
Fin the neeps growe cauld on the plate

I'm a clockwirk Heilan dauncer,  
In a musical box I bide,  
I'm made in Japan by a Geisha's haun  
An exported world-wide

I'm the reel frae a Hollywid movie  
In technicolour clartit  
Mel Gibson's William Wallace  
Is nae fur the faint hertit

Oh we are the Scottish icons  
Fur exiled hairt-strings ruggin  
They liked us sae weel, like rottens' flees  
They lowped on a boatie an they crossed the seas  
Wi their gear an their siller an their gran degrees  
Oh we are the Scottish icons  
That keep the brain-drain gluggin.

## 32. WINTER, CRAIGENDARROCH, DEESIDE (extracts)

Win fuspers cranreuch, wersh an cauld,

Auld Winter's tale that's yearly tauld.  
Feetikins treetlin ben the sna, show far a bawd has crept awa  
Stervin an thin on hirplin feet, on his last wardly road, pur breet.  
Fite sky an warld mell. Blin smore has opened cauld rife Januar's door  
And hairse an rochlin throw the trees  
Grey feathered crooin cooshies wheeze.

The snaaflakes tapsalteerie droon in Dee, as Yule comes tummlin doon.  
Sma trimmlin birdies freeze on boughs  
An bairns' chikks are twa reid lowes  
Tho mochles, toories, scarfs enfauld  
They're scant remeid far wids are bauld.  
Ben roosty bracken, storms blaa, on ilkie steen's a hap o sna  
Like Scots-Guaird busbies on parade, far ilkie icicle's a blade,  
As keen as won at Waterloo, sherpened wi frost, wid cut ye through.  
The willow's twined bi ghaistly grey  
Far kirkyaird cloots o mist hing wae.  
An ilkie birk frae neck tae nape has pitten on an ermine cape.  
The river's pots an puils o ice is grippit sair bi Winter's vice  
Yowes trimmle, chaa the frostit neep  
Reid robin's far ower cauld tae threep.  
Mists like the thin airms o a priest  
Raxx up far clouds in heiven reest  
Lang skeins o haar twine roon the Bens  
The sky draps doon tae stalk the Glens  
The warld's braith is frozen rikk, far wagtail's dowp's an ee-blink flick.  
The bubbles in the Dee stare up, weird kelpies glower frae ilkie cup  
Grey een, grown cloudy-fire an blin, teet at the aik tree's runkled skin

Here, muckle wechty clouds o oo teem oot their trock like miller's styew Nae  
hens, wi chuckens in their train, far has the pouer o Simmer gaen?  
That fullt the sheugh wi flooer an bee gart ilkie burn daunce merrily? Winter's the  
Chiel fa's Lord ower aa, ower parliament an cooncil haa  
His grip's tyrannical an strang..think, gin ye ruled the hale year lang!

### 33. THE VRICHTS O KING'S: MEDIAEVAL MAKKARS

Carved oot bi mediaeval maister-vrichts,  
The years hae turned the timmer angels blaik.  
Tho carpeted in crammosie, fleer-boards  
O auncient aik-brods, at a fitfaa, craik.

Whyle thon same chiels fa biggt the chapel waa  
 Measurt an chappt, Buonarotti's mallet  
 Hacked his Pieta frae a merble block.  
 Rich peint ran weet, on Leonardo's palette.  
 The founder-bishop lies aneth a slab  
 O Belgian merble. Here, he's beddit doon,  
 Wi chunnerin wirm, fa won approval's seal  
 The Papal Bull, tae heist the college croon.  
 Alive, his lugs war full't wi scholar claik,  
 The mummlit incantation o the mass.  
 The Angelus, that summoned loons tae prayer.  
 The sweesh o gouns as students jyned a class.  
 A mason's monument, the waas raise up.  
 The vaulted reef hauds ghaists o Latin spikk.  
 A glazier's Solomon meets Sheba's Queen,  
 Lang efter incense brunt its haly rikk.  
 Auncient an modern wirkmens' darg is snorled.  
 Like shiftin sans, they mell, the deid, the quick.  
 Tae sit in sic a staa, tae straik yon wids,  
 Tae strip awa veneer o centuries,  
 Touch the Kabbala tree o time itsel,  
 Howked in an age o guilds an mysteries.  
 Tae sit in sic a staa, far shaddas hing,  
 Is tae inhabit history's muckle wame,  
 Wi burgesses in ermine-tippit hoods.  
 Aa, aa maun daunce in Dissolution's flame.  
 Far denim-hurdied students read, vrichts plane.  
 Professors news, as gairdeners howk the yird.  
 Far masons' haimmers dunt a risin dyke,  
 Theses maun still be screived, an vivas heard.  
 The waas o past an present here are thin.  
 The bus that birrs along the stoory street,  
 Traivels a road aince lepers shauchled ben.  
 Ower lang-gaen muirlan, picnic-pairties eat.  
 Far roaders dreel, roosed drivers revv an bleep,  
 Sang schules an minstrels threipit ballads sweet.  
 Far larries thunner by on tarry wheels,  
 Aince, Margaret Tudor wauked on gowden feet.

34. JOHN BARLEYCORN TUNE: JOHN ANDERSON MY JOE

John Barleycorn my joe, John, fin we war first acquaint,  
Ye war sae entertainin ma siller sune wis spent.  
Ye tuik me tae a tavern as queer as it wis braw  
Far Bacchus filled a bumper at the Dionysia.

John Barleycorn my joe, John, life's storm we've faced thegither  
An there is nae denyin ye kittle up a blether,  
Bit oh, yer clour is sair, John, its dunt is hard tae tyne,  
I'll takk fur beau, a sweet Bordeaux an set his mou tae mine.

John Barleycorn my joe, John, ye've at the ingle sat,  
Ye've kept me up till mornin, wi Willie, Neil an Pat,  
We'd sing tae meen an starnies we'd serenade the dawn,  
Syne thole the efterstangs o grue, an aa because o John.

John Barleycorn my joe, John, noo oor affair's on ice,  
Yell sit wi ony randy fa cares tae pye the price,  
Wi Jock or Rab or Jeannie, ye'll lie doon like a lamb,  
Yer onybody's fur a maik, a bang-the-coggie dram.

John Barleycorn my joe, John, I'd hae ye as a guest,  
Bit niver as a lodger sae dinna pack yer vest.  
An ae nicht stand is dandy...jist mynd, afore ye go,  
Caa tee the door on your wye oot, John Barleycorn ma joe.

### 35. ST MACHAR'S CATHEDRAL TUNE: PERSONANT HODIE

Fleurs de lys, boar and star, shields o Keith, Hay and Mar,  
Banners reid, drooked wi war, by Dunbar's designin,  
Kirk wi Europe jynin,  
Heed thon heraldry, aa maun boo the knee,  
Fit brings life tae the glaur's ower deep fur devinin.

Here the Don, wyved aroon, Pictish plaid, Bishop's gown,  
Machar's spad laid the foun, o this sanctuary,  
Celtic missionary,  
Roon its widlan boun, grew the infant toon,  
Seaton's lan, in the plan o a visionary.

Machar kirk, Sabbath day, voices jyne, priest and lay,  
Hymn an psalm reverently, mell in adoration, thochts upon Salvation,

Man is stoor, stoor, stoor, short's his oor, oor, oor,  
Sma his pouer, nocht is sure, bit Daith's domination.

Sun poors in, through the glaiss, dragon's flames turn tae aisse,  
Caunle-sheen catches braisse, Licht o Lichts revealin,  
tribulations healin,  
Granite steen an slate, cross an alterplate,  
Bigged tae bless, aa express, faith ayont concealin.

See the sky, mark it weel, Warld o air, Fisher's creel,  
Braid an wine, aa reveal, inner signs an meanins, body's bit the gleanins,  
Hear the wee winged bird, cheep its wheeplin wird,  
Ane in aa, spurgie sma, Haly Spirit breathin.

Anely flesh fills the grave, faith can sain, faith can save.  
Rowe the steen frae the cave, see redemption shinin,  
see the derkness dwinin.  
Peals o hells ring clear, ower the city's steer,  
Toun an goon, bless this loon, grace an peace combinin.

Doon the lang aisles o steen, ghaists o lang-vanished sheen,  
Barhour's pen, Dunbar's dream, Elphinstane's oration.  
Each new generation,  
Seeks this auncient place, each succeedin race,  
Seeks the answers ahin Warlds an their creation.

Don an Dee, Denburn wee, seek the great glimmerin sea  
Ilkie sma tribut'ry fur its source is vearnin,  
like a salmon spawnin  
Sae like boats we moor, fur life's short, roch oor  
Anchors brakk, tapsails shakk tae the Deep returnin

Sheena Blackhall



# Skin Parchment

On the wishing tree  
Hang lips, a moustache, three hearts  
Twirling in the breeze

A cloud like a fat cigar goes puffing off  
To nowhere

On a Yesterday's girlfriend  
Old Loves are tattooed like graffiti  
Skin parchment memoirs  
Peeling around the edges  
Unwelcome as the afterwhiff  
Of a fart.

Sheena Blackhall

# Sky, Sea, Beach

Sky sinks a shaft of light into the sea  
No-one else on the beach  
Apparently notices.

A tug-haired toddler pats a bucket of sand  
Hammering home the obvious,  
Upended like a duckling,  
Pink polka dots on her tights,  
Spread like cake mix  
Dropped in a warm pan  
Across her two small buttocks.

The firmament continues to descend.  
A herring gull sails grimly through the clouds  
Like a cargo boat from Orkney  
Laden with sheep.

The sky continues to pour  
A linn of light down from a Heavenly fissure.  
Waves rush to my feet,  
Thick with the silt of stars.

A greyhound, skin and bones,  
Lollops onto the surf  
Shaking the spray from its flanks  
Like a shattered rainbow.

Sheena Blackhall

# Slave-Boy

I am Akello son of the Yoruba  
My sister is Abeba, little gazelle  
We worship Esu, the god of travellers and crossroads  
Listen, I will tell how this came to be

We had a mother and she loved us dearly  
Here is the song she sang around our fire:

Someone would like to have you for her child  
But you are mine  
Someone would like to rear you on a costly mat  
But you are mine  
Someone would like to place you on a camel blanket  
But you are mine  
I have you to rear on a torn old mat  
Someone would like to have you as her child  
But you are mine

We went to the river for water, through the reeds  
There we were caught by slavers,  
From an enemy tribe, who prey on the young and helpless

Chained together by neckrings, we were driven  
Like cattle for miles, till we reached the coast.  
Abeba wept for our mother all the way

And then, we saw the ship, not like our own canoes  
A floating city with blankets hung from rods

Aaeee! If we had known what was inside  
We would have fed ourselves to the crocodiles in the swamps

Abeba was pulled from the line to join the women  
Of many tribes. I was chained with the men

Shackled, two by two, right wrist to our partner's ankle,  
We were packed below like fish beneath the deck  
Secured by leg irons, no room even to sit.

I would not eat, the devils forced my mouth  
Open, with a contraption, to spoon slops down

I heard from a crewman who spoke my mother tongue  
My little Abeba had been raped by many  
And now was dumb, and trembled all the time

We lay in human urine, shit and vomit  
The air was foul, like a great slaughterhouse  
Of rotting meat, in a death's ante-chamber

The dying were unshackled like feast-pigs,  
And thrown aboard, still live, a treat for sharks

Farmers, priests, musicians, weavers head-men  
Here we were nameless, slabs of numbered cargo

Until the second birthing at the auction.  
Kingston, St Vincent Isle, each faced their fate

Abeba, branded, became Rose, field worker  
Now I am Jacob, hog-boy to a pig

Sheena Blackhall

# Sleep

Chimneypots with the fire gone out,  
The mathematician, the rich, the sick,  
Take a break from the waking world,  
Close their eyes, with the slow, the quick.

The phone may ring on its plastic perch,  
It's screech unheard in the sleeper's zone.  
All men drink at the pool of dream,  
All men kneel at the pool alone

Turbulent day with its heres and theres,  
Closes its door. Good riddance I say  
To its whys and wherefores, its snaps its snares,  
Bring on the moon and the Milky Way

I lay me down with a questionmark...  
Puzzles are solved before the dawn  
The wizard who works in the webs of dark,  
Has found an answer for every one!

Sheena Blackhall

# Sleep Fast, We Need The Pillows (Traditional Polish Saying)

I am sleeping as fast as I can,  
So as not to wear out the pillow.

Pillows are precious;  
This pink one was mail-order,  
Bought by my mother, now deceased.  
Deliberately nylon, so it never creased.

Half of a matching set,  
Except they never matched  
Was this one his or hers?

It'll outlive us all.  
Immune to disease, to moth,  
The ultimate mort-cloth.

If I unpicked it, what secrets would it tell?  
Pillows are fickle, shameless.  
Promiscuous,  
Pillows lie down with anyone.

When I, too, am dead,  
Oh pillow, who then will hold you close?  
Whose dreams will run like rivers  
Round your frills?

Sheena Blackhall

# Sleeping Beauties (Cryogenics)

Gate-crashing into tomorrow  
Without a visa, friendless  
Orphaned out of the past  
Out-of-sync, out-of-joint  
Why would anyone want to outlive their peers?

Frankenstein's creatures, reanimated mummies  
Death-dodging waxen manikins  
Emerging from each chrysalis of ice

Lazarus ladies and gentlemen  
Like stills from a black and white movie  
Anachronisms, melting out of the limbo  
Of your chilly chambers

One flick of the switch  
Could plunge those sleeping beauties  
Into nihil.

They lie like dried herring,  
Hoping to awake when their ills are curable  
Each passport rubber stamped by Sci-fi morticians

Will they be quarantined by the yet-to-be-born?  
Displayed in museums or peep shows  
Their antiquated genes become  
As odd as the Elephant Man's,  
The Dodo, the curious Bearded Lady?

Orphaned out of the past  
Out-of-sync, out-of-joint  
Why would anyone want to outlive their peers?

Sheena Blackhall

# Sloth

I think I am one of life's watchers  
A sloth, slung between two trees  
Looking up at the moon  
My two eyes fill with moon  
I think the moon fell into me and drowned  
I think I could be the moon

I am a human hammock.  
Toe-hold on English, finger-grip on Scots  
My words drift down like leaves

I am disconnected from the scrabbling  
Creatures below, their drive, their naked ambition  
Caught in the whirling maelstrom of making their mark

One night I'll become the moisture  
Wetting the clouds of a day

Someone will have to dispose  
Of my fur and eyes,  
Tipping the moon back out for the grass to drink

Sheena Blackhall



# Smoke

A puff of smoke, grey fluff and feather  
Bursts from a hedge  
On a clumsy fledgling flight

Nature has dressed the braes around in gold  
A glut of glorious daffodils

Snowdrifts beneath the tree  
Are a distant memory

The clock ticks on  
Round the changing face of seasons

The mirror shows late winter all year round

Sheena Blackhall

# So Little

So Little

Today, I looked at my feet  
And wondered how long I'll need them

Time regulates nowadays  
Whatever I'll buy or not.  
Expensive goods or carpets will outlive me  
Soon I'll be one of the ancestors  
The future lies in the loins of my sons  
The wombs of my daughters

Sparrows, ten a penny in my childhood,  
Are rarer than hens' teeth in the garden dust

Poor world, we take so much  
And give so little.

Sheena Blackhall

# Solitary Bather (River Maha Oya)

After the elephants left, their fans in tow  
Ooing and aaing at babies, or bull's erections  
The public bathing session done and dusted,  
Tables at the café lost all their trade,  
Beggars and hawkers chased their human prey.  
Even the chipmunks vanished into the trees  
Behind thin-legged mahouts in torn vests.

River and jungle merged again as one  
Churned by the monsoon into coils of mud  
Waves rolled over hotly in the sun  
Like heavy pages in a weighty book.

A girl in a scarlet sari stepped from the palms  
Like a butterfly floating up on fragile wings  
Waded into the water up to her waist  
Laughing at something or nothing.

She tipped her head back to the turning waves  
And with a brass bowl scooped the pool like grain  
Again and again the bright drops fell on her breasts  
A noon-day shining, a shower of golden rain  
Alive in her youth like a flame.

The sari bobbing round, a sailing poppy  
Such joy she showed in that primordial act  
Lifting her lean brown arms to greet the sun

Sheena Blackhall

# Solstice Fire

I fed a sheep's jaw bone  
To a Solstice Fire  
How quick the flames rose up  
And died away!

The jaw bone was hulled and prowed  
Like a Viking longship  
It went to its own Valhalla  
Its little cremation  
Wrapt in crimson shawls

I sit in my life's cold clothes  
Their colours fading

Sheena Blackhall

# Spider

She has drawn up the portcullis of her legs,  
Like a hunting sea anemone.

The flimsy artefact that is her web  
Is slung like a pirate's hammock,  
Like a net that waits  
For the delicious shudder  
When the high wire artist falls.

Debris of a daddy-longlegs  
Lies on the stone ledge  
Under her live-in larder,  
Expelled from Miss Arachne's Mincing mouth,  
Surplus to current requirements -  
Like unhinged meccano,  
Nuts and bolts tastefully removed.  
The legs are the wheels  
Of a stalled car  
In the breaker's yard,  
Disjointed.  
Going nowhere.

Sheena Blackhall

# Spik Nae Evil (20 Scots Poems)

## 1. The Puddock

The puddock hunkers on his hurdies  
Sittin on his dowp.  
Foo dis he traivel through the toun?  
Lowp! Lowp! Lowp!

## the Coo

Pru the Coo  
Wi a great muckle moo  
Said, 'I wish I cud loup Like a kangaroo! '

The magic stars  
On a wishin tree.  
Granted her wish richt speedily,  
An noo she stots  
Like a trampoline,  
Pro the Coo  
Gaun ower the meen.

The jumbo's snoot's  
A watterspoot.  
It is a jungle shouer.  
He sooks a puddle up wi it  
Syne sktyes it up an ower  
His back, his wame,  
His lugs, his heid,  
Till he is tickety-boo.  
And then he sooks a burnie up  
An coups it doon his mou.

## Percy Penguin

Peter Percy Penguin  
Plyters roon his pen  
Stravaigin roon his paidmlin pool  
Up an doon again.  
Naethin in his noddle  
Bit jist ae single wish  
Green an weet an sealey ⇨  
Fish! Fish! Fish!

## 5. Kung-Fu Chukken

Dinna think cause I am wee  
Ye can takk the len o me!

Kung-Fu Chukken is ma name  
Wi a roose as reid's ma caimb

I can fecht an skelp an kick  
Doos an spurgies...rin hame quick!

t

Hoolet bides in an auld aik tree  
Aathin that moves can hoolet see.  
His een are sherp an his neb can catch  
Moosies that move in his leafy patch.  
Rin, rin, moosie, he's comin noo ⇨  
Can ye hear him cryin  
Tu-whit-tu-woo?

Wee Jennie Wren luvs wee Cock Robin⇨  
I saw their names on an auld aik tree.  
Bit fit she disna ken, is that Wee Cock Robin  
Has gien his hairt tae Miss Valla Yeitie.

He's nae chunce, fur Miss Valle Yeitie  
Luvs Peesie-wheep ower the lang green lea.

Bit, sad tae tell, Peesie-wheep luv's Spurgie,  
Spurgie luv's a Doo an the Doo luv's me!

dile

Crocodile, crocodile, Open yer mou.  
I am a dentist,  
Yer teeth I maun pu.  
I ken they are dirlin,  
I ken they are sair →  
Nae toffee or chocolate  
For ye onymair.

the Hippo

Hilda the Hippo wis hefty  
Wi thighs like the legs 0 a brig  
An the monkeys fell affo their perches  
Fin Hilda attempted a jig

Her six double chins war like jeely  
Her belly the wecht 0 a train  
Fin an earthquake dug holes in the jungle  
Fowk said, 'Hilda's bin dauncin again.'

Bit noo, she's enrolled for aerobics,  
Plays squash an is fit as a flee;  
She jogs roon the watterhog's mudbath  
An dis twenty press-ups afore tea.

She nivver etts chocs or fish suppers  
Bit a bittie 0 fruit or lean meat,  
Fur Hilda the Hippo wad tell ye  
Watch oot -for ye are fit ye eat!

10. Yasmin theYowe

Yasmin the yowe frae Hindustan  
Can birl a hula-hoop roon a cweet;  
Can staun on ae leg, furl a plate in her haun→  
Ifye dinna believe me, come an see't!



Fa says yowes are as thick as mince?  
Her IQ is a hunner an ten.  
Wi a Harvard degree an a PhD  
In animal husbandry, didn't ye ken?

Yasmin the Yowe frae Hindustan  
Is gey peely-wally. She's weirin awa...  
We've nae conversation tae gie her a heeze  
The only wurd that she hears is baa.

### Rhinoceros

Fin Rhona Rhinoceros faas asleep  
Oh fit dis she dream about?  
She dreams 0 gaun tae a carnival  
An wallop in doon the chute!

She dreams 0 swingin sae heich, sae heich,  
Her horns can touch the stars,  
An whyles she dreams, in a rocket ship  
She turns richt fur Mars!

Fin Rhona Rhinoceros faas asleep  
o far dis she wanner tae?  
She veesits the muckle elephants  
That waulk about Bombay.

And whyles she flees tae the Arctic lans.  
Far the penguins merch in pairs,  
An thegither they slide doon braes 0 ice  
Like bairns doon the bannisters!

### Dinosaur

A dinosaur! A dinosaur!  
We nivver saw the like afore!  
The Beastie makks the bairnies roar  
Frae Sumburgh tae Singapore!

A dinosaur! His muckle moo  
Has teeth as lang as knives,  
An fin he roars, the tabby  
Losses aa its seeven lives!

A dinosaur! His ilkie snore  
Caas continents ajee.  
An fin he piddles lochs arise  
As braid's the Irish Sea.

A dinosaur! Fit dis he ett?  
A herd 0 coos fur tea!  
He sweels it doon wi a lagoon  
o vats 0 barley bree.

A dinosaur! His heid's amang  
The aeroplanes an stars.  
His legs are pylons, tail's as lang's  
A traffic jam 0 cars.

A dinosaur's a fearsome breet  
Fin it lies doon tae claw ⇝  
Bit fin it daunces, hae a care ⇝  
Skyscrapers stert tae faa!

### Monster's Plea

Far div TV monsters ging  
Fin their programme's endit?  
Eence I wis a TV star,  
Ma series wis suspendit.

If ye tak me hame wi ye  
I wad think it braw  
I wad fleg the bogie-men  
An burglars• fur yer Ma!

### e Creepie

Creep by Castle Creepie

Victor Vulture's there.  
He bides wi thirteen vampires  
An twa bogIes up a stair.

A skeleton's their toast rack  
Fin they aa sit doon tae dine.  
Creep by Castle Creepie  
Fin the meen begins tae shine!

Creep by Castle Creepie  
Victor Vulture keeps a bat  
Far ye micht hae a goldfish  
Or a purrin pussycat.

He's sherpenin his orra cleuks→  
I winner fa he'll grab?  
Creep by Castle Creepie  
Or it micht be you he'll nab!

e Widdershins the Witch

Winnie Widdershins the witch  
Is bidin at Bieldside:  
Dinna look oot for a besom  
It's a Hoover that she'll ride,  
For Winnie Widdershins the witch Is modern as can be.  
Nae a cauldron, bit a microwave  
For makkin spells, ye see.  
An her list 0 magic potions  
Isnae keepit in a buik →  
They're on file in her computer  
If ye jist ken far tae luik.

Winnie Widdershins the witch  
E-mails her faithfu• cat  
Tae hurl upon the Hoover  
Like a supersonic bat  
Doon tae Asda fur her eerins  
Fin her larder's nearly teem →  
An fur special treats she feeds it  
Kipper fillets an ice cream.

Winnie Widdershins the witch  
Is only seen at nicht,  
On the scraun fur mair computer games  
Sae keep yours oot a sicht!

#### 16. Dentist

Open wide! Fit a view!  
Waur nor lookin doon a bug's H.Q.  
This set 0 teeth's like extinct volcanoes,  
Aa the hues 0 a palettefu 0 rainbows,  
Chocolate, aniseed, peppermint, bananas,  
Mair dirt here than a mole's pyjamas.

Drill oot the cavity. Pulverise the brute.  
Switch on the stereo. Droon the skirls oot.  
Hurra fur the ile boom. He needs teeth fa dines.  
Come in, Sheikh Abdullah. Bring yer concubines.  
Fin we clean yer canines, we makk sure they shines!  
Fa'd be a dentist? Waur nor settin mines!

#### 17. Baa

Een, twa, three a leerie  
I spied Bella Peerie  
Sittin on her bumblebeerie  
Eatin jeelie babies

Stot, stot, stot, stot,  
Dunt the baa against the waa.  
Stot, stot, stot, stot.  
Can ye catch it? Will it faa?

Maisie's baa is wee an roon  
Frae a shoppie in the toon.  
It is strippit reid an broon  
See it stottin up an doon.

Jamie's baa is big an dubby  
Fit game's it fur? Fitbaa? Rugby?

Dunt it wi yer heid, yer feet,  
Playin fitba in the street

Geordie Buchan

Girny Geordie Buchan  
Fegs! He's aye nae weel  
Whyles it's teethache, whyles a hoast  
Tae keep him aff the skweel.

Girny Geordie Buchan,  
Whyles his belly's sair →  
Whyles his heid is dirlin  
Sae he canna caimb his hair.

Foo could fowk expeck him  
Tae wirk, an him nae weel?  
I think Geordie Buchan  
Isna sic a feel!

I think Geordie Buchan  
Isna seek ava.  
I've seen him getting sweeties  
An comics frae his ma.

'Peer Geordie's ailin, '  
She says, bit we aa ken →  
Geordie Buchan's anely  
Plunkin skweel again!

Competitor

Ma hauns are skyty wi sweat the day  
I've practised this poem for wikks.  
Ma hair's bin caimed and ma teeth are clean,  
Noo I hodge while the wifie spikks.

She's sayin she's affa pleased tae see  
We ken oor Scots sae weel.  
An Grunny says it's a gey queer world →

She wis skelped fur't at the skweel.

There's poems about trainies that ging toot-toot  
An budgies ye keep in a cage.  
I'm watchin the hauns o the clock gyang roon  
I'm the next een up on stage.

Takk a big deep braith an think fin it's deen  
o the penny I'm getting frae Da.  
An oh, gin I wun yon siller dish  
Oh, wadn't it nae be braw?

It's my shot noo...aa the fowk are quate  
As I cheep oot ma wee story.  
Even a littlin, aabody kens,  
Can hae twa meenits 0 glory

#### 20. Snake

The snake is ae lang thrapple  
He slidders on his belly.  
The anely place I like him  
Is safe inside the telly.

Sheena Blackhall

# Split Second

A golden day at harvest time  
Kingfisher blue and cloudless,  
Fields glowing with ripened grain

Passengers doze in the bus  
Like drowsy bumblebees  
Drugged by warmth  
The purring of the wheels

Brakes screech, we all lurch forward

Somebody's split second error  
Has spilled four cars in terror  
Like dice from a shaker

We witness a tragedy unfolding  
Are there welts? Are there weals?  
We are a near miss

Trapped in their crushed cages  
Chalk faced drivers shudder  
Streaked in blood.  
Sirens scream from emergency services

Stopped drivers drum their steering wheels  
Impatient to be gone  
Having places to go that  
Don't entail misfortune

Sheena Blackhall

# Springtime Girls At Uni

Springtime Girls at Uni

My granddaughter aged six

Holds her ice cream aloft, a flaming torch

'Look look! I'm the statue of Liberty! '

We pass the rugby goal posts in the field

'Why does the Capital H have such long arms? '

A silver star from a pack of wedding confetti

Floats in a pavement puddle

Her sister four and thoughtful, stands forlorn

'A star has fallen down from that white cloud

The moon's its daddy. He'll be missing her.'

At home, the music box's ballerina

Lies on the floor, her dancing days all done.

'A ghost has done it! ' says the littlest one

Sheena Blackhall



# St Michael's Church, Betws-Y-Coed

The gravestone details are chipped out in Welsh,  
Betws-y-Coed, prayer house in the wood's  
A honeypot of sun where monks once prayed  
In Welsh and Latin, by the Holy Rood

It's seen much change, here in the Gwydyr Forest  
Sanctuary to merlin, buzzard, hawk  
Within the graves lie footpads, bards and shepherds  
Listen, as ghostly farmers turn to talk

A thousand years the yews have flourished here  
Under the flash of mediaeval glass  
Above the sacred doorway, swallows swoop  
A tiny cricket chirrup in the grass

Sheena Blackhall

# Stagwyse: 4 Scots Poems

ettin in Scots freely made frae Henry Baerlein's Inglis translation  
Al-Maarri (Persian, d.1058)

The days are riggin us in blaik  
Fur Him fa'd hing us like craws.  
There's nae daith fur the sun. I ken  
The centuries are nippicks o the nicht.  
Hinna ye heard wyce bodies gie the dreich threip? –  
That spite o wir bigsy wyes,  
Wir bit quaet shaddas  
Tied tae wir taes.

First ae religion's tapmaist  
Till anither's briered  
Fur man can niver thole a mortal weird,  
Bit ay sikks anither gowk-spikk.  
God's abune. We'll niver win  
Wir freedom, free hauns that  
Dig wir mools;  
Nor can we shakk aside the wechty cloud,  
Mair nur a slave can brakk  
The hefty chyne that rules.

2. A Thing Of Beauty Is A Joy Forever  
Birse farmer, circa 1963

Heich simmer makks the hochs a love-juice cauldron.  
Dauchlin astride a sunshine-drookit dyke,  
I heard an engine purr, an iron bawdron,  
The bowfin o a coo's-lick touslie tyke.

Syne suddent, frae ayont deep-shaddaed trees,  
A fairm-chiel drave his combine ower the lan–  
The jetty curls upon his broo ableeze  
Wi sun, as ony bonnie Grecian Pan.

Braid showders, glistenin broon, the loon, bare-backit  
Sat squar abune the corn, like a young God

Ridin alang the barley-rigs half-nyaakit,  
Watched bi a lustfu virgin an a bawd.

□

Reid kerchief lichtly wippit neth his chin,  
A mou wad sook the hinney frae a bee,  
Sweet fusslin, ower the birrin chariot's din; □  
He smiled full on me, wi a bull-black ee.

Twa birdies flichtered, coortin ben the corn, □  
Syne drappt tae couple, aa pretensions turred → □  
Their birdsang like the sounin o a horn, □  
Biddin me cast ma bairnhood tae the yird.

He raise tae cry his tyke, the stoot claith held  
The fite swan o his secret manhood trussed  
As faist's a muir-fire wi a breem is melled;  
I kent the gnaawin thorn-stob o lust.

111.

Flee oweset intil Scots frae Miroslav Holub's 'The Fly'

She doupit doon on a blastit willow  
Owerluikin a swatch o the fecht at Crecy  
The skirls,  
The greets,  
The manes,  
The killin an cowpin. □  
In the mids o the fowerteenth chairge  
O the French horse,  
She wis ridden bi  
A broon-eed laddie flee  
Frae Vadincoort.

She dichtit her shanks thegither  
As she dowpit doon  
On a gralloched shelt,  
Thinkin lang  
On the immortality o flees.

Wi a sough, she lichtit  
On the blae tongue  
O the laird o Clervaux.

Fin the quaet doon-drappit,  
An anely the fuser o rot  
Creepit saft roon the deid,  
An anely a pucklie airms an legs  
Jinked, puppet-like, mangst the wids,  
She sterted tae lay her eggies  
Ontil the single ee  
O Johann Uhr,  
The Royal Airmourer.

Sae it was  
She cam tae be etten  
Bi a swiftie fleein awa  
Frae the lowes o Estrees.

o Abyne for the folk o Aboyne an Birse

Drooned clouds waucht by...  
A whaup surveys its marra upside doon-  
Leesome licht an shade  
Play tig n' tag ben bays o jet an jade.

A mavis threeps, its dickie broon's the dyeuks  
That claik in boorachs in derk, midgied neuks;  
The antrin spirk ontill the loch o rain  
Draws watter-wabs, like ice on winnock-pane.

Wee coracles, the lochan-lilies showd;  
In ilkie scowp o petals glimmers gowd.  
A sma sun shines, a floer's caunlelowe  
Deep in the floatin blossom's scented howe.

Oxter-deep in the peat-mirled bree  
The iris bides; bullrushes sweesh an swee  
Pale as strae sodjers mustered in the reeds,  
Broon busbies cockin, tap o lang-stemmed heids.

The foggy seggs  
Wyde, far the heron stauns  
On shilpit legs.

Aik glowers, a wid-narcissus in a puil;  
A boatie lairs in girse, its beeriet keel  
Smores neth a tousled reet aside a wharf.  
Treelipin weeds wyve roon, a drookit scarf  
Wippin alang the watter like an eel;  
Green, glidin glimmer in the lochan's sweel.

A linn o leaves draps frae an ootraxxed birk—  
Aneth, a routh o ripples lap an lirk;  
Dyeuks plyter, plash an paiddle ower the loch.  
Winged will-o-wisp, a jinkin, bricht muir-moch  
Daunces. A torque o wavelets circle roon  
An isle far ghaistly mists come creepin doon.

Far aince a hame stude, noo's a larach's waa...  
Like thistledown, my kin hae blawn awa.

Sheena Blackhall

## Steens (27 Scots Poems)

s

A steen on an Anstruther beach  
Wizzened bi tides an winters  
Alpha an Omega o its ain weird  
Fuspers till itsel, a steekit shell

Aince, I cairriet a steen up a heich Ben  
Conquerin it, as I thocht,  
Roosted crampons litterin its braes

Eenoo I hear it lauchin in its corries  
I'd fooner gin I tried tae sclimm its foun  
Some-like thon beardie chiels at the wersh Pole  
Heistin a flag for Britain, afore their daiths.

Druid steens abeen ma gransire's ferm  
Steepit in starns an meenshine  
Staun as a portal, drooked in eirdly dwaum-licht

Plantin, for Manjusvara

A flute wis played aside the wids  
Far prayer flags flichtered in the breeze  
The reedy sabs upon the air,  
Melled wi the birdsang in the trees

A howp o yird wis howkit oot  
Mools-like, aside a clorty hole  
An there a sapling wis set doon  
New life, the sizzens cloor tae thole

An we stude roon kirkyairdie-like  
Myndin on ain fa lued this airt  
An voiced oor myndins tae the glen  
There, in the mid o its green hairt

A puckle stood, a whylie quaet,

An dowiie- like they drapt a tear  
Bit ye war wi us in thon wye  
Ye hid o bringin sense an cheer

I think ye lued the flute play best  
Thon day we laid the past tae rest

### 3. Flegs

A regatta o dyeuks, the rowan aneth the meen  
Ken nae fear o the derk  
Nor dae the deid fa lie in the mools in their timmer sark  
Nor dis the fite-faced hoolet wingin doon frae his hoose  
Wi a wheech an a stooshie o wings  
Dingin the pech frae a moose

### Welcomin Local

Ye can spot the toorists hereabouts nae bother  
Chips `n ice cream, thon is aa they ett

Aiberdeen ye come frae?  
Cauldest hole on earth  
Ye hae ma sympathy

Callander's braw, ye think?  
It wis, tll the social spyled it  
Ferryin oot the hameless  
Tae stap the B `n Bs

Still ye canna blame the hoteliers  
They've tae makk their siller somewye

Jist you watch yer purse  
That's aa I'm sayin.

### Tour, Inverness- John o Groats

At the station, a teethless schizophrenic

Gies a langamachie tae the unlistenin lug o mornin  
A rant tae an inveesible congregation

A weel-read chiel, his een  
Follae the prent on the newspaper  
His lips aywis moothin a kirn o styte

Trudy frae Texas has trailed her loon alang  
'What else is there to do for godsake Herbie! '

The rain trinkles sidiewyse doon the panes  
The driver's hair's peroxide à la Calgacus  
Fingers bestudded wi rings, oorrie an Gothic  
Post Celtic punk

The guide, Catriona, is nat'ral straaberry fair  
New oot o a gym slip. Ae skweejee tooth,  
Nae makk up, hair dreepin doon ower her left ee

We leave the Heilan capital, passin  
Thon weel kent Scottish eateries,  
The Indian Ocean Restaurant  
An the Route 66 American diner  
Tae cross the Kessock Brig on the Moray Firth  
Biggt tae withstaun an earthquake  
Vrocht as it wis, on the Great Glen's muckle faut line

Bottlenose dolphins dinna jink in public  
Glowm in happit fathoms, sleekit-like

The Black Isle breenges on us, a bleeze o hinneysuckle  
Reid kites, re-introduced, we're telt, frae Scandinavia  
Furl by banks o breem, gowden an blythe

Catriona gars us takk tent tae a sanbank  
Aneth the Cromarty Brig, far seals lie sprauchled  
Like creashie Brits beached oot in Benidorm

Ower the intercom, the driver's Glesga burr  
Spirks inno life. Here's Balnagowan Hoose  
The Scottish seat o Mohamed Al Fayed  
His tutor telt him Egyptians discovered Scotland



Fusky's mair tae the current driver's likin  
Tain, he says, distils Glenmorangie malt  
King James IV cam here tae auld St Duthac Kirk  
As penance for his pairt in his faither's murder

Noo we enter the Clearance Lan o Sutherland,  
Here, sheep tuik precedence abune the crofters  
Fifteen thoosan forced tae leave their hames  
Mist haps the shame o thon coorse dispossession

At Helmsdale, a statue o The Emigrants  
Honours the fowk fa fled a Duke's brutality,  
For the wersh realities o a life in exile  
Howkin hames in Canadian winter snaas  
Their torn reets bleedin memories an banns

Helmsdale, airt o the gowd rush, far, we learn,  
A chiel panned jist eneuch for a waddin ring

Wee clachans aince war a bield for the herrin gutters  
Back in the glut o heavy wechted nets

The day, the dowie corn is drooked wi rain,  
Boos, tashed an sypit, nearhaun weet eneuch  
For a shoal o Neil Gunn's bonnie siller darlins

An hinmaist, Johnny Groats. The Lanely Planet  
Caad it 'a seedy tourist trap', this winner o  
The Carbuncle Award for the dreichest neuk in Scotland.

Jan de Groote, a Dutchman, started the ferry  
Wi the blissin o James IV. Fowerteen ninety sax an still it's here  
Somethin maun be richt or twid be gaen.

n

The mist that bides in the corrie's briest  
Kens nocht o the wyas o men  
The skreichin moose in the midgied girse  
Kens less o the tod's deep den

Secrets keepit an secrets happt  
Whyles better tae be unseen  
The moose wid niver steer frae her nest  
Gin she luiked wi the hoolet's een.

Following Poems are Scots Owersets of Japanese Tankas

Kiyowara no Fukayabu 10th century poet

In the simmer nicht,  
While the gloamin still seems here,  
Luik! the dawn's arrived.  
In fit neuk o the clouds  
Has the traivellin meen sattled?

Fujiwara no Okikaze 10th century, poet and politician

Far then are they noo,  
In ma auld age sae far ben  
I can haud as friens?  
E'en Takasago's pines  
Arena friens of yestreen.

Tenchi Tenno (628-681) , Emperor

Roch the segg-mat reef  
Happin the hairst-sheilin  
O the Autumn rice-park; -  
An ma sleeves are growin weet  
Wi the watter dreepin throwe

Kakinomoto no Hitomaro 660-739,

Ochone! the fit-draan trail  
O the Ben-pheasant's tail  
Booin like doon-curved branch! -  
Throwe this lang, lang-trauchelt nicht  
Maun I bide beddit alane?

Sarumaru Dayu, poet active 708-715

In the Ben's deep founs,  
Stravaigin throwe crammosie leaves,  
Skreichs the wannerin stag.  
Fin I hear the lanely roar,  
Dreich, - foo dowie, is autumn

#### 7. Advice the Warld gied me

The fir tree telt me tae sink deep anchored reets  
The rose buss telt me tae hap ma flowers wi thorns  
The watter telt me tae saften ma rims an edges  
An whyles, tae lie like a puil  
Watchin the lift wi an ee as clear as glaiss

The vole, deid on the road  
Like a cowped black velvet purse  
Telt me I'll lie as still as her  
Fin the Sizzen cheenges

The cloud that cairries the rain,  
Telt me that I'm nae mair nor less  
Than a skirp, a spirk, a dot  
In the blawn win.

ells

Nae harebell can balance the buiks  
Nae ane can shee a shelt  
Bit atween the dowie firs  
The time atween mornin an nicht  
They shakk their trimmlin heids  
Sae braw sae blue  
Cowpin their thummles o scent  
In the widlan air

Meanwhile, the heron stauns like a caunle  
Watchin fur flames o fish

cht Thochts

Aa nicht whyle I sleepit  
Ma harns hae bin oot on the prowl  
Like huntin cats  
Bringin hame triesurs o bluid

10. Opium Quine: Owerset o Die Opiumraucherin (1926) Bertolt Brecht

She's rattlin wud tae chase the dragon's rikk  
Her days are nichts, her gloamins, a black-oot  
The hookah's an exhaust pipe in her moo  
She wadna ken gin fate sud stub her oot

Her heid's near baldie. She is gaun tae wrack  
She canna see herself as ithers micht  
A moose-wabbed blob-heid in the keekin glaiss  
She thinks she isna seen, a total sicht

Her ain doonfaa, it disnae gar her stop  
Naeb'dy will miss this smack heid fin she's gaen  
Her helpin haun's the heroin she takks  
The wyte is hers, aa hers, an hers alane

Taed: Eftir Tristan Corbière (Le Crapaud, 1873)

Yers is a fooshtie nicht sang  
Tae the meen's siller cauldron  
(howked oot frae uneirdly yird)

Hunkered, on-gaun parp parp  
Risin derk frae the tarn  
Far dae ye bide in the day?

Sheuch lintie, doon-cast bird  
Like a bard stukk fur a wird  
Grindin his teeth, I delicht

In yer pyocherin clear-  
In o the thrapple. 'I'm here

Aneth a stane. Sae, gweednicht! '

## 12. The Pipe: Eftir Charles Baudelaire

I'm the pipe o the outlinned poet  
The cruddiness o ma dowp, is a thochtie  
Like the first wife o a Hottentot.  
Nae doot it shows he's unca fond o me

I'm the licht o his life fin dule laps roon him  
Puffin rikk like the lum o a crofter  
Fas meat's on the byle  
Hame, eftir a day's wirk on the yird

I'm a cweel puff, fas furlin rikk  
Birls a cirrus o ether tae coddle him  
Fin he's bythesome he blaws a ring

Ma moo o fire is blockit frae his thochts  
Sae he can bask in the caimbed guffs comin  
Bibblin oot the stem, sae we're at ane.

## 13. Lessons

See thon wee fishie there  
Faither tells dother  
Pyntin oot troot  
In the skinklin watter

Twa eenies keek  
As the fins gyang skytin  
Ferlie o winner's  
The reward for wytin

Poser

On fower inch reid stiletto heels  
A fantoosh coiffured wumman  
Hyters ooto a Trossach humphy pathie

Dug lead in ae haun  
Pyoke o keech in the ither.

#### 15. Setterday in Callander

Sunlicht dapples the dyke  
A bletherin bairn babbles alang like a burn  
Blin-fair, blink bonnie an blythe

A heron steeps its taes in the river's mids  
Its lang raxxed craig glower-owerin in the seggs  
Gowans an buttercups skinkle on ferny braes

The wagtail flicks his wee dowp up `n doon  
Like a smoker tappin the ash frae his burnin fag

me Impune Laccessit

Thrissles in coorse or fair weather  
Are thrang wi thorns an spit  
The hurcheons o the plants,  
Like schiltrons o Bruce's army  
They brakk through cracks in stane  
Fin the sun teets throwe the wid  
They kittle up, like seannachies eftir a ceilidh  
Takkin a mornin dram  
Braid shoodered, sonsie, fearie  
Yer sheughside thrissle'll teir yer queats  
An shanks fur the pure hell o't  
Nae a single pacifist amang them

#### 17. The Cannie Slugs

The slug powked oot her hornies  
Saw a wirm atween the girse  
She bedd ahin a thistle  
For fear twis somethin wirse

Takk tent should be her motto

Brocht up cannie, unca guid  
She mind't me on ma mither  
Saw the trees bit nae the wid

#### 18. Nigredo/Albedo

Ma kinsman, a meenister, saw signs an veesions  
His fermer forbears risen frae the yird  
Troopin in, undeid in his kirk frae their laigh pew  
Ma mither's ghaistly faither  
Stude at her bedhead ae hale nicht afore an operation  
There in the derk like a caunle licht o wunner

Aince, bi the river bank, fin sun an leaves  
Melled in a shimmer o sunspirks  
I jyned the cosmic daunce, deid tae the bouns o eirdly  
Flesh an bluid. An oh, thon taste o the Aa in Ane wis guid!

#### 19. Schemies

Some fowk bide in schemes  
Wi £10 short fur the leckie  
Wi dug keech ower their trainers  
Wi thon etten an spewed luik  
Wi a sister on speed an smack fa's up the duff  
Wi twa bairns fostered oot  
Wi lassies wi barbit weer tattooed on breast  
Wi peroxide grannies spray-tanned tango orange  
Wi windaes boordit up

An ithers dinnae

#### 20. Vanished

A swift flew into the space between two clouds  
Then vanished like the mandolin I lost  
Like my friend who'd eaten the Blarney Stone  
And washed it down with a flagon of Glenmorangie  
Like the flute-man walking his tune across the horizon

Like the heartbeat of a home where love has died

21. Blue Boat

A blue boat sits on the loch  
A painted island

The only traffic's a crow  
Crossing a cloud

Two wrens shuffle  
A pack of rustling leaves

22. In the Temple of the Air

Six books unopened on a coffee table  
Two sliced ripe lemons glistening on a plate  
A soup of insects hatching in a pond  
A vixen sniffing round a compost heap  
A cuckoo hijacking a thrush's nest  
A gate that opens on a winding path

23. Hercule Poirot: A fictional Belgian detective created by Agatha Christie

Hercule Poirot, like HP sauce  
Brocht a savour tae aa he did  
His daith wis merked in the New York Times  
Queer, for a body fa niver lived

Five fit fower wi a heid like an egg  
A mowser shaped like a blaik bow tie  
Struttin in patent leather sheen  
Pince-nez perched on his een tae spy  
Ony wee facks, an he'll sniff them oot  
Like a truffle hog, ill deeds he smells  
He tracks crime doon bi Psychology  
Vive Poirot an his wee grey cells!

24. Nicht, Ballater



Wheesht. The corn is swyin aroon Tulloch  
In the bottle green parks, in the nae-yet ripe time  
Fowk sleep like cowpit dominoes in the clachan  
Minnie the fruit seller, fa guffs o paraffin an carbolic  
Snores in her flannelette gown, her mou ticht  
As a walnut shell, her auld chest whizzlin

Simmer thunner rummles atween the Bens  
On Nell's tea caddy the meen lichts on a jumbo  
Gowd an blaik. The flooers hae steekt their petals  
Like virgins hochs.

Wheesht. Third day's broth ferments in Annie's pan  
Donald the roader keckles in his sleep.  
Ma Gordon's washin skelps aneth the starns  
Like bats on their reest. The Dee  
Skinkles ower pebbles roon as Sabbath peppermints

Thirty-steen Jeannie glowers at the tickin clock on  
The mantle, like a trauchelt coo dowped in the hett ley

Wheesht. The aiks on Craigendarroch are newsin  
O tods an ernes. The hoolet, wi its muckle een  
Sits on the hinges o a branch. The midnight puils  
Are hotchin wi fern-tickelt troot. In sty up Gairnside  
Squallichin grumphies sook their midnight feed  
In moosewabs an shaddas. The nicht air's warm  
On the greenin gravesteens, ower by the brig far  
Chuckens sleep on their eggs, a lid o feathers  
The frienly knowes, gweed neebors, niver  
Wrang-fit each ither.

Wheesht. In meenlicht gairdens, veggies swall  
Like yeast. In Rosie's wyme anither sodjer's bairn  
Begins tae growe. Larick an birk showd saftly,  
Green an dwaumin

Little Maid o Norway

The little Maid o Norway  
Her faither's favourite floer  
Wis delicate's the violet  
That dwinnles in an oor

Her faither wis King Eric  
A Norseman, kind and gweed  
Her mither, deed in childbirth  
Wis Scots, o Royal bluid  
Her gransire Alexander'd  
Sent nobles ower the tide  
Tae ferry his ain dother  
Tae be the Norseman's bride

Bit on the hamewird journey  
Frae Eric an his wife  
The ship sank sailin hamewird  
Each Scots Lord tint his life

Drooned nearhaun Aberlour  
In fifty fathoms deep  
The Scots lords met their Maker  
An wi the fishes sleep

Ootower the cliffs at Kinghorn  
King Alexander fell  
Cowped bi his rearin stallion  
Doon tae his sair daith-knell  
The little Maid o Norway  
Noo, becam Scotlan's queen  
The English Lord, King Edward  
Pit forrit, syne, a scheme

His son an heir Prince Edward  
Wad wed her speedily  
Bit laith wis gweed King Edward  
His dother tae owerjie

Twa Scots lords war despatchèd  
Sir David Wemyss wis ane  
The tither wis Sir Michael Scott  
Wizard o micht an fame

The little Maid o Norway  
Wis cairriet tae the stran  
At eicht year auld, lamentin  
Lost faither's luv, an lan

A stormy ocean crossin  
Wi hairt-brakk's ill tae bear  
An as the boat reached Orkney  
The Maid wis stricken sair

The Bishop Narve o Bergen  
Spak prayers ower her heid  
Sir Michael Scott the wizard's  
Black Airts brocht nae remeid

The little Maid o Norway  
She deid within the day  
Quittin this warld o Sorras  
Wi Heiven's host tae play

## 26. The Auld Man o Hoy

The Auld Man o Hoy  
Fowk climm tae the tap  
Syne turn roon about  
An climm aa the wye back

## Swilkie Whirl Puil

Aff the pynt o Stroma, in the Pentlan Firth  
Furls the muckle Swilkie, faist, for aa it's wirth

The Icelan fowk'll tell ye, it hauds a muckle quern  
Stown frae the great King Frodi, that caused the thief tae murn

Stown bi the sea-king Mysing..his boat sank wi the wecht  
It's neth the watter grindin sea-satt for aa it's wirth

Thon's foo the sea is satty, it's auld King Frodi's quern

A-grindin satt foriver, far tides thegither kirn

Sheena Blackhall

# Steeplechase: The Creative Challenge Cup

Entries were high that year.  
Steel-eyed jockeys reigned back restive mounts.  
The usual mix – Press, Pros, Nouveaux,  
Amateur hacks who nurse bruised bank accounts.  
A cloud, big as an ice-floe,  
Sat Buddha-still on a cherry tree,  
A single cherry-tree, branchful of birds;  
But only one bird sang – ignored by me –  
A common bird, a thrush I think it was:  
I scarcely heard, blood rushing in my ears.  
A hush crept through the crowd.  
Electric pause. All senses narrowed to the course ahead.  
You have to make your mark,  
Ambition hissed, Before you 're dead!  
The starting shot was fired and I was off!  
Weekender plodders fell at the first hurdle.  
Gathering speed, my steed's hoofs sprouted wings.  
Galloping, galloping, galloping, we ate grass.

My thoughts ran quicksilver, were racing things.  
Riders were streaks, receding as I'd pass.  
Inspired ideas went chasing, chasing, chasing  
After the leaders, muscles tensing, bracing,  
The hurdles veering higher, higher, higher.  
My pony flew like Pegasus on fire.  
Success was worth all agony, all pain.  
Hurts became sticks to feed creation's flame;  
And then, that leap of leaps: defying fears,  
I soared and touched the kingdom of the spheres...

Fell tumbling, tumbling, like a withered leaf.  
A nightmare drop, no forest floor beneath.  
Within, I was a citadel of sand:  
How long I fell — a week, year — I forget. I cannot tell —  
I may be falling yet.  
But then it seemed my horse's hooves touched ground  
And, blessed note, I heard a tiny sound.  
A common bird. A thrush. Reality.  
The first I'd known,

Magnificent edifices, dizzying spires;  
Illusions rooted in dissolving land.  
Unstable, shuddering on a shifting shore,  
Disabling tides eroding more and more.  
Mansions were levelled, minarets shrank, tumbled.  
Reality fell down, foundations crumbled,  
Within the soul's dark night, profoundly lost;  
All boundaries crossed,  
As pictures danced and leered behind each glass  
And Satan spread a picnic on the grass.

Returned from that far country  
Where lightning's lunge can slash the proudest sail;  
Where many fall as did at Passchendaele,  
Or shaken, creep back home on crippled feet  
With scars man you meet...  
Dual nationhood may hide behind his smile.  
Land of the lost. I lived there for a while.

Sheena Blackhall

# Stick Man

Stick man, his gait is stilted  
From the gape that is his mouth  
A stream of eloquent words  
Random and unconnected  
Betray the pure source of a ruined mind

I have seen a cathedral thus,  
All grace and tumbled stones  
The ghosts of windows wide to winter frosts

This is the hidden hurt, the wickedest wound  
Most savage cut of all  
When reason is unseated from its lofty plinth  
Leaving the shambles of the self  
A shadow person, stumbling in the dark

Sheena Blackhall

# Stone Age Orcadians

Scratch Orkney and she bleeds history  
Neolithic settlers quit the face of the earth  
Entered their world of stone, the portal of death

Their years, a series of obstacles,  
Weather, wind, and rain  
And the howling darks of Winter  
Life snapped them off like sticks  
To kindle stories

In the Tomb of the Otters,  
All ages and genders, babies, mothers, fathers  
With otters' bones commingled  
In the Tomb of the Eagles,  
High on the Isbister cliff edge,  
Buried with lords of the air

At Maeshowe, great Neolithic chamber  
At the winter solstice  
The setting sun enters the inner passage  
Lighting the back wall like a trapped god  
Maeshowe, stripped and robbed by the Vikings  
Who carved a dragon, a serpent, a walrus  
And runic graffiti:

'Thorfinn wrote these runes'.  
'These runes were carved by the man  
Most skilled in runes on the Western Ocean  
With the axe that killed Gaukr Trandkill's son  
In the South of Iceland'  
'Haakon singlehanded  
Bore treasures from this howe'.

Scratch Orkney and she bleeds history  
The Ness of Brodgar ripped up all the history books  
Stone Age slate roofs, painted walls and pottery  
Now, the bones of the dead  
Are tapped to release their secrets  
Staved in skulls hint at truncated lives



At the Ring o' Brodgar, rearing from the heath  
Lightning has felled two stones  
A moment's work, far quicker than their rising

Scratch Orkney and she bleeds history  
Once a holed monolith stood in a field  
North of the Standing Stones o' Stenness.  
The Odin Stone. It stood for millennia,  
Felled by a 'ferrylouper' patching up a byre

Now it's low as the pebbles,  
Looks up to the wind-chilled sunshine,  
Orcadian Ozymandios  
Isolation is the birthright of the idol

The Stane o' Quoybune at Birsay, the Yetnasteen in Rousay,  
Are petrified giants. Every New Year's day  
Touched by the Gods, they walk.

The Stane o' Quoybune visits the Boardhouse Loch,  
Dips its head in the water, drinks its fill.  
Only those tired of life impede its progress  
To wait for a year, to travel slowly over the startled land,  
Think of it, after a twelve months tethered to moor  
To roam, with the boon of movement  
Like an ancient Juggernaut grooved and omnipotent  
Slow, and unhindered, crushing all in its way

Scratch Orkney and she bleeds history  
Wind and high tides stripped the grass from a mound,  
Hidden for 40 centuries by sand  
Protectively cocooned on the Bay o' Skail,  
In the West Mainland parish of Sandwick,  
The village of Skara Brae

Eight houses, linked by passageways  
Each house the same - a large square room,  
A central fireplace, a bed on either side  
A shelved dresser opposite the doorway.

Who'd want to wear dead mens' clothes?

Who'd want a life, brutish and short and hard?  
Which one of us would be tied  
To the shadowy peg of Neolithic terrors?

We are the grave tourists  
Voyeurs nosey-parkering into the past  
Staring into the rough-hewn walls and chambers  
Like the Vikings at Maeshowe,  
None leave empty-handed, trinket laden

Sheena Blackhall

# Stone Step

I am the 9th step on the Via Carlotta  
500 years of feet  
Have hollowed my stoney spine  
I sag, I crack  
Under the onerous weight  
Of Hunchback Time.

Hurriers clatter staccato soles along me  
I am the 9th click-clack  
Of wellington, slipper, clog  
My cold stone cools  
The small hot feet of children

In winter, I am ice  
My sides are curved with snow  
With a crumbling smile

I am the 9th step on the Via Carlotta  
I know my place  
Keeper of cools  
Of dust  
Nurturer of shade

I am a servant in the ladder of motion  
In the scheme of things  
The lowest unpaid maid.

Sheena Blackhall

# Stories

Some stories are like rosebuds  
Soft as the toes of babies.  
Others are hard as a factory's polished lino.

They were young once, these stories.  
Some have callouses  
Some missed the railway track  
Some died on it  
Some grow sour.  
Others improve with years.  
Some, you have to get down on your knees  
To coax from a dusty corner under an iron bed.

They roll out, rusty and dusty,  
Rhematically and stiff...  
But take them out.  
Encourage them to run  
Watch as they blow the cobwebs  
Out of their mouths and ears!

Sheena Blackhall

# Strange Encounters

I met a whippet on the road  
He wore a Balaclava  
To keep the sun from off his ears  
When in the Costa Brava

I met a frog upon the road  
Her feet encased in flippers  
To help her surf across the gloop  
When sliding on her nippers

I met a crow upon the road  
A bib beneath his bill  
One must protect one's feathers  
When one dines upon roadkill

I met a flapjack on the road  
You must beware of strangers  
To prove the point I snapped her up  
To underline the dangers

Sheena Blackhall

# Suckling Sow

A line of drawn, raised threads.  
Her underbelly's joined  
Like puckered silk:  
A seam of pink, plucked flesh.  
Teats, trembling pearls  
Of squealing piglets' milk.

Sheena Blackhall

# Summer

Hiccupping frogs land in the palm of the earth  
Under poppies, red as stigmata

Two snot filled boys on a bench  
Swop punch-lines, secrets, scabs

Wasps suck on the cherry tree's nipples  
Honesty's wearing its lacy summer frock

How much blue can one sky hold  
Before the darkness comes?

Sheena Blackhall

# Summer Holiday

The wife and I go where there's sun and sand  
We watch the pennies, fly where it is cheap!  
Australia's too far at our age, and daunting  
With sharks that rise attacking from the deep

Each day we measure out our daily fixes  
My high blood pressure, her cholesterol  
We never miss our medical appointments  
Our holiday insurance covers all ☐

That nice resort near Sousse...it knocked us sideways  
The TV said that Isis claimed the blame  
To murder folks like gas workers and pensioners  
And all unarmed. The killer, took cocaine.

We heard that Isis calls such resorts 'brothels'  
Next year we'll spend our hols in Harrowgate  
They've NHS...no fear of clotting veins there  
Or blood baths, though I'll need to watch my weight.

Sheena Blackhall



# Summer Pilgrimage

Take the pathway east  
Where the toads and froglets feast

At the yellow iris pool  
Beeches quiver, green and cool

Reed and petal, black winged moth  
Poppy like a scarlet Goth

Humming in the midgied breeze  
Insects seething in the trees

Split tongued vetch and foxglove tower  
Ragged robin's ivied bower

Speedwell, thistle, clover, birch  
Buttercups where sunbeams perch

South dips downwards to the lake  
The way the hinds on hoof-toe make

Pebbles, pockmarked, gnarled and pitted  
Water clashing, sandy gritted

Heron, neck outstretched and grey  
Greet the otter in the bay

Waves drop stitches on the shore  
Rotting trunk and mushroom spore

Westwards to the waterfall  
Here's the way that's best of all

Shamrock, bluebell, Tara's cave  
Creaking oaks, ache-filled and grave

Cow-spit, dog grass, clover, fern  
Forget-me-nots at every turn

Rowan, mole hill, docken leaf  
Fallen feather on the heath

Northwards rising to the sky  
Where owl keeps a weather eye  
For tiny movements on the grass  
Where the changing seasons pass

Thigh-grip foot tilt up the stair  
Leads to cloud and endless air

Sheena Blackhall

# Sunday Beach

Acres of pale green sunshine, the cold North Sea  
Has drawn a line beneath the snowy sky,  
That hangs like a Chinese plate streaked grey,  
Lit by the diamond ray of the dazzling sun.

Sparkling waters glitter in silver cups.  
Where the dark land rises black as a breaching whale,  
The voice of the sea is a wind, rushing through meadows.  
The sand slides over the shore like mead down a thirsty throat.

Footprints plod along like purposeful camels.  
Dogs race into the waves to bark and bite at the foam,  
Fixed in their dogged identities,  
Paw-paw-pawing prints the sea erases.

Water gurgles to meet the slippery shale,  
To-ing and fro-ing, meeting and parting,  
Two lovers, inextricably entwined.  
The smooth clean sea's white veins swell turgid, high  
To collapse onto the slithering strand.  
Thrust and suck, thrust and suck,  
Wet marriage of the tide,  
Two partners, Sea and sand,  
J'espere, j'espere, j'espere, they whisper,  
In ever unresolving lunar tensions.

Sheena Blackhall

# Surrender

Consider the word surrender  
The joy of delivering responsibility up to a masterful other,  
A man like my father who sorted everything out!

How comfortable, to serve and not to govern!  
How comfortable to act and not to fret!  
How comforting to be featherbedded through life  
With a champion looking out for you  
Taking the hard knocks, slaying the dragons,  
Bearding the Minotaur in his stinking den!

It is difficult being a woman  
It is difficult to learn the ways of a gender  
In love with mirrors, terrified of ageing

What harder work is there than childbirth?  
No primping or preening there, through the looking glass  
The howl of Agape, of a flesh-door forcibly opened  
Almost like a rape.

Sheena Blackhall

# Swimming Pool

I saw a salmon once, like an empty sock  
Its procreative powers leached away  
Senile, rheumy eyed, a near-dead thing  
Lolling in water, too far gone for motion

I roll around in the weightless womb of the pool  
Wings of skin, like grey fins hang from my arms

My body turns belly up and I stare at the ceiling,  
Its tiny lights like pin pricks, needling away the dark

Sheena Blackhall

# Sybil (From A 19th Century Headstone)

Sybil attended servant school  
Her god, all-powerful and cruel  
Spirited off this earthly jewel  
Now she is dead, yet beautiful

The willow bowed to see her pass  
Dropping soft catkins on the grass  
The brown beck was her looking glass  
Now she is dead, yet beautiful

At church, when all were gathered in  
Her master thundered, raged of sin  
Lamb of his flock, cowed by his din  
Now she is dead, yet beautiful

No child will suckle at her breast  
No lover find his ardour blessed  
Briefly awakened, now at rest  
For she is dead, yet beautiful

Never to grow to womanhood  
Never to know a nesting brood  
Never to show decrepitude  
For she is dead, yet beautiful

The kingdom of the grave is cold  
Here, clouds are clods. Here, sky is mould  
Hers is a story quickly told  
Sybil, long dead, was beautiful

Sheena Blackhall

# Taj Mahal

It reigns all glib jibes in.  
This blend of marble, myth and jasmine-scented air  
The sky, empties its moods into its pure face.

No-one thinks of its builders  
Who'd sweated, cursed, gone home and kicked their wives  
Who'd thrown their evening meal into the grate.

A British Princess wearing a crown of thorns  
Pricked by a spindle courtiers overlooked  
Wondered at love enshrined in stone  
That any wife could earn such Royal love.

Passing through snake charmers, peddlers,  
Lip curled Asian dogs, to enter this cool oasis  
Like a great gold plate a desert's yielded up.  
Each hardened brick of cynicism cracked  
A wall of Jerico brought tumbling down

Two sisters took the Taj home in a camera  
A batchelor shared his blood with a mosquito  
I rediscovered the actual meaning of awe.

Sheena Blackhall

# Tears

The world looks wobbly when you cry  
When tears are brimming in each eye

Then faces blur and smiles go flat  
Like mirrors in a fairground that  
Distort perception...make things fuzz  
You know...the way that sadness does

Sheena Blackhall



# Ten Blessings

Blessings be on drops of dew  
Blessings be on rainbow's hue  
Blessings be on mouse and snail  
Blessings be on bird and sail  
Blessings be on men of peace  
Blessings be on soul's release  
Blessings be on new born's bed  
Blessings on the goodly dead  
Blessings be on rose and pine  
Blessings on your head and mine

Sheena Blackhall

# Terminal

A bobbing cork, he lives a storm of days  
No battle-charge could ever be as cruel  
As waking up to his realities  
Helpless as winter cabbage, human fuel  
For parasitic pain to chew upon  
He is the ruin of a mortal man

All honour to his fight. He will flat line  
With slow paralysis, that cumber band  
That tightens, spreads, enshrouds him like a cape  
A living coffin, voice drool, mouth agape

Sheena Blackhall

# Thai Thai

Noodle-sellers. Fortune tellers.  
Silks, sarongs. Rubies, Khlongs.  
Temple cat. Spending baht.  
Mango stall. Shopping mall.

Sugar cane. Monsoon rain.  
Spirit house. Dragon blouse.  
Lotus flower. Siam tower.  
Tourist police. Conmen fleece.

Bitten dog. Floating log.  
Speeding scooter. Guard with shooter.  
Traffic jam. Low salaam.  
Deep fried cricket. Snake in thicket.

Toilet squat. Buddhist watt.  
Calomine lotion. Tuk-tuk motion.  
Mozzies hum. Immodium

Sheena Blackhall

# That Telling Look

One day, she looks at her husband  
And the fire's gone out.

Next, it's the house sale,  
Splitting up the assets.

What to do about the table?  
Like a Rubik cube,  
It's solidly interlocked

The table looks at her  
She looks at the axe

The husband loves that table  
'Take it! ' he says. 'It's yours..'

Sheena Blackhall

# The Address Remembers

The door remembers  
the layers of bottle green paint  
the brass-bulld letterbox  
the glittering granite steps  
the rhododendron bush  
the shining number plate

The hall remembers  
the echoes reaching the ceiling  
the spider webs around the hanging lights  
the coats stand with Zulu knobkerrie

Grandmother's room remembers  
lily of the valley, lavender  
peppermints and whiskey  
prayers and hatpins  
a velvet choker, an ivory elephant

The music room remembers  
sub zero cold  
the piano's polished face  
an unlit fire  
a frowning metronome

The parlour remembers  
a sheepskin table cover  
a back scratcher  
a panting dog  
an old mahogany sideboard

The loft remembers  
secrets, the roof  
a seaman's chest  
torn lino  
rows and rows of furs  
an overkill clothing

The bedroom remembers

windows with frost fairies  
the stink of Friar's Balsam  
clammy sheets

The garden remembers  
tom thumbs nodding  
sparrows twittering  
thistle and rosebriar waving  
chives, heather and mint

The shed remembers  
man things- tools and screws  
a place for everything  
everything in its place

The garden walls remember  
studs of purple flowers  
disembodied voices of the neighbours  
the world kept at bay

Sheena Blackhall

# The Alchemist

I write of the squelch and mulch of the compost vat  
How it gobbles and guzzles the clot and scum of leavings  
Beneath its lid a fizz of pulsing flies  
A fecund phalanx of wing beats smoulderings hissings

Lid lifted, they upsurge quick as a blizzard of black  
Massing and milling like Satan's acolytes  
The slop that is their horrid glory-hole's  
A riot of rot, a seethe of suckings and bites

Leaves turned ginger and cinnamon, saffron too  
Caged in a glut of slime and scattershot  
Of rat-droppings, eye watering sludge  
Is meat and drink for this Dante's insect zoo

Dropped in the cauldron's cauldron a robin perches  
Down from the sunlight netted in deep tree mesh.  
Up the chiaroscuro of bark, a squirrel  
Jinks through a jungle of branches, coffin and crèche

Alert for the mouthings and mutterings of hidden creatures  
Trees move at anchor like ancient toll gates creaking  
The footfalls of a fox pad into silence  
Into the wood like heart's ease after weeping

The vat continues its alchemy its magic  
Fermenting rot to vintage fertile soil  
A dragonfly hangs over the heady steepings  
Rising up like a lotus over a pool

Sheena Blackhall

# The Alliterated Robert Burns

If he wooed, he won the willing lady  
When he wrote, rich rhythms he outlayed  
If he drank, the deepest draught he swallowed  
When he ploughed, the plovers piped and played

If he laughed, the lilies leapt to hear him  
When he talked, such teachings he fermented  
If he sighed, the soulful willows swayed  
When he railed, the roughest rogue relented

When he died, the fiddler left his fiddling  
When rantin rovin Robin's corp was laid

Sheena Blackhall



# The Alphabet Of Life

Arching, aching and adoring  
Breaching, baking, bumbling, boring  
Chattering and caterwauling  
Dashing, doodling and divining  
Earwiggling and exercising  
Fishing, fabricating, flying  
Guzzling, growing, getting, going  
Hurrying, hip-hopping, having  
Inking, interviewing, itching  
Juggling, jesting, jumping, jeering  
Keeping, kindling and kayaking  
Laughing, loving, liking, looking  
Mooning, moaning, mixing, mourning  
Needling, nipping, napping, nutting  
Overlooking, ostracising  
Picking, preening, popping, poking  
Quickening, quacking, quenching, quarrelling  
Running, rustling, reaching, rhyming  
Spurning, squashing, spying squirrelling  
Toasting, turning, teasing, trumping  
Upping, undertaking, using  
Vanishing, veneering, viewing  
Washing, winnowing, and waning  
x-raying and xylo-phoning  
yapping, yellowing and yawning  
zipping, zoo-keeping, zigzagging  
ad infinitum, alphabet

Sheena Blackhall

# The Alternative Hospital

A drip dispensed mango and passion fruit juice  
Marigolds bloomed in the sick bowl

Baby elephants acted as visitors' seats  
Nurses played leap frog up the ward

Bed curtains were climbing clematis  
The bedpan held tropical fish

Ballerinas worked in the theatre  
Handling the surgeons swabs

The sheets were squares of meadow grass  
Nobody ever died at three am.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Ancestress

Her hair's electric, a shock of power  
Like sun rays wide in a woodcut

In the family furniture, she goes against the grain  
Her womb has vanished into the mist of a cold region

In the weather forecast of time, she's spring in Winter  
Cailleach and the Maiden merged in one

This is one broth of a girl, a long-nailed fury  
Whore and nun enmeshed. She rises over cities like a cloud  
Her tale is the umbilical I dangle from

She is peach blossom, moon, and rainbow  
I think I heard her whisper in my cradle  
Strange words from ancient birthings, solemn keenings

This ancestress could never have been swaddled  
She'd kick over the traces, give you a run for your money  
She wears a belt of skulls, and strokes them, tenderly.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Animal Refugees

I'm the only elephant in Phnomh Penh  
No more of my kind you'll see  
My wife ran off from the killing fields  
She's an animal refugee

I'm a Mekong crocodile from Vietnam  
When the napalm scorched each tree

I swam to Laos at dead of night  
I'm an animal refugee

I'm a slithery snake from Angkor Wat  
Where the mountains churned the sea  
Now tourists squat in my habitat  
I'm an animal refugee

When people's homes are ripped apart  
There's appeals on world TV  
No one saves us. There's little fuss  
For an animal refugee.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Annunciation Of The Egg

Horses smell sweeter than lilacs.  
Their buttocks are firm as a chaise long  
Their eyes are lustrous as lilies  
They canter like a brook across a ford.

Even now a horse is walking over my fragile memory  
As if it was treading eggshells in a green field  
The field I sucked like soda one summer's day  
Drinking it in with my eyes.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Arching Scythe

The farmer said, 'It is ripe for cutting'  
The stem said it was tired and dying  
With the ear of the corn I listened  
The earth for its seed was sighing

In pre-born blackness I swam like a fish in the sea  
I swayed like an ark  
A speck of creation. A magnet, gathering power  
Till fallen free of the Jonah-tunnel  
I twist and turn in a cold uncharted ocean  
With Death, the shark  
And beyond, the unfathomed Void  
Round as a womb, the Dark

Sheena Blackhall

# The Art Of Dying

Let me consider the manner of death of others  
R. fleeing from death from one quack cure to another  
S. submerged by disease as if swamped by an ocean,  
P, like a startled rabbit, a machine crushing his skull

And the family suicides, drowning chosen by two  
water rushing into their lungs and stifling life  
for the quieter vistas of longed-for calm, non-being  
they still rattle round in my thoughts like a child's marbles  
R.'s fingers tinkling a tune, P. turning a card

C. went thunder-struck like a felled oak  
his sister exiting in a tangle of tubes,  
someone threw a switch and her light went out,  
all the baggage of marriages and days went AWOL with her,

a shrinking sigh, M. took her secrets and sorrows  
into the dissolution of the grave, its worms and weeds

now they're forgotten like rain fallen into a pond  
like chaff taken up by the wind and blown asunder  
as I will be, and you, and you, and you..

Sheena Blackhall

# The Artist's Store

Faces turned to the wall,  
Cold-shouldering the world,  
Squares of canvas  
Lean against the dark,  
Stretched to the limit  
Blank, blind, anonymous  
As stones. Cut adrift from easels,  
Stacked in racks;  
Like an orchestra's brass section  
When it's silent, All taps and pipes,  
U-bends and gaping mouths  
Ugly as plumbing.

Each canvas-back is bare as a scraped pig,  
But turn the pictures round,  
You're hooked! They dazzle you; with their  
Quicksands of delight,  
They swallow you up and spit you out like pips.

In the artists' store  
Wonder hides behind frames like the sun that sleeps  
In an angels' folded wings.  
Magic sleeps, like the fire  
That flames from an actor  
His hero-greasepaint on.

Something miraculous happens when paint meets canvas,  
Old as caves, deep as dawn.

Sheena Blackhall



# The Aye Aye (21 Scots Poems)

Robin's Nest

Guid day noo bonnie Robin, an whit dae ye hae here?  
A nest I've bigged wi muckle care frae screivins far an near  
There are three eggies in thon nest. Whit bides inbye each shell's  
A hairst o wirds by seannachies an bards frae Ayr tae Yell

The first egg hauds a rowth o poems wad break yer hairt tae hear  
The secunt hauds a core o buiks o poets an their lear  
The third egg hauds a magic cloud, kens aa that ye micht speir

An I maun guaird thon sky-blue eggs frae tod, or piercin thorn  
A kintra's barberie needs a hame fur littlins yet unborn

st the Trees three Birds war Steerin

Amangst the trees three birds war steerin  
Deil the feather tae their name  
Three wee fledglins raxxin, skreichin  
Cheep cheep ma, wir wymes are teem

Gies a wirm, a hornygollach  
A sappy slug, a forkietail,  
An emerteen, a furry moch  
The squashed intimmers o a snail

Inbye a hoose, three bairns war steerin  
Bed-time, bit wi nae remeid  
Three wee bairnies, tcyauvin, skreichin  
Greetin fur a buik tae read

Stories steek their een at nicht  
Dragons, feys, in widlans deep  
Fin the meen shines in the derkness  
Stories pave the wye tae sleep

hin in us niver dees

Thrawn Janet haunts the midnight oor  
Somethin in us niver dees  
Tho Stevenson is nocht bit stoor  
A buik aince born takks wing an flees

Holy Willy...fa'd forget?  
Somethin in us niver dees  
Tho Burns langsyne is wirm's maet  
A buik aince born takks wing an flees

Rob Roy, daithless, wiolds his sword  
Somethin in us niver dees  
Walter Scott lies in the yird  
A buik aince born takks wing an flees

Iain Banks an Muriel Spark  
Somethin in us niver dees  
Flesh an bluid maun tirr its sark  
A buik aince born takks wing an flees

#### 4. Black an Fite Cat

The Black an Fite cat wi the lugs o fur  
Is chawin a paper bird  
wi a smudge on his snoot that micht be ink  
he's ettin up ilkie wurd

the paper wings hae sentences  
that melt on the tongue like a dream  
the black an fite cat wi the lugs o fur  
wad rather hae thochts than cream

#### 5. Dream o the Restless Bairnickie

I dreamt I jyned the Seelie Coort  
An rade upon a futterat's back  
It could baith flee an sweem the tide  
An breenge ben mony's a happit track

I slept aneth a puddock's steel  
I sprouted wings, sae moosewab licht  
I climmed the steepest watter linn  
Haudin a salmon's tailie, ticht

I steppit inno warlocks' haas  
An watched them steer their potions roon  
I wyved ma eildtrich wan, an syne  
I gart ten siller stars drap doon

I kept a tiger in ma pooch  
I liked tae hear it yawn an purr  
An fin a bogieman lowped oot  
It chased him wi a muckle gurr

I fand a gowden clarsach braw  
It played me mony's the canty tune  
An it could daunce baith but and ben  
Frae midnight's quaet tae noisy noon

An fin it rained, abune ma heid  
I held alaft a gowan flooer  
An fin it snaaed a robin tuik  
An warmed me in its feathery booer

I hurled on beeswings throw the mist  
Tae crannies mortals dinna ken  
Tae play wi feys an fire-flauchts \*lightning bolts  
The blithest bairnie in the glen!

## 6.A Waddin Toast

Be as the swans that glimmer ower the loch  
Waddit for life, until Daith dis them pairt  
Be as the Cushie Doos, that coort foraye  
Their dearies, wi a douce an tender-hairt

Be as the Ernes, sae fierce, an yet sae leal  
Far reengin, yet wi a returnin wing  
Be as the Hoolets, bosied in the laft  
Inbye their nest, fur comfort see them cling

As burnie seeks the sea, an trees seek the air  
The merriege o a man an wife should be  
As blythe as blossom in the aspen's hair  
As merry as the rowan on the lea

It merks the stert o halvin life's lang tcyaaave  
Fin twa lie doon tae taste life's sweets thegither  
Sae let the bells ring oot, the whisky poor  
Let aa gweed wishes bless this pair foriver

#### 7.A Scots owersett of 'Embrace', a poem by Billy Collins

Bosie

Ye ken the kitchie gemme  
Wipp yer airms aroon her ain corp  
An frae ahin, it luiks like  
Someyin's kinoodlin ye  
Her hauns, grippin yer sark  
Her fingernails kittlin yer nape

Frae the front it's anither maitter  
Ye niver luiked sae alane,  
yer crossed elbucks an daft grin.  
Ye could be wytin for a tailor  
tae meisur ye for a straichtjaiket,  
ane that wid haud ye really ticht.

#### 8.A Scots Owersett of 'The Father' by Nguyen Duy,

The Faither

In this airt there are sae mony  
Wha spent hauf their life in Viet Bac,  
The ither hauf amang the Truong Song Bens,  
Chiels an weemen wha aince ett reets, bamboo shoots fur maet  
An noo makk dae wi taro leaves an wud tendrils.

Their gran hopes hae turned their skulls fite,

Their kent clachans sae hyne awa noo, like hyne aff Sizzens  
A lifetime working in sun and rain,  
A lifetime waukin, an they've yet tae reach hame.  
Aa along the hyne horizon, faimilies dover ower in sleep.  
A faither auld as a thoosan knows, a mither auld as a hunner burns.  
Whan the wins cam, they'll hae tae arc an cercle, climm ower  
The muckle ins an oots o the wids tae win tae this airt.

Owersett in Scots of 'How Lies Grow', by Maxine Chernoff

The first time I leed tae ma bairn  
I telt him it wis his physog on the pot o bairn maet.

The secunt time I leed tae ma bairn  
I telt him that he wis the best bairn in the warld  
That I hoped he'd niver leave me

Of course I wint him tae leave me ae day.  
I dinna wint him tae turn inno ane o thon creashie shaddas  
Fa bide in their mither's hooses glowerin at gemme shows aa day.

The third time I leed tae ma bairn,  
Quo I, 'Isn't she bonnie? '  
O the wumman fa'd kittled him in his pram  
She wis auld an ill-faur't, wi a smitt

The fourth time I leed tae ma bairn  
I telt him the truith, I thocht.  
I telt him he'd hae tae leave me someday  
Or risk turnin inno a chiel in a dickie tie  
Fa etts macaroni on Fridays

I telt him it wis for the best,  
Bit syne I thocht, I wint him tae bide wi me foraye.

Ae day, he'll gyang awa frae me.  
Syne, fit'll I dae?

10.A Scots Owersett of 'Psalm before Sleep' by Peter Cooley

## Psalm afore Sleep

Except for ma corp, fa gyangs wi me  
inno this wee daith? Except for the starnies  
openin noo in the lift abune,

except for the boatie I fit inno sae snod,  
ma airms, ma shanks, chitterin tae thaw,  
dividin the muckle tides bearin me forrit.

Except for this sang, the win in my lugs  
That's jyned the lift, recitin a blaik music  
the aybydan life gaes on repeatin in seelence.

This is the wye oot: the morn I'm some ither body  
I'll meet ee tae ee, the ither shore raxxin up.  
This is the poem my wirds niver bring back.

Owersett in Scots o 'Silence' bi Primo Levi,

An unspukken kennin says that naebody spikks:  
in a glisk, aabodies' sleepin, elbucks rammed teetle elbucks,  
faain o a suddenty forrit an yarkin upright wi a stiffenin back.

Ahin the jist-steeked een, dreams brakk oot wi virr, the ordnar dream.  
Tae be at hame in a winnerfu hett bath.  
Tae be at hame dowpit doon at the table.  
Tae be at hame, an tell the tale o the hopeless darg o oors,  
o this niver eyndin hunger.  
O the slave's wye o sleepin.'

Div ye Dae?

Fit div ye dae fin the enemy's comin?  
Bide, or hide, or flee?  
Fit div ye dae fin the enemy's comin?  
Set yer beasts aa free?

Fit div ye dae fin the enemy's comin?  
Gie them a cheery wave?

Fit div ye dae fin the enemy's comin?  
Dig yer neebor's grave?

Fit div ye dae fin the enemy's comin?  
Makk them yer foe or frien?  
Fit div ye dae fin the enemy's comin?  
Sup wi a smaaer speen?

z on Jersey

Tea frae brummils, nettles, carrots  
Coffee frae acorns or parsnips  
Fags rowed ooto docken leaves  
As fur maet, rowe up yer sleeves  
Catch a rubbit, chap it up  
Makk a stew or soup tae sup

I Moued Charlie (1676-1782)

Mussel-moued Charlie, skinnymalink  
Heich as a pine tree, thin's a reed  
Fiery een that pierced wi a blink  
A lantern jaw like a corp lang deid

A gangrel body, he traivelled roon  
Aiberdeenshire, staff in his haun  
He lived till a hunner an five year auld  
A lantern jaw like a corp lang deid

He carried his sangs in a leather pyoke  
Wi a Bible hung frae a bittie o towe  
In the fifteen, oot, an the forty five  
A Jacobite hero throwe an throwe

The auldest body in Aiberdeen  
Twis at Auld Rayne he last drew braith  
The North British Wikkly magazine  
Wis sae sair-made it merked his daith

Mussel-moued Charlie, a Lesly born  
Fowk sing his ballads an airs the day  
Mussel-moued Charlie, hawker chiel  
Pairt o the plaid o a kintra's play

### Royal Mount

I heard a ghillie caa the Royal Mount, John Broon  
Of coorse it is masel, the sturdy Fyvie, strang in the hochs  
Haudin alaft the queen's braid sonsie dowp

An here we staun in a dreich doonpish at Balmoral  
Rain skytin aff ma neck on a dowie day  
John Broon luikin dour, a face like a torn cloot

He's wishin hissel inbye wi a warmin dram  
Dry kilt, the favour o his monarch's lug  
An fit mair fa's tae ken, an less daur say

I dream o ma hett stable, strae an hey  
The queen's o hardy stock. Nae doot  
Anither oor o dreepin weet  
Humphin her up the braes o the Royal seat.

### the Brig o Dee

Thrope the hairt o the derkenin toun, the toun o granite,  
The toun o gulls, skreichin ower siller streets  
By the lums on terraced reefs, the scholastic touers,  
Ben luvers' fusers an beggars prigginn spikk  
The great Dee ripples an rins tae the ootraxxed sea  
Wi a sabbin soun at the auncient, sturdy brig  
Far traffic poors inbye frae the Central belt  
Creep- creepie up frae its sides, the hoosin schemes,  
Wi their banks o chitterin daffs, their worn girse

The fisher wheechs his net ower the deeper puils  
An farrer doon the bows o the ile-rig ships, dunt  
An rain comes treetlin doon as the grey clouds shift  
Fin the lichts come on, an the nicht hings in the wings



O the starnie Heivens, thoosans o fowk lang deid  
Heeze on the shores o the river, ghaists o the gaen  
An ay the rain faas doon, as if the toun wis greetin.

17.51st Highlander poem: Owerset in Scots below

Là á Bhlàir's math na Càirdean  
Friens are gweed on the day o battle

Na diobair caraid's a charraid  
Dinna forsakk a frien in the fecht

Cuimhnichibh na suinn nach maireann.  
Mairidh an cliu beo gu brath.  
Mynd the Heroes fa gaed their aa  
May their Fame live on, frae the grave's twilight

18.A Puckle Doric Wirds I Like

Atween, abeen, aneth, anither  
Black affrontit, bairnie, mither

Cantie, vauntie, stooshie, cauld  
Craitur, clachan, clype, twa fauld

Daunder, dottlet, deave an deen  
Drookit, dreich, delichtit, steen

Faither, fa, fit, far an fan  
Feart, fash, ficher, flech an lan

Foonert, fyky, flittin, baa  
Glaikit, gypit, gulshoch, snaa

Hairstin, hirplin, hale an hoose  
Hinney, boolies, beddies, moose

Ingins, aipples, neeps, ill-tricket  
Jeloused, joco, dumfounert, strippit

Kirk, kist, lochan, lugs an loons  
Leid, laird, lea-rig, cweets an croons

Foggy-bummer, futterat, fooshtie  
Fair ferfochan, fowk an roostie

Ganzie, greetin, guddle, gype  
Gangrel, greetin, minkit, swipe

Mony, mochie, mools, an meer  
Neuk, oot, orra, onding, sweir

Puckle, peely-wally, puir  
Quine, reive, riggin, richt an muir

Raikin, roose, rowth, contermaschious  
Scaffie, scutter, skelloch, fashious

Semmit, sottar, speirin, skail  
Scunnert, stammygaster, kail

Tattie, teuchter, thrapple, thocht  
Trauchelt, toonser, thrawn an socht

Wabbit, watter, widen, wark  
Wizzent, yowie, wifie, sark

Oxters, shouders, gee-gaws, dyke  
Add as mony mair's ye like

Bewteis of the Fute-Ball:  
(An early short anonymous Scottish poem)

Brissit, brawnies and broken banis,  
Strife, discord and waistit wanis,  
Crookit in eild, syn halt withal –  
These are the bewteis of the fute-ball

a

See them on the fitba park  
Breengin up like girselowpers  
Heidin the baa, ram stam, like chairgin bulls

Duntin doon in the glaur  
Skirlin, skelpin in tries  
Rowin in dubs like grumphies

Snotters fleein oot their nebs  
Slivvers frae their mous  
Nae time tae dicht them awa

In sna, in a doonpish, in haar  
Wyvin their airms like tattie bogles

Hairy shanks, hudderie heids  
Sweirin, wenchin, boozin  
Wi ither celebs

An the fans, fechtin, malagaroozin ane anither  
Lauchin, ettin rowies an pies  
Greetin, skreichin, wyin bunnets an flags  
Weirin Wee Jimmy hats  
An eftir, the players  
Scrattit knees, stounin shins  
Pick up the pye packet  
Nae bad fur an eftirneen's wirk

Following Poems are Scots Owersets of Japanese Tankas

Lady Ise 870-935, influential daughter of a province governor  
E'en fur a span  
Cuttie's a jynt o a teenie segg  
Frae Naniwa's bog,  
We maun niver tryst again  
In this life? This, dae ye speir?

Fujiwara no Kintsune  
Nae the snaa o floers,  
That the hashin wud wind furls

Roon the gairden coort:  
Fit dwines an faas awa  
In this airt is I masel.

Fujiwara no Kinto (Fujiwara no Kinto) 966-1041, imperial counsellor  
Tho the wattergaw  
In its flow, stapped langsyne,  
An its soun is seelence;  
Yet, in name it iver rins,  
An in fame nicht yet be heard.

Lady Shikishi Naishinno (Shokushi Naishinno) 1150-1201  
daughter of Emperor Go-Shirakawa

Life! Thon towe o gems!  
Gin ye are tae eyn, brakk noo.  
For, gin yet I live,  
Aa I dae tae hide ma luve  
May at the hinnereyn dwine an fooner.

Scots Owersetts of 4 poems by Ono no Komachi.  
Ono no Komachi c.825 – c.900 was a Japanese waka poet, one of the  
Rokkasen—the Six best Waka poets of the early Heian period. She was renowned  
for her unusual beauty, and Komachi is today a synonym for feminine beauty in  
Japan. She also counts among the Thirty-six Poetry Immortals.

1) Did I catch a glisk o him  
Because I fell asleep  
Thinkin about him?  
If anely I'd kent I wis dream  
I'd niver hae waukent

2) Nae wye tae see him  
On this meenless nicht—  
I lie waukent, langin, burnin,  
Breist racin like a lowe,  
Hairt in flames.

3) The girselowpers sing  
In the gloamin  
Of my clachan on the Ben

The nicht, naebody  
Will veesit bar the win.

4) Since this corp  
Wis forgotten  
By the ane wha pledged tae cam,  
My anely thocht is winnerin  
Whether it's even leevin.

From English translations of the Man'yōshū and the book, "The Ink Dark Moon",  
by Hirshfield and Aratani.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Barley Queen (18 Scots Poems)

ckburn 1314

On passing the Signs of the Battlefield on British Rail, en route to Stirling

Stirlin Castle lay in Inglis hauns  
Beseiged bi Scots, a biggin strang an stoot  
Edward, the Bruce's brither, ringed it roon  
Ettled tae sterve the Suddron sodjers oot.

The Englishman, King Edward traivelled North.  
Wi wechty cavalry, Welsh bowmen, infantry  
Weapons, siege engines, buglers, meat an wines,  
Wi Knichts an Barons, prood clanjamphrey

Aa merched tae Stirlin, tuik the Roman road.  
The Bruce placed men wi widlan at their back  
He chuse his grun fu weel, a nerra gap  
Atween the trees, should ony challenge brakk

He set his pikemen heich on Gillies Hill,  
Close whaur the the road fords ower the Bannock Burn.  
Inbye the wids he blockit paths wi boughs,  
Leavin the Inglis feint the room tae turn

Tae cowp the Inglis shelties should they chairge  
He howkit pits, an happit them wi sticks,  
An syne, he wyted, wi his rings o spears.  
As stinch a waa as ony vrocht wi bricks

Fecht in brukk oot, the Scottish pikemen held  
The beast o War, sherpened its teeth an cleuks  
Like ninepins Inglis cavalry wir felled  
Men crawled tae dee wi fiers, in bluidy neuks

The Inglis forces crossed the Bannock Burn  
Henry De Bohun, a young Inglis knicht  
Spied a lane horseman on the Scottish front  
Weirin a croon, the Scots King in plain sicht

Forrit De Bohun rade wi deidly lance

As Robert raised his battle-axe alaft  
Stude in his stirrups, jinked the comin cloor  
An split the foe-man's skull-bane fore an aft

Thon nicht the English camped, Bruce planned ahead.  
Ower fu o war's consarns tae brakk breid  
The hinmaist fecht wad be upon the morn  
The verra day the Baptist, John, wis born.

Bi day-brakk, aa the Scots war in position.  
King Edward, saw the Scotsmen kneel in prayer  
An leuch, nae kennin they socht Heiven's blessin  
Thinkin they prigged for mercy, ooto fear

The Breckenoch wi St Columba's banes  
The Abbot o Arbroath, fur aa tae see  
Held heich. Twid lead them, like St Andra's Cross  
Through fear an pain tae sair-earned victory

Straicht ooto Revelations, aa in reid  
The Horse o War breenged oot, a fiery steed  
The Bruce's pikemen, stinch as porcupine  
Cowped Inglis shelts at reid-raw gory meetin  
The Scotsmen focht wi steel in ilkie spine  
Welsh bowmen skewered their Inglis fiers retreatin.

The bonnie Bannock burn wis smored wi deid  
Ran crammosie for days wi sodjers' bluid  
Edward tuik ship fur hame, a beaten cur  
Fecht in for freedom gies the weakest, virr  
An smeddum, tae rise up an takk a staun  
Tae strive fur liberty an native lam

ma Grandmither telt me

Tinkler, tailor, sodjer, sailor  
Rich man, puir man, beggar, thief

Coont prune stanes tae larn fa ye will mairry  
Ye'll grow up tae be a wife  
Skail satt an haive a pinch across yer showder

Inno the Deil's ee, he nicht be watchin  
See a fite shelt, makk a wish fur luck  
Sex isna fine at first. It growes on ye.  
The weird ye'll dree, ma lass, ye winna jink  
A lassie's education is important.

### 3.A Gey Pernickity Chiel

As eaters o aipples gyang,  
Mr. Feenie wis maist pernickety  
Ayewis peeled the skins aff widdershins

Watch him stert frae the stem,  
Takk teenie nippicks, like a field moose  
Haudin a brummle fruit

He has donated his organs tae posterity  
Imagines them cupped in a surgeon's cannie hauns  
Imagines the surgeon unzippin his birthday suit

Mr Feenie powks a pear like a podiatrist  
Checking fur latent bunions, signs o foosht  
Ye'd niver see him ett a black banana  
Or use a speen marred wi a toosht o roost

Scots owersets from poems by Ivan V. Lalié, a Serbo-Croatian poet,

### Thon Muckle Meen

Thon muckle meen that's jist about tae set  
Bonnie an byordnar big, in orange bluid  
Thon sweet, unroondit miracle, ae blaik winter mornin  
Ower the sherp jynts o fooshtin reef rig-banes  
Oh hyne-aff wytin o mine, this witnessed meen  
O hinney an stoor ower chaumers noo asleep  
Far the braith o luvvers has mistit the seelence  
On windaes as brittle as ice on puils

A meen wi nae glaisses, gun nor smile  
Gaun by my life like a boatie, a thochtie dowie



As I staun here, staun here upon the shore  
Ma hauns in ma pooches, an dinna meeve  
For I hate the meen, this muckle meen  
Tellin me: yer alane, an disna takk tent o me.

Rider: A Fresco

Cuddy an laird o the bridle, breengin as ane  
In the thrall o iron. The frichtened girse  
Sooks in its teenie tongues, an a grue rins  
Ower the simmer seelence, teucher than glaiss  
The laddie is meevement, air is resistance won.

Ee tae ee. Like wafter in watter they skyte  
Edgeless, inno each ither. Cleuks aneth  
The stammach, the hatred o flinty teeth  
The cuddy's laithered in swyte, its een are gapin.

The lance o a suddenty, ripe wi the rider's wecht  
Abeen the dragon, as cuddy an maister rear  
Aneth the fogg, the yird, shakkin in fear  
Has turned tae stane. The dragon's cheenged tae sclate.

Owersett in Scots o a poem by Ivan V Lalic

Places We Love

Airts that we lue live anely throwe us,  
Space dinged doon is anely a dwaum in aybydan time,  
Airts that we lue we can niver leave,  
Airts that we lue we lue thegither, thegither, thegither

An is this chaumer really a chaumer, or a bosie,  
An fit is aneth the windae: a street or years?  
An the windae is anely the merk left bi  
The first rain we understude, foraye returnin,  
An this waa didna define the chaumer, bit perhaps the nicht  
That yer son began tae meeve in yer sleepin bluid,  
A son like a butterflee o flame in yer ha o keekin glaisses,  
The nicht ye war frichtened by yer ain licht,

An this chaumer leads inno ony eftirneen  
That ootlives it, foraye stappit  
Wi yer casual meevements, as ye steppit,  
Like fire inno copper, intae ma anely myndin;

Fan ye gyang, space closes ower like watter ahin ye,  
Dinna luik back: there is naethin ootside ye,  
Space is anely time seen in anither wye,  
Airts that we lue we can niver leave.

#### 6. An Owerset into Scots from Couplets 20, by Robert Mezey

##### Couplets 20

Dinna be feart o deein. The glaiss o water  
Is quickly poored inno the wytin joog

Yer physog'11 be nae langer eese tae ye. The keekin glaiss  
Grows mair an mair see-throw, naethin is happit

It's nicht in the farrest provinces o the harns  
Seein faas back, inno the great sea o licht

Foo fey, tae see thon skinklin green flee  
Wauk onno the eebaa, rubbin its hauns an prayin

Dinna be feart, ye gyang tae far ye war  
Afore birth pushed ye inno this cauld licht

Lie doon here aside Empedocles  
Be jyned tae the sma grains o britherhood

#### Owersett in Scots o The Peace of Wild Things Bi Wendell Berry

Fan wae for the warld growes in me  
an I wauken in the nicht at the smaaest soun  
feart o fit ma life an ma bairns's lives micht be,  
I gyang an lie doon far the wid drake  
reests in his bonnieness on the water, an the muckle heron feeds.

I come inno the peace o wud ferlies  
fa dinna tax their lives wi forethocht  
o wae. I come inno the presence o quaet water.  
An I feel abeen me the day-blin starnies  
wytin wi their licht. Fur a whyle  
I reest in the grace o the warld, an am free.

Owersett in Scots o the poem Sometimes, bi Hermann Hesse

Whyles, fan a bird skreichs oot,  
Or the win swypes ben a tree,  
Or a dug howls in a far aff ferm,  
I bide quaet an lippen a lang time.

Ma sowel turns an gyangs back tae the airt  
Far, a thoosan forgotten years syne,  
The bird an the blawin win  
War sib tae me, war ma brithers.

Ma sowel turns inno a tree,  
An a craitur, an a cloud bank.  
Syne it cheenged an fey it comes hame  
An speirs me questions. Fit should I repon?

Owersett inno Scots o Flying Inside your Own Body, bi Margaret Atwood

Yer lungs fill an spreid thirsels,  
wings o pink bluid, an yer banes  
teem thirsels an become hollow.  
Fin ye draw braith ye'll lift like a balloon  
an yer hairt is licht as weel an mighty,  
stounin wi pure blytheness, pure helium.

The sun's fite wins blaw ben ye,  
there's naethin abee ye,  
ye see the eirde noo as an oval jewel,  
skinklin an seabluie wi luve.

It's anely in dwams ye can dae this.

Waukenin, yer hairt is a shakken neive,  
a fine stoor staps the air ye breathe in;  
the sun's a hett copper wecht pressin  
straicht doon on the think pink rind o yer skull.

It's aywis the meenit jist afore gunshot.  
Ye tcyauve an tyauve tae rise bit ye canna.

### German Poem

Naebody unnerstude  
fit the wee German poem wis aboot  
Aabody said it wis complex, it wis deep  
Nae kennin the spikk ava, jeloused it wis rale profound

I speired at the poet:  
Wis thon poem philosophic?  
'A fyew wirds haein a lauch' quo she.  
Nae sae much ode as comic.'

My time...will it be lang's the clouds in sky?  
Ay  
My weird, will it be roch's the hoodie craa?  
Ah...  
Should I takk flicht, or be a loveless bride?  
Ride

ona

\*Catriona is the name of a malting barley grown on Fadlydyke Farm New Deer

Simmer wins are saft an warm  
See her in a Buchan Park  
Swyin, bonnie blithe an swack  
As gloamin deepens intae derk

See Catriona toss her pleats  
The hoolet flichters up abeen

Starlicht stealin ower his wings  
Ay she daunces neth the meen

Green her dress, this Buchan quine  
Bred tae turn a laddie's heid  
She'll set passions in a lowe  
Smeddum's in her fiery bluid

Slowly, up Catriona growes  
Mony moths draw tae her flame  
Grown an simmered in a still  
Whisky Katie is her name

Speirin

Fit did ye say ye cad yersel?  
Ye didna?

My name's Joe. Yer nae a local body  
There's somethin brocht ye hereabouts aa richt.  
It's nae ill-fashence tho, that gars me speir  
Ye micht be in the wrang place, michtn't ye?

Yer nae? Yer affa dour  
Weel weel, gweed nicht.

Turra Coo tune: Paddy McGinty's Goat

In the year o nineteen thirteen there arose a great to-do  
Fin Lendrum's Robert Paterson wis pairtit frae a coo  
He wadna pye insurance tax sae Sherriff Keith he came  
Up tae the ferm the value o the unpyed tax tae claim

The family coo wis staunin chawin quate oot in the park  
Tae full Lloyd George's coffers it wis liftit wi a yark  
Bit fin it won tae Turra weel, fowk's rage they did reveal  
An they peltit aa the Sherriff's men wi neeps an eggs as weel

Lendrum tae Leeks it wis peintit on its side  
Anither fermer bocht the beast bit losh she wadna bide

The fowk in Turra brocht her back wi ribbons roon her neck  
The famous shorthorn milker fa wis better than a cheque

There wis firewirks at her hamecomin, fower thoosan o a crowd,  
See the Conquerin Hero comes the band wis playin lood  
Wi buntin hung frae windaes, twenty members o the police  
Come ower frae Inverurie tae try tae keep the peace

Noo there's holy coos in India, a coo that lowped the meen  
Wi a kittlin an a fiddle an a bosker o a speen  
Bit Turra's favourite hero is the cratur wi the horns  
That gart Lloyd George roar oot as if she'd trampit on his corns

A postie cad Mark Gartly climmed the heicht o Bennachie  
In a costume wi coo-udders roon his hurdies swingin free  
There's bin raffles, quiz nichts, antique fairs, aa kinno ploy an game  
Tae pye tae raise a monument tae Turra's coo o fame

I'm telt it will be biggit ooto bronze this famous coo  
Wi its teets like baby bagpipes an a smile aboot its moo  
Bit ae thing wi this statue that'll niver come tae pass  
This coo'll be eco-frienly an blaw oot nae methane gas

Prince Charles the Duke o Rothesay, unveiled the Alford bull  
Imagine if ae meenlicht nicht it gaed oot on the pull  
Gaed coortin in the gloamin wi the swanky Turra coo  
The calfies wad be cast-iron hits frae Slains tae Timbuctoo!

#### 15.A Sang o Portsoy: tune, the Bonnie Ship the Diamond

Portsoy it is a fishin toun upon the Moray Firth  
An braw the boaties bob therein aroon the herbour girth  
The partens an the labsters they stap each fishin creel  
The dolphins, whales an porpoises  
Aa dance the Portsoy reel

Chorus:

Oh Portsoy by the sea far the wee boaties sail  
It kens the joy o briney breeze an the dunt o gurly gale

An aince a year gin ye are here, and seafarin's yer wish

They'll larn ye foo tae mend a net, makk ropes or catch a fish  
They'll tell ye o the smugglin days aroon the Star Inn Bar  
The smugglin crews shared oot their dues an supped a foamin jar

Chorus etc.

Gin ye should traivel tae the East, Boyne Castle for tae view  
The ghaist o Mary Beaton micht appear tae gar ye grue  
Gang tae the shore an frae the san lift up a pearly shell  
Ye'll hear drooned men frae mony wrecks their tales o shipwrack tell

Chorus etc

An should ye fin some serpentine, the merble o this airt  
Jist mynd the Palace o Versailles has a swatch o't at its hairt  
For fowk fa like a couthie dram Glenglassaugh's unca gweed  
It'll cheer the dreichest, dowie day an pit fire in yer bluid

Chorus

Oh cast yer een abeen the waves far gannets flee an skirl  
Whyle frae the cliffs the puffins dive an roon the watters birl  
The guillemots an pyoolies skreich heich in the herbour skies  
An the heron at the herbour waa wytes fur the fish tae rise

in a Suit

A Memsie loon o fermin stock, John Milne set aff fur Kings  
An prued the sheltie frae the park like Pegasus had wings  
He trained up tribes o dominies gart aathin roon him sproot  
An screived o orra loons an dubs in Doric...in a suit.

He warn'd his student chairges they maun cheep afore they craw  
An be eident, fair an couthie thon's the best advice ava

Maiden o Drumdurno: Tune: Barbara Allen

Twis in the month o sweet July fin hye is richt for raikin  
The maiden o Drumdurno stude in her ferm kitchie bakin

An as she trauchled at her darg aside the open yett  
The bannocks an the simmer sun, turned her cheeks rosy-hett

Alang the road atween the park, a stranger chiel cam ridin  
A cape o black, a wide-brimmed hat, his countenance a-hidin

He tied his shelt at the stane waa, an tae the hoose cam stridin  
I'm near tae dee o drouth quo he, a drap tae drink I'm seekin

She socht him in, gart him sit doon, brocht him a jog o watter  
An ay he watched her, as he drank, Drumduerno's weel-faired dother.

I'll wager here, a waddin ring, the finest gowd yell see  
Gin I can bigg a road frae here, tae tap o Bennachie

An aa the while, bake ye yer breid, an gin ye bake it faister  
The wager lost, I'll turn awa, takk fa ye like for maister

The lassie leuch, she thocht him daft, nocht bit a gangrel body  
She shook his haun, turned tae her floer, an badd him makk his roadie

But ere an egg cracked in the bowl, tae Bennachie she keekit  
An saw a sicht that gar her wish, her bonnie moo she'd steekit

He'd bigged a road up tae the tap, the cinnors flew like lichtenin  
An back tae claim his prize he flew, the trap aroon her tichtenin

She's fleein fur Pittodrie Wids, her hair ahin her fusslin  
Auld Nick Hissel, frae lowes o Hell, sae close her back wis birsslin

Wi aa her nicht the lassie prayed, as Cloutie catched her showder  
The Lord sent doon his mercy syne, an cheenged her tae a boulder

An noo she stauns, Drumduerno's Quine, a comely stane is she  
Her keekin glaiss, still in its place, at fit o Bennachie

Some say o nichts, fin dyew is saft, she wauks the world alane  
The speerit that the Deevil wooed, men caa the Maiden Stane.

Bullers o Buchan: Tune: Blow the Man down



There's a landmark in Buchan that catches yer braith  
Staun firm, niver look doon  
Ae slip an ye'll plunge tae a wattery daith  
The ocean maks war on aa at its foun  
Birds are their citizens, heich ower the sea etc  
Kittiwakks, razorbills, puffins sae wee etc

Shags hing their wings ower the cliff-taps tae dry etc  
Fulmars an guillemots fecht on the sly etc

Smugglers an pirates kent ilkie dark cave etc  
An mony's a sailor slipped here tae his grave etc

Bit gin yer a seal or a porpoise sae braa etc  
Ye'll lowp frae the waves an ye'll lauch at it aa

Takk tent or the Bullers will dash oot yer brains etc  
Gin ye think this is fearie, ye hinna seen Slains etc

Sheena Blackhall

# The Beard: Callander Bookshop

'I must set fire to my beard today'  
The beekeeper's husband said  
And the blue tits told the chaffinches  
And the chaffinches upped and fled

By the pool the tattling frog-lings  
Fearing a conflagration  
Dived in their emerald leggings  
In goose bump consternation

The beekeeper's husband's tawny beard  
Is thick as Jericho's walls  
A herd of bison could shelter there  
It's as long's Niagara Falls

This remarkable outcrop of Highland Hair  
As springy's a trampoline  
Would burn so bright, 'twould be seen at night  
From Rome to Pittenweem

But the wise old bees were unconcerned  
For there's often smoke without fire  
'Such a wonderful beard' their queen declared  
Could be lent out for hire,  
To a Russian Tsar or an oil Emir  
To impress the noxious throng  
Or laid as a living carpet, for a saint to walk along.'

From Callander to Angola, the fame of the beard has spread  
It's said that a Dutch explorer was found in its depths half dead  
Bald chinned bandits from Chile, pirates from Cannes to Calais  
Fierce Afghans wearing turbans have bid for it on e-bay

A radar seeking survey, the following contents found  
The Marie Celeste. A baker's dozen  
The Duke of Wellington's second cousin  
A tribe of hitherto unknown Celts  
A Chinese dragon. Lochgelly belts  
And much much more to amaze and astound

And a branch of the London underground

But a conservation order

Means the beard must remain unlit

By Royal proclamation

May the sun not set on it!

Sheena Blackhall

# The Beautiful Snails

An armada of beautiful snails  
Is gliding across the lawn  
On wonderful silver trails

An Armada of beautiful snails  
In full sail, their elegant horns  
Unfurled, like Trafalgar rigging  
Are peering with glistening eyes  
Through dewdrop antennae  
At the dawn they are navigating

Each tortoiseshell cloak  
Is curled as a sleeping fox  
Such Celtic linking!  
They ripple across the cat-walk  
Like models, slinking

Sheena Blackhall

# The Beserker (16 Scots Poems)

Wolf o Badenoch (Alexander Stewart, 1st Earl of Buchan 1343-1394)

The Wolf o Badenoch had mony lairs  
Glen Lyon's Castle Garth, Kingussie's Ruthven  
Drumin bi cauld Glenlivet, Lochindorb  
Names kent an cursed bi aa the Host o Heiven

He sired forty bairns bi orra jaads  
Syne turned his barren, lawful wife aside  
Thus Moray's bishop, Alexander Bur  
For richt an virtue tuik his lady's side

A monk wis sent tae excommunicate  
The Wolf. At Lochindorb he tracked him doon  
An for repon the haly cheil wis flang  
Inno the Castle pit tae sterve an droon

The Wolf rade oot tae spulzie Forres toun  
Pluscarden Abbey brunt: his rooze wis lowsed  
Tae Elgin he brocht flame an sword an wae  
The Lantern o the North foraye wis dowsed

Men spakk his name in fusers, crossed thirsels  
Until the nicht a veesitor in black  
Cried inbye Ruthven Castle ae dreich gloam  
An eildritch pyoke o chessmen on his back

Aa nicht Auld Cloutie wi the coorse Wolf played  
Aa nicht a deidly storm rang roon the haa  
Bi mornin ilkie servant chiel lay killt  
Sterk on the muir ootbye the Castle waa

An in the banquet room, the Wolf hissel  
Lay cauld upon the brod wi glowerin een  
His sowel in Hell, far aa the Damned maun bide  
The verra iron nails rived frae his sheen

His tomb is at Dunkeld. Step cannie there  
Nae effigy or slab can bind him in

Fariver coarseness wauks in human form  
The Wolf o Badenoch's ae step ahin.

## 2.A Capsule Hotel

Gin yer skint an ye bide in Japan  
Takk a keek at the new hoosin plan  
For fowk biggt like a sprat  
Ye can hing up yer hat  
In a capsule. Watch oot fur yer knees!

io Nelson: Tune We're Bound for the Rio Grand

Horatio Nelson wis seasick each day  
Aywis ailin  
Horatio Nelson wis seasick each day  
Bit he's won him a plinth wi a stan

Chorus  
Sae Huzzah, medics Huzzah  
Bring yer text buiks  
For surgery, tropical ailments aboon  
In the corp o this seafarin man

Malaria, typhus, thon tar caughted them aa  
Aywis ailin  
An a steen frae a sanbag tuik oot his eeboo  
Bit he's won him a plinth wi a stan

His humerus bane wi a musket wis splayed  
Aywis ailin  
His richt airm cam aff wi the surgeon's blade  
But he's won him a plinth wi a stan

A Frenchie merksman gaed this Lord a begeck  
Aywis ailin  
He bruck his foreheid wi a shot frae the deck  
Bit it's won him a plinth wi a staun

Sae vauntie o ribbons an medals wis he

Aywis ailin

He wis killt bi a shot tae his ain Victory

Bit its won him a plinth wi a staun

e's Nowt

The stots in the byre hae wide set een

Wi full lang lashes o purest cream

Curly powes an sharny shanks

Libbit an polled wi hairy flanks

Their story eyns at the Killin Hoose

They'll niver growe auld. They're fat an crouse

They're kittle an swack thon furreign breed

A short roch life, an a lang time deid

5. The Wids o Clune: for the Pitcowdens project, Durriss

If ye gang by Durriss, step in the wids o Clune

Larick an aik trees will keep ye snod an dry

Dauncin unner Douglas firs, bairnies late or soon

Learn tae lue the lanscape on the story wye

Mony cam tae visit, by the Curly Brae

Will they finn a wallie there, hidden in the girse?

Will they finn a Cloutie Tree, far leaves and wishes swey?

Wheesht! Stand in seelence. Reid squirrels pass!

Farrer up the knoweheid, there's a beerial cairn

Steen Circle lies there aneth the winny skies

Bairnies frae Pitcowdens dauchle here tae learn

The tree names, the flooer names, the wud birds' cries

Tribbled Toun

After the painting *The Troubled City* by Ken Currie, Scottish National Gallery

Berlin at the wersh eyn o its glory days

Frae the Brandenburg Yett tae the Reichstag

Rowed in a lowe.

Corp-like shaddas, hooded, fearie, masked  
Burnin files an papers  
Ghaistly, gurly, the ruins far  
Loons war hingit on lamp posts.  
Bairns, thrapplit like chuckens  
Fa wadna fecht

An syne, the rummle o Soviet tanks,  
The skirlin o sodjers, roch an murdrous  
Shots brakkin windaes, shells explodin in backies

An ongaun orgy wi weemen skreichin for help,  
Rifle butts duntin doon doors  
Killin, nae prisoners taen on either side.  
The daith o a war that didna dee wi a sigh.

#### 7. The Chiel fa Tamed the Craa: William Glennie    Tune: Drumdelgie

In the year o 1941, near hauf wye throwe the war  
In Meldrum toun a chiel wis born fas skills wad takk him far  
A clivvir loon he left gthe skweel, his learnin scarce begun  
Tae takk a fee at Hillocks wi a fermer an his son

He fed upon the knotty brose weel steered in his brose cup  
An wirkit Meg the muckle shire bi cryin Whoa an Hup  
An aince his time o caain neeps an fermin darg wis dane  
Aff tae John Lewis shipyard as apprentice he wis taen

The engineerin trade he learned, syne aff he set again  
Tae jyne the trawlin industry in charge o ither men  
At 23 the youngest engineer in his hale squad  
He vrocht wi Walker's Steam Trawl Fish, fa scored the sea for cod

Fan ither tint their jobs in thon unchancy post war years  
He raise tae Superintendent ower his brither engineers  
The fleet that he tuik tent o wis the brawest on the sea  
Wi mony's the bonnie fishin boat weel-kent in history

Bit fortunes cheenge, some boaties gaed tae catch the fish nae mair  
Hall Russell's quickly snapped him up an he got settled there  
Tae Norway an the west coast ports he traivalled in his trade



Tae fit a sonar fish finder, an gie research an aid

At thirty wi Shore Porters his job wis fairly set  
A pairtner in the business, near as heich as he cud get  
Bit ither irons in the fire o life he plunkit doon  
A leader in the Salmon Nettin Station near the toun

Noo had he bin a lesser man, his cloot wad be wrung oot  
Bit Glennie biggt a hoose in Dyce the best for miles about  
An urban castle wi sic ferlies ower gran tae list  
Shipped in frae aa the airts like ony magpie's treisur kist

He merches up at Lonach wi a pike an plaid sae braw  
He fand the time tae wed an raise a family an aa  
As provost o the Trades he wore their gowden chyne sae braa  
Bit fowk in Dyce aa ken him as the chiel fa tamed the craa!

Gin ye ging up tae Aiberdeen in sunsheen or in sna  
Ye'll mebbe see him gaun about. Ye winna see the craa  
It perched upon his shoulder an atap his car did race  
Bit noo it's deid, its ghaistie haunts the gairdens o the place.

Brummell

Beau Brummell, a Regency buck  
Wis niver doon-wechtit wi luck  
Quo he 'Fa's yer fat frien? '  
An twis clear he did mean  
The Prince, wi the girth o a truck

Beau Brummell tuik five oors tae dress  
(As a dandy, he aimed tae impress)  
Bit he gambled his wealth  
An he ruined his health  
An thon's aa he did, mair or less.

9. Rasputin

Fowk hated the gyte monk Rasputin  
They decidit they maun pit the buit in

They pyson't, syne shot him. Fit finally got him  
Wis the river they droont the puir breet in

#### 10. John Cage

John Cage, John Cage, queerest ferlies heard on stage  
Clunks an clicks an hoasts an splooters  
Pianies playin tooter-ooters  
Plunks andreeps...an unca soun  
Dingin music's norms aa doon

#### Livingstone's Unscreived Letter

Conseeder yer bairns, left faitherless  
Bi absence an yer driven wint tae explore

Conseeder Mrs Livingstone gettin blootered  
Straas on her camel's back as big's a ruck

Lion-mauled, connached bi cholera,  
Etten up bi ulcers, dysentery, malaria,  
Wis it wirth it,  
Yer bluid birsslin wi fever  
Yer mowser bleached bi heat  
Yer wyme rummlin wi hunger  
Yer seed in anither continent  
The lift abune ye plottin  
Deein alane, wis it wirth it?

Poles apairt, frae Blantyre tae Zambesi,  
Tae re-chirsten a native linn, Victoria  
Though The Rikk that Thunners  
Seems a fitter name

Chief Chitabo's tribe howked oot yer crined, stoot, hairt  
Claimin it beat fur Africa alane  
Beeriet it unner the Mvulu tree in the clachan

Chuma an Sumi cairriet yer corp thegither  
A thoosan miles tae the coast, tae ship back hame

Tae a cauld Abbey, beeriet wi cauld honours

Addressed tae survivin kin,  
The letter ye niver screived:  
Forgie me fur leavin. Some things  
Takk heicher preference tae family

## 12. Michael Jackson's Pet-Rap

Fin Michael Jackson deed, man, he left a zoo  
Fu o pets needin feedin makkin piles o poo

His first pet Ben, wis a muckle hairy rat  
Far ye micht hae a hamster or a wee fat cat

He had tigers, he had puggies, he had zebras, he had snakes  
Alligators that cud gie a body ghaistie shakes

He had elephants, giraffes, he had wud alpacas  
Bubbles the puggie fa could waggle his maracas  
His parrots skreich tae cactii in Arizona  
His snakes hae fand a hideyhole in Oklahoma

Madonna, Jackson's python, is a tourist draa  
The tigers hae a compound oot in Shambala

A pet isnae fur Xmas, fur a day an a denner  
Tho it costs a thoosan dollars or a British tenner

Fin ye dee, ye canna takk along yer cats an dugs  
Sae makk sure they're luikit eftir fin ye pop yer clogs!

ocles

Empedocles in antiquity  
Tuik tae thinkin a God he micht be  
Tae pruv Divine Natur, intae Etna's crater  
He lowped. Noo he's jist lava bree.

#### 14. Mr Jackdaa

Mr Jackdaa on the lum  
Dichts his neb an plunks his bum  
Chyak! He cries, syne cracks a snail  
Open. Etts the cratur hale

Mrs Jackdaa thinks he's braa  
Gies him tasty bits tae chaa  
Roadkill for the heid o hoose  
Barley..Wyver...baby moose

He's her beau on twiggy legs  
Bides tae help her raise the eggs  
They are leal, the male jackdaas  
Peety humans waurna craas!

#### 15.In Camperdoon Zoo

At Camperdoon Zoo, you micht nae see a gnu  
Bit there's wolves disembowellin their tea  
Nae bears in the pen (Mebbe deid in the den?)  
An a cuddie releasin a pee

The otter the day's on a wee holiday  
The lemurs are lazily lollin  
The fite snawy hoolet is dowie an wae  
An its keech... weel thon's simply appallin

The marmoset's checkin fur flechs in its chum  
The rhea is luikin upset  
The lynx is a minx gettin up tae high jinks  
The porcupine's naebody's pet

Torties are warsslin like battlefield tanks  
There's wallabies duntin a greetin  
There's a fruit bat or three. A wud cat lookin twee  
Bit a jumbo of tin! ! ! Thon's plain cheatin!

Pirate

The pirate cam wi a terrible roar  
Wi a sword an a cutlass tae oor front door

He'd a reid scarf wippit aroon his neck  
An a bobbin parrot that gaed peck peck

'Cam in, ' quo Mum, ' takk a brakk frae the sea  
Cause even a pirate needs his tea.'

Sheena Blackhall

# The Birthplace Of Herbert Hoover

Welcome to the birthplace of President Herbert Hoover  
In small town mid America, West Branch, Iowa

See the Autumnal tones of our American Fall!  
His family homesteaded here  
In a board and batten cottage  
Built by his father, a sober Quaker blacksmith.

When Mr Hoover was voted into the White House  
He had all this restored, as befits a national shrine  
Of a small town boy made good

You might see a tiny figure, wearing a hat  
Pointing towards that simple little cottage  
(In case you miss it)  
Even the sidewalks emanate from that place

Great oak trees dressed in brown  
Lord it over a landscape of ochre, green an rust,  
Ululating soft as Granma's quilting

Two boys in overalls walk along on the left  
(The agrarian idyll)  
Behind them, haystacks prick up in the fields  
Like raised stitches, picked out in fine linen  
Three chickens peck like golden knotted threads  
On an old tapestry, miniscule yet perfect  
A pink native boulder placed here in 1929  
By the Daughters of the American Revolution;  
Reads, 'Birthplace of Herbert Hoover,  
First President of the United States  
Born West of the Mississippi River.'

Sheena Blackhall

# The Boar

Ceridwin's sacred beast, bricked into his brute quarters,  
Pound for pound today is a saleable commodity.  
This mediaeval master of the hunt,  
This short-arsed Celtic warrior  
Shrieking like a carnyx, pads across the straw  
On tiptoe cloven trotters, pauses, roots and grubs.

Criss-crossing his twilight pen,  
He tries again and again to gore the worm-holed rafters,  
Holding up the tin roof of his den,  
Woven with spiders' pentagons and squares.

Ringed with cerulean blue,  
His eyes are two round circles filled with night,  
Queerly, they peer from the sides of the reedy face  
Like clouds concealing fickle, thundery weather

His ancestor, when cornered in the hunt,  
Could rip a huntsman's belly with one tusk.  
He challenges and snorts, this war-pig  
Spears of bristles rising on his back.  
A nimble tank on trotters,  
Hot's a hairy tub of red Satanic cinders.

His sudden anger is a falling star.  
I am weighed in the scales of battle and found wanting.  
Turning his screwed-up tail towards my face  
He flaunts his dribbling bottom, pursed like a sour crone's mouth.  
Jiggling between two hams, his balls are breakfast rolls.  
For a time he settles, slumped in a corner, mouthing creamy spittle.  
His blue-veined ears, as white as mouldy cheese,  
Twitch on the heavy lard-tub of his head.  
His water-trough is ringed by trampled straw  
Gold as a fallen torc, facing a pool of pee  
Eye-wateringly strong, that scours the nose.  
Smells breach the twitching funnels of his snout

Mobile and moist his urgent nostrils clench, unclench,  
Suck in the dim pen's stench of straw, dust, dung,

The rosebuds of his world.

Sheena Blackhall



# The Boddamer's Monkey: (30 Scots Poems)

Boddamers' Monkey (Traditional)

Eence a ship sailed roon the coast, an aa the men in her wis lost  
Barrin a monkey up a post sae the Boddamers hanged the monkey oh

Durra ma doo ma doo ma day  
Durra ma doo ma daddy oh  
Durra ma doo ma doo ma day  
The Boddamers hanged the monkey-oh

Noo the funeral wis a gran affair, aa the Boddam fowk wis there  
It mynt ye on the Glesga Fair fin the Boddamers hanged the monkey-oh

Noo aa the fowk fae Peterheid cam doon, they thocht, tae get a feed  
Sae they made it inno pottit heid fin the Boddamers hanged the monkey oh

Buss in a City Lane

The lilac buss wis drookt wi dyew, richt sweet the blackie wheeplit,  
An ilkie floer wis hung wi bees that ower the petals treetlit.

The lea-lang Spring the buss wis thrang, wi teenie spurg an robin  
Fae perfinned boughs their tweetlin sang ower leaf an lawn gaed throbbin.

There wisna ony note that jarred in thon sun-droggit neuk,  
The sleekit cat curled in the shade drew in her killin cleuk.

The siller trails o sliddery snails, fin nicht brocht oot the meen,  
Glimmered aneth the lilac buss, gowd starnies shone abeen.

A littlin, thirled tae widlan wyes I lued thon secret dell.  
Fit bairn noo seeks the lilac buss an spins tales tae itsel?

3. Antigone. In Memoriam: Ian Alexander Middleton. Born Aberdeen 10: 5: 40  
died Brazil  
10: 2: 99

There's steps in the snaa this nicht.  
Mebbe ye traivelled the laigh road hame  
Frae yer marble mortuary slab in a fremmit hospital's wame.

Yer bedroom licht is on. The wye it shone,  
Like a lowe throw gurly seas efter ye left,  
Smittit bi Ambition, youth's disease.

I staun an watch it, unner the dreepin trees.  
The new fowk's shieled the sna.  
Mynd foo we eesed tae sterve wi twa, three lumps o coal?  
Wis't thrift that draye ye awa? The drooth fur advancement?  
Or doonricht scunneration tae the foun o Aiberdeen an forty-echt mile  
roon?

Faither wheeplit pibrochs, mither, psalms.  
The tunes yer fite hauns played war Bartok, Chopin, Brahms.

The antrin caird ye sent, took pride o place.  
The polished pianie held yer ghaistly face,  
Lang efter ye'd forgotten kith and kin  
Jist names fin ye war fillin forms in.

For thon auld scrats, auld sairs, there's nae remeid.  
Brither, sae far frae hame, sae cauld in bluid.  
The tune is ower, closed pianie, blawn seed  
Bar ae last note. The lyke wake fur the deid.

#### 4. Lecture on a Simmer Evenin'

Bricht yalla dots rin doon the spikker's tie,  
Like cat's een set atween his grey lapels  
His wirds skinkle an glent like shoals o haddies  
Flashin their abstract tails, a wirthy trawl.

Mair nur the lecture clammers fur sole attention.  
There's a clattervengeance o soun aroon the quad,  
A squallach o scurries argyin ower a pie.

Ma richt ee lichts on the delicate raxx o trees,  
Breirin bonnily ower the Simmer lawn

Ma left is takkin tent o the blackboord's scrattins.

This auncient university breeds din.  
A cooshie croos, stoot buits crunch graivel,  
Labourers are howkin up the slabs.

law Quarry

A hard birth fur a toon,  
Blastit, drilled, rived fae this steen wyme,  
Scoored an scrattit bi the fower sizzens.  
Quarrymen, blawn stoor, gien wye tae buzzards.  
Dunt o mallet, chisel, rasp o saw, sooked tae the foun o silence,  
In yon blaik lug that's open tae the sky.

Gulls swey like pearls alang a roosty cable  
Necklace o seabirds string the dizzy drap  
Jig like washin ony blaw sets flappin.  
Ilkie neuk reams ower wi birk an bracken.  
Barbit wire keeps suicides awa.  
The man-made lochan' s lowrin slatey-grey.  
A landin dyeuk snags ripples ben its face  
Somelike a teir on fifteen denier nylons.

e tae Twa Makars. In memoriam, Alastair Mackie & Ken Morrice

This nicht I wauk ma lane alang  
The brig atween twa warlds  
The nearer side is thrang wi sang  
Tae thon far bank I'm thirled.

Twa ghaists like glisks o glamourie  
Like fireflauchts in the mirk  
They cry me ower wi mony's the smile  
Far deidly watters lirk.

Their poems upon the prentit page  
Will jink the coffin braisse  
Bit wit an virr, throw kirkyaird smirr  
Are nocht bit stoor an aisse

Ae makar tuik the written wurd  
Tae peint byordnar scenes  
The tither wis the quater chiel  
His currency wis dreams

The first wis derk as he wis fair  
Gaed mony's the hairt a rug  
The ither wis the quaeter chiel  
Poored wisdom in ma lug

Throw this heich windae in the North  
Gey near the Auld King's Croon  
I'm thinkin on the eildritch road  
That leaves this granite toon

Wheesht! In the tinklin o the tide  
The sabbin o the sea  
I hear thon twa, that screived sae braw  
Cry wistfu, ower tae me

Twa makars snippit frae oor mids  
There's nane can full their space  
An since their wae-gaun fae this airt  
The toun's a dreicher place.

r Cinema: The Odeon Cinema, Justice Mill Lane, Aberdeen 1932-2001

Here, trodden tabbies, splats o seagull keech,  
pattern the grun, far Arctic breezes wheech  
Bi tenements, far doos convene in pairties,  
tae keek at the Art Deco o the Thirties.

Setterday mornin magnet, post-war boomers,  
Bairns matinee... white socks and navy bloomers,  
Douce quines frae Broomhill, Hardgate, Ferryhill,  
(Weel shod in leather sheen frae Watt an Milne)  
Jyned loons frae doon the toon.

A gallus crew, we tradit insults, staunin in the queue  
Wi lugs, nebs, chikks an hauns turned icey-blue,

gaberdines buckled ticht in expectation,  
Wi sighs an cat-calls o exasperation.  
Sic rinny snoots, jug-lugs, an scabbyknees!

A puckle pence bocht cowboy fantasies,  
as quines wi flashies showed us far tae sit  
Led on like miners doon a tarry pit.

Nae Roman in his thrillin amphitheatre  
enjoyed an entertainment ony sweeter!  
Tomato sauce congealed insteid o bluid,  
yet still we grat fin peintit Indians deed.

A warld o black an fite, a simple code.  
Villains war coorse, war booed, an overload  
O raw emotion. Ye cud skirl and cheer.  
Heroes war gweed. Each baddie raised a jeer.

Nae back seat fummler's undercover lust,  
spylt the hoorays fin King Kong bit the dust,  
Tore doon the tinsel stars o makkie-on,  
set there bi Hollywod fur littlin's fun.

An fin ootbye, the clouds war gray and teemin,  
Inbye we'd dry like kettles hett and steamin.

On stage, the screen's great lirkit curtain rose,  
In ripplin silk, like can-can dancer's bows.  
Wi oos an aaahs, we aa grew quate an chawed  
Oor sherbert dabs, while pirates puffed an blawed.  
Unseen projectionist in his wee room,  
Shot film frae camera-gun, across the gloom.  
Fired pictur efter pictur on the screen...  
Spacemen an giant squids in Aiberdeen!  
A rinnin ream o dreams in waves o licht,  
poored ower wir heids, an gript us wi delicht,  
While usherettes selt ices cauld an sweet,  
could melt the steeny hairt o Union Street.  
Peroxide quines wi lips as reid as rasps,  
wi corrugated perms an waists like wasps  
War saved frae monsters. Foo we'd stamp an scream,  
Afore we rose an sang, 'God Save the Queen! '

An shuftled oot, een-dazzlit tae the sun...  
A magic palace thon, the Odeon!

## 8. Parking Squirrels

In Glesga squirrels hae a hing  
In Aiberdeen they skyte up trees like wildfire.

ian Police HQ

The justice skyscraper  
Sits in the laptop o the clouds

Incomers, ootcomers  
Shoppie-doors, heid bummers  
Watched ower bi the ark-angel ee  
O CCTV.

In the founs o the biggin, doon in the twilight sunks  
(Like Hitler's bunker plaistered wi graffiti  
Scrawled bi the dowp-eyns o deid fags)  
Are hoosed the toun's unwinted:

hoose-brakkers, tattooed or pockmerked  
din-makkers, pierced or bleached  
gear-takkers, burly and gurly  
skelpers o wives, toothless an eesless  
chorers o cash an grab

Harry fae Boxy, Wully fae Tilly  
Morality means nix  
Fin ye canna see bi the thocht o yer next fix.

Yer notion o shoppin's tae takk it  
The cycle o need an greed  
The bobbies' job's tae brakk it.

e tae a Bonnie Fechter, 51st Highland Division: In Memoriam. Hamish Henderson

Fareweel, tho editorials  
Tell yer fame ower city an lea  
Sangs are yer best memorials  
Liltin an lowpin fu brawly!  
Fareweel tae mirth an jollity  
Scholar-sodjer poet sae braw  
Fareweel tae grace an gallantry  
Scotland's the puirer without ye

Tales ye tuik fae quine an seannachie  
Airs fae trench, fae bothy an aa  
Screivin sangs o fire an honesty  
Best bloody sangster in Scotia!

Fareweel, here comes the ferryman  
Weel ye'll ken the ranks that ye'll meet  
There's nocht tae pack or cairry, man  
Takk the lang rest o the weary  
Fareweel the squaddies' champion  
Bonnie fechter, richter o wrangs  
Jynin yer auld battalion  
Stinch in the pages o history

Tinker Gaelic, Cant or Romany  
Roon Blairgowrie chasin the tune  
Rypin Jeannie's buss o balladry  
Berries ye'd hairvest sae cheerie

Fareweel, tho editorials  
Tell yer fame ower city an lea  
Sangs are yer best memorials  
Liltin an lowpin fu brawly!  
Fareweel tae mirth an jollity  
Scholar-sodjer poet sae braw  
Fareweel tae grace an gallantry  
Scotland's the puirer without ye

Praises cudna bribe the like o ye  
Siller coin nur braw O.B.E.  
Comrade Captain, bard o quality  
Makker o 'Freedom come all ye'

Fareweel, here comes the ferryman  
Weel ye'll ken the ranks that ye'll meet  
There's nocht tae pack or cairry, man  
Takk the lang rest o the weary  
Fareweel the squaddies' champion  
Bonnie fechter, richter o wrangs  
Jynin yer auld battalion  
Stinch in the pages o history

Bombed an tombed an shelled the infantry  
Some nicht live bit ithers maun dee  
Fa takks the human invent'ry  
In the Derk Valley sae drearie?

Fareweel, tho editorials  
Tell yer fame ower city an lea  
Sangs are yer best memorials  
Liltin an lowpin fu brawly!  
Fareweel tae mirth an jollity  
Scholar-sodjer poet sae braw  
Fareweel tae grace an gallantry  
Scotland's the puirer without ye

Eyn at Bennachie

October wins blaw snell an caal,  
As Bennachie shakks oot her shawl,  
Aa roon the muckle mountain's raul,  
The chitterin birks are blae.

A beech tree like a heron stauns  
On ae thin pole. Wi frostit hauns,  
A fermer drives ower hairstit lans,  
That gloamin's peintit gray.

Yowes graze the girse near tae the been,  
Their oo's as fite's a staunin steen,  
Far sunlicht steeks its rosy een,  
Back o a Meldrum brae.

The duntin o a tractor wheel,



His howkit oot a dubby puil,  
Far jeelin dyews o nicht may sweel,  
Till cock craa steers the day.

The craas flee ben the derkenin lift,  
Atween the widlans, shaddas shift,  
The wyvers darn their hames....  
Sic thrift, tae catch their fleein prey!

Frae cloudy laidders, noo climms doon  
Each starnie, in her siller goon  
As Bennachie pits on her croon  
The Samhuinn meen, sae fey.

### Boddamers' Monkey

The Boddamers' Monkey wis dressed in silk  
Wi a ruff roon his thrapple sae swanky  
He smokit a pipe like a Turkish laird  
He'd a watch an a braw strippit hanky

He acceptit an invite tae gyang tae a feast  
The Boddamers pickit the venue  
Bit fit they omitted tae tell the puir beast  
Wis that he wid be served on the menu.

's: A Buchan Ferm, New Deer Tune: Oh Gin I war far the Gadie rins

Oh the New Deer braes are green an fair,  
Sae green an fair, sae green an fair  
Oh the New Deer braes are green an fair  
Far the yowe lies doon wi the ram

Ben the showdin hey takk the road inbye  
Takk the road inbye, takk the road inbye  
Ben the showdin hey takk the road inbye  
Fur a cheery news an a dram.

Far the aipple stauns in the kailyaird neuk  
In the kailyaird neuk, in the kailyaird neuk

Far the aipple stauns in the kailyaird neuk  
Wi its fruit in ilkie haun

New Deer, New Deer, the win blaws clear  
The win blaws clear, the win blaws clear  
New Deer, New Deer the win blaws clear  
Far the sky boos doon tae the grun

There the linties sing an the doos takk wing  
The doos takk wing, the doos takk wing  
There the linties sing an the doos takk wing  
Ower the rigs o New Deer lan

Braes o Ballater Tune: The Corn crake

Fin first I cam tae Ballater twis in a swaddlin gown  
The lullaby that gart me sleep it wis the riveries soun  
Far laricks sweesh in gloamin's hush at ilkie hill's derk foun  
An ay the yoam o fir an pine it fullt the muirs aroon

Gean blossoms faa, saft breezes blaa far linns lowp ower the scree  
Mang dyewy glens an misty Bens in yon sna-cled countrie  
The erne's kingdom raxxes oot ower aa that it can see  
The deid sleep lichtly in their staas alang the banks o Dee.

The city steer, the traffic din toon mall an yuppie bar  
They gar me lang fur lochan' s cweel aneth a Heilan star  
They gar me lang fur loch an fir bi Muick an Gairn an Mar  
For oh, they're aa the world tae me the Braes o Ballater

t fur a Brither for Charles Middleton Ritchie, born Ballater 1929, died Oshawa,  
Canada,2000

A Heilan fir across the faem, wis lately felled - the low road hame.  
He wis the choicest in the glen, the kindest and the best o men,  
Skirp o the Scots Diaspora, that swallt the lochs o Canada.

In Scotland, geans drap wreaths o bloom. A thoosan weety birk trees greet.  
Forget me nots lie tashed aroon, as Spring creeps oot on cripple feet.  
Beech branches in their timmer tomb, wyve shaddas far dreich arches meet.

Sma speedwells chitter in the gloom, far wyvers wummle in the peat.

A dipper bobs an skuffs the brun, his hame reams ower wi sun an wave,  
Sae braw, yet aa ma hairt can haud's, the wintry sorra o the grave.  
An aa I see's a lowered kist, an aa the years atween, we've missed.

Forgie me, fur nae haun o mine, cud drap the stoor abeen yer broo,  
A warld awa, far yer cauld clay, is held foriver captive noo.  
The braid Atlantic rins atween the Mither kintra, an the New.  
I fand a feather on the muir, free o the yird, in its wa-gaun  
A bonnie leverock, warbled clear... Brither, yer sowl wis in yon sang.

## 16. Weather

Roon Banchory whins  
There's blustery wins

In Maryculter  
Rain dreeps splooter

Far pinewids staun  
It's aywis gran

ar Gaitherin

Skirl pipes, skirl! Yer braw bit sang sets howf an clachan dirlin.  
The warld an his wife this day in borrowed tartan's birlin.  
Thrang throw the toun, ower cassies croun,  
Clan plaids, roon queats unfurlin.

Baith freemit bluid an furreign creed wauk brither-like, wi brither  
Ye'd think that wars hid niver been sae weel they mell thegither!

The stooshie rages ben Braemar, like burn that's big wi spate.  
Gee-gaws an tartan tinketry are set at ilkie gait.  
Like dandelion wauchts o oo, Kyndrochit's fame will traivel  
Fin tourists hamewird wing their wye an thochts an gifts unraivel.  
The human tide o nations grows, the clash o claik's unkent,  
Bit, kent or unkent, pooches teem...their gowden siller's spent.

Far frae the steer o Games mineer, the Clunie trysts me doon.  
A single leaf drapt on the waves, sits glentin, green on broon,  
As sae, this day will haud the fore fin ithers dwine aroon.

Larick an rowan saftly showd, the clouds flit ghaistly ower  
The muckle mountains o Braemar. Her glory, an her pouer.

bi the Cluny

In ilkie sheugh there's gowden flooers, in shadda-dappled Heilan booers,  
The macroscosm's abstract face, grows beard an fuskers in this place.  
Blink-bonnie sunbeams glisk and glent, birks cweel aneth a rainbow tent,  
A kelpie's mane's foriver tossed, ower mossy steens wi spray embossed.

Waves mirl in pirls o hinney-broon, far Cluny cowps her cargo doon,  
It plinks in puils, a tinklin bell, or thunners, blaik's the Earl o Hell  
Gaun ram-stam ower a reamin linn, far ants merch oot frae emerald whin.

Yowe's winter oo is tirmed wi shears, in ilkie tree the birdsang briers,  
A buzzard cercles, heich's a steeple, derk merles in widlans, wheeple,  
wheeple.  
Like quaichs o malt the Cluny showds, as eident swallaes lowp the clouds.  
Far wyvers hing lace wabs, hett fir langs fur a shooer o weety smirr.

If ghaists creep back tae haunts they've lued, in this green tapestry I'm  
shewed,  
The gloam wi perfumes rare is blent, wild thyme, wi peace an pleisur,  
blent.

alist's Guide tae the Dee. Inspired by John Hearne's 'The Ballad of the Buchan  
Lady', performed on 25th October 2002, Event 43 in the Doric Festival (2002)

breenge-bubble breenge-bubble breenge-bubble  
heather-muir bee-bizzin win wheep win wheep win wheep  
sky-braid sun-caller sky-braid sun-caller sky-braid sun-caller  
Clouds waucht heich an cauld Clouds waucht heich an cauld  
Birks are showdin swete an green Birks are showdin swete an green  
Steens staun stinch steens staun stinch steens staun stinch  
Glisk-glimmer glisk-glimmer glisk-glimmer  
Lowpin linns are wummlin thrang wi troot

Peat-weet glaur clag peat-weet glaur clag  
Fite waves wallop skelp inno pit-mirk puils  
Fite waves wallop skelp inno pit-mirk puils  
Swack an blythe the bonnie salmon sweem  
Swack an blythe the bonnie salmon sweem  
The brig stauns siccar The brig stauns siccar The brig stauns siccar

## 20.A Sang o the Western Isles: Tune: Men O Harlech

At thon hell hole in the Heilans, ashtray's reemin, soap dish, teem  
Hotel keeper's heich on hashish, aa the laavie paper's deen  
Mirror's crackit, bins are stappit, mould is on the TV screen  
Sae the news reader's face is green.

Paper's beilin aff the ceilin, only hauf the fire lichts up  
Outside naavies' drills are dreelin. Last guest's teeth are in the cup  
Taps are broken, a luv token condom's lyin in the neuk  
Richt abeen the veesitor's buik.

Lichts are fused an carpet's chittered. Scurries skreich an car horns maen  
In the bidet keech is skittered. Hornygollachs choke the drain  
Tabbies trampit, lino mankit, spider on the windae pane  
Wyvin moosewabs in the rain.

Brakfast toast is bleck as charcoal. Bacon rasher's hard's a crisp  
Sleep is shattered. Howf is hotchin. Hauf the bar's three quarters pissed  
Rug is skyrie reid an firey (curry stains the hoover missed)  
Here's far aa yer Nichtmares tryst!

## Ythan Pearl: from an Ythan legend

A glimmer in pearl eence bedd in a mussel's briest,  
(The Ythan's towes are ticht on the bairns it lues)  
An lang an lane it sat in its wattery reest,  
The sweeshlin waves flew ower like a flicht o doos.  
Ae simmer's day, a smuggler gied a-dookin.  
He spied the mussel. Raxxin wide its mou,  
He took the Ythan pearl, pooched an kepted it.  
Wird cam wi the derk that nicht that a ship wis due.  
The lugger, Crookit Mary wad lan a cargo,

Saxteen ankers o gin for the smuggler's crew!  
Gulls flew fite fae the caves o the craggy coastline,  
As a hidden gauger, quate, his cutless drew.  
She rowed like a ghaist neth the stars, the Crookit Mary,  
Sweyed neth the meen, cross spars wi sail claith hung.  
The smuggler chief wi his band wauked stealthy forrit,  
Gaugers raise fae the dunes an the trap wis sprung.  
The clash o clubs an cutless...the shot o a gun...  
The rypit pearl rowed ooto a deid man's haun.  
The tide swypt in an roon tae the wytin Ythan,  
Some ferlies born o the sea, sit ill on lan.  
A glimmer in pearl eence bedd in a mussel's breist  
(The Ythan's towes are ticht on the bairns it lues)  
An lang an lane it sat in its wattery reest,  
The sweeshlin waves flew ower like a flicht o doos.

in a Clarty Airt

Liftin the tatties, reets an yirdy wames,  
Back o the dyke, twa-fauld wi an auld tin pot,  
(The dyke that wis bigged lang-syne bi rag-nailed thoomb  
The dyke that keeps the girse fae the kailyaird plot)  
The cottar wife his a girth like a ban o gowd,  
Far the unbom bairn growes slow as kneadit dough.  
She dauchles bi the dyke tae dicht the stoor  
Fae her waddin ring, wi its precious, haly glow.  
The waddin ring. A dyke baith strang and stoot,  
Keepin twa luvvers in, the warld, oot.

Sharny beets bi the door, fire teased fae aisse.  
Day's eyn, the scrat o knives, their twa plates teem.  
Toozles rugged fae her heid bi a preenin caimb,  
Veesitors due the nicht, aa maun be clean.  
The fusky bottle will kittle the antrin blether.  
Pairty fur fower. Her man, new tae the tether.

Scrat o a needle skytin ower vinyl.  
Sab o a cowboy crooner souglin a tune.  
Bairn in the belly lies like a puddock's spawn,  
Anither quine, wi the cottar dances roon.

Ye makk yer bed ye lie on't. She watched him flirt,  
Throw the wee smaa oors wi a chaip-like bit o skirt,  
Gart the gowden ring on her haun bit yalla dirt.

Ta-ta, we'll meet ere lang! The derk sweeps doon  
The cottar beds, tae dream o a stolen fummle  
His wife gaes oot tae teem the orra pail  
Back o the dyke, far dreams aroon her tumble.

Cheenged fae a thing o grace, tae an iron ban,  
The waddin ring burns hett as a cattle bran.  
Bide fur the bairn... At mendin, quines are deft  
Bit love an likin packit their bags an left.

an Bacon Tune: McGinty's Meal and Ale. A modern cornkister, based on an actual news report

Twa grumphies in the toon o Keith war bocht tae keep as pets  
Bi a wifie wi a gairden fa consulted wi the vets  
Fa said mowers nicht be eesefu kyn bit pigs war better bets  
At chawin up the greenery as tidy as can be  
Weel she took them hame an coddlit them on sweeties cakes an candy  
Man, they chawed awa at nettle: shaws an daisies fine and dandy  
At lowsin time they sloked their drooth on Irn Bru an shandy  
Fish fingers an a puckle chips sweeled doon wi Typhoo tea.  
Fowk waukin past the gairden caad the grumphies Eggs an Bacon  
Twa brakkfasts in the makkin gaun aroon the gairden raikin  
Bit fin they didna fit their pen, harsh measures they war taken,  
Tae loss the extra inches sae they'd fit the piggery.  
They war dieted an exercised an sent tae takk aerobics  
Wi some wifies frae the Rural, bit the soos war claustrophobics  
An Bacon vowed she'd raither bide at hame an read her comics  
Than lowp aboot in leotards fur aabody tae see.  
The SSPCA cried in tae hae a consultation  
Thinkin Bacon wis bulimic an that Eggs hid constipation  
Till the wifie that first bocht them roared oot loodly in vexation  
'Takk the twa o them awa at least a hunner mile fae me! '  
There wis ads in Lanely Hairts Columns, programmes tae the nation  
The pair war seen on corners wearin bowties an carnations  
Bit finally it hid tae be, tae stop the consternation  
They war destined fur Cullerlie ferm, a grumphie's B and B.

Noo Cullerlie is the placie far they foster fancy breets  
There are educatit peacocks, there are hens wi bandy cweets  
Eggs an Bacon war sae creashie that they didna fit the seats  
O the trailer tae convey them tae a life o luxury,  
A jeep wis hired bit it broke doon fin Bacon caused a stooshie  
Fin they tried tae shove her backwyse in, an jobbit her bihoochie  
Oh a skirlin soo's an affa soon, she roared till she wis plookie  
Ay it tuik a month o Setterdays tae cairt them ower the lea.  
Ye'll hae heard about the latest in genetic engineerin?  
Ay, they've bred a pig wi attitude, that's unca gleg at sweirin  
An I'll tell ye far its cloned frae, tho it's mebbe nae endearin  
It's a cross wi Eggs an Bacon an a tiger caad Machree.  
If ye ging inby the Rowett, far professor chielies potter  
Ye'll see Eggs upon a platter makkin noties wi her trotter  
An Bacon's got a PhD in foo tae makk a sottar  
They'll be gruntin in the chat-rooms on the internets tae be!

Fair Inspired by the painting 'A Scotch fair, ' by John Phillip. Sung to the  
tune: Fa saw the 42nd?

Fa saw the Heilan sodjers?  
Fa saw them merchin there?  
Fa saw the Heilan sodjers  
Catch recruits at Aikey Fair?

Chorus:

Some fowk cam tae coort an cuddle,  
Some tae daunce an some tae stare,  
Some fowk cam tae buy or peddle,  
Pots an pans al Aikey Fair.

Fa saw the fermer's cuddy  
Turn an pit doon its lugs?  
Fa saw the bar-fit laddie  
Pairt a pair o fechtin dugs?

Chorus...

Fa saw the auld wife steerin  
Broth, wi a muckle speen?  
Fa saw a plooman speirin



Fur a kiss frae cripple Jean?

Chorus...

Fa heard the tinker singin?

Fa heard the calvie lowe?

Fa heard the bagpipes skirlin

Roon the fair on Aikey's howe?

Chorus...

Fa tuik a dram o fusky?

Fa's lad got fechtin fu?

Fa's kittlin Sandy's lassie?

Fa will pye the piper noo!

Castle

Castles hae secrets nae man kens, o ancient curses, kills and rings,  
O armoured knichts and ladies fair, o wheelin hawks wi ootraxed wings.

Tammas, the laird o Erceldoune wis skeeled in gifts o prophecy  
An fur his comin, seeven lang years tile yetts o Fyvie stood ajee.

The fairy fowk hid trained him weel. Sae steeped wis he in witcherie  
That fin True Tammas crossed their path, even the heichest booded the knee.

Fin he drew near tae Fyvie's haa, weel saiddled on a midnight steed  
Forked lichtenin closed the castle yetts bit deil the raindrap wat his heid.

He cursed the rigs, he cursed the towers, quo 'Hapless shall yer mesdames be  
Fin ye shall haud within yer waas, steens fae this neuk, unhaley three.'

The first steen's in the lady's bower. The Ythan haps the secunt steen  
The third bides in the aludest tower an it is hid frae mortal een.

Seeven hunner year hae passed an gaen since first the Rhymer cursed the lan  
Nae direct heir can Fyvie hae till aa three steens thegither staun.

The Charter Room has kept it safe, the weepin steen, seeven hunner years  
For should its greetin niver cease, Fyvie wad droon in its gray tears

e Fraser

At gloamin time the muckle trees in April weir their branches bare,  
Strippit an scourged bi Winter's wheep. The jeel o nicht is in the air.  
Their reets rin deep aneth the grun, ben the braid mantle o the lan  
Fit ghaisties fuser in their lug, through the deid oors afore the dawn?

The lowe inbye the castle haa burns bricht, bit nae fur sonsie laird  
Tho brods inbye the auncient waas, wi wine an plenishin's prepared.  
Noo fowk fa sikk tae pree the past, its grace an grandeur, come fae far  
The history towrists heeze like bees roon Castle Fraser's hinneyjar  
Ile magnates full the seats o chiefs, an dollars fuel the castle fire  
The hawk that flichters throw the wids pyes little heed.  
He's nae fur hire.

Huntly Gaitherin (2000) Tune: The Hash o Bennygoak

In the year o the Millennium I cam tae Huntly toon,  
Wi coontless nationalities frae aa the warld r oon.

Chorus: Oh the Gordons, the Gordon, nae winner they are gay  
Frae Haddo Hoose tae Huntly brocht the siller in the day.

The Farquharson frae Finzean cam tae Huntly in his car,  
The Gordon and The Farquharson sat doon without a war.

An eagle in the falconry wis fairly mystifeed,  
Tae see the chief o Gordon wi its feathers on his heid

The Queen Mither reached a hunner sae they fired a puckle squibs,  
A collie dug got sic a fleg it lowpit frae its ribs.

There wis Scots frae San Diego, Singapore an Khatmandhu,  
An a puckle kilted Incas wannered ower frae Peru.

It wisna rainin raindraps, bit paratroops on towes,  
They dumfounert twinty grumphy an a pair o puzzlit yowes.

On the muckle bouncy castle littlins stottit roon like baas,

Whylst famous personalities wis signin buiks in staas

There wis oatcakes, hamebakes an Mrs Baxter's soup,  
An a new liqueur they poored ye frae a teenie whusky stoop.

There wis hot dogs, collie dogs an daschunds weirin spots,  
There wis even Geordie Byron coortin Mary Queen o Scots.

Oh the Bogie it is bonnie an the Deveron it is braw  
Bit ye've rypit aa oor siller, sae it's time we war awa

y

Bi Huntly's ruined castle waa the Deveron trinkles doon,  
The starns that glimmer in the nicht like jewels aroon her croon.  
The foggy steens staun stinch an quaet, roch waves aroon them knell  
Some like the cloor fan Gordon nicht cud shakk the throne itsel.  
Noo Huntly's muckle keep is teem, an sae, in borraed claes  
Mummers assemble flesh an bluid on ghaists o derker days.

Styx Rins Ben Balquidder

Tapsalteerie doon the burn  
The craikin craa an the turnin wirm  
The smoodrach snaa an the tummelt cairn  
Whummlin doon wi the lauchin bairn

Heelstergowdie ower the linn  
Fur an feather an fang an fin  
The faschious wife an the birsslin deil  
The scholar priest an the eident cheil

Boats an biggins an grains o san  
Fae Auchtermuchty tae Samarcand  
Gae wallop in aff tae gweed kens far  
Wi a soo, a doo an the Norlan star

Map & compass are dinged tae nocht  
The burn can neither be stopped nur bocht  
Tho whyles it dwaums in a derksome puil

Up it gaithers wi breenge an sweel  
Pitten an eyn tae clishmaclavers  
Canty blethers an halfpins' havers.

Bide on the bank an ye can wave  
As the hale jing bang lowps inno the grave  
It winna be lang ye'll murn an greet  
Thon ferlies thrang ye'll quickly meet  
Twa blinks o an ee an yer life is ower  
A nochtie wheech o stramash an stoor.

oth at the Ploy

The Sidmouth sea is stapped wi fowk, like aipples dooked at Halloween.  
They bob in ilkie wattery neuk. They news tae femmit an tae frien.  
They slap their wymes wi candy-floss, grease-rowed fish suppers an ice  
cream.

Skitterin gulls dive-bomb the stan, far juggler, fiddler, seannachie  
Stept fae some Mediaeval lan re crank the wheels o pageantry.  
A da, like some pied-piper drake, leads dreepin bairns fae ocean's bree.

Couples haud hauns as if they thocht the ither hauf micht blaw awa.  
Chaip seaside gee-gaws selt an bocht, vanish fae shops like April snaa  
The birsslin sun nailed tae the lift's the orchestrator o it aa.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Body Speaks

I am a human body  
I can snore at 70 decibels  
My digestive acids  
Could dissolve zinc

I have enough lime  
To whitewash a small shed  
I have enough phosphorus  
To make 2,000 match heads

I have a spoonful of sugar  
My iron could create  
A one inch nail

I have dreams and memories too  
Don't forget emotions, thoughts and fears  
They are the things that anchor me  
To myself

Sheena Blackhall

# The Bog King, Shards, Et Al: 25 Poems In Scots

oid 5099: Iainbanks

Whan somebody dees, Daith, the Craa Man,  
Cairries them aff tae the itherwarld  
In this case, Asteroid 5099.

In life, thon atheist- asteroid  
Screived buiks an music,  
Liked a dram o the craitur  
Wis an extra in Monty Python's Holy Grail  
Dwalt amang thochts o ooter-space an crime  
Fur him, the Holy Grail wis space itsel

Asteroid 5099. Fittin name  
Fur a chiel wha picturt explodin grannies,

Whan Daith the Craa Man cairries fowk aff,  
Maist takk the laigh road inno the clarty lair  
Bit ye he tuik up on his back tae the Aybydan  
Tae bide wi the meens an starnies furlin there

Fa'd hae jeloused that a flicht o birds  
Cud cause a stooshie like breengin herds?

A bird in a cage, drives ten tae a buik  
Tae hunt doon quotes in a librar's neuk

Ye'd hae thocht it wis Elvis, raised frae the deid  
In Embro, tae see the fowk stampede!  
Some war delichtit an ithers, wae  
Nae aabody won a bird thon day

Paper frae buiks, or paper birds  
The nub o the maitter is wirds wirds WIRDS

well's Yetts: tune, The Baron o Braichlie  
Came ye by Blackwell's yetts, came ye by there?

And saw ye twa mavisies fechtin fu sair  
'Oh, I cam by Blackwell's yetts, I come by there,  
And I saw twa mavisies fechtin fu sair

Twis aa ower ae title, the last in the store.  
Oh the feathers wir fleein, an doon ran the gore  
For neither wid share, nor frae Amazon buy  
An their tulzie caad buik shelves an stauns faa apley

At Media Studies the battle began.  
Frae the Scots Gaelic Section the bystanders ran  
First they cowped ae buik and syne they cowped twa,  
And they tore Chinese Medicine, the dearest o aa

Frae Chakras, tae Physics, nae volume wis safe  
The chapters an pamphlets wi beaks they did strafe  
Pulp Fiction wis torn tae confetti as weel  
There wis nae man sae brave that cud bring them tae heel

Came ye by Blackwell's yetts, came ye by there?  
And saw ye twa mavisies fechtin fu sair?  
'Oh, I cam by Blackwell's yetts, I come by there,  
Bit fin I spied the stooshie, I ran like a hare

For whaun mavisies stert tae teir leaves up wi rage  
It's like watchin a tiger lowp oot its cage  
A Kindle, a Kindle, a Kindle they need  
For tae teir up a Kindle takks smeddum indeed

Wyce-Like Heron  
The craggy heron, scholarly an wyce  
Takks tent o the wee bandies sweemin by  
An runkles his grey senatorial feathers  
Nae heedin the chirps an blethers  
O chookie spurgie critics on the banks.

He ranks the fishies wi a kennin ee  
Ower flashie, skyrie, dowie or perjink  
Awa they skyte like fireflauchs doon the burn

He' s wytin for a soople salmon-Soutar,

An Eddie Morgan troot that fair bumbazes  
A muckle, gurly pike o a Hugh MacDiarmid.  
He's wytin fur a screivin stammygaster

Doo

Croo Croo cried the doo,  
I've grown tired o the view  
As she uptailed an flew  
Frae the Festival queue.

Up tae Orkney she gaed  
Wi the speed o a gled  
Heich abune Brinkie's Brae  
An the Brough o Birsay  
Ower Rousay an Hoy  
Cantick Heid, Boloquoy  
Whaur the silkies gyang splash  
An the weird trowies hash

I am Freya, she cooed  
Her saft heid like a snood  
I can fashion a spell  
An yer weird I can tell  
Kill nae bird, fur its makk  
Wi my magic I takk  
An the sagas I read  
Are o warriors lang deid  
Syne a feather fell doon  
In thon auld Scottish toon  
A peerie refrain  
Fur the Norse fowk, lang gaen

Chookie Wren

Wee chookie wren, will ye bide awhile?  
Na sir, I canna be still for lang  
Whit dae ye bring tae the fowk aroon?  
A tale, the leaves o a buik, a sang

Wee chookie wren, ye traivel licht  
Hae ye steppt frae a rainbow ooto the sun?  
Blythness cams in the smaest pyoke



The shorter the veesit the mair the fun

Wee chookie wren, is yer nest nearhaun?  
A gangrel birdie like me's ay fleein  
Fariver the wins o the Grampians blaa  
A bird like me maun be up at deein!

n  
In Scots, this Sizzen o the hairst  
Germanic fowk caad harbistoz  
Hærfest in Anglo-Saxon spikk  
An tae the Norsemen it wis Haust

The weetest Sizzen o the year  
A doon pish teemin ower yer heid  
The grun is turned tae clarty dubs  
As sappy's saps o wattered breid

The wins are roch, the nichts draw in  
It's cranreuch cauld, the birk hings yalla  
An frae the gurly lift abeen  
Ye'll see the waa-gaun o the swalla

8. Owersetts in Scots frae 'Distant Road: Selected Poems of the Vietnamese poet  
Nguyen Duy, translatit inno Inglis bi Kevin Bowen and Nguyen Ban Chung

The Warmth o the Strae-Sleepin Neuk  
I chappit on the yett o a sma theekit hut bi the simmer park  
An auld wummin wauked oot in the wind tae greet me  
'Ma hoose is wee, bit there's a neuk tae rest  
Nae sheets nor mattress, tho, ' she made apology  
An rowed thegither a bed o strae for me tae lie on

The yalla strae wippit me roon like a cocoon  
I lay awakk in the hinneyed yoam o the parks  
In a warmth warmer than a quilt  
In thin an brukken threids

The grains o rice keep oor wymes stappit  
Bit the warmth, this flame hett warmth  
This simple yoam o the paddy park  
Nae wye tae easily pairt frae it

9. Owersetts in Scots frae 'Distant Road: Selected Poems of the Vietnamese poet  
Nguyen Duy

A Fyew Speirins

Gane sae short a time syne, it seems foraye  
Tell's, dis the lavender sark still hing frae the brig?  
Are the Dong Ba peppers still birsslin hett?  
The An Cu rice as tasy as afore?

An the royal Poinciana, dis it ayewis line the road,  
The Perfume River lie saft eftir rain on the Bens,  
Is the Am Phu ettin-hoose there still  
The quine thon day, is she merriet?

10. Owersetts in Scots frae 'Distant Road: Selected Poems of the Vietnamese  
poet Nguyen Duy

The Stane

I staun in meditation afore Ankor's ruins  
Gin stane can be sae dinged doon, fit o human life?

Oh stane,  
Let me screive a plea for peace

In the eyn, in ilkie war  
Faiver won, the fowk war ay the losers

11. 4 Twa Line Poems bi Nguyen Duy

Happin  
I button yer blouse  
A trimmle meeves throwe a lea o co lau girse

POET B

The sklaik rins that the poet's gaen inno business  
The lift maun hae agreed tae be for sale

POET C

The sklaik rins that the poet's noo a heid bummer  
Win an cloud sen in their resignation

POET E

The poet's gaen back tae stravaigin  
Girse an tree wint tae live as girse an tree

12. Owersetts in Scots frae 'Distant Road: Selected Poems of the Vietnamese poet Nguyen Duy

Back tae the Park

O strae an stibble I cam back tae ye  
A coorse win blaws wechty wi the guff o dubs  
Along a fence, mornin glories bloom in bonnie purple  
Striddlin the bamboo twigs a Peyot cries ma name

O strae an stibble I cam back tae ye  
The sunlicht faas on the seedlins, fite an see-throw  
The watter buffalo's back sypes wi a chiel's satty swyte  
The muirhen brakks the fullness o noon wi her greet

O strae an stibble I cam back tae ye  
A neebor's airms wechtit doon wi bairns  
An airm I aince touched sae lightsome in luv's first steerin  
An aa the days thereafter

O strae an stibble I cam back tae ye  
A gloamin lift brunt the colour o strae an stibble  
A park in a lowe wi the bodies o auld fairmers, booed in plantin  
Their split dowps upturned in patience tae the lift

O strae an stibble I cam back tae ye  
O lat me boo tae the speerits o the clachan  
Tae granfaithers, granminnies, the wings o the heron  
Faithers an mithers, the hard darg o the watter buffalo  
O strae an stibble I cam back tae ye  
Tae the auld pagoda, the temple nae langer staunin  
Tae the teem kirkyaird, the girse turnin deep yalla  
The knowes an humfs o ma forebears deep in its hairt

13. Owersetts in Scots frae 'Distant Road: Selected Poems of the Vietnamese poet Nguyen Duy

Tae the Vietnamese Bidin in Furreign Lans  
Foo derk the road- foo hyne awa it raxxes  
It stretches the yird's fower airts

Frae the Heivens a starnie beckons ye hame  
Crossin the river, fowk-sang biggs a brig

A lang derk past balances atween us  
Bit feet aywis return tae the rice park dykes

Ye raise up tae leave, ye luikit back tae the bamboo hedges  
Noo the yoam o the bo ket waukens ye in the mids o nicht

Ye raise up tae leave, ye memorized the face ye left ahin  
Lips reid as roses takk a lifetime tae dwine

The world's a eildritch ferlie.... Oorie, isn't it,  
Ower nearhaun an things dee....hyne aff, they rise again

.....finis .....

14. Veritas Vos Liberabit (The truth shall make you free)  
i.m. The Borders Wizard - Michael Scott (1175 to 1232)

Born in Balwearie, he'd the pouer  
Tae cure... could reest fowk wi a glower  
Wycer than Pope or Jesuit  
veritas vos liberabit

Condemned tae Dante's fiery pit  
Tae Caluce Keep, he did commit  
The Plague, caught bi his skill an wit  
veritas vos liberabit

Scientist, scholar, sorcerer  
Alchemist, gleg astronomer.  
He traced the starnies heich orbit  
veritas vos liberabit

He wore the lang robes o the East  
Wis three quart warlock, ae pairt priest  
The lear o Arabs, he'd transmit  
veritas vos liberabit

Toledo an fair Padua  
He wis weel kent in kingly haa  
Fowk thocht he'd tae the Deil submit  
veritas vos liberabit

At Berwick, he wove towes frae san  
His lear wis famed throw oot the lan  
His physic cured the sairest smit  
veritas vos liberabit

He wore a helmet on his heid  
Foresaa a stane wad knap him deid  
The Eildon Knowes this warlock split  
veritas vos liberabit

At Melrose Abbey in the mools  
He's beeriet wi his buiks, fey tools  
Secret o Secrets, weird-like writ  
veritas vos liberabit

15. Jenny Geddes (c.1600 – c.1660)  
Mynd on the The Boston Tea Pairty?  
The steer fin Archduke Ferdinand wis killt?

Jenny Geddes, fruit and veggie seller  
Keepit a staa ootbye the auld Tron Kirk  
King Charlie's new archbishop Willie Laud  
Brocht oot a prayer buik fur the Scots tae read  
St Giles' Cathedral, Sabbath, ae July  
Thon wumman tuik her creepie steel inbye  
James Hannay, Dean of Embro, raised his voice  
Fin Jenny raise an skirled like a craw:  
Deil colic the wame o' ye, fause thief;  
daur ye say Mass in my lug?  
An straightwey haived her steel at Hannay's heid  
Like wasps cowped frae their nest in a fine fizz

Like doonpish frae a nicht o storm an grue  
The hale hypothec focht like scaldit cats  
Wi Bibles `stead o steens as missiles haived  
The Dean tuik fleg an hid, the Provost summoned  
Tae herd the randies frae the haly airt  
Windaes war brukken, doors an yetts war battered  
The Provost cooried in the city chaumer

King Chairlie wadna budge. The Covenant  
Wis signed...an syne, the Bishops' War  
Led ram stam tae the bluidy kintra split  
Royalist, Puritan, Kirk o Scotlan fechtin  
As ae tint nail can gar a sheltie faa  
Sae Jenny Geddes' steel dinged doon a croon

#### 16. The John Ross Rap (1790-1866) , Cherokee Chief and Scot

Sitting Bull, Cochise, Geronimo, syne  
John Ross. His grandfaither, merriet a quine  
Scot an Cherokee a mirled bluid line

Born in Chattanooga, Tennessee  
Learnin the wyes o the Cherokee  
Ross wed an Indian they caad Quatie

He focht for fairness for ane an aa  
Cherokee Nation versus state o Georgia  
An won, bit a bitter blow wis sune tae faa

His tribe wis forced upon the trail o tears  
Hunners war herded, young an auld in years  
In the hairt o winter, driven on like nowt  
Wi reivers an rapists preyin on the fowk

Quatie deed at Little Rock, gey sair-made  
A quarter o her fowk aneth the mools were laid  
Ross sattled his nation fur a spleet new life  
Merriet a Quaker, fur a secunt wife

Frae hyne aff Caledonia, wird tuik flicht  
That Scots war deein in the tattie blicht

Kittlin his Heilan bluid. The Cherokee  
Sent siller tae relieve Scots misery

Pow-wow, stomp daunce, river cane flute  
Pibroch, Sean Truibhas, blaeberry fruit  
Water drum, turtle shell, medicine wheel  
Philabeg, heather reet, eichtsome reel

Cherokee tribe an Scottish clan  
Aa thegither in the race o Man

Wid o the Aiks  
The wid o the aiks hid a river at its reets  
Bar-fit, I'd rowe ma skirt inno the legs o ma breeks  
An wyde throw bandies jinkin ben the watter

Bens held the clouds tae their briest  
Lat doon the simmer rain, saft, swete as milk

A heron bood doon in its ain seelence  
Powkin its neb throwe the win

I wore the sun like a skin o buttery yalla  
An skyted three fite steens alang the puil

Een noo, in ma inner ee, I can enter thon wid in a glisk  
Faist as the shutter click o a camera  
The verra hint o't swackens ma sowel like rosit

18 Port an Fruit Cake  
Jean wis a pyed companion  
Cook an skiffy, ane o life's naturals  
A makkie-on frien, tied bi the chynes o siller

A puir relation. Fowk said she'd bin raped as a littlin  
Hynie back on a ferm. It hid turned her fey  
Cursed tae gyang throw the world wi the bowl o plenty's scrapins

Her scones war licht's her feet  
That pampered quaet's a moose

Her duster, aywis dichtin ither fowk's stoor  
Pairt o her daily darg wis the high tay,  
Cuttin the crusts frae the sannies  
Plunkin the fruit cake doon wi the milk an sugar  
On a table clout as fite's a corpse's shroud

Aathin perjink in the room, the tickin clock, the braisse,  
Warmed bi the lowe that lowpit in the hairth  
The key in the press, the cheena dug's spyled face  
The port poored inno the glaiss, fantoosh, genteel- like  
Her mistress watchin ay like a clockin hen

Jean's grey hair wis straucht's a poker  
Cat's sookins striddlin her napper  
The hairband she'd worn as a flapper  
Pyed tae listen aa day tae her mistress bletherin on  
Wi a tongue that gaed like a clapper

Twa semmits agin the cauld, in bauchled sheen  
Thon wis the tap an tail o a deem caad Jean

#### 19. Aiberdeen Meets Embro

'Weel Embro, ' quo Aiberdeen, 'We dinna aften see you awa fae hame.  
Is this you slummin it wi the puir relations? Mair tae the pynt, ye'll likely be  
needin somethin..'

'Dinna gie's yer heehaw, ' quo Embro. 'Aabody kens YER nae short o a bawbee.  
Ye've got mair millionaires than ye can shakk a haddie at'

'I'll grant ye, ' replied Aiberdeen, 'that a twa three bodies skim the tap aff North  
Sea ile...bit a fyew fowk's fortunes dinna makk the kettle byle in aa oor hooses.'

'I'd like tae help, ' quo Embro, 'bit ma hauns are tied. I've trams tae rin an  
festivals tae host. An fit's the pynt o bein the capital city if ye canna lay claim tae  
the best o aathin gaun? If yer feelin left oot in in the cauld, Aiberdeen, takk my  
advice...pit on anither vest! '

#### 20. Chardonnay

Tae the Arts Centre Theatre: I jist hae tae say  
Ye've fairly wirked winners wi oor Chardonnay



Fae a quinie fa cudna say boo tae a moose  
Her projection's sae loud noo she's caad doon a hoose  
Aince feartie an quate, shes a richt diva noo  
Her tantrums are famed...sic a hullabaloo  
She'll kick up, wi the watterwirks likely tae droon  
Ye, fin aa that ye've askit is 'Redd up yer room'  
An last nicht fin her da gied her beans wi her breid  
He endit up weirin them ower his heid

We bocht her a skull for her birthday, ye ken  
(It's unfair that Hamlet is aye played by men)  
She's newly turned fower, bit a star in the makkin  
The speed she picks wirds up is really braith takkin  
Her da jist sweirs aince, an she kens it bi hairt  
Sae she's ready ye see for a star billin pairt

As Wee Orphan Annie..she'd gie fowk a thrill  
(Ye should see her jink gym makkin on that she's ill)  
She can sing as weel's ony thon opera craiturs  
An it's bairns as ye ken that sell best in the papers  
Her ar-tic-ul-ation is perfeck..jist hear  
The darling skirl 'Mingin' each vowel's crystal clear  
An as for stage presence...there's nane get a luik  
In fin Chardonnay herds them intae a neuk

You ask her..I daur ye... tae staun like a tree  
She can froth at the moo like a horror movie  
She can mummle like Brando as lang as ye gie  
Her a sweetie tae sook. She's got talent, ye see  
She whyles pees the fleer wi excitement...bit then  
Wi a wee suppie sawdust thon's easy tae men'

Fit's this? She's bin bitin the ithers in class?  
Nae doot they deserved it..ye maun let that pass  
The artistic temperament's affa high strung  
An milk teeth are saft fin a littlin is young.....  
Takk her hame? Bit it's only a twa or three plooks  
Chukken pox isna fatal...the medical books  
Advise ye tae catch't as a quine or a loon  
Ye should thank her for spreadin the virus aroon!

Ye've banned her? Twis only twa plates an a cup

She broke in the café fin rinnin amuck  
She wis jist improvisin a riot, the vratchie  
An got cairriet awa like the great Stanislavski

Yer nae buyin thon? She's yer best protégé  
Her relations could full aa yer seats ony day  
If hauf o them warn in Craigie eenoo  
She's brakkin yer phone...ye've upset her, the doo  
I'll write tae ma MP... the Cooncil... the Queen  
Ye'll be sorry fin Chardonnay's nae on the scene.  
Fin Hollywood beckons my bonnie wee belle  
Ye'll be the anes that are kickin yersel

21. A Rowie for Me: Tune: A Gordon for me  
As I wis a waukin up Union Street  
A bonnie wee laddie I chanced for tae meet  
Speed datin, I speired fit he liked tae eat  
Fin he telt me 'a rowie' I fell at his feet

Chorus

A rowie for me, a rowie for me  
If yer nae a rowie yer nae eese tae me  
A bagel is braw an a croissant an aa  
Bit a hett buttered rowie's the pride o them aa

They tell me paninis can raise a queue  
An Nam bried's anither that's on the menu  
An the wraps like ice cream cones far grease faas oot  
Sae eftir ye dicht yersel doon wi a clot

Chorus

I gaed tae Dyce airport tae flee tae Spain  
They opened ma case an sent me hame again  
For smuggling oot rowies is a crime I wis telt  
Cause on the Black Market for a fortune they're selt

Chorus

I eat ten a day an I think I'm hooked

I like rowies toastit or cut up an sooked  
An fin I'm crematit wi aa thon lard  
I'll burn like a bonfire, aa meltit nae charred

Chorus

22. Owersett in Scots o the poem 'An Auld Cracked Tune' bi Stanley Kunitz  
Ma name is Solomon Levi,  
The desert is ma hame,  
Ma mither's breist wis thorny,  
An faither I had nane.

The sans fusered, Bide separate,  
The stones learned me, Be hard.  
I daunce, for the joy o leevin,  
On the ootside o the road.

23. A Scots Owersett o 'The Cat in the Kitchie' by Robert Bly  
Hae ye heard about the loon fa wauked by  
The blaik watter? I winna say muckle mair.

Let's wyte a fyew years. It winted tae be entered.  
Whyles a chiel wauks by a puil, an a haun  
Raxxes oot an rugs him in.

There wis nae  
Intent, exackly. The puil wis lanely, or needit  
Calcium, banes wid dae. Fit happened syne?

It was a thochtie like the nicht win, which is soft,  
An meeves slawly, sougin like an auld wumman  
In her kitchie, late at nicht, meevin pans  
Aboot, lichting a lowe, makkin some maet for the cat.

24. A Scots Owersett o 'Watterin the Shelt' by Robert Bly  
Foo queer tae think o giein up aa ambition!  
O a suddenty, I see wi sic clear een  
The fite spirk o snaa  
That's newly drappit inno the shelt's mane!

Owersett in Scots o the poem 'Cologne' by Paul Celan  
In Kohln, a toon o monks an banes,  
An pavements fang'd wi murdrous stanes  
Fool clouties, orrals, ugsome vratches;  
I coonted twa an seeventy stenches,  
Aa weel defined, an umpteen stinks!  
Ye Nymphs that reign ower sheughs an sinks,  
The river Rhine, it's kent, Ochone  
Dis wash yer city o Cologne;  
Bit tell me, Nymphs, fit pouer divine  
Shall eftir, wash the river Rhine?

Sheena Blackhall

# The Bramble Picker

Her watch was hand-cuffed to wed-lock.  
She was the pace maker. The peace maker.  
Sleep was the anaesthetist, the only bolt hole out.  
The walls were a silver screen,  
Where silent movies mouthed a silent scream,  
The death throes of an out-of-water trout.

In the dead centre of a field,  
A scarecrow was being crucified.  
Maggots moved in his eyes.

Somewhere a mill wheel was turning, crushing corn to dust.  
High pylons marched up ferny hills...their edicts whined through lines  
Fathoms of air below, a hare was cropping grass.  
A fox was circling....Wicked streak of rust.

Taking a kitchen knife she carved the Tree of Life upon her arm.  
Leaves, crimson berries showed.  
How very strange that living blood still flowed!  
When in her hollow heart, December snowed.

When neighbours asked, she blamed the branching cuts  
On plucking brambles from their thorny bed,  
And took to wearing long sleeved cardigans,  
In Village-land, some things are best unsaid.  
The mirror tilted. Her small world hung squint.  
She was immured by bricks as hard as flint.  
Like a grey she-wolf, her endurance milked stone dry,  
Alone beneath a catacomb of sky.

Washing the plates in catkin-furry spring,  
She gazed on her two hands within the bowl,  
It seemed to her that both of them were dead....  
As salmon, sinking sightless in a river.  
This conceptual error, was the birthing of a most domestic terror,  
All that was her, a thinning, dimming light,  
Was swallowed by Un-Reason's frightful night.

Her bramble-picking's done, scar tissue healed, .

The mirror, straight. Its face so clean, so bright,  
She's like a rag doll slumped upon the sofa, her stitches oh so tight,  
In her left hand she holds a reel of thread...a needle, in her right.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Bronte Tour

Step off the road. Here's where we start the tour  
Top Withens lies up there: the Heathcliff moor  
Beyond the side wall of the parsonage  
Wind takes your skin off there, when storms rage  
And there's the Black Bull Inn where Branwell drank  
Took Laud'num on the sly, the drooling skank  
He sat upon the Temperance Committee  
A butt for village gossip. Nothing pretty  
About his sorry tale. It's best forgot  
He blamed his fall on love, and died a sot.

But you- and you-and you- where did you meet  
Your partners? In a tavern? On a street?  
This pavement's narrow...let those dodgers pass  
They haven't paid to join my master class  
Oops! Pardon me! I'll switch my phone off now!  
Look folks, it's my friends Ron and Sal from Slough  
He once taught geography at Heptonstall  
You want to see them jive at the Hunt Ball!

A short aside. Come into this allotment  
The Mecca of the veg. A grand assortment  
Of characters you meet each village show  
A Yorkshire man could make a desert grow  
Our Swedes and cauliflowers are judged dynamic  
And every single one of them's organic.  
Our Haworth brass band has won stacks of prizes

I've loads more facts like these, tasty surprises  
The Brontës published their own poetry  
1,000 copies. Just sold two or three  
D'you hear that sooty rook on the church wall  
Beside the outside lavs? Your skin will crawl  
When I tell you what Haworth's drains were like  
Cholera, typhoid, seeped from every dyke  
4,000 bodies packed in like sardines  
In graves with corpse-juice oozing from the seams  
And stinking houses! Mill workers crammed in  
Like runner beans inside one damaged tin.

And now we're in the church. Please take a pew  
What's that? You've been short changed? Learned nothing new?  
Where's Charlotte's grave, that writer you so honour?  
My dear, the best's to come. You're sitting on her.

Sheena Blackhall



# The Brotherhood Of Trees

I am the ash  
Yggdrasil, the World Tree  
My three roots linked to wisdom, fate and magic  
I am the Yule log, I court the flash of lightning  
I am the Dule tree, dead men were my fruit  
The gallows reward for crime

I am the alder, the builder of  
Crannogs,  
Clogs,  
Harps

I am the aspen  
The ever- trembling tree  
Scots call me Old Wives Tongues  
Persephone's my mistress  
One side of my leaves is dark from the heat of Hades  
Men say Jesus hung from my crossed boughs

I am the beech  
The trysting tree for lovers  
We beech trees are the Seven Men of Moidart  
Planted in praise of Jacobite Charlie's men

I am the birch  
Druid lord of renewal and rebirth  
Dedicated of old to the God of the Flame

I avert the evil eye, increase fertility  
Within me lives a Ghillie Dhu, tree spirit  
Covered by leaves, moss, lichens

Lovers jump over my broom to marry  
Criminals bear the sting of my rod on their back  
I give arrows, bedding, books and artists' charcoal  
I help make whisky, vodka, wine  
Look up and see the witch knots in my hair!

I am the chestnut

My nuts were used as medicine in war  
When the World bled, for easing troubled nerves  
At Samhain, lovers tossed me in the fire  
I'd tell them if their lives would grow together

I am the elder, the Scottish bour tree  
Pan made his pipes from me  
Men lower me into graves  
To protect their dead from evil

I ease the path to the afterlife  
I serve the Crone Goddess  
And the Celtic tribal mother, Cailleach Beara

Thomas the Rhymer slept beneath my branches  
My jelly, which the ancients called Jews Ear  
Makes me the greatest healer in the wood

My bark and root cure epilepsy, croup  
My flowers treat skin conditions, wounds and sores  
My flowers sooth cystitis, womens' troubles  
My berries boost the lungs. Even my leaves  
Are useful: ward off flies

I am the elm  
I grew in the underworld  
Seeded by Orpheus music,  
Women draw rain water from my cracks  
To smooth their wrinkled skin

I am the hawthorn  
The thorn tree, I tore the brow of Christ

I'm used to boost fertility in couples  
A cardiac tonic, I lessen palpitations  
I am the very cogs and teeth of mill wheels

I am the hazel  
Filberts, Hizzle, Crack Nuts  
I gave the Druids invisibility  
My nuts are the fruits of wisdom  
From the salmon's sacred pool

A baby born in Autumn, fed on Hazel Milk  
Would gain the Highland gift of second sight

I am the holly  
I stand in Cawdor Castle  
I sprang from the earth in 1372  
My leaves treat smallpox, broken bones and pleurisy  
My wood makes bagpipes, walking sticks and slide rules  
Holly whips to make smart horses trot

I am the juniper  
My berries were used to purify and cleanse  
In Scotland I am the Savin Tree  
Used to bring on an abortion

At times of plague, men burned me in the streets  
With rosemary and frankincense and oak

My berries went to make Jenever Gin  
My wood's the handle of the sgian dubh  
My roots are used for making lobster creels

I am the mistletoe, the Druid's weed  
My Goddess Freya is the Queen of Love  
Those meeting underneath my boughs must kiss  
My key unlocks the doorway to the dead  
Today, I'm used by some in treating cancer

I am the oak  
If you fear lightning  
Carve in wood my acorn shape, as guardian

Oak doors keep out all evil  
The space between two oak trees leads to elfland

My leaves heal gangrene, make a hero's garland  
600 oak trees built the Mary Rose  
My bark is rich in tannins, used on leather

Four hundred years, an oak's stood at Stromferry  
Living when the Brahan Seer prophesied

I am the pine  
Picts hung a wolf's head in my branches  
To ward off foes: its fur neck red and dripping

Around a bed where childbirth was in process  
The women burned my needles, drove off evil

I am the rowan  
My sacred beast's the Dragon  
I am a child of Bride  
I drive off wickedness  
My bark heals adder bites  
My wood makes cart wheels,  
Long bows, whistles, oars and cromacks

I am the sycamore  
In St Machar's Cathedral, Northwards, Aberdeen  
Four of my kind are growing  
The daughters of a plane tree planted to praise  
The Auld Alliance between Scots and French  
My ancestor lives in New Battle Abbey

My flowers open first, like scented almond  
Beloved of bees, I feed their colonies  
And fiddle makers prize me for my style

I am the willow  
Three cricket stumps for Maiden, Goddess, Crone  
I am sorrow and lost love  
I am saugh, a sacred wood

I am sacred to Hecate, and the Moon  
At night, my spirit moves from my tree and sings  
I am used in spells for healing, banishing

I am witchhazel  
My twigs are used in love charms  
I cure bites, stings, and other little hurts

I am the wych elm  
I am the Brahan Elm of Easter Ross

A giant with my branches in the clouds

I am the yew of Fortingall, Glen Lyon  
I am the oldest tree in all of Europe  
5,000 years I've seasoned in this place  
My symbol's death. My roots drive into the dead  
Letting their spirits free to leave the world  
I made the bow that slew the Scots at Flodden  
I am a dowsing rod, maker of poison,  
Poured into the ears of Hamlet's father

Sheena Blackhall

# The Burns Supper

You stand there, knife in your hand  
Solemn's the Last Supper,  
Addressing a haggis.

Every Scot in his marrow warms to Burns,  
The Ayshire Casanova who  
Spoke out for Freedom, the rights of man  
In straight plain language

You get to stand there in his skin  
Have a piece of him, shaking your fist  
The main man, against Holy Willies  
Iniquities of poverty and your own  
Insignificance and peelywalliness

Everyone's got Burns taped. Number one  
Of the performance poets, he lived life LARGE  
He hammered verbal nails into unfairness.  
Man of the people, sweat of our sweat  
Our greatest export

This is your moment of glory.  
The haggis awaits. Your mother sucks on her gums  
You make her proud, oh aye.  
Her hair is permed to perfection,  
Her annual trip from the care home

Your oilman son, all hairy legs and trainers  
Listens to you for once in his beer stained kilt  
The power of poetry gives you borrowed importance  
Outside, the North Sea storms and rails and rattles  
Landlubbers pay it not one jot of attention  
Its dramatic shenanigans is nothing compared  
With hundreds of Tam o Shanter's  
Spoken this night in a show of Scots solidarity

Your son's imported partner, a pallid Finn  
Is appropriately impressed as you disembowel  
With relish the steaming haggis entrails.

Your son explains this is a Scottish custom  
She nods and whispers, 'Ah, just like our sauna.'

Sheena Blackhall

# The Celestial Bed (1780s)

Two guineas a time to enter the Temple of Health  
Electric medicine attracted the famous and rich.

Such delights awaited!  
Ornately furnished rooms,  
Perfumed air,  
Soothing music  
'medico-electrical apparatus, '  
Half dressed beauties posing among the statues.  
(One became Nelson's lover)

The centerpiece itself, the 'Celestial Bed, '  
Cost £50 per night.  
The cure for the sterile or impotent.

This electrifying bed was twelve feet long  
By nine feet wide  
Could be tilted for various angles.

The mattress was stuffed with  
Sweet new wheat or oat straw,  
Aromatic with balm, rose leaves, and lavender flowers,  
With hair from the tails of rampant English stallions.

Lovers lay in the bed,  
Heard soft music play  
Breathed in fragrant air,  
Stared up at the mirror suspended from the ceiling

Electricity crackled across the Celestial bed's headboard.  
The air hissed with magnetic fluid  
Stimulated libido

The phrase, 'Be fruitful. Multiply. Replenish the Earth'  
Inscribed to be acted upon.

Sheena Blackhall



# The Census

Britain's shepherd count her sheep  
Are they black or white or brindled  
Are they facing east or west  
Has the native stock now dwindled

Do they bleat in English? Scots?  
Are there few or are there lots?  
Do they baa in Hindustani  
French or Gaelic, or Irani?

Do they mix or stay apart?  
Who is dumb and who is smart?  
Is there still a need for rams  
To instruct the future's lambs?

Does each sheep stay in its pen?  
Does it leap the fence? Ah then,  
Sums go wrong. 'Twould make you weep  
Census shepherds, counting sheep

Sheena Blackhall

# The Changeling Kyrielle

I hide my growlings, curb my prowls,  
Leave my fur jacket in the hall,  
And with the dinner party blend  
I am not civilised at all.

My claws are curving, pearly white,  
So when the roast's thin slices fall,  
The dripping blood is my delight  
I am not civilised at all.

I must not snarl or show my teeth.  
Such savage manners would appal.  
I must affect a simple smile.  
I am not civilised at all.

When the high Moon is in its place,  
And Shadow slithers like a pall,  
A thousand packs howl in my heart,  
I am not civilised at all.

My ears like shells, fill with the sound  
Of whirring wing and foxes' call.  
The wild, the wet is my delight,  
I am not civilised at all.

Then I peel off my human face,  
Slink from the house and leap the wall,  
To join the runners in the night,  
I am not civilised at all.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Chimney Pots' Perspective

In a class of their own,  
Chimney pots lord it over roofs and cats

In the hierarchy of objects,  
They are vastly subservient to clouds  
But are superior to gutters and slates

They are the channels of fire and smoke  
Through which homes breath

Rooks may perch upon them  
For central heating.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Citadels Of Sand

The citadels of sand rise up  
Magnificent and grand:  
And every step of crystal glass  
Towers up above the years of grass  
Like flitting ghosts that silent pass  
In that deluded land.

The music from these costly halls  
Falls haunting to the ear  
Each gliding painting on the walls  
Holds some black secret that appalls  
Like some dead girl, unseen, who falls  
Into a deadly weir.

There are no guests within that place  
No deity, no king.  
But ever nearer, waves creep round  
To bring great temples to the ground  
Sand slithers down without a sound  
Where no choirs ever sing.

The sea around that citadel  
No boat has ever crossed  
The stars above that citadel  
In veils of storm are tossed  
And at the city's very core  
A single sleeper's curled  
Dream for a roof, a street, a bed  
Lost in that withering world.

Narrow its contours, short its day  
Ambition's wynds of power  
A thousand tears will wash away  
Pride's palace in an hour.

A trembling shadow on a lake,  
The troubled sleeper dare not wake,  
Lest sky should rend, and breath forsake  
And demons of the dark should break

The citadels of sand.

Sheena Blackhall

# The City Of Of York, Haworth, Et Al

City of York

The Jorvik Vikings of great Odin's tribe  
Erased by time's eviscerating tide  
The monks of Micklegate, the city cats  
Carved round the town to rid the place of rats  
Live on in wood and stone, not flesh and blood  
Nothing withstands degeneration's flood  
The Roman city of Eboracum  
Now beats to rhythms of a different drum  
The dust of a dead Roman legionary  
Mixed with a Saxon chieftain's emissary  
The Shambles, written in the Domesday Book  
No longer runs with blood from butcher's hook  
Under the turf, Dick Turpin's skeleton  
Grins at the irony of future gone  
By Clifford's Tower ghosts wail at eventide  
Of cornered Jews, hounded to suicide  
Here, Henry Hotspur's head on Traitor's Gate  
Hung, warning all who challenged crown and state  
Richard of York and proud Northumberland  
Too, joined the ranks of the beheaded band  
The worldly wind through streets and byways blows  
Everything comes, alights a while, then goes

## 2. Four Mysteries of York

The Horn of Ulf  
The Monkey's funeral  
The Green Man  
The Wicked Bible

Four mysteries of York I've not explored  
High in the Cathedral Bell Tower  
Perhaps the Green Man reads the Wicked Bible  
At the Monkey's Funeral  
While as a parting paean,  
The Horn of Ulf blows

Keening, down the aisles

### 3. Esholt, Emmerdale

The wind blows under the standing cows  
It's chilling their nether regions  
Under the parasol shade of trees  
Young midges dance in legions

The cottages lining the rural roads  
Are lilac hung and sooty  
At the Woolpack Pub on a wooden bench  
The tourists hug their booty  
Of Heartbeat beakers and Esholt mugs  
With Emmerdale key-rings jingling  
By a great horse chestnut's Ancient boughs  
The fake with the true is mingling

High in the beech trees, thrushes trill  
Their woodland solos singing  
Better than soap stars fading thrill  
Is the copse where a blackbird's winging!

### 4. Haworth

A black dog straddles a carcass on the moor  
Ripping the tender sweetbreads from a deer

This is the country of the Pendle witches  
Of marsh and mire, of millstone, grit and hare  
Where wind can turn your innards inside out  
On crags and peat hags bleak and desolate  
Gut-wrenching gales that sear Top Withens bare

A forest of gravestones crowds the parson's gate  
Consumption gained admittance uninvited  
The guest that dogged the Bronte house for years

Within the parsonage, ghosts throng the rooms  
Emily, fallen asleep at the kitchen table  
Pen in hand, beside the onion peelings  
Charlotte, scrubbing the flags of Bramwell's vomit

After his night's debauch at the Black Bull Inn  
Pat Bronte wooing women who would reject him  
The fated tread of sisters' failing footsteps  
Outside, the cobbles dark with soaking rain

#### 5. An English Field

An English field, pool-table flat  
Supports an English sheep  
I think it counts the passers-by  
To help it fall asleep

#### 6. May Time

Daffodil's torn her April frock  
Butterfly, harebell, dandelion clock  
Bluebells nod in the daisied dew  
The land lights up when May peeks through

Sheena Blackhall



# The Clay Speaks To The Potter

When Eden's tree put out its leaf  
Its roots with my dark side did pleat  
You were created from my bones  
The gentle dust beneath your feet

Holder of honey, milk and wine  
The cup where lip and liquid meet  
I am the fragments ground by Time  
The gentle dust beneath your feet  
The hatchery of history  
Older am I than wood, than peat  
I am the child of storm and stone  
The gentle dust beneath your feet

Touch me. I yield, take any shape  
Then turn my face towards the heat  
Of transformation in the kiln  
The gentle dust beneath your feet

And when you step from light and life  
Into the tomb, so cool, so sweet  
I will enfold you at the last  
The gentle dust beneath your feet

Sheena Blackhall

# The Clouds Come Bearing Crows

The clouds come bearing crows  
There is nothing cosy in Nature  
Death ticks round like a clock,  
Not for applause or thanks

The illiterate buzzard grallochs the silly dove  
A pillow, spilling the beans  
All that is born turns in the falling dance  
Conkers roll like children,  
Splitting their sides, repeating

This is my seventieth year beneath the sun  
I'm a smudge that time's erasing  
My appetite for power, for passion's gone

All that beavering away, for justification  
Ever seeking a reason for being  
Nailing myself to the earth in meditation  
Perhaps it's down to the drive  
Beyond dream or logic or art,  
For procreation

Sheena Blackhall

# The Cockle Pickers

It warms the cockles of the heart,  
Morecambe Bay. Kiss me Quick  
The summer bus- trip- tourist paradise.

Even in winter, company reps tuck in  
To Cumberland sausage, Herdwick mutton  
Saltmarsh lamb and Windermere char

In the warm Victorian trappings of creaky hotels  
Sticky toffee puddings tighten the buckle  
Lyth Valley damson jam, melts on the scone  
Twinings tea sends thin curls from the pot.

Out on the fickle sands of the wintry bay  
Chinese cockle pickers, from red earthed paddy fields  
In Fujian province, are up to their necks  
In raging tides and quicksands

Millions of gallons of sea exact death duties  
Their gang-master, Lin Liang Ran,  
He of the snakes-head clan  
Has washed his hands of them  
This inconvenient hiccup to his business.

After the tide of media frenzy recedes,  
Half across the world a wife will weep  
Over her husband's plastic good luck charm  
Salt encrusted by sea and human tears

Sheena Blackhall

# The Coffee Pot

The apple sits neglected in a corner  
Madame Dubois has left  
The faintest smear of lipstick on the glass.

The grounds in the coffee cup linger  
Dark and strong

A liquid breakfast  
Hardly worth crumpling the napkin

Sheena Blackhall

# The Cold Atlantic (Clearances)

The cold Atlantic wallows to and fro  
Its passing rattle sucks each broken shell  
How many heard the heartbreak order Go?

Driven towards a land they did not know  
Behind them, crofts where rooftrees burnt and fell  
Terrified families dispossessed, just so

A landlord's profits, flocks of sheep, could grow  
In scales of honour, was it right to sell  
A clan, a people's birthplace? Like a foe

To turn whole families out into the snow?  
And that my friend was genocide, a hell  
As callous as the rapine of Glencoe

A dowie crossing, painful tidal flow  
A poisonous parting and a forced farewell,  
Where avarice brought down the hammer blow

Off the Atlantic, feel the chill air blow.  
Its waves still whispering, of what befell  
Those stranded on the shore, too poor to go  
Like sand grown black with stranded mackerel

Sheena Blackhall

# The Colonel's Widow Stating Her Opinion

Through the thronged bazaar the widow's voice is angry  
'Girl, for shame! Your child should be in school,  
Or safe at home. Not begging on the streets.'

In the plush hotel, the staff salaam and bow  
First at the desk with her long complaint.  
'No tea making facility  
Standards are slipping.  
I'll put all this in writing'.

Her purring taxi waits,  
To ferry her past Delhi's gutter-shacks:  
By the ghat, she wilts,  
Adjusts her sunglasses,  
Straightens her broad-brimmed hat.

If you can't afford to feed, you shouldn't breed.  
A Harijan swivels on festered stumps of legs,  
Bump-slide down to the pool on calloused knees.

Five foot four in Marks and Spencer's socks  
She has come to view the mosque  
She's read the appropriate warnings.  
The horrid, nasty troubles you can catch  
Barefoot indeed! To visit a heathen shrine!  
The sacred and profane  
Size each other up, through coloured eyes.

In the lounge the temperature rises  
The Central heating's gone.  
If this was British, we'd soon get it sorted!

The housemaid's been up since dawn  
To climb the roof, seeking the Sun God's blessing  
The Hindu Salutation to the sun

Sheena Blackhall

# The Colossus Of Invergordon

I met an oilman from a Northern land  
Who said, An oil rig stands midst the foam  
Out in the sea, far from the salty strand  
The mighty ocean tries to knock it down

But it stands firm, obdurate, in command  
And sucks the black gold from the deep sea bed,  
And little cares for human underlings  
That its production keeps alive and fed

This industry's brought many a wife to tears  
When helicopters crash and tear their wings  
For sometimes wealth brings nothing but despair

I looked on that colossus of a rig  
And shuddered, for so dark it seemed that day  
The waves rose like a wild whirligig  
The ghosts of oilmen echoed through the spray

Sheena Blackhall

# The Cook

She is heavier than a box of smarties, a foxglove, a sieve  
She is sleepier than a grasshopper, a clock, a waterfall

Not built to a model's proportions  
She is a rotunda of relaxation

Her skin drinks in the cool air of the room  
Birds could nest in her armpits  
Walking, the balls of her feet make seismic ripples

Her breasts could suckle a herd  
Of milk white goats  
Skipping down the sides of Mount Olympus  
She's one whole woman, comfy in flesh and gender

Sheena Blackhall



# The Cornfield

There is a cornfield ploughed into my brain  
No wind, nor sleety gale wears it away

What fails with time, glass, clocks, health, flowers  
This place remains intact.  
Its stalks are crowned with golden glistening seeds

I dream of it in moonlight when the sharp stars sing  
Their pibrochs, to far, dusky firmaments

I dream of how it swayed around, breast high  
Whispering its tales of earth and sun-baked bread

Sheena Blackhall

# The Cough: Inspired By 'the Limp' By Ananda (Stephen Parr)

The cough arrived on Wednesday  
Sly and persistent, stalking its next host

First, it took up residence in the throat  
Of a latter-day Scrooge  
With vocal cords as tight as piano wires  
It led him a merry dance through the midnight hours

Next it selected a fatter prey to pester  
Bedding down in an outsize larynx, triple x  
Tweedledum's Adam's apple became a juicer  
Oh the phlegm that it inspired in him!

A horrid little boy proved quite a challenge  
Always washing his hands to ward off germs  
The cough laid siege and entered his lungs on the bus  
His wheezes blew it wide, a plague to many

It met its match in the chest of a veteran soldier  
Who battled it with Fisherman's Friend full strength  
Who gassed it with Friar's Balsam

Who smothered its ingress with liberal lashings of Vic  
Who finished it off with a tumblerful of toddy  
Last seen it was panting up to recuperate  
In a respiratory ward for afflicted sneezes

Sheena Blackhall

# The Crannog Woman (14 Poems In Scots)

## Memorial

Slippin intae Fittie in the dreich sea haar  
Twa score o whalermen, taigles in their hair  
Langsyne they perished ower the herbour bar  
Samhuin brings them hame frae their derk sea lair

Gowk's Day, the Oscar sailed. The lift sae fair  
Cheenged tae a blizzard eftir braw sunsheen  
Heistit up the vessel, cracked her like a nut  
On the Grey Hope Rock, wi'in sicht o Aiberdeen

Slippin intae Fittie in the cauld sea haar  
Twa score o ghaisties, swickit o their lives  
Langsyne they perished ower the herbour bar  
Made orphans ooto bairnies an widdas ooto wives

Steek the yett ahin ye, dinna luik ootbye  
Pearls are their een an their hair is o the dulse  
Green is their countenance, Daith is in their banes  
Sea san's their life bluid, the tide is their pulse

## Wifie on the Beach

Is it a whale? Is it a peach?  
It's a muckle fat wifie, laired on the beach  
Her taes are yoky bit ooto reach  
The muckle wifie laired on the beach

Is she a skiffie? Dis she teach?  
Is she a chore or a benefit leech?  
Is she a doctor? Dis she preach?  
The muckle fat wifie laired on the beach

Is her spikk genteel or a seagull's screech?  
Her tool cud dae wi a suppie bleach  
Mebbe she's cairryin twins, baith breech  
The muckle fat wifie laired on the beach

## Queue

Foo's yer doos. Aye peckin?

Got yer fare? Jist checkin!

Bus is late. Bus stop's stappit  
Quine wi granny, heid-squar happit

Dreich doonpish. Double deckie  
Chitterin druggie. Gallus brickie

Skreichin scurrie, hirplin doo  
Wyin feenished, Bus here noo!

e at Gloamin

A gown wauchts like a ghaist in the weet air o gloaming  
Rikk furls frae seety lums in the derkenin lift  
The gairden's teem o fowk. The anely soun's  
The skelp o win-wheeped claes

Deep in the shaddaas a kittlin keeks  
Wi spuuky, waukrife een  
Wytin fur moose or ratten tae catch all cleuk

A fell onchancy time's the hauf-licht gloamin  
Street lamps leam ower the cassies, an oorie lowe

Somelike afore an ailin body dees  
The braith in the thrapple snags foraye on seelence.

Waukrife Win

The waukrife win boos ower the birks  
It skreichs roon hooses an ferms an kirks

It takks an taigles the rikk like oo  
It skitters the scurries ahin the ploo

It gars the stoor gang tapsalteerie  
It sabs doon lums, baith fly an fearie

An naebody kens far it sleeps at nicht  
Bit the hoolet, the brock, an the starnies bricht

Flittin

Naethin bides at Whinnyfauld  
Birds stop ower passin ben  
Clouds scud aff tae hetter climes  
Wins race on tae uplan fen  
Ile-wife lassie blythe an cheery  
Flittin's packit... gled tae leave  
Cauld an mochie is the landscape  
Dreich an dowie. Fit's tae grieve?

Id Fountain

Spurgies skail frae the stane  
A linn o feathers

Wee stoaters, randy an gallus  
Kickin up stooshies in the stoor

Rigged oot deuce an swankie  
A genteel pertrick watches frae a ledge  
Ower wechty fur aerobatics

The spurgies jink an hotter  
Like berries on the byle  
In a warlock's kitchie

on Snawy Bens

Ooto the cauld an grey they stepped  
Ooto the muirlan mist  
Gracefu an braw's the skinklin stars  
On tae a secret tryst

Ane fell reid tae a poacher's gun  
Anither drooned in the burn  
Anely the third wis left alive  
In the cauld, at the Auld Year's turn.

g at King's College

Gean blossom shouers sweet petals ower the girse

Pink, fite an green, a Beltane benison  
The saft-like breeze comes dauncin doucely ben

Frae auld St Machar an the skinklin Don  
Daffs jink their heids like lammies on the teat  
The pee the beds show aff their yalla hue  
Spring shakks a shank alang the Chanonry  
Rigged oot in skyrie orange, reid an blue  
In backies washin wallops in the win  
The cobbles an the waas soak up the sun  
Wee spurgies cheep amang the showdin boughs

Blaik wyvers showd in moose-wabs newly spun  
Splayed ower the emerant girse bi Elphinstane  
A student woos his luv wi word an buik  
Aneth a muckle tree far coortin doos  
Purr an kinoodle in their ain wee neuk

The world is thrang wi cheepers, nests, an wings  
An this is foo the Sizzen comes tae King's.

Liggers' Stane: tune; The Parting Glass  
The Lord o the Isles cam Marchin East  
Untae the Garioch he has gaen  
Tae spread the pouer o the Heilan clans  
Macleod, Macdonald and Maclean.  
An for Harlaw the Trades set oot  
Oor citizen-wirkers, Provost, Thane  
Tae save the toun o Aiberdeen  
Frae fire an spulzie, rape an pain  
For man maun fecht an weemin bide  
Tae hug the hairth an the bairns at hame  
Bit ilkie army has its wives  
Fa follae their men tae the drum's refrain  
An in the clash o sword an shield  
Fin bluid rins doon the braes like rain  
Fit lass o mettle could idly staun  
Tae watch her luv cut doon an slain?

Sax hunner years they've slumbered quaet  
The lassies neth the Liggers' Stane

The fechtin quines fa jyned the lines  
Their beauty crummlit inno stoor an bane  
The lang lythe park bi Bennachie  
Tae its kind hairt the deid has taen  
An Heilan wife wi Lowlan lass  
Thegither sleep aneth the ripenin grain

Their men are praised in verse an sang  
The heroes o Harlaw's reid plain  
Spare the antrin thocht for the nameless quines  
That lie aneth the Liggars' Stane

The Lord o the Isles merched tae the Wast  
Awa frae the Garioch he has gaen  
Bit gin ye speired fa won the day  
There war orphan bairns wad answer nane.

: A Scots Owersett o an English translation o a poem bi Yevgeny Rein b.1936  
Nikolay Gumilyov

An auld dosser frae Koktebel  
Eleven dug years auld  
An near-haun pure-bluid German shepherd  
Yer sprauchlin aneth ma fit,  
Takkin tae tent o the TV  
An the steer an stramash ootby

There's the fitba semi-final on thon scunnersome box  
An the latest sklaik roon the table  
Ye dinna gie a hee-haw tae thon  
Bit yer kent in hyne-aff airts, ye ken  
Fowk mynd ye  
In Lunnon, New York, Montreal  
In San Francisco, Munich an Paris  
Mony fowk hae bin throwe this veranda  
Ye clinkit yer chyne tae greet them  
An barked blithely, or jist tae lat them ken ye war aroon  
Syne we tuik aff yer collar  
Ye raxxed oot yer breist  
An made yer entrance onno the veranda

'Jim! ' they cried lood tae ye, 'Wee Jimmie, Jimlet! '

Ye likit thon  
Bit the dignity wis the foremaist thing  
Guests may come an gyang  
Bit the German shepherd ay bides  
Year eftir year guests cam  
Year eftir year guests newsed  
Suppit beer, tea, milk, vodkay  
An spak funny wee wirds ower and ower  
'mondrian, ' 'chagall', 'yevtushenko'  
'He's awa', 'She's awa', 'They're leavin'  
'kabakov', 'sapgir', 'savitsky', 'brodsky'  
'jackson pollack', v.v. nabokov', 'limonov'  
An again, 'They've left, ' 'They're leavin', 'They'll be leavin.'

It's nae sae croodit noo on the balcony  
Bit Clava the milkie aywis comes  
Wi milk in the pail an the dampt box skreichs an fizzes

Are ye dwaumin, Jim ma dug? Ye hae the richt tae  
I'm doverin aff afore the TV  
Ye ken oor dreams are far sweeter  
Than aa the steer an stramash  
We've nae reached the eyn o the century yet  
My weel-lued dug  
Fit wye are we sae rugged back  
Inno oor bairnhood, fin we clinkit oor chynes?

Twa Poems owersett in Scots o English translations o the wark o Oktay Rifat  
1914-1988

12. Pink Hoose on the Bosphorus  
There are quines crisp as lettuce  
Their moos an nebs furred an furly  
They're dowpit, cross leggit on the ferries  
The win blaws an fin he luiks  
A man keeks at sights that gar his hairt stoon

Oh Istanbul, auld deevil that ye are!  
Doon at Findikli there's fun and games.  
A line in ma haun wi a hunner hyeuks  
I yark like the Nor win amang the tunny



Frae Captain Turgut's boatie.

I've niver bin tae Orhan's mools  
At Rumelihisar  
I niver socht tae gyang.

Noo, wi fresh breid, a daud o fite cheese  
He'd be jist here  
Suppin raki an watchin the sea

I lowp frae the quay tae the watter  
Fish aneth me  
Clouds abeen  
The roch Bosphorus laps ma mou  
I sweem straicht tae the pink hoose on the waiter's rim

n Time

'Pit the peaches on the shelf, let the kitchie yoam o peaches! '  
Quo the cheil, an raise frae the bench tae gyang an milk the coo

The wumman saw the coo keekin at the hey while she wis bein milkit.  
A tin pailie aneth, teats in his hauns, sidie-on  
The chiel pechs as he puus doon the milk rived frae clover an thyme  
Blaik an fite spirks in the caller evenin

She gaed tae the kitchie, redd up the peaches on the shelf  
Noo the floerpot in the keekin-glaiss, the braw-shewed bowster  
The licht atween the beams, the purple o the kilim  
Noo even the wyvers yoam o peaches  
The lift is peach-covered, the clouds yoam o peaches

; The Neptune: tune; The Baleena

The Neptune wis a vessel, a handsome privateer  
Her darg wistae attack the French an reive teir gowd an gear  
James Scott he was her maister, an mony a prize he won  
Frae the harbour o Portsoy she sailed weel rigged wi sail an gun

Bit aff the Scottish coastline, the Neptune she wis taen  
Bi the Boston 'Independence' wi caiiriage guns an men  
The Captain he wis captured an tae the Yankee sloop  
Wis led at gunpynt tae the deck

Wi mony a skirl an whoop

Twa Boston tars war stationed, upon the Neptune syne  
Tae steer their prize fur Americay upon the ocean brine  
Bit the Portsoy crewmen focht them, an won bi grit an guile  
An the Boston tars war clapt in chynes inbye Banff's sturdy jyle

Sae here's tae the Portsoy pirates, fa feared nae man nor beast  
An ruled the waves aroon the coast, an founded many a feast  
Wi smuggled meat an brandy, sent the Yankees ower the wave  
For anither destination far the seamen warna brave!

Sheena Blackhall

# The Curate's Egg

The curate's egg  
Was cracked by a blue-skinned man  
With a short spear and no money

When he fried it,  
A flash in the pan released a dozen butterflies  
Singing in Mandarin

The shell was found to contain  
One dinosaur turd  
And a cameo brooch of Charles Dickens  
Inscribed by Machiavelli to the NHS

The blue skinned man  
Claimed the curate egged him on

Sheena Blackhall

# The Cyard's Kist (28 Scots Poems)

## Cyard's Kist

'There's nae guid comes  
A's wrack, fin the Cyards are here  
Wi a birn o bairns at their back  
An their hawkin gear.'  
Bit the lassie didna list  
She wis mad tae lift the sneck  
On the cyard's kist.

There wisna the gowden glint,  
Nor the silk sae braw  
The finest Flander's lace,  
Nor the ring sae sma.  
Bit the road that niver ends  
An the words unsaid,  
The darklin wid for a wa'  
An the whin for a bed.

Tell true, did iver ye wist?  
The hale o the warld lies there,  
I' the cyard's kist!

## 2. Hedgehogs

A bourich o preens  
That's quick tae fleg;  
Twa bitticks o' een  
An a wee, wee neb;

Come scooshlin oot, wi the starry mune  
Fin whins are dark an the walks are teem.

Far they come frae, naebody kens,  
Jinkin awa frae the sicht o men  
An for their coortin', I maun suppose,  
They rub their snoots like Eskimos!

## Cyard's Coortin'

He hawked a puckle pots an' pans,  
Till — scunnered o' the wark,

He timmered up the kindlin'  
Till the swat ran doon his sark  
Syne he wat his whussle freely  
Frae a coggie keepit handy  
An' thochties turned — as thochties will —  
Tae blythesome houghmagandie.

The larik at the lochan's brim  
Wis warslin' i' the win's  
The burnie boundin' doon the brae  
Cam' splytrin' ower the linns  
A hale clanjamphry o' doos  
Reviled him for his sins...  
Bit a' the gangrel cared aboot  
Wis coortin' i' the whins.

There's nae a cyard that wauks the road  
Bit harkens till the kimmer  
The lassie he'd a notion for  
Wis noted as a limmer  
Ye can tak' a horse tae watter,  
Bit ye canna gar it drink  
An' there's mair tae winnin' lassies  
Than b' tippin' them the wink.

The warmest hopes o' laird an' loon  
Are aften quickly cweeled  
An' for a' his airt, an' guilin'  
Weel, his woin' wis repeeled  
She rammed his bunnet ower his lugs  
An' pulverised his shins  
An' yon's the recompense he got  
For coortin' i' the whins.

If yer lookin' for a moral —  
Niver lippen till the clack  
Jist tak fowk as ye fin' them —  
Dinna mak' the cyard's mistak.

y  
Fowk squattit in doorwyes —  
Shifty-eed, reid-biddy earls,

Watchin the seamen scalin aff the docks,  
Scaunin the streets for a hard-faced quine,  
Buyin an 'oor o warmth  
Far the screichin seagulls dine.

He bedd in a single room —  
Fower waas an little mair.  
His gear, as auld an dane's himself—  
In the rochest side o toun  
A deid-end, doon-cast lair:  
Ye widna turn a hair,  
Tae see him pass, snod-bonnetted,  
Claes a bittie the waur o' weir.

Bit fin he sang  
Man, it wisna a room ava,  
For he sang frae the hairt  
Auld, hauntin lays  
O roads he'd tramped an seen  
In his waulkin' days.

Syne the dreich, bare waas dinged doon,  
For far an wide his music tellt  
O' the clean, cauld muirs  
O' the tinkler loon.

Gin I'd his smeddum, airt, an' inward sicht —  
I'd shak life bi the lugs  
An' set it richt!

#### 5.Images

If I gaed blin the morn  
There's sights, like draps o dew,  
Wid bricht the dark...  
Wippet an warm, safe within,  
An' niver tyned.  
I can mak Winter, Spring;  
Fin I've a mind.

Lyin, stibble-chaffed, i' the hairst park,  
Ringed bi lang-armed trees,  
The weird wid cleft wi calls

Watchin' the sair-made kye  
Trauchle frae brae till byre;  
The soughin' win' i the girse  
An' the sky on fire.

Three hills, guardin' the west  
An' a lang sweep doon  
Tae an oxter o' tummlin' watter:  
Fine tae cweel yer cheek  
I' the bank-heich spray  
Fin as stauns still  
An the roses fa' bi the fern  
At the ebb o day.

Age winna blaud this sicht...  
A bairn's weel-treasured ferlies  
Will gang wi me, ticht-keepit,  
Intae the last guid nicht.

Youth  
As I gaed ower the stormy muir  
The sky was riven like the sea;  
The muir-fowl fled the onding's rage,  
Aroon the sleet fell cruelly.

'Whaur are ye gaun on sic a nicht? '  
The reeshlin bracken seemed tae speer.  
'A road that hisna seen my step  
This mony a dreary year.'

As I cam ben the soundin Dee  
The birks wir chitterin i' the mist,  
'Gae back, gae back, ' they whispert, soft,  
'It is a worthless tryst.'

As I cam ower the Linn o Muick,  
The larik murmered through the smoor,  
'Oh whaur left ye the bonnie bairn,  
That cam' this road afore? '

Syne, I glanced blythely in the burn,  
Bit oh, my hairt wis turned tae stane.

A wizened wife wis mirrored there —  
The bonnie bairn had gaen.

Tryst

Twa lovers trysted bi the birk,  
The lass had munelicht in her een,  
Bit creepin saftly throw the mirk  
The waukrife lad had nane.

Warm was his kiss an' strang his airm,  
The blin-sicht mowdie turned awa,  
Nae lad sae fine could mean her hairm,  
Her bridal guest, the hoodie crow.

A lass gaed up the ferny hill,  
A gowk came back wi' feint a word;  
The cankered worm wis on its broo  
An in its wame, the yird.

Lintie

The lintie lichtit on the bough  
Abune twa lovers true  
An' sweet an' lang she sang her lilt  
Fin love wis fresh, an' new.

Fin love grew auld, the bird cam' back  
Bit didna hinner lang  
For `Fegs, ' quo' she — 'there's nocht bit strife  
A spittin' futterat's man an' wife  
I widna waste ma sang.'

9.A Guid New Year

Fin e're the auld year hirples oot  
In ilka hame the toast is raised  
An yet, ahin the Season's cheer  
Hidden awa, the hint o' fear

For the Past is safe ahin us:  
A barn, wi the hairst stap-fu;  
Fit lies afore, is a cauld, braid park  
Waitin the bite o' the ploo



The bairns are beddit an' sleepin'  
The slowest crap ava;  
As we squar' up tae the tick o' the clock  
An think fit'll yet befa...

For Time's a bitter sickle  
An noo's fan its edge is keen  
An empty seat, by the Ingle  
A glaiss that's sittin teem

Bit the sna bree happen Morven  
An the lang, dour rigs o' Cromar  
An the grey grey mist o' mornin'  
That sleeps on Lochnagar  
Can lauch at a body's fancies  
Time winna alter them  
For they've bin there sin' the start o't  
Safe, till the world's end.

oming  
The salmon swims tae the lochan's briest,  
The bees win hinney frae the muir,  
Sae 'tis wi me a tug at the hairt  
An it's sair, man, sair...

Tae stan at the mou o' the quate hoose  
Whaur ilka room is teem,  
Hearin the step o' a bairnie's fit  
Come lichtsome doon, in a dream.

Bit the bairns are gaen these mony years  
An echoes soun i' the stair;  
Wi' only masel tae min on them  
The ghaisties heezin there.

For I ken I sud snib the door  
An leave this rickle o waste  
Tae the caller air o bog an thyme;  
The simmer sun an' frost.

Bit iver an' aye I come my lane,  
As if tae a jewelled kist,

Tae an auld deen hoose  
Wi' the reef staved in  
The haunt o the muirland mist.

k  
'Ye dinna tell me — damn the bit —'  
(A glimmer lichts the ee,  
Syne a the sklaik comes scalin oot,  
Like midden oozin bree.)

It's pintless, syne, tae quanter them —  
Their argument's entire;  
'There's water far a stirkie droons;  
An' far there's smoke there's fire.'

If half they said wis Gospel;  
We'd be damned for ivermore;  
The curse o Scotland's villages...  
The sklaikin at the door.

Muick  
The skies drift doon — a dreepin' blur  
That maks o' Ben an' brae a shroud  
As if grown weary o' the lan'  
The mountain coories i' the cloud

An' naething steers within this world  
O' stormy lift, an' troubled tarn  
Bit drooned reflection o' the hills  
As lang as Time, as bricht as starn

In ilka crag's a favoured face  
In ilka burn's a frien'  
An' aa' the days we've been apairt  
Are as they'd niver been.

ye back  
The howlet, teetin' frae the wid  
Jeloosed the moosie's track  
A dainty nippicky o' fur  
A tasty hist ye back

The yowe gaed stytrin' throw the whin  
Oer oot-rigs lang, an' black;  
As hunkrin' doon, wi' slivrin mou  
The tod cried 'Hist ye back'

Abune the burn the puddock hodged  
His hurdies strang an' swack  
O' sweet an' cweel, the waves aneth  
A sloakin hist ye back

She'll kiss him aince, she'll kiss him twice —  
The fiercest hist ye back  
She'll kiss him ower and ower again  
Tho' aa' should gang tae wrack.

r Tongue

Written on hearing the Rev. Lamont's Service in Scots, Denburn Parish Church  
'Twis a gey stammygaster, a meenister spikkin' like yon —  
Nane o' yer peely wally affairs, that hae ye hodgin' i' the pew  
That's best forgon.

"Gin ye despise yer mither tongue, as weel despise yersel"  
These were his wards, or near eneuch —  
Nae pan-loaf bletherin', bit cantie, couthie stuff.

Syne I didna sit in a kirk ava — for his wards struck hame —  
The years rowed back, like meltin' sna', an' I sat ma lane  
In a cauld, hard chair, at a fantoosh schule  
Recitin' the 'Puddock.'

Abody snichered an' smirked as the wards fell deid  
At the only bairn o' the hale jing-bang, tae ken fit she read.

I felt like a dinosaur, I tell ye — the last o' a line  
A freak at a sideshow, better kept oot o' sicht;  
A grim day yon — ye wis naething there,  
Gin ye couldna cock yer snoot, or yer crannie, or baith  
'Uppity vratches, nae worth mindin', ' ma mither said.  
Aye; bit they hurt me sair.

And tae this day, tho' I ken it's wrang  
If the wards slip oot — the auld spik, in genteel company

I feel a pang o' shame for the bonnie, birlin' wards  
That loup frae hairt till mou,  
Couthie, an' kent, an' fine  
For I'm back in time, on a cauld hard chair  
At yon fantoosh schule — an' the snichers there.

Dominie

The dominie thocht it an unca thing,  
The Mither tongue.  
Like Sabbath braws, he glorified gentility  
An' hauled ma kail daily throw the rick  
Dubbin' the Doric orra, coorse, ill-fared  
A peer realtion o' the Southern spik  
Set by unsung.

The mannie's deid or, if he's nae,  
By God! he should be!  
Mim-moued, his cantin' quate.  
Nae doot, he's since jeloused,  
It's deeds that mak the man — nae wards  
A thochtie late.

y School Picnic

At first peep o' the whussle we were aff —  
Hyterin by whins, a tattie wummlin' on my speen,  
Pechin tae win the line.

Chae cam first — a sleekit limmer o a loon,  
Swickin, his tattie held doon, firm, wi his thoomb.

The meenister gaed him a prize, bit nae cheer.  
I feenished wi the lave, naething byordnar,  
Bit hinmaist, on cam Dod;  
Skitin doon on his doup, sklytert in sharn,  
Till, wi a roar, fowk rose tae clap him hame.

Syne, up he trauchles, jobbit wi nettles,  
Face like a hairst meen, fit tae burst,  
Tearin ower the grun.

I couldna fathom it ava; the fuss they held wi him,  
Until my faither, wi a kindly grace, explained,

"It's nae the rinnin o the race that coonts,  
Bit foo it's run."

Grown aulder noo, I whyles mum my lot,  
Fin ithers draw awa, an gain apace.  
Bit syne his words return an comfort bring —  
"It's in the wye ye rin it — nae the race."

's Lament

It's nae delight tae be a hen,  
Wi' clooks an claws an caimb.  
Reestin wi the rottans  
In a hen-hoose for a hame.

Nae suner div I saddle doon,  
My clutch o' bairns tae hatch;  
The fairm-wife comes — a scraunin' pest —  
She cowps me aff ma cosy nest  
A tarry-fingered vratch.

Jist lately, though, she's changed her tune —  
Ma platie's piled wi corn,  
"Sup up, ma bonnie quine, " says she,  
"We're haein broth the morn! "

18. Halloween

Fin nichts draw in an fires burn high  
An antrin bogies glower inbye  
An leaves gang tapsalteerie ower...  
Canny! Yon's the witchin hour.

Lift the neeps frae yont the dyke.  
Howk them oot wi muckle fyke.  
Candles teet tween eerie een,  
Fairies flit at Halloween.

Pare the aipple's rosy cheek,  
Gin yer true-love's name yed seek,  
Or, in darkened mirror watch,  
Wheest! his likeness ye may catch.

I've heard tell, but say it low,

O warlocks steerin, lang ago,  
Risin, grim, frae graveyard stane,  
Wid fleg the breeks frae ony wean.

Sae gin it's a the same tae you  
I'll hug the cheery ingle-side;  
Lest wi the ferlies in the dew  
I micht collide.

#### 19.A Sair Miss

For A.J. Blackhall, World Barley Champion  
Set doon

Wi the wecht o years at his back,  
A sklyter o yird flung ben,  
As a last fareweel.  
The mourners staun like hoodie craws  
Ower near the mou o the grave for comfort,  
Dark an cweel.

Syne, for a pairtin thocht, Say only this —  
A guid man gone.  
A sair miss.

#### Bogie

The Bogie bides abune the brae  
As queer as cannel-licht,  
For in a dwaum, I spied him there,  
Ae ghaistly, gurley nicht.

His heid is hapt wi' stringly web  
He hirples back an ben,  
A muckle humfy-backit gleg  
Deep, in a gorbelt den.

Ugsome, unsocht, he creeps about,  
A touslie tinkie tyke,  
He is the wailin i' the win,  
The fear ahint the dyke.

"Wheest, bairnies, wheesht, " I whisper,  
As the lowe cracks i' the lum,  
"For gin yer coorse — ye niver ken —

The Bogie-man nicht come."

al Record

'Pit yer penny on the plate, ' said Ma o' rectitude, a pillar —

(My need wis greater nor the kirk's

It AYE wis wintin siller.)

'An dinna glower at me like yon

Wi' sic a gurley look

The Lord is writin' a'thing doon,

He keeps it in His book.'

Fin I fed the dog wi candy

Till his teeth were fairly stuck;

Fin I swicket at Monopoly

Or glaured ma sheen wi muck;

She wis sure tae gar me rue it

Wi' a thochty o' a froon,

'Aye — there comes a day o' recknin',

Mine — He's writin' a'thing doon.'

I'm aulder, bit nane wiser —

An' I fairly shak tae think

That the Angel wi the ledger,

Maun be rinnin oot o' ink.

Shop

A hingin-luggit rabbit baps its feet,

Its loupin' snibbit in,

Yarks its snoot, teetle the pen,

Syne bauchles back, doup doon,

Duntin the cage, in bye-gaun,

Wi' its croon.

Heezin up abane

A squatter o squeaks

In a kirn o strae.

Moosies, an' ither flechy beasts,

Jink intil play.

Aneth, a rack o shiny bowls —

Fish, goggle-eeed, glower oot

Like hauntit owls.

A budgie, dry's a birsled bane,  
Its wings doon-cast as dreepy drawers,  
Rives wi's beak agin the bars.

If, for the sake o' bed, an' bite tae eat,  
Freedom wis price tae pye,  
A'd raither wint ma meat!

led Pack

There's been misdeals, aboot the antrin pair  
A queen o' hairts, his sattled wi' a joker.  
Bit Matrimony's an unchancy thing  
A gamble, like a skeely game o' poker

The bairns are trumps — I ken the faces yet  
Yon's got his faither's hair — a spaded Jack  
An' she's a spikkin' likeness o' her mother  
A's tapsalteerie, like shuffled pack

It isna safe, tae say a wardie wrang  
For faith, they're as conneckit weel throwither  
Yon wisna Geordie's son-in-law ava  
Bit Nancy's sister's second cousin's brither.

-Sang

There's a hole i' the sky,  
At the back o' the day  
Tae gang til't naebody daurs  
For there, like a barfit bairn, stauns nicht  
Wi his neive stap-fu o' stars

The day creeps oot, wi a hirplin' gait  
A gomeril spent, an' dane  
Its lowe burned grey as a ghaistie's gown  
An' the gloamin' glint i' its een

An' ben yon chink, at the back o' the cloud  
Far the settin' sun sits reid  
Fleerichin' up, till an unkent hame  
Are the souls o' the newly-deid



There's a hole i' the sky,  
At the back o' the day  
A place far naebody's been  
Till Daith, the lanely leerie man  
Cam's steekin' their waukrife een.

and Kin

He taks efter my side  
Man, there wisna wan o the line  
That couldna wheeple a tune.  
Black-haired as craws  
An' kittlesome, quanter-kine.

It eesed tae bamboozle me sair  
The interest fowk showed in a cot —  
Discussin the set o' a bairn's heid  
Like a new-bocht stot.  
Wis it close tae the bluid?  
Claimin' the verra licht o'ts een  
For a Sire lang deid.

Sizin up my ain bit loon  
There's a mixer-maxter o favours.  
His virtues are a' my ain  
Bit his fau'ts are his faither's!

Slate

A tousie heid boosed ower her latest trock  
(The cheapest wylins frae the sweetie shop)  
Bairn-pleased, an naethin blate  
Wi twa, three, sticks o' chalk,  
An' a teem slate.

A half-oor saw it cast aside  
Scoored, bladded, spiled;  
Its reel run oot  
An' a' its magic filed.  
The antrin owergaun wi a cloot  
Restored its favour  
Snorrels cancelled oot  
As easy's scalin waiter frae a pail.  
The slate took on its maiden sheen,

Fresh, clean an hale.

Afore I gang, twa-faul, intae the dark:  
Set by my wardly gear, for timmer sark,  
Turn dweeble, auld an sweir;  
Lord, I wid ask for naething mair  
For it's weirin' late.  
Gie me a twa three sticks o chalk —  
An' a teem slate.

27. In Absentia

'Mak the maist o't noo —  
Ye'r a lang time deid.'  
Jokin' like, the auld sang...  
Ay, bit it gars ye think  
An' its nae sae wrang.

I widna be comfy  
Loupin aboot wi muckle wings,  
Face as shiny's a puddock's dock,  
Mindin ma Ps an Qs aa day,  
Wi' the unco-guid an' sic-like stock.

Surely thae widna miss ae face,  
Meenisters, Lords an' Commons,  
Hashin oot o the mools  
Rinnin' the last celestial race?

I'll sneak awa at the final trump.  
Cry, 'Ta Ta! ' tae the kirkyaird,  
Stanes an' aa,  
An' mak' for the crags o Lochnagar,  
Brave an braw.

Sodjer  
Heatherin eerin orin aye,  
The drums are dirlin lood ootbye;  
Hiddledum diddledum deitherin deist,  
The pipes are willin the lads tae list.

Too roo rantin ree  
Hine awa an ower the sea;

Hudderin heiderin hodderin hey  
Cannon rick is cauld an grey.

Eenertie feenertie fichertie feg  
The sodjer's gotten a widden leg;  
Pirlie wirlie winkie woan,  
Fars the cheer in winnin yon?

Sheena Blackhall

# The Dance Of Death

Father, mother rich and poor  
Sister, brother, none endure  
Children of the Winds of Chance  
Join hands with Death and let us dance

Do not fear his hollow smile  
He'll not dissemble nor beguile  
His music is impermanence  
Join hands with Death and let us dance

Mighty, lowly, strong and weak  
Laughing girl with sunny cheek  
All must tumble to his lance  
Join hands with Death and let us dance

In the apple lives the worm  
In the statue lives the dust  
As the dawn becomes the moon  
Men are mortal, die we must

Sheena Blackhall

# The Dancing Tree

Crow flapped under the boughs of a creaking oak  
Sensing something unusual was going to happen.

The oak had recently felt the urge to uproot  
Deciding that it was darkened by its own shadow

Its branches hung horizontal, a gallows tree  
The remains of the dying sun bled through its twigs

Spring pressed against its sides like a young fire  
It seemed its roots had troweled aeons of midnights  
It was nailed to its birth-spot, girning

So many hours of gravity!  
So many anguished whimpers of fading leaves  
Drifting into the empty rooms of the woods!  
The past was a dead weight, a hard tethering.

People remember flowers  
Like lovers' promises on paths of kisses  
Oak, knew only bitter and biting breezes  
The weary sameness of weighty treadmill seasons

On tight-rope winds birds swung into the heavens  
Children, green and pulsing, ran barefoot  
Out of the ken of trees and parents

A malcontent miser, the oak  
Counted its pennies of wrongs.

And so, with storm clouds brothing,  
Thunder, lining the horizon  
Oak twisted its roots out of reason  
Out of the mulch and withering that was its life.

On the woody stumps of its feet  
It left its familiar boundaries,  
Hobbled its way past the smoke of hidden cottages

In the moonlight, it swayed and rocked  
In the moaning wind, a sawdust dancer, it sighed  
Free of its knotty shackles, it tasted newness  
Crow cocked his weird head side-ways  
Stunned on by strange behaviour  
Beak agape at such unnatural practises

Sheena Blackhall

# The Dark Belongs To The Feral Ones

A lone assistant, an all-night stand  
Somebody's daughters and somebody's sons  
Flash of a blade behind a door  
The dark belongs to the feral ones

Mayhem & menace, muggings & fear  
Somebody's daughters and somebody's sons  
Drugs and litter and fights, and beer  
The dark belongs to the feral ones

Boots that stamp on a victim's face  
Somebody's daughters and somebody's sons  
Is it the fault of blood, or place?  
The dark belongs to the feral ones

Gym-slip bride in her council flat  
Somebody's daughters and somebody 's sons  
She's the local hoodies' welcome mat  
The dark belongs to the feral ones

Speed and jellies and hash and smack  
Somebody's daughters and somebody's sons  
Dealers in playgrounds pushing crack  
The dark belongs to the feral ones

Gangs, graffiti and poxed-up sex  
Somebody's daughters and somebody's sons  
Smash society..clear its decks  
The dark belongs to the feral ones

Sheena Blackhall

# The Dark Hare

What was it the dark hare heard?  
Owl-screech, mouse-patter rain-drip

What was it the dark hare saw?  
Grass-gleam, oak-apple, cowslip

What was it the dark hare tasted?  
Flower-nibble moon-drop barkchip

What was it the dark hare touched?  
Moss-mound, stone-round, branch-whip

Where did the dark hare go?  
Only the moon knows that,  
And she's not telling

What was it the dark hare felt?  
Heart-thud, with terror swelling

Sheena Blackhall



# The Day After

The day after the bombs fell,  
After the fire warden, running with his tin hat,  
The screams, the flames, the stirrup pump, the terror,  
Dust settled on a newly ravaged street

Homes were card-houses,  
Higgledy-piggeldy, lying like drunks  
In insecure repose.

Matchsticked floors rose up  
Like the bones of a Sunday chicken  
Still waving wallpaper  
The spit and polish of daily life was suspended.

Curious bystanders, neighbours,  
Stood in awe of the dead homes  
Spilling domestic entrails over the road

Some, too numb to grieve,  
Make the death-defying dive into denial

Who could balance the books?  
A child's doll, trapped in the rubble  
Held onto her hidden owner  
Waiting the spade, the shovel, the makeshift undertaker

The silent human audiences,  
In a still life, real life movie  
Are always the ones who pay the price of war.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Day It Rained People

The day it rained people,  
Irina Tipunova heard a howling noise.  
Everything rattled,  
A woman, landed in her kitchen

Rain has no memories when it hits the ground  
Beauty, embroidered sheets, a Chopin concert  
All erased. A spilt second of panic  
Searing through flesh then nothing.  
There is no alphabet to describe that terrible downpour:

Three babies  
Fresh cut flowers  
Bodies of holiday makers  
Four pet dogs  
Diplomats' papers  
Doctors, stopped in their tracks  
A child's pink slippers  
Newlyweds  
A bicycle (undamaged!)  
All harvested by looters

Shooters, meanwhile, deny responsibility  
White flags mark the fallen in bright cornfields  
Surrendered remains, steam in the heat of corruption

An infant lies by a sunflower, never to wake  
Again to suckle the milk from the pap of its ghostly mother

From football to oblivion,  
A boy lies, fouled, in a foreign field

All, all, like acorn cups spilled from the tree of the world  
The callous clouds neglected to uphold.

Meanwhile, like carrion crows  
The needy living strip the needless dead



# The Devil's Hiss

When I was born I came out bawling  
Red and raw, with the devil's hiss  
Mother said I was always squalling

A toddler next, still caterwauling,  
Swaddled tight in life's chrysalis  
Raggedy kneed from lurch to crawling

Then came school, dreich days, appalling  
Failing to please some tyrant Miss  
All of my letters, tumbled, scrawling

Teenage moods, the pretence of drawling  
Trying to woo some Adonis  
Wrestling off his urgent mauling

Love of a sort...a skylark falling  
Hard for an Irish suitor's kiss  
Crushed by his after-math stone -walling

Ever since then, emotions, stalling  
Knowing each fence hides an abyss  
Locking the door when love comes calling  
Pain is the price for ardour's bliss

Sheena Blackhall

# The Dragon's Vertebrae (19 Scots Poems)

sel

A birlin meal is ordnar in Beijing  
The carousel is stapped wi bowls o rice  
A chef, gouned like a surgeon, fully masked  
Haggers a Peking dyeuk, wi mainners, nice

A muckle carp lies sprauchled on the brods  
Its heid, tail, fins left on for aa tae see  
I dinna like its twa unchancy een  
The nesty wye it seems tae glower at me

Its wyme is fu o banes...a booby trap  
Tae cleuk yer thrapple. An fit's even waur  
Its open moo seems ettlin tae spik  
Along the lines o 'Eat me gin ye daur.'

The charnel-hoose o breets, in butcher's yairds  
Is miles awa frae superstore an plate  
I'll chaw awa at meat dressed frae the fridge  
I canna swallae killin fin it's hett

Muckle Waa o Cheena at the Mutianyu section

The Chinese waa is big an braa  
Tholess win an snaa, an thon is aa  
I can recaa. Some heid-the-baa  
Thocht we cud try an wauk it aa

I'm nae sae feel as try...Na, na  
I'd bite aff mair than I cud chaa  
Thon dyke far Heiven's breezes blaa  
I photied it, syne cried `ta ta'

ge

Six towrists at a time they takk

Tae dunt an rummle, knead an shakk  
The creashie faulds o furreign flesh  
An, like pink littlins in a crèche  
We sigh an turn fin telt, as they  
Smeeth aff the runkles o the day  
Syne, suppin luewarm, yalla tea  
Pye peanuts fur tranquility

-Shanks

In the Muslim merket o X'ian  
A cricket in a teenie wicker cage  
Canna neither turn nor lowp  
Let alane growe  
It rubs its shanks thegither  
Tryin tae kinnle a lowe

etts o English translations o Three Chinese Poets

Autumn Nichtfaa at my Airt in the Knowes: Wang Wei (Buddhist,701-762)

In the teem Bens, efter new-faan rain  
A glisk o Faa comes wi the air o gloamin  
The meen is bricht an glimmers atween the pines  
Abeen the steens the sping-fed burn rins caller.

Bamboos reeshle: washerwives gyang hame.  
Lotuses steer: fishin boats meeve alang.  
Bi its ain will, the scent o Spring has gaen.  
Bit ye, o best o friends, of course maun bide.

Speirin an Makkin Repon in the Bens: Li Bai(Taoist,701-761)

They speir foo I choose tae bide in the green Bens  
My hairt is calm. I smile, mak nae repon;  
Peach blossoms float awa, leave nocht ahin—  
There is nae ither yird nur lift than thon.

Thochts on Traivellin at Nicht: (Confucian scholar, Du Fu: 712-770)

Licht breeze on the fine girse.  
I staun alane at the mast.  
Starnies lean on the skelp o braid flat yird  
Meen shogs in the muckle river's spate  
Letters hae brocht nae fame.  
Office? Ower auld tae win.  
Driftin, fit am I like?  
A gull atween yird an Heivens.

Meenlicht Nicht: (Confucian scholar, Du Fu: 712-770)

In Fuzhou, hyne awa, my wife is watchin  
The meen aleen this nicht, my harns are fu  
Wi sorra for my bairns, fa canna think  
O me here in Changan; they're ower wee still.

Her cloud-saft hair is weet wi scentit mist  
In the clear Licht her fite airms ken the chill.  
Fan will we feel the meenlicht dry oor tears,  
Leanin thegither on oor windae-sill?

Chorer

A Castlegate seagull caa'd Sam  
As a treat, thinks Doritos are gran  
Fin he's wintin a snack  
He jist hi-jacks a pack  
Fin he fancies a bittie o scan

He plaps in the shop for the snatch  
And he by-passes queues wi his catch  
I've met him masel, and ye niver could tell  
By his luiks he's a crisp-liftin vratch

Oh, gull that comes in frae the haar  
The Arts Centre could help ye gae far  
Top bill for a week, wi yer flair an yer beak  
In Bussy Malone, as the Star

Thorn Buss

The Brus lies in Dunfermine kirk  
Rowed in claith o gowd  
Lord Elgin's merble at his heid  
A King frae tap tae shroud

Ootbye, a wizened thorn buss  
Leans ower an unmarked grave  
The lass that bore the Wallace  
Lies forgotten wi the lave

The breist-milk o the mither wolf  
Gaed Rome its virr an pouer  
The seedbed o Scots liberty  
Lies hummle in thon stoor

The Brus lies in Dunfermlin kirk  
Braw kist wi braiss plate tapped  
The thorn buss stauns ower Freedom's dam  
Her heid's wi green girse happed

12.A Welcome to Hector Anderson: Born May 10th 2007

Welcome tae ye bonnie loon  
Born in Mey, the month o bloom  
In the makkin o yer tune  
Huntly an Kinraigie

Hector may yer life may lang  
Niver scarce o luv an sang  
Sweet's the wells frae far ye sprang  
Tarlán Burn an Bogie

Stinch, the meanin o yer name  
Soople hauns an soople frame  
Noo ye've made a hoose a hame  
Blythesome, fiddlers' laddie



Like Strathbogie's staunin steens  
Ye'll hae smeddum in yer beens  
Chikks as reid's the Simmer geans  
Roon Cromar an Drummy

Fitna road yer fit may takk  
Peace an joy be in yer pack  
May ye niver fortune lack  
Far the wins may blaw ye

Here's yer health! Swack may ye grow  
Like the rosit on the bowe  
May yer tribbles as be fyew  
Andersons' new babbie!

Nicolaisen Sang: tune: Geordie Weir For Professor Wilhelm Nicolaisen

I'm a weel-kent professor and Wilhelm's ma name  
Research intae folklore an place is ma game  
I can spikk aboot petroglyphs, Ogham an Picts  
Ethnology, culture, an onomastics

I've faithered fower dothers, I've got strang DNA  
The quines they aa bide in Americay  
There's three generations, as this wis my plan  
Tae breed Nicolaisens an widen the clan

My office is nae in a cubbyhole flair  
I'm on the 9th storey, on a penthouse stair  
As I screive up treatises at my windae sill  
A seagull is dichtin its dowp wi its bill

I've traivelled the world like a Romany cheil  
Frae Tubinham, Glesga, Binghamton as weel  
Ohio an Aarhus, an Embro I've seen  
I'm a kenspeckle figure in Auld Aiberdeen.

In oral traditions there's fyew that can beat  
Me in flushin fowk narratives ooto the street  
Afore ye can say 'Ecclefechen' ye'll see  
Me plantin its reets in a new glossary

The year I wis born Linbergh flew tae Paree  
Show Boat wis staged at a Broadway soiree  
There wis earthquakes, an floods an a solar eclipse  
There wis veesits frae aliens an sinkin o ships

Urban myths I hae read, fegs ma study is stoked  
Wi tales aboot Santas in lums, fa were cooked  
An monkey-meat sannies they eat in the Hague  
An poodles exploding in fowks' microwaves

Syne there's thon polar beastie, fa eats, sheets an leaves  
Alligators doon sewers, New Yorkers believes  
Are pets flushed doon lavvies...tho here's ane that's real  
The best urban myth is that research pyes weel

I'm a weel-kent professor and Wilhelm's ma name  
Research intae folklore an place is ma game  
Ohio an Aarhus, an Embro I've seen  
I'm a kenspeckle figure in Auld Aiberdeen.

o Aiberdeen: for Lys Wyness

The Hardgate, the Well o Spa, the Castlegate, the Corbie  
St Mary's Well, the Angel Well, served common fowk an lairdly  
The Thieves Brig, the Dyer's Well, stude lang in Aiberdeen  
The Carden and the Fidler's Well, brocht watter sweet and clean

The Well spring bi Netherton, the Well o Steenywid,  
St Fittick's Well, the Lady's Well- tae droothy fowk, foo guid!  
Auld Wells at Kittybrewster, Fountainhaa, the Chanonry  
The Firhill, the Quaker Well, St. John's, the Chaplaincy

St. Mary's Chapel, Fettes' Well, the Tony battery  
They slaiked the drooth o shelt an man ower mony's the century.  
The Bishop's Palace Well wis braa, wi doocots ower at Seaton  
The Well that served the Haimmermen hid waters cweel and weetin

The Crew Well, the Stroup Well, the Struick's cheery chink  
John Philip's Well, the Kirkie's Well...aa caller springs tae drink!

Noo watter's piped tae ilkie hame, nae labour nott ava  
Bit gin ye staun aside oor Wells, fa's paths hae dwined awa....  
Ye'll mebbe hear the saftest sooch...a thochtie...naethin mair  
O lang-deid Aiberdonians come tae draw their watter there

h's Carol Hymn Tune: Oh Come o Come Immanuel. For Sheila Wheeler

Caesar sent sodjers roon wi a decree  
That aa maun register. Frae Galilee  
I traivelled wi ma wife by ma side  
Near tae her time a young an tender bride  
Nae scholar, I, frae Nazareth I cam,  
A jyner o the tribe o Abraham

The road wis roch. Nae chaumer at the inn  
The toon o Bethlehem a stoorie din  
The bairnie in her wame, like a thorn  
O flesh an bluid impatient tae be born.  
The anely neuk, a yirdy cattle shed  
Tae lay her doon upon the jizzen bed

Sae prood wis I tae showd my infant bairn  
His perfect heid lay peacefu on my airm  
The cuddy an the kyes' company  
The anely ithers yonner bit we three  
Masel, my Mary, oor wee family,  
wi Jesus, a domestic trinity.

Bit shepherds socht this littlin Mary bore  
Fa vowed that Angels led them tae the door  
An three wyce Kings frae hyne in the East  
Booed doon wi reverence in ilkie briest  
Gowd, incense, myrrh, sic precious gifts they brocht  
Nae jyner's son has iver kent nor socht

Nae scholar, I. Frae Nazareth I cam  
A jyner o the tribe o Abraham  
I'll carve ye simple gear frae a tree  
Grown frae the hummle stoor o Galilee  
Fin Angels flap their gowden wings an sing

I plane the wid an gar the haimmer swing

Noo Mary sleeps bit wide awak I stare  
An ordnar man wi a byordnar heir  
Her life's bin cheenged, is't a gain or loss T  
he Future that will bring her tae the cross  
The littlin smiles. I takk his tiny haun  
We twa are pairt o an Immortal plan

## 16. Scots Owersets o Buddhist Devotional Texts

(3.1)

I ken delicht that a pure bield's bin bigged  
Agin aa skaith bi ilkie thing alive  
I ken delicht that aa things tholin wae  
Hae bin set fair in blyther wyes tae thrive

(3.2- 3.3)

I ken delicht that karma's wheel is stopped  
This, bodhisattvas an the Buddhas won  
I ken delicht that wyceness is a sea  
An in aa dominies that add tae thon

(3.4-3.5)

In ilkie airt I praise the enlichtit anes  
Fa's darg lichts up the bywyes o bumbazement  
I pray the victors sikkin nirvana  
Bide on foraye, tae Licht the firmament

(3.6)

Haein dane thon, fin I hae dane it weel  
Micht I syne kweel the waes o warlds' thrang

(3.7)

Micht I be cure, physeecian, nurse likewise  
Fur the ferfochen, tholin rebirth's stang

(3.8)

Micht I ding doon the dule o thirst an wint  
Drap as a shouer o watter an o food



Ma corp is as grippit's a cat, staukin its prey  
Let ma corp be easy  
Ma thochts furl like willas, wheeched in Samhain wins  
Let ma thochts be quate  
Ma sowel is as wechty's peat, new-howked frae the bog  
Let ma sowel be licht  
Ma hairt is as derk's the yird, weety wi winter rain  
Let ma hairt be bricht

r

The mighty larick raxxes tae its faa  
Twa hunner cheepers drap afore it dees  
The bluebell crines..breem briers ahin the waa  
In ilkie sheugh, the breenge o hairstin bees  
Girse shakks its silken feathers.  
Wi delicht a jibblin burn rins gluggerin doon the brae  
The Ben shakks aff the dowie shawl o nicht  
Even Daith wad banish dule on sic a day

Nae riches buy a gowden day like thon  
The rose buss wytes fur sunlicht in its turn  
The foonert hoolet haps her trauchelt heid  
Ant reives the larder o the simmer's horn

A stobby nettle bars the beetle's path  
A roundelay o swallas ring the trees  
Hett dockens boo their backs in ecstasy  
A muir-moch on a drainpipe takks her ease.

h

Dreich, an the dowie Bens, dyew-drooked  
Are doubly dooked in dreepin weet  
That saftly deists the leaves, dird-dirdin doon,  
A sma percussion trinklin an sweet

Throwe aa, the gowden bummers bizz is loud

Heistin the skirts o rhododendron buss  
Smachrie o pollen skirpit on their backs  
Their hinney hairst baith sonorous an gowd

The wheeplin lintie in the larick's reist  
Sings sonsier amidst the runnels o rain  
Treetlin doon an awa tae the lochan's breist  
Far leerichie-larachie waves cam reeshlin in  
Weetin this world o wattergaw an stane  
Sic warlock-glisks fin greybeard Heivens greet!

Sheena Blackhall

# The Dule Tree (21 Scots Poems)

acement

Granfaither bred milk kye, hard uddered, fu o cream  
Shires fur the ploo. Reid wattled, bigsy cocks  
He raised gweed oats frae roch an steeny knowes  
His gift, tae tryst gowd corn frae the blaik yird.

It's in the bluid. Ma hairst's the prentit wurd  
Ma stots an stirks roar frae a paper pen  
They gurr an flech, live anely on the page  
Their rank pee fulls the ennui o ma days

Ma cousin, like masel o fermin stock  
Keeps herds o porcelain kye inby a press  
A bowfin collie bares a varnished woof  
Her nowt staun still on ilkie cheena hoof  
Her yowes are reeted teetle weel-fired graiss

Oor rural reets hae runkled, run agley  
Her breets are , makk poetry  
Baith born tae be ferm-fodder. Feylike wark  
breets fand in press an page, instead o park

n in Winter

Buchan. The lan is twa third sky,  
Heich clouds o oceans waucht ootbye,  
Far skurries sweem, forked swifties sail,  
Galleons o haar breist gurly gale.

The parks lie laigh. Nae Bens raise prods  
Tae teir the face o Heiven's brods.  
The deein sun bleeds crammosie  
Ower derkenin steadin, dwaumin lea.

Here, Winter cowps his creel o sna.  
Here, hop-sotch leaves blaw clean awa  
Far starnies shine like wolvine een,



Shards o Eternity, abeen.

r Lammie For Philip ct Vicki Watt, New Deer

Yowes bleat in the pitmirk park,  
A new-born baa girns bi a crunchin jaa  
Noisily chawin girse ben frosty oors.  
A hoolet flichters fae a muckle elm.  
Here rubbits, the grey watchers o the nicht,  
Hunker doon in their fur, like nests o ghaists.

Cauld Heiven glimmers ower the sleepin ferm.  
On bucklin queats the blearie new-born lamb  
Hyters ben the dark in its bluid-reid sark,  
Aa at saxes an seevens.  
The mither powks wi her snoot  
This chitterin maik o hersel, a testy dam.

Wives better thole the years  
O weddit argy-bargy, tyauve an scutter,  
Servin the faimly genes wi warmer platter,  
Fin littlins roon the hairthside nyitter-nyatter.  
This sheep- world's oo an girse.  
Each life merked oot bi birth, ram, mitherin, daith,

Sma milesteens fae hett pulse tae cairdit fleece.  
Yowes maun be fertile, they maun multiplee,  
This is their greatest function an their eese.  
Sheep dinna quit the warld like rotten neeps.  
Fae shakky, shudderin wames, bleat efter bleat,  
On sturdy shanks, they leave their seed ahin,  
On fower stinch feet aside the grey-steen dyke,  
Drap Innocence an Purity, hauf-blin.  
An this is foo, since Time an Tide began,  
A Buchan fermer welcomes Easter in.

#### 4. Keekin Glaiss

Unner the mill wheel birls the burn□  
Glaiss, is onything mirrored there?

The fey Green Man...dae his craiturs burn?  
Glaiss, is the World's Future bare?

The Dark is sleekit, the Dark is slee ?  
Glaiss, the days ower yer surface flee  
Like threids unraivelled fae tapestry.  
Keekin glaiss, is there room fur me?

Mystery sleeps in the muirlan bog  
There, yer terrible face is black.  
Hinna ye heard o Tir-nan-Og?  
Glaiss, I wish that yer sides wad brakk.

## 5. The Changlin Burn

The Linn that niver sees the sun  
Cams tummlin doon unaskit ?  
Tho dreich an dowie is its warld  
Its weird's tae be disjaskit.

Roon draps o dule its watter laps,  
An skelps like blyther burns  
Tho feint the sunbeam brichts its broo,  
The dowie Linn that murns.

Widdershins roon Life's nerra neuks  
Gyang baith thon burn an I.  
Yet whyles, doon fae the gowden lift,  
Licht pierces derkness. Shaddas shift  
Like wauchtin glimmers o spendrift,  
The fireflaucht sun sens by.

Watter

Clear ice bree, bubbles abeen caul steens  
Like champagne jibblin ower a crystal quaich.

## 7. The Dule Tree, Leith Hall

The Dule Tree's reets rin deep an wide,  
Its airms are theeked wi moss,  
An dreich an dowie is its makk  
Lang Shadowlan o Loss

The coorse, the ootlinned an the craa  
War aywis gallows-meat;  
The Past eenoo, wi its gap-mou,  
Hings there wi swingin feet

The waesome wecht o centuries,  
Foul pestilence an wars,  
Fierce storms, hae gien its timmer sides  
A rowth o battle scars.

The meen flees faist, fur fear that she  
Micht fooner in the mirk.  
Nae sanctuary in the Dule Tree,  
Fyled wi its bluidy wirk.

In birdsang Mey the birks are braw,  
Aa's grace an idleness  
Twa coortin swans glide ower the puil  
As smeeth's a keekin glaiss;

Bit sweetest Joy maun hae its Grief,  
A flaw's in ilkie jewel,  
Spring may be bride, bit by her side  
There stauns the Tree o Dule.

8. Breets seen fae a Tour Bus windae

Camel

Fit's a camel?  
A puckle lumps  
0 grizzle an girse that fowk caa humps

The Delhi Coo

Ye've heard o the coo that lowpit the meen?  
A Delhi bovine is skin an been,  
She dines aff paper an peel an claes,  
A traffic jam's far she spens her days ?  
Ye may toot yer horn bit she'll anely moo  
A thravn like breet is a Delhi coo.

#### Dauncin Bear

Ane o seeven Sloth bears  
Hauled ben the road  
Set towrist cameras snappin.  
Eater o termites an fruit  
Forced tae hyter ben bywyes  
Thrang wi honkin larries, sweyin bullock cairts

Jungle hermit tholin the powks o fowk.  
Hummlit an tamed, spice fur the furreign palate  
He daunces, a mou fu o rage  
Bit toothless, toothless.

The noontime monkey spits at him,  
The jackal lauchs at him,  
The camel weirin a cap o scarlet tossles  
Passes by wi a sneer.  
Sax fit an twinty steen  
O Asian bear, led bi a chokin towe;  
His muckle heid a mane o tummlit pouer.

Glowerin fae hurtin een,  
Twa great teem ruins, hame tae ghaistie thochts ?  
Anely the waas remainin,  
Derk wi shaddas.

#### Hindu Coo

If I cud be a Hindu coo,  
I'd haud up ilkie bus;  
I'd mooch an pee wi attitude. I'd be promis-coo-us

I'd splatter pats in shoppie doors, the coorsest coo in Delhi,  
An I'd be signed bi Bollywood, an moo upon the telly

## Jaipur Pig

A hairy black pig in a sewer, hit bi elephant keech in the stoor  
Said 'My, fit a surprise, denner's drapped fae the skies,  
In Jaipur there's a shooer o manure'.

## 9. Hauns

There wis this far road that gaed up an doon  
An aawye ye traivelled the hauns war broon;  
Thin, they war, wi skaith oppressed,  
Fur a twa, three coins, yer heid they blessed,

An the blin men dytered an dwaumed an tapped  
At the door o yer conscience they chapped an chapped.  
There wis hauns at yer elbuck, yer pooch, yer knee  
And the mantra chanted wis Gie, gie, gie.

I bocht a skirt that I didna need  
Cud hae full'd twelve mous wi a fortnicht's breid,  
The siller I wastit on nocht ava  
Could hae claited a clachan an bigged a haa.

I bocht a buik that I wadna read  
Could hae full'd a pyoke wi a hairst o seed,  
An noo each day fin I steek my een  
In ma fine safe toun, in ma fine stoot sheen,  
I think on the hauns I didna shakk  
Thin hauns that a coin could mar or makk.  
Bit the wheel his spun, an the chance is gien,  
An moosewabs growe ower the beggar's speen.

## 10. Harem in Fatehpur Sikri

Like leddies o Shallott, their snibbit lives.  
They flash like parakeets across oor thocht;  
We anely guess at Akbar's coontless wives,  
Rich flooers, wi Akbar's pouers, easy bocht

And yet, unlike their sisters in the ferm  
Each wad hae etten, slept safe in her bed,  
Coonted the days fae couplin aff each month,  
Kennin the Moghul's love-bairns wad be fed

Their anely task, tae braid their scented hair,  
Tae spread their thighs fin ordered tae his lair  
The harem keeps its secrets. Western een  
Can anely guess at ghaisties ower and gaen.

#### 11.It's a Sair Fecht:

It's a sair fecht keepin the wolf fae the door  
Fin `Hello', -he sez,  
Caimbin his touslie fur wi manucured clooks,  
Tuckin his tail in his troosers nice as pie,  
Wi yon wee smile on his face  
Like butter widnae melt in his hairy moo.

Afore ye can say 'Boo' he's in!  
An here wis you  
Thinkin his name wis Lido,  
Fin aa the time it really wis Hard Times.

Noo he's chawin the fat aneth the table,  
Leavin the scraps fur ye.  
Crunch Crunch Crunch  
An the electric due, ye ken,  
The final warnin.

#### 12. Howdie

Yon chiel wi the parchment skin, mou like a thin bruise,  
Fa'd hae thocht he'd worn a Maori Mask,  
Mendit multi-storey lifts?  
Daunced tae a Thai's queer pipe?

An her in the neuk, the littlin wi tubes in her wyme,  
Shaved heid an feart-like een, airms like twa wee spurtles...

Gowden butterflees that's prentit on her tights  
Flee roon her crib at nicht gin she jist wills them.  
A winnerfu ferlie!

I ken because they tell me.  
I am the howdie.  
I am the listenin lug  
Tae the blate, the slichtit, the fleggit,  
Aa them fa keep their stories deep inbye  
Like beeriet treisur happit ower wi stoor.

I am the story-howdie.  
My darg's tae ease the birth o ithers' tales,  
Haudin on praise, hett towels o wirds,  
Helpin tae lift the new-born oot, tae skelp life intae't  
By settin it doon on the page. By screivin it.  
Oh winnerfu tae hear sic tales takk life,  
Oh hummlin, tae be hauns-on at the birthin.

### 13. Incantation

Three times roon I wauk the puil  
Tinklin watter.  
Puddock sweel  
Inno memory's fikey pyoke;  
Stap the image, tie the knot.  
Syne, fin hyne awa I gyang,  
Inbye aa thon sights are thrang.  
Fa'd hae thocht that loch an knowe  
Cud set the senses in a lowe?

Three times roon I wauk the puil,  
Sun an meen an puddock sweel;  
Lest thon ferlies I should tyne,  
Cherm an chant shall mak them mine.

### 14. School Visit of a Scots Specialist

Good morning, I am Mrs X, Head Teacher  
I have contacted the school wishing to visit?

What would you bring to our classes here?  
What would you come to tell?  
I'd bring ye a leid baith stoot an guid  
Aince spak bi the king himsel.

Is there a need to sow such seed  
Br stories, poems and words?

Fin Scots steps oot tae the nation's youth  
It rins on sangs an girds.

Maybe a poem, once a year  
Lip-service to the past?  
T'will come like a loon in a scarlet goon,  
Nae some sairmade ootcast.

But what of the cost should we welcome it  
Through Education's door?

Fit ye gie, ye get. Fit price d'ye set  
On a kintra's leid an lore?  
The firmament ower the birlin warld  
Hauds multiple constellations;  
Like a wattergaw foo rare an braw  
Are the leids o different nations!

w-Pouer / Faain Asleep on the Job

A happenin rises ooto the Muckle Furth  
It daunces roon awhile  
Shakkin its shanks like Siva in a lowe  
Cweels doon lang eneuch tae lowp ahin ma een.

Here, it slooshes aroon in the collective bree  
O five decades o'life in my cailleach - skin.  
Syne aff it floats like a boatie, lackin a crew.

Ideas sclim aboard till it's like tae sink;  
A fecht brakks oot-like futterats tied in a sack  
The winners cobble aboot thegither  
Skelpity - skelp.  
They argy, warssle an skelloch,



Some's washed aff bi waves o whim...or logic.  
Some sprout fite wings, flee aff tae perch in the Arctic  
Wytin fur later boats tae thunner by.

Hauf-sinkin unner its mixer-maxter load,  
The boatie sails atween heich-touerin cliffs  
Inno the midnicht herbour men caa Dream.

Neist month, neist mornin, neist millennium,  
Oot she steers, a full-rigged poem,  
Sails, trimmed bi subconscious Thocht.  
Whiles, she's a rhymin galleon, a haiku coracle,  
Whiles she's a clarty tug.

She micht rhyme, or she michtna  
I live my life this wey-transform the fey tae wirds:  
Poem, tale, novella;  
Imagination's the starnie I steer by.

in Arlington

A bluid-reid maple skails a puil o cweel,  
The sodjer's polished buits pace twinty-ane.  
Green acres haud their beeriet treisur snod,  
Gravesteens, fite as cotton, full the parks.

The sodjer's polished buits pace twinty-ane.  
Starnies an stripes waucht like an erne's wing.  
Gravesteens, fite as cotton full the parks,  
A lowpin flame rekinnles Saxties lowe.

Starnies an stripes waucht like an erne's wing.  
Fower wheep-tailed shelties pu a glory kist.  
A lowpin flame rekinnles Saxties' lowe,  
Tour buses veesit the necropolis

.  
Fower wheep-tailed shelties pu a glory kist.  
A bluid-reid maple skails a puil o cweel.  
Tour buses veesit the necropolis,  
Green acres haud their beeriet treisur safe.

## 17. Granmither

She claimed the ingle-neuk in bauchled sheen;  
She'd straik, until I sattled like a kittlin,  
My bairn-heid in her lap, a wechty steen.

Her westbans cheenged wi sizzens,  
Lean tae creash. Her hooded een  
Blinked sherp's a hoolet hudderin in a howe□  
Fite-faced she'd full the cheer aside the lowe.

She wis the tattie-parer o the hoose,  
Cleaner o braisse,  
Keeper o Faimly Lear.  
I niver kent her young, or seen tae weir  
Ither than widda-weeds, an auncient loom.

Her lang skirts reeshled, sweyed like staunin hey;  
She wis baith hairth an lintel in thon room.  
Her wirds hid traivelled wi her throwe the years  
Fae crib tae schule, frae merriege, tattie- park ?  
Wirds fur lauchter, greetin wirds fur tears,  
Smeddum an smachrie, wirds o play an wark.

The anely pairt o her she grippit in,  
Hairpreens clappit grey braids tae her heid.  
Doverin, she'd dwaum inbye her cailleich's skin.  
Her eident fingers held the threids o love ?  
They niver dauchlet till the hinmaist yark.

## 18. Schemie Bairns

Doon oor bit there's mair graffiti  
Than the tomb o Nefertiti;  
Multistoreys are oor streets,  
Windaes fu o dryin sheets,  
Socks that wins'll wheep an wheech,  
Cassies splattered wi dug-keech.

Ice cream mannie plays a tune, brings wee bairns an mithers roon;

Chippie on the corner stauns, plunkin pyokes in hungeret hauns.

Oor dug Tiger's got a moo that cud gnash the QE2;  
Guairds the littlins in the hoose, fin there's muggers on the loose.

Oor da Terry's got tattoos. He's quick tae fecht an quick tae roose  
A TV king, the anely een can cheenge the channels on the screen.

Doon oor bit we dinna tell, we keep oor business tae oorsel;  
If yer a frien, then gies yer haun ?  
Twa bairns agin the world we staun.

rian Bairns

Rockin horse, rockin horse, hopscotch an girds,  
Governess teachin gweed mainners, fine wirds,  
Velveteen breekies, a pair o fine sheen,  
A sheltie, a maid an a fine siller speen.

Lum-sweeper, lum-sweeper, barely turned ten,  
Cleanin the lums for the fine gentlemen,  
Barfit an shilpit, a doon-trodden moose,  
He maun wirk fur his maet in the pairish puir-hoose.

Rockin horse, rockin horse, kink hoast, TB,  
They're nae respecter o class or degree.  
Vauntie young gentlemen, lum- sweeper loon,  
Fin the Derk Angel cams baith sleep as soun.

20. Twa Queens

Lace an pomander, pearls an ruffs,  
Spanish galleons, dauncin bears,  
Streets wi a thoosan different guffs,  
Lark for denner, or potted hares.

Walter Raleigh an Francis Drake  
Braved the tide fur the English Queen;  
The croon sat ill on her royal heid  
Till her cousin Mary's sheen war teem.

Mary played in the Dauphin's coort,  
Bonnie an jimp, an blythe an braw,  
An thocht that life should be luv an sport,  
Till the heidsman sneckit her life awa.

## 21. Auld Man o the Sea

Auld Man o the Sea, Auld Man o the Sea,  
Fae yer fish-green watter, fit's this ye gie?

Here lies a tyre a king's coach cairriet,  
Here is a ring that a young bride merriet,  
Here lies the glove o a lang-gooned quine, `

Mangst bottles, an boxes, braid an twine.  
The ocean chaws wi its muckle mawe,  
Fit the land-fowk lose or haive awa.  
Auld man o the sea, through the weety haar,  
These baubles ye bring...hae they come far?

The quine that sleeps at the ocean's foun,  
Rowed in an emerald sea-weed gown,  
Wi fishies flashin ahin her een,  
Auld man o the sea, dis she lie her leen?

## Craw

The cock craws twice an ilkie ghaist tae its derk chaumer creeps ?  
Even fae a new-cauld bairnie's crib, far grievin mither greets.

The craiturs o the cauld rife nicht, thon things o mirk an dwaum,  
Maun hap their heid, fur naethin deid maun show its face at dawn.

Craw, cock an heist yer flame-reid croon!  
Pipe in the warmth o day!  
Fur ae short oor we tread the stoor.  
The morn, we're nocht bit clay.

23. Salute tae the Smithsonian. Tune: Rothsay-oh

Three years intae the century  
A wheen o Scots flew ower the sea  
Bard an cook an seannachie,  
Brocht here bi the Smithsonian.

Wi ither fowk the airt wis thrang,  
Wi lute an drum an Mali sang  
Near Bluegrass Appalachian,  
Wi ceilidh bands in Washington.

Chorus:

Far fiddlers bow an banjos play,  
The sun gets hetter ilkie day,  
A doonpoor wadnae gyang astray  
Abeen the stoor o Washington.

The merket place wis quickly fillt  
Wi sporran, tape, an patchwirk quilt;  
Wi cowrie necklace, tartan kilt  
Brocht ower for the Smithsonian.

Try a Kentucky barbecue,  
Or Okra stew fae Timbuktu,  
Or takk a dram o Scotia's brew  
Fae whisky stills in Washington.

There's tales o Gael an Cherokee  
Fae Shetlan roon the cauld North Sea  
There's knittin, tweed an heraldry  
Aa filmed bi the Smithsonian.

The Niger drummers gar ye swing,  
The green grass cloggers near takk wing,  
There's Reel, Strathspey an Heilan fling  
Tae cheer the fowk o Washington.

There's Iwo Jima's flag o fame,  
Far heroes fell in thon campaign ?  
An Arlington's eternal flame  
Burns brichtly ower Washington.

The Potomac rowes brawly roon  
The founs o this majestic toon,  
Far Martin Luther King laid doon  
His life fur aa in Washington.

Three kitchies o the warld hae met;  
The meal an ale I'll nae forget?  
We hope the sun'll niver set  
On frienships made in Washington.

Aroon the warld it's gweed tae myne  
Yer culture's fit ye sudna tyne;  
The Future's bigged on Auld Lang Syne  
Oor thanks tae the Smithsonian.

#### 24. Eird Hoose

Inno the yird's intimmers,  
A neukit roadie wynin doon an roon  
Like Orpheus micht hae wanneret  
Efter tint Eurydice.  
A road as blaik as cinnners.  
Licht dwines till a preen-prick heid;  
The tunnel bores farrer inno the pitmirk  
Crack that's the wame o the yird□  
Centuries crummle awa like shaks o seed.

I like tae coorie doon in this tint airt  
Oot o the blatterin win, hid frae the cauld souch oYule  
Wi'ts cranreuch claas.  
The auld eird-hoose is theekit wi girse an breem,  
Its gulfs are fooshtie, mochie wauchts o mould,  
A blaik chaumer. A derk thocht,  
I coorie doon in the derk, in its velvet faulds,  
Like a tod, oot o the eird's mineer,  
My twa een shinin...  
Auncient shaddas steer.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Dying Room

On the first day she was borderline.  
It was white and sunny, the Dying Room  
They gave me a rich tea biscuit the colour of clay  
With weak tea, served in a hospital mug.

I sat in silence by her silent bed.

On the second day  
They asked my permission  
To withdraw life support  
'You wouldn't want your mother  
To be a vegetable, ' a young nurse said

With cheeks like fiery apples,  
I gave my agreement  
To quicken my mother's going.

I sat in silence by her silent bed.

The drips were drawn away  
I remember the wheels of the trolley  
They gave me strong tea  
And a piece of cherry cake.

Her head rolled on the pillow  
An old turnip, yellow, with threads of grey.  
I poured banalities into her shrivelled ears  
Late rain on stony ground.

On the third day her lips moved.  
She left the Dying Room  
Came back to a sort of life.

I sat in silence by her silent bed.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Earthquake

A yowe in Ardnamurchan  
Lost two teeth and a fleeciful of fleas  
When the earthquake struck

On Ben Ledi two tourists  
Feeling the earth move beneath them  
Thought that the Highland air  
Had boosted their libido

A scone on a plate in Kilmahog  
Slid two centimeters to the right  
Into a blob of raspberry jam  
(A jar from a batch that hardly set at all)

Ochone said the old woman  
Gardening in Moidart  
The curse of the wind farms  
Has surely come upon us

A mole in velvet livery  
Had his ceiling crumble like curdled cheese  
Around his dainty ears  
Indicating the end of the world

When nobody was killed, mislaid, or injured  
Although the signs and portents weren't good

Sheena Blackhall



# The Ecumenical Stalagmites

Out of the cosmic mass  
There formed a pious cave.  
In the beginning, there was Lime  
And the cave wept Water.  
The duality of Lime in unending Drip  
And there grew two revelations of the Drip  
The Drip made Rock

The Stalactites growing down  
The Stalagmites growing up  
Cave bats screech of bitter years in the darkness  
The warfare of the Cascades  
Like dragons' teeth, both sects  
Thinking the other, heretic

Stalagmites called their enemies `Pinocchios'  
Stalactites called Stalagmites 'Little Pricks'  
Aeons passed. The factions' views grew harder  
Lately, some of their members have connected  
Making a column, threatening the cosmic order  
Drips, acting as ecclesiastical brokers  
Learning to bridge the loneliness of the void

Sheena Blackhall

# The Elephant Poem

If you see a jumbo flying over Sumnavoe  
Don't treat him like a leper or an alien UFO.  
Please don't write letters to the Times, or text an air controller  
If, high above Auld Reekie's roofs, he lights up a Corolla.

If he coughs and sneezes, do not censor him or scold—  
Remember he's from India and quite abhors the cold.  
Though he trumpets out Aida as he skydives over Mull  
It's kinder on the listener than 'Messiah' from a gull;  
Don't shatter his self confidence, as only men can do,  
By suggesting he'd be better in safari park or zoo.

If you see an elephant who's sitting on a cloud  
Don't frighten him by shouting that it shouldn't be allowed —  
Send him a sprig of marigolds tied up with a balloon,  
Champagne and plates of strawberries, to feast upon at noon,  
For elephants are friendly things but very very shy  
So wave to him and smile if you should see one floating by!

Sheena Blackhall

# The Engineer

My son the engineer takes things apart  
Studies their mechanisms, rearranges them

I broke his family in two, his known bearings  
He grew with a gift for repair, is still mending

Now, he is in Brunei,  
7,000 miles away from his Northern birthplace

The Sultan there maintains four palaces:  
The largest cost 400 million dollars

In this palace visitors can find:

1788 rooms

257 toilets

564 chandeliers

18 lifts

51,000 light bulbs

44 stairwells

a mosque for 1500 people

a banquet hall for 4000 guests

5 swimming pools

200 polo ponies

165 Rolls Royces,

aeroplanes and helicopters.

The Sultan of Brunei is the owner of  
the Dorchester Hotel in London,  
the Holiday Inn in Singapore  
the Beverly Hills Hotel in Los Angeles.

He is lord of the mangrove swamps  
leaf monkeys, pigtail macaques, sun bears and Burmese python

He is lord of the soft shell turtles,  
salt water crocodiles, the bearded pig  
the greater mouse deer, secret collared mongoose

He is lord of the clouded leopard

stink badger, marbled cat, the pygmy fruit bat  
pangolin, the orang-utan, dugongs, manatees

Tonight, my son's a part of this sultry country  
The thought of him warms my heart like a good fire  
Though his head lies far from here on an Asian pillow

Sheena Blackhall

# The Enigma Of The Shells

When I was small I was a living loom  
Tilting my hands like a cat's cradle  
While grandmother wound the wool  
Into a widening ball

Tom Thumbs in the garden  
Rioted over the path  
A rumba of sunny flounces  
Wetting my tiny ankles

Peony roses eased their velvet waistbands  
Cracks of shadows, like pleats between their petals

Then there was the enigma of the shells  
Devoid of occupants, as if the horned snails  
Had glided into the air and disappeared

So many mysteries of loom, of shadow, of shell  
Finding my thread in the greater pattern  
A Shirley Temple girl in somebody else's frock

Sheena Blackhall

# The Evil That Men Do (Scots Owersetts & Poems)

8 Scots Owersets in 'Evil' pamphlet

Panther: A Scots Owersett o a poem bi Rainer Maria Rilke

His trauchelt glisk frae passin by the bars  
Has grown intae a blearie, teem-like glower  
It seems tae him there are a thoosan bars  
An oot ayont thon bars, teem air aa ower

The dunt o his strang feet, thon ongaun soun  
O swippert tread ahin the iron bans  
Is like a daunce o virr, furlin aroon  
While in the mids, a bumbazed smeddum stauns

Bit there are times the preen-pricks o his een  
Grow great, the strang shanks staun alert, apairt  
Tense wi the linn o veesions that rise up  
Anely tae sink an dee inbye his hairt

2 Ute Indian Prayer: Owersett in Scots

Yird, larn me quaetness  
As the girsse is stilled bi licht  
Yird, larn me sufferin  
As auld stanes suffer wi myndin  
Yird, larn me tae be hummle  
As blossoms are hummle fin they brier  
Yird, larn me carin  
As the mither takks tent o her littlins  
Yird, larn me courage  
As the tree that stauns alane  
Yird, larn me ma limitations  
As the emmerteen that creeps on the grun  
Yird, larn me freedom  
As the erne that flees in the lift  
Yird, larn me tae thole  
As the leaves thole daith in the Faa  
Yird, larn me regeneration  
As the seed that briers in the Spring  
Yird, larn me tae forget masel

As melted snaa forgets its ain life  
Yird, larn me tae mynd on kindness  
As dry parks greet, eftir rain

two Scots Owersetts o Poems bi John Clare

3 Winter

Auld Januar rigged in cranreuch cauld  
Comes hirplin in an aften makks a staun  
The blindrift doonfaa near caas time ajee  
Yule stravaigs on bit dunts his shaky haun  
An Februar like a wee feartie quine  
Smilin an waefu follaes on ahin  
Happit in cloak o dubby roads, sair made  
She hashes on, aince mair her hame tae win

Syne Merch, the seannachie, bi storms inspired  
Teets up wi blytheness on the tribbled lift  
An syne, in ram-stam roose, fair kittlet up  
She gars the hale storm byle, an gyang quick shift  
Yet neth the blaikest cloud a sunbeam's gley  
Shaws cheerie promise that spring's on the wye

4 The Hurcheon

The hurcheon hides aneth the fooshty hedge  
An biggs a nest o girsse aneth its edge  
Or in a buss, or in a howked oot tree  
An mony aften boo, an claim tae see  
Him rowe an stap his jags fu o aik caps  
An creep awa, ben far the pyot flaps  
His wing at dubby dyke. In auncient reet  
He biggs a nest tae full wi wid fruits sweet

On the hedge boddom, powks for nuts an slaes  
An like a girselowper, chirps as he gaes  
He rowes up like a baa or grumphie breet  
Fin traivellers him wi tykes at their feet  
I've seen him in their camps; they caa him sweet  
Throwe blaik an wersh, a tasteless kinno meat

Bit they fa hunt the park for stinkin maet  
An wash at dubby dykes, an arna blate  
Tae ett fit dug's refuse, far e'er they bide  
Carena a snuff for task, or guff besides  
Fowk say hurcheons milk kye, an fin they lie  
Chaw at their fleshy teats an makk them dry  
Bit they fa've seen the smaa heid, grumphie like  
Rowed up tae meet the oncam o a tyke  
Wi mou scarce big eneuch tae haud a strae  
Will mervel at fit fyew hae seen bi day  
An still they hunt the hedges aa about  
The shepherd's tykes are trained tae hunt them oot  
They haive wi virr the wechty stick an stane  
Aa peetilesss, the fecht gaes on again

Nhat Hanh: A Zen Buddhist Prayer  
Peace is in ilkie step  
The sheenin reid sun is ma hairt  
Ilkie floer smiles wi me  
Foo green, foo caller, aa that growes  
Foo cweel the win that blows  
Peace is in ilkie step  
It turns the eynless path itsel tae blitheness

6.A Tale: Miklos Radnoti(Hungary) English by Andrew Peters & Livia Varju  
Peace sleeps quaet in a cave on a Ben  
She's still bit a bonnie bairn  
A douce deer cams tae feed her  
The wyver's moosewab is wuvven tae hide her

: Li Bain  
Fin I wis wee  
I thocht the meen wis a fite jade ashet  
Or mebbe a keekin glaiss in Heiven  
Fleein ben the blae clouds

8.A Cup that is Fu: Frae the Tao Te Ching bi Lao Tzu (Chinese circa 500BC)



A cup that is fu is easily skailed  
A sword that is sherp is easily brukken  
A hoose fu o treisur is easily reived  
A body that's prood is easy tae cowp  
Aince yer wirk's dane, seek anely tae rest  
Thon is the road tae blitheness

..end of Owersetts

### The Cassies

These are the souns that the toun cassies ken  
The thunner o larry gaun racketin ben  
The clatter o skateboard, the hoast o a beggar  
The dirl o a buggy, the steps o a shopper  
The skirl o a seagull, the croo o a doo  
The blether o scaffies that wirk as a crew  
The tootin o bussies, the skreich o a van  
The lauchter o hen-nichts oot on the ran-dan  
The boozers an fowk that are oot on the razzle  
Gaun styterin alang in the dreich weety drizzle  
The shauchlin wauk o the auld coffin-dodgers  
The slappety-slap o the faist rinnin joggers  
The steer fin the green man clicks on wi a bleep  
An pedestrians hash ower the cassies like sheep  
The furl o a bike wheel, the dunt o a bin  
The splyter o rain draps. A spylet littlin's din  
The newsin o friens: English, Doric, or Poles  
The lug-rippin soun as the roadies howk holes  
The loon an the quines dauchlin hame frae a class  
The waddin guests scalin frae kirk in a mass  
The dirl fin a pipe band stricks the cassies' croun  
The gush as a dug's piddles treetle on doon  
Tae jyne wi the chuddy, the fag eyns, the tins  
O fowk fa've nae grasped yet the eeses o bins  
The muggers, the chorers, the chauncers, heid bangers,  
Step oot wi the hairdressers, nurses an bankers  
Their mobile phones bleatin, like calves needin fed  
As Aiberdeen traivels frae worktime tae bed  
Nae tae mention the howl o the win aff the sea  
The hailsteens, the rain batterin buntin skweejee

Bit the cassies thole aa...a smaa piece o the pairt

That is Aiberdeen's heirskip, its grey granite hairt

Gaun deeper, an these are the souns cassies myne  
The toun as it wis in an earlier time  
The skreichin o bombers that scrattit its face  
The greetin an sabbin as hames turned tae aisse  
The clang o a shelt, as its hooves struck the road  
The creak o a cairt wi a fresh veggie load  
The chink as a tackety buit struck the stane  
The sweesh o a skirt heistit ooto the rain  
The whoosh o a tram as it drave ben the cauld  
An aabody younger, fin fifty wis auld  
The scrape o a shovel tae haud back the sna  
The scart o a breem as it swypt leaves awa  
For shopkeepers then tuik a pride in their store  
An keepit the street weel redd up at their door

Souns o leaf, fowk an watter, fae tap tae its heid  
The anely thing quaet in oor toun, are the deid!

John Fyfe 1830-1906: A Spikkin Portrait

I am John Fyffe, a blank canvas  
Wi an inventive turn o mind.  
A Bucksburn loon, son o a quarry maister

Oh aye: I invented the Steam Derrick Crane  
An the Blondin, that heistit 20 ton  
Frae a quarry's fleer tae its edge

I cadged thon idea frae a ropewye ower the Dee  
That cairried the mail frae the bank  
Tae the castle o Abergeldie across the watter

An I cadged the name  
O Blondin frae him fa trod a tichtrope  
Abune Golden Square

Dae ye like ma beard an mowser?  
Dis it makk me luik affa distinguished?  
An ma suit's the verra best that siller can buy!

I ained a quarry in Kemnay, while alive  
It helped tae bigg the London Cenotaph  
Biggins on Princes Street, Auld Reekie  
The Forth Railway Brig, The Thames Embankment,  
Marischal College, the Citadel, the Art Gallery,  
St Mary's Cathedral, Northern Assurance offices,  
HM Theatre, Palace and Grand Hotels  
Piers, docks, viaducts, lighthouses, sea defences tae  
Ma wirks, like Ozymandius, rin aff the tongue in a torrent!

I am the heid bummer o aa heid bummers  
Serjeant peinted me, aged 72  
I glower oot frae the frame  
In truth, like a block o granite  
Roch hewn, thrawn an flinty

Provosts favoured me,  
The great an the gweed  
Heezed roon me like flees roon sharn

Ma granite helped bigg Sydney Herbour Brig.  
Ma wirkers tuik their skills tae California,  
The Mississippi Levees and Odessa.

Paradise Hill is far ma wealth cam ooto  
The maist influential quarrier o ma time

Ma wife, ma Barbara, bore me a faimily o ten,  
Echt dothers an twa loons.  
I biggit Beechgrove Hoose for us tae rear them

Efter the honours, the siller, the darg, the tcyauve, the achievements  
Fin aa is said an dane,  
Fit is a man's memorial bit his bairns?

Cuisine: Inspired by The Stove in the Studio: Paul Cezanne

Granmither's dumplins, rich an rare  
Were sappy an beguillin  
Fowk lued tae sup her daily fare

Sae keep the pottie bylin

Mither's mince wis wattery-kine  
The rowth o bree fair spylin  
The natural poothery tattie taste  
Sae keep the pottie bylin

Granda's parritch wis sae teuch  
It near wad dae for tilin  
The dauds o aets war iron-hard  
Bit kept the pottie bylin

Auntie's brummil berry pie  
Fin cooked wis ripe for wylin  
Ye'd traivel far tae better thon  
Sae keep the pottie bylin

Clickety-Click: Inspired by An Old Woman with a Rosary Paul Cezanne

Click-clickety-click click  
The string of Dementia's beads  
Rattle in my hands, thin memories

Click-clickety-click-click  
Dead man's teeth in a mug  
Little bubbles rising like fish  
Through the tepid water

Click-clickety-click-click  
Bouncing ball on the wall  
Why am I grown so old?  
How has this happened?

Click-clickety-click-click  
Zimmer wheels turn beneath me  
Like mill stones grinding  
A rag and bone person

Click-clickety-click-click  
Shuttles weaving a shroud  
Time is working my fingers

Into shards

The Odd Couple: Inspired by the Jan Arnolfini Marriage: Jan Van Eyck

She's up the duff  
Face like a skelped erse  
Naebody else wad hae her

I winna lie at nicht an winner  
Is't my bairn?

She wis a virgin bride  
(A rare thing noo)  
Nae back-chat

A dab haun at hoosewirk  
Vrocht her maternity frock  
Frae her granny's curtains

The headsquare's happin her alopecia  
I'm bald masel,  
I'm naea beauty either

My fur coat's ooto a car boat sale  
Saves a fortune on central heatin  
At nicht we warm oor feet on oor wee dug

The Wreath: Inspired by The Rosy Wealth of June: Ignace-Henri-Jean-Theodore-Fantin-Latour

The wreath sits a little too easily  
On the bare midriff of the coffin

Begonias, Lilies, Dahlias and delphiniums  
Begonias too, and roses  
Cream, pink, red

Thorns and briers crown the wreath, like suffering  
Let us not dwell on the mortal remains beneath  
Let us not think of the stopped lips

The stoppered orifices  
Like plugs in a bottle of holes

Shall we show compassion for one  
Whom nobody liked but the florist?  
The guilty son sent flowers in his absence

The Gowden Brig (Bairn Migrants)

The warld is fu o the puir an tint  
Some hae hames, an ithers hae nane  
An mony war shipt ower the gowden brig  
Some war orphans, aa sailed as ane.

Glesga's gorbals, fin parents deed  
Seekened or pairtit, their helpless geets  
Prigged or borraed or chored a crust  
Frae haun tae moo on the hairtless streets

Aff the streets an intae a Hame  
Chaiper tae ship ye hyne awa  
Far fowk are fyew an wirkers are socht  
Stappin yer heid wi veesions bra

Aff tae the Gowden Brig o dreams  
Canada, far there's wealth for aa  
Wee an feart, ye boord a boat  
Swallaein bairns in its muckle mawe

Jist yer luck that the trip is roch  
Days o seekness, for hame, the sea  
Gars ye cowk, maet'll nae bide doon  
At nicht ye trimmle wi misery

Noo ye've crossed the Atlantic wave  
Met an fed an wytin a place  
Will fa chuses tae takk ye in  
Be kind, an gie ye a breathin space?

Gin yer lucky, they micht be guid,  
Gin yer nae, yer a slave tae chase

Kicked an cloored like an ootliined tyke  
Nane tae listen, or plead yer case

Ae quine keepit her frostbit feet  
Warm, bi staunin in drappit sharn  
Ae loon nursed twa brukken ribs  
Eftir a beatin in the barn

Years win by, an bairns are men  
Scotlan...far are their kinfowk noo?  
Dis ony ane care for the hyne awa  
Shipped awa in the last adieu?

Dis yer ma drink gin,  
Dis she drink it oot a tin  
Dis she get a funny feelin  
That she's gonnie hit the ceilin  
Dis yer ma drink gin? ...trad

Maud

Backhill of Ironside, Scareleys, Hareshowe  
Gilkhorn, East Gowkhill, Hardbedlam, on throwe  
Doghillock, Rashypans, Swanford as weel  
Sprotyneuk, Hindhillock, Drymuir, Clackhill  
Achreddie, Silverlead, Yonderton tae  
These an Pitfoskie ye'll see in a day  
By Mill o Fedderagate, roon bi Balthangie  
Up Hill o Corsegight, far brakes are gey handy  
Backhill o Clackriach, Nether Gookhill  
Fridayhill, Kiddshill, haun on wi a will  
Bog o Artomfard an Punnercroft, trauchelt  
Back bi the Waggle Cairn wishin ye'd dauchelt  
At Maud, for a sup an a bite afore traivellin  
The length o the Ordinance Survey map, raivellin!

The Hotel

The hotel wis a wirk still in progress  
The men war still layin the fleer

Bit the meals war aa fully digestit  
An oor atween courses, I sweir

I thocht that a murder hid happened  
Stairs taped...wi forensic intent?  
Bit the tape wis fur blockin the staircase  
For fear fowk wid bladd the cement

Aa thon guests, an wi ae elevator?  
Health n' Safety wad hae sax blue fits  
Hid a fire brukken oot in the kitchie  
We'd aa hae bin birssled tae bits

An the shooer wis inventit for Noah  
A flat fleer that the watter scooshed ben  
Still, the hotel provided the towels  
Tae sype up the sottar, ye ken

#### The Liver Birds

The Liver Birds are unca birds  
They dinna flech nor cheep  
Their body's like an unca shag  
Their heid's an eagle's beak

The She-Bird luiks far oot tae sea  
(For trade, a global token)  
The He-Bird faces tae the toun  
Tae see the pub yetts open

#### Hitler's Day Oot

I winner of Hitler liked ice cream?  
Did he goose step ben the stran  
Wi his mowser stapped wi vanilla  
Frae the 99 cone in his haun?

Did he paddle a while wi his breeks rowed up?  
Did partens chaw on his taes?  
Fin Hitler traivelled tae Liverpool,  
Oh foo did he spen his days?



Sheena Blackhall

# The Existential Dilemma Of Ordinary Objects

Igor Kadinsky's mug  
Is green and tin with literary pretensions.  
It yearns of setting its lip to  
Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Yevtushenko.  
When steam curls up its sides  
It thinks of trains, a hedonistic frisson.

Father O' Rourke's cup  
Is stained, with hidden depths.  
Its hand is placed on its hip,  
Like Marilyn Munro  
Descending the stairs  
Into a roomful of partying politicians.

Mary Brady's tumbler's secretive,  
Hasn't been out for years.  
It's in a locked cabinet,  
Giving nothing away.

The Laird of Inverquhomerie's silver quaich  
Dreams of multiple salivations,  
When a quaich was an item  
Revered by congregations,  
When tongues like little fishes  
Licked its sides.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Fade Away Girl

He loves me, he loves me not  
How vain to imagine I'd cherish a photo of him  
He loves me, he loves me not  
Not as much as he loves a corkscrew, a vin ordinaire  
He loves me, he loves me not, he loves me

Enough to give me a mystery. All women love a mystery  
A box, a Pandora enticement. How well he presumes to know me!  
How cynical! How very fin de siècle!

He loves me, he loves me not, he loves me

But how unsubtle, the gift of a purse,  
There is no finesse in money, I am not a whore

He loves me, he loves me, he loves me

And I have the fan to prove it!  
For cooling, for flirting. dismissing, inviting  
To snap, to flutter to hide the blush or the pout  
Ah, but is the passion reciprocated?

Last, what a curious gift, my final suitor...  
The Imitation of Christ by Thomas a Kempis  
I have given it close attention  
It advises contempt for the vanities of the world  
It counsels withdrawal of the outward life  
It exhorts me to renounce all that's vain and illusory  
It stresses the inner benefits of solitude and silence  
It asks me to be grateful for 'every little gift'  
So I may be worthy to receive much greater ones,  
To consider the least gift as great  
The most common as something special.  
And finally, to sit as a solitary sparrow on a housetop  
In the bitterness of my soul, meditating upon my transgressions.

He loves me not.



# The Farm-Wife's Wake

My aunt was like a tumbled sheaf of corn  
Her hair was fair as ripened, rippling grain  
Her speech was gentle as the summer rain  
She loved all beasts, but dearest, those new born

And for her funeral flowers, to ease her rest  
The ghosts of violets, speedwell, cornflowers blue  
Her mourners, clucking hens of speckled hue  
Wobble-legged calves, and thrushes in the nest

Sheena Blackhall

# The Fence

Today I am thinking about my fence  
I built it to exclude  
The unwelcome, the unwanted, the not invited

The thistle blew over it  
Defiantly staked its claim  
Too prickly to shift

The rain crossed the line  
Bringing the wind at its tail

The mole dug under it  
Making an impotence out of my outpost

Today my body slumps over the useless fence  
It kept nothing of value in  
It nothing wicked out  
Even now, its fenceness  
Rots like ancient briars

Sheena Blackhall

# The Finns

The Finns go walking by like pines  
Tall and stately, dark as woods  
They turn their heads like snowy owls  
Large eyes of blue in spectral hoods

Their talk is spare, like sound of waves  
You feel a fjord has just passed through  
Mothered by begs, green glassy deeps  
Where stars are sharp and folk are few

Sheena Blackhall

# The Forest Of Nightmares

'You're going home, ' we told them  
'Line up quickly. You're going to see your families.

First, we'll give you a meal,  
Then a ration of bread and three herrings  
To eat on the journey.

See: here's your guard of honour  
And a military band  
To play you onto the trains! '

At Gnezdovo we searched them  
Stole their money.  
We bussed them in groups of twenty  
Into the forest  
Gagged, their arms tied at their backs.  
The pines wore a dusting of snow  
The sun was jaundiced.  
The pit was already dug.

We led them, six at a time  
To kneel at the mouth of their grave.  
To look on the layer of bodies  
Sandwiched heel to toe.  
Crack! A shot through the head  
A boot in the back  
And the thud as they tumbled over  
Dead meat, to be trampled flat,  
Spread out in the pit like dung.

Tiny shards of frost  
Shimmered like glass in the cold  
The witnessing pines were mute  
The ferns turned a blind eye.

Sheena Blackhall



# The Fortingall Yew

When Neolithic man with fur & stone  
Roamed Scotland, one small seed begat a tree  
At Fortingall, with wolf and wildness sown  
It grew in stature, a yew stout and free

It shaded wild cat, beaver, Bronze Age man  
And later, Roman legions from the sea  
Here Pontius Pilate played within its ken  
The boy who killed a breeze and bred a gale

This yew's seen Kingdoms rise & Kingdoms fail  
Eternal in its ancient, siccar soil  
Enduring Beltane fire, flood and hail  
It watched men hunt and forage, till and toil

This tree of Knowledge, sacred churchyard queen  
Grown from the heart of Scotland, stinch and royal  
The mythic and the modern lie between  
Its boughs like fleeting pictures in a dream

Sheena Blackhall

# The French Childhood Of Queen Mary Stewart

A princess skipped light in a castle of tune  
Rivers of music ran bright through her days  
Splendid her mornings and golden her crown  
Notes tinkled merry in sweet roundelays

The happiness tree bloomed awhile in her land  
Into the dark grave its blossoms fell down  
Quietly, sadly, they withered away  
The yew and the ivy crept over her gown

Only a cat stalks that garden of dreams  
Slowly it dances a stately parvane  
Purring and rhythmic it pounces on birds  
Strumming their heart-strings in midsummer rain

Sheena Blackhall

# The Gardener

His own small garden made the world seem right  
He even learned to love the Autumn rain.  
The winter's snow, the fading winter light.

He grew the cleanest carrots in the lane.  
He'd dig all day, then slump down on his seat  
But had you asked him, he could not explain

Why he so loved the clods beneath his feet  
When other men preferred to pass on by  
And wyle the hours away where neighbours meet

In pub or club to drink contentment dry.  
After an evening's toil, this gardener, slight  
Of build, would gaze up at the reddening sky  
And clean his spade and lock his tool shed tight  
His own small garden made the world seem right.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Ghost Of Sigmund Freud

It was Saturday, under the sign of Libra  
When he crossed, with the aid of morphine,  
(that child of Morpheus, Greek God of Dreams)  
Into the world of the dead

He bore his grandfather's Hebrew name of Shlomo.  
At seven, his father presented him with a Bible  
His books were later burned by the Nazis

'What progress we are making, ' he told a friend.  
'They would have burned me in the Middle Ages;  
Nowadays they're content with burning all my books.'

Interrogated by the feared Gestapo  
He escaped to England and safety  
Four younger sisters perished in the death camps.

In London, his Chinese chow, Jofi,  
Frequently stayed while he conducted sessions.

The ghost of Freud's there still  
Amongst his Biedermeier furniture.  
Look! It circles the psychoanalytic couch,  
On which his patients lay.

The couch is covered with a rich Iranian rug  
Chenille cushions piled at the top.  
Fine oriental rugs, Heriz and Tabriz, cover the floor and tables.

He continues to live many other surrogate lives  
In the writings of Henry James and Virginia Woolf,  
Alfred Hitchcock and David Lynch,  
He peers out from the art of the Surrealists  
The subliminal power of advertisements.

You may catch a glimpse of him studying you  
From the eyes of the Hydra, the Baboon of Thoth,  
From behind a Bodhisattva, a statue of Artemis,  
From the tail of mummified falcon in his museum

His fingers brush vignettes in the book of the dead  
Lightly linger on Sphinx amulets, netsuke, a heart scarab

Frequently his ghostly presence flits in the garden,  
Sniffing a red geranium in a terracotta flower pot

It glides amongst roses, clematis, plum and almond trees  
In this transplanted piece of Hapsburg Vienna

Sheena Blackhall

# The God Of Hate

There is a God of Hate  
Turns sister against brother  
Turns country against state  
Turns father against mother

There is a God of Hate  
Men dare not name. Oh fear Him!  
Most murderous potentate  
Angels of Death stand near Him.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Görings

Albert Göring, Hermann's younger brother  
Helped Jews and Czechs escape the Holocaust  
His forebears numbered Counts and social thinkers  
His godfather, a Jew, supplied his home  
Two castles towering in baronial splendor

A film maker, he starred in war's real movie  
Hated the Nazis, their brutality  
When Jewesses were forced to scrub the streets  
This dapper-suited man knelt down to join them  
Shaming the SS guard to let them go

Hermann, the elder, spread race-hate through Europe  
Like rancid butter, bully-boy of bigotry

Albert, squirreled bank accounts abroad  
Funding escape routes for outlawed resistors  
Gas-oven fodder and the walking dead  
He used the family stationary, signed Göring  
To snatch Jews where he could from execution  
Saved only by the scent-track of his brother  
The family name, whose syllables spelt terror

Fall of the House of Göring, by War's End  
Both brothers faced the trials of Nuremberg  
Hermann swallowed cyanide, dodged the gallows

Albert, released to lingering poverty  
The flip side of the coin died unemployable  
Cursed by the name, its notoriety

Sheena Blackhall

# The Gowk Bird (Scots Cuckoo)

Balquhidder hotters in the heat  
Sun's a gowd baa rowed up wi oo  
The glen's a quaich far burn's rin swete  
The gowk bird sings cuckoo cuckoo

A calfie heists his knobbly heid  
His mither bells a saft balloo  
In neuks a heeze o midgies breed  
The gowk bird sings cuckoo cuckoo

Struck tunin forks are reeshlin aiks  
There's nae fause note here. Aa is true  
The lintie lilt, the paddock craiks  
The gowk bird sings cuckoo cuckoo

Hyne frae the traffic's din an berr  
Hyne frae the city's steer an styoo  
Tod pairts the girse, winged spurgies whirr  
The gowk bird sings cuckoo cuckoo

It kens the fowk fa veesit here  
Will vanish like the fleetin dew  
Each hoose o flesh maun disappear  
The gowk bird sings cuckoo cuckoo

Sheena Blackhall



# The Grand National

Do you like the smell of horses?  
Warm hay, with a hint of musk  
Nut-brown, grey, or raven black  
Eyes dark and moist as dusk?

Horses and women too-  
Thoroughbreds, groomed and gleaming  
The jockeys in vibrant silks.  
The women, painted and preening  
The punters in natty suits.  
The flanks of the runners, steaming

Becher's Brook, five feet, with a steep drop  
Two horses died here, 1989  
The Chair, six feet in height, took Joe Wynne's life  
Canal Turn. Easter Hero fell  
Causing a pile up, horse and man commingle  
Foinavon Fence. A loose horse, Popham Down,  
'Cut down the leaders like a row of thistles'  
Lord Oaksey recollected to the press  
The fastest winning horse was Mr. Frisk  
The oldest winning horse was Peter Simple

The names that people saddle horses with!  
Rule the World, Comply or Die, Don't Push it,  
Many Clouds and Silver Birch, Red Rum  
Charity, Miss Mowbray, Shannon Lass  
Frigate, Anatis, Nickel Coin, The Lamb

The Owners: hairdressers, comedians,  
Football gurus, Royals, businessmen

And now a surgery has been constructed  
To treat the casualties of grown up play  
two treatment boxes,  
X-ray unit, the works  
video endoscopy,  
equine solarium,  
sandpit facility

horse ambulances, under police escort,  
oxygen and water available  
five star equine treatment all the way

Red Rum is buried at the winning post  
Do his bones stir as runners thunder past?

Sheena Blackhall

# The Great Boddam Cat

The great Boddam cat  
Was incredibly fat  
When exhumed, it was neatly beheaded

So we'll never know now  
Why it got there, and how...  
As sadly, when found, it was deaded.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Great Tapestry Of Scotland

The ice melts, Scotland rises from the sea  
The wildwood and its fauna, first arrive  
The Barn's Ness house, East Lothian, is built  
Broch, Cairn, and Roman ruins still survive

Pytheas, Greek explorer, circles Lewis  
Ninian comes. Columba builds Iona  
The Romans fight Calgacus in the North  
The Irish warlords settle Dalriada

Cuthbert's born. Monks scribe the Book of Kells  
Picts beat the warlike Angles at Dunnichen  
The coming of the Vikings brings despair  
Constantine climbs the Hill of Faith in Scone

At Carham Scotsmen fight Northumbrians  
Tweedbank and Galashiels become the border  
Macbeth of Moray, sits on Duncan's throne  
Queen Margaret is Malcolm Canmore's queen

Great Border Abbeys rise in veneration  
King David founds new burghs round the land  
Foremost of the schoolmen's John Duns Scotus,  
The Norseman, Somerled, reigns in the isles

King Haakon's Vikings face defeat at Largs  
King Alexander falls from a storm-bound cliff  
Wallace and Moray fight at Stirling bridge  
The Bruce at Bannockburn defeats the English

The Black Death leaves too many farms deserted  
St Andrews University is founded  
Orkney and Shetland cede to Scottish rule  
Rosslyn Chapel's built, with green men furnished

Chepman and Myllar run their printing press  
Blind Harry writes the life story of Wallace  
Waulking songs on Harris time the toil  
King James IV is slain on Flodden field

Sir David Lyndsay writes the The Three Estates  
The Court of Session's founded, highest law court  
Scottish Reformation invokes turmoil  
An early aim: A School in Every Parish,

Mary Queen of Scots confronts John Knox  
The wild Lowlands fosters Border Reivers,  
A daring foray rescues Kinmont Willie  
Robert Carey makes The great North Ride

King James's Bible's written down in English  
Dawn of the Ulster Scots in Down and Antrim  
National Covenant's signed by Greyfriars Kirk  
Drovers herd their cattle from the Highlands

At Philiphaugh the great Montrose is beaten  
The Killing Times brings fear to the conventicles  
The Glencoe Massacre appals the nation  
The Bank of Scotland's founded, issues money

The Darien Scheme brings ruin to investors  
The Act of Union links the Rose and Thistle  
Even though at Sheriffmuir, the war's a draw  
Dutch troops boost Hanover, the Fifteen's lost

The modern kilt's invented at Lochaber  
The Fortyfive's extinguished at Culloden  
The military ensures Scotland's surveyed  
English suppresses Gaelic, customs too

St Andrews founds its world famed golfing club  
In Edinburgh they teach the deaf and dumb  
James Small invents the Swing Plough, aiding farmers  
Encyclopaedia Britannica is established

Edinburgh enjoys its great Enlightenment  
James Watt invents the power of the Steam Engine  
Glasgow's Tobacco Lords bring trading wealth  
Adam Smith writes down The Wealth of Nations

David Hume examines human nature

The Clearances depopulate the country  
Home weaving, reeling, spinning, skills continue  
James Hutton's writes his Theory of the Earth,

James Boswell praises Scotland's fine smoked fish  
The Forth and Clyde Canal brings ease of transport  
Burke and Hare, two Irish navvies, grave rob  
Scots stamp their influence across the Empire

Robert Owen builds his dream, New Lanark  
Robert Burns composes Tam O'Shanter  
Fear of Napoleon's coming is unfounded  
Sir Henry Raeburn paints the rich and famous

Sir Walter Scott promotes Romantic Scotland  
Composers, poets, visit Fingal's Cave  
The Scotsman's printing press brings news to all  
George Smith sets up The Glenlivet Distillery

Harris tweed clothes workers on estates  
Glasgow grows in industry and wealth  
Sheep shearing piles up wool, but empties glens  
The first Reform Act now extends the franchise

McMillan makes the first power pedal cycle  
Queen Victoria enjoys Balmoral  
Disruption splits the Kirk. Wee Frees in Scotland  
India is a honeypot for Scots

Hill and Adamson, take stunning photos  
The Forth Rail Bridge assists the Railway Boom  
The Education Census checks our schools  
It's Orange versus Green in Scottish football

Irish flee to Glasgow from the Famine  
James Clerk Maxwell studies speed of light  
The Scots forge links and interests with Africa  
The Highland Games enjoy a wide resurgence

The Scottish Rugby Union is first founded  
Shinty and curling flourish, Scottish pastimes  
Scots emigrants sail for America

Paisley gives its name to Peacock patterns

The Battle of the Braes takes place in Skye,  
The Napier Commission champions rights  
Robert Louis Stevenson writes marvels  
Scots forge ahead in heavy engineering

The S.T.U.C's formed, a Scots trade union  
Keir Hardie speaks, Labour MP & firebrand  
The herring girls gut fish around the coast  
Captain Scott sets sail in the Discovery

Jute, jam and journalism ...That's Dundee!  
Charles Rennie Mackintosh leads Scots designs  
Sir Hugh Munro maps out Munros for climbing  
The First World War drains Scotland of her sons

Elsie Inglis champions wartime nursing  
The battle cruiser Hood is built for combat  
The Iolaire sinks, just off Stornoway,  
Eric Little runs for Christ and country

Scottish Women win the right to Vote  
Whalers harvest oil for Scottish lamps  
The General Strike is called by hungry miners  
Fair Isle jerseys are a fashion statement

MacDiarmid's Drunk Man looks upon the Thistle  
Ramsay MacDonald heads the rise of Labour  
The Great Depression strikes across the nation  
Glasgow's tenements fill with the poor

The Second World War heralds years of turmoil  
The Clydebank Blitz rains death down from the skies  
Concrete pill blocks safe-guard Scotland's shores  
Scots convoys, training, men, assist on D-Day

The Edinburgh Festival is launched  
East Kilbride's named for an Irish saint  
The NHS makes medicine free for all

TV arrives, the 1950s marvel

The steamie is the place for dirty laundry  
Cumbernauld takes Glasgow's overspill  
North Sea Oil is found off Aberdeen  
(Aberdeen, an ancient North East city)

Linwood begins to make the Hillman Imp  
Pop music booms, Scots teenagers love rhythm  
Glenrothes new town is laid out in Fife,  
Jimmy Reid leads work-ins on the Clyde

It's on its own, our Scottish Comedy  
The SNP upsurges in Elections  
Scottish films and actors grace the movies  
Football goes abroad with Ally's Army

The Miners' Strike sees industries decline  
Gaelic resurgence flowers in the media  
Glasgow is lauded as a town of Culture  
Dolly the Sheep is cloned in Edinburgh

The Scottish Parliament now reconvenes  
(Parliament facing Past and to the Future)  
It oversees the map that is our country  
Scotland ongoing story- tapestry

Sheena Blackhall



# The Grenfell Disaster (Based On Eyewitness Accounts)

Most tenants left the flats with just their lives  
But other lives were left back in the flames

People were framed at the windows  
Banging, banging, shouting, shouting helpless

Ten storeys up the victims knotted bedsheets  
A child on fire jumped from the 20th floor

A woman dropped her baby from the 9th  
I shouted 'Everyone has dialled for help. It's coming.'  
The look on each face was Death

The kids had high-pitched voices, they were screaming  
I'll never block that noise out from my mind

The stairs were choked with smoke  
The lights were flickering.

Dark and scary. Terrified old and young  
Disabled struggling down the smoke-filled stairwell  
Stepping over bodies, luggage, flame

Polystyrene falling down like snow  
The stench of burning plastic, sizzling flesh

Cladding, like wrapping a person in cotton wool  
Had tossed them helpless onto an inferno

Firemen walked towards the torch of tenants  
Under riot shields to protect from debris

Everywhere the noise of sirens screaming  
The flash of torches, suddenly gone black

Sieves can go straight down to 6mm  
Can pick up small fragments of bone and teeth  
Painstaking job

And then the aftermath, shock, grief, and anger  
The months to come, to mourn neighbours and friends  
The months to come to pose the question Why?

Sheena Blackhall

# The Half Life Of Facts

No-one, once, could tell the age of lobsters  
Canadian scientists learned to count the rings  
In their eye-stalks. Eureka, it was done!  
Everyone thought the world possessed two moons  
Now it has thousands, temp'rarily captured objects  
RH120, the size of an average car  
Martian Canals, once found by Schiaparelli  
Are now disproved, mere dust balls of illusion  
Tabula Rasa? Not since gene detection  
Explored the background of our DNA  
The planet Vulcan joined our constellation  
A nineteenth century neighbour, now discounted  
Which gave its name to Star Trek's Mr Spock  
The earth is round, not flat, fact and statistic,  
Are often quoted. Are they realistic?

Sheena Blackhall

# The Hare

The hare ran fast through Blueberry Wood  
Quick as a river flowing  
The sun was warm and the land was good  
Now was the time for growing

The hare thumped hardy heels on the ground  
The mad March wind was blowing  
The flame of sex burned in his blood  
Now was the time for sowing

Autumn set the leaves to the torch  
Her fruits to the Fall bestowing  
The hare ran wet on the stibble park  
Now was the time for mowing

Winter came to Blueberry Wood  
In the cold the ravens crowing  
The frosted hare lay softly down  
All of the world was snowing

Sheena Blackhall

# The Harry Potter Train Et Al (6 Poems)

The Harry Potter Train et al (6 poems)

1: Animals at Large, Oban

The salmon farm looks like a wedding marquee tent  
Or a huge mosquito net for a Caliph's harem

The fishy banquet of pellets comes hailing down  
An uninvited gull on the outside looking in  
Drools at the salmon hedonism

Nearby on Sgeir Donn Island  
The local Oban seal colony  
Rolls over to face the tourists

Line dancing seals bob up black in the waves  
Like little fat nudists, flashing their chubby tummies  
With exuberant whiskers, Victorian and lavish.  
They eye you up, then vanish in foam and spray

On the top of the Dutchman's Hat greylag geese from Canada  
Rest like aircraft travellers, after a gruelling flight

At Oban harbour, peeled prawn sandwiches  
Sit cheek by jowl with lobsters, fresh from creels

Mussels, crabs and oysters,  
Langoustines (live or cooked)  
Hang around looking shelly and hard

Headstrong gulls, slap the ground with their flippers  
Forage and screech and dive, slick opportunists

The gravelly, shingly beach, ripples and rucks  
Sucked by the tides, the pebbles like small, lost souls  
Spat out by the weary ocean

A cormorant holds up its arms like a prophet,  
Old Testament preacher of death and retribution.

In the whitewashed sky, terns swoop  
Over the housed breasts of tourists

The sea is filling a dead dove's open beak  
With foam, like bridal blossom

2: Footsteps on an Island, Kerrera  
Following the star of time and movement  
Walkers tread a path of many turns

In the aftermath of Culloden  
Flora MacDonald came here as a prisoner

Whoever burns his backside must sit on it.

Quarry workers stepped from whitewashed cottages  
Salmon fishers, weavers, and distillers  
Millers and peat cutters all laboured here  
Lobster fishermen supplied great liners  
Shellfish packed in ice for Cunard's Queens

The value of the well's known when it's dry

A Hunting Tower held Hebridean chieftains

Hold back your dog until the deer falls down  
The chief's house has a slippery doorstep.

The artist, Turner came to paint a castle  
Beauty's fine but it won't boil the pot.

Ministers preached from sea stacks in extremity  
Nothing can get into a closed fist.

At Cnoc na Faire, a clutch of childrens' graves  
Hebrideans who died in Glasgow's slums  
The grass that grows in March will fade in April.

St. Marnock's monks walked round in meditation  
What comes in with the wind goes with the water.

Bronze Age Cists hold early walkers' bones

The moon is none the worse for barking dogs

In the bay lies the wreck of a tobacco boat  
That plied its trade as far as the Caribbean.  
A little hole will sink a mighty ship.  
A wave will raise its head on quiet seas

### 3) Climbers on Ben Nevis

A blonde hairdresser in a bikini and a pair of hiking boots.  
A man driving a Model T Ford  
A piano, carried up by removal men from Dundee  
A group of Glasgow University medical students, pushing a bed  
A Fort William man pushing a wheelbarrow.  
Mr Campbell, Ardgay, Ross-shire with a barrel of beer  
A horse and cart and several wheelchair users.  
Kenny Campbell carting a whole church organ  
A whimsical sheep, watching them all pass by

### 4) Inverness- Fort William

Inverness rolls past. Jimmy Chung  
And classy canines blow the heather myth  
Clean out of the lochs

A trampoline covered in frost and autumn leaves  
Trembles in icicle air, no drum beat heels  
Pound on its stretched, racked skin

Three pheasants sashay out of pagoda pines  
A loch as old as Methuselah wrinkles  
Its wrinkled brow. Its waves collapse in shudders

Raging Highland burns pretend they're torrents  
Over Drumnadrochit clouds are pregnant  
Heavy withy winter, weighted down with frost

How freeing to slip past these trees like a fox  
Eyes darting from side to side  
Greedy to miss not a scrap of the land's beauty

Cliff faces crack where pioneering grasses  
Claws at a niche. At Glenmoriston

An eagle widens its wings on a timber perch  
Like a minister clearing his throat for a fierce tirade

At Fort Augustus the trees are lemon and lime  
Like girls at a Sixties wedding  
A head squared pensioner toddles  
Through puddles of spray

A rusting barbecue sulks in a sodden garden  
Its table umbrellas closed like weeping bats

A herd of hinds, due north of Invergarry  
Lift startled heads, wide eyed and curious  
And all along the Great Glen, mist is coiling  
Round the hills, like a torc, like a Celtic snake

5) The Jacobite Express  
Puffa-puffa -chugga-chug  
Creche on train goes jitter-bug  
Glimpse of bracken, trail of steam  
Sweets and crisps...a bump....a scream  
Rain and sun, and sleet and hail  
Railway geeks...a minke whale  
Corries, lochans, goodie bags  
Pottermania, crags, peat hags  
Jacobites would turn and run  
From this tin of family fun  
Viaducts and Neptune's stair  
Migraine. Oh thank God, we're there! !

6) In Memoriam: Margaret Elizabeth Petrie  
Because she lived life well, what's there to grieve?  
She has gone to her rightful rest, her time to leave  
The family she nourished and nurtured at her breast.  
A loyal wife by love and contentment blessed  
Because she lived life well, what's there to grieve?

She saw her slice of the world, Australia-bound  
For her father went wherever work could be found  
Came sailing home on a roistering, rolling tide  
Via Ceylon to Gordonmills, Woodside  
Because she lived life well, what's there to grieve?



No money for education, not for a lass  
Her teenage years were work, not books in class  
Married at nineteen, play-time over and done  
A bairn in the pram and her husband fighting the Hun  
Because she lived life well, what's there to grieve?  
The Armistice brought flittings, and nappies to dry  
A house at Beechwood, skylarks singing on high  
On the edge of the country then, the growing town  
Where the summers turned her family August-brown  
Because she lived life well, what's there to grieve?

Her days were baking, washing, feeding the fire  
And that was the top and tail of her whole desire  
To watch her children grow to man's estate  
And in their turn, to settle and find a mate  
Because she lived life well, what's there to grieve?

Her soul was stout, her view of the world was clean  
With another roll of the dice, she might have been  
An artist, dancer, scholar, highly bred  
And if she regretted that, she never said  
Because she lived life well, what's there to grieve?

There's nothing to mourn but much to celebrate  
For a step goes light when it's not weighed down by hate  
And the years go fast. Time, time decrees the end,  
Much thanks to a mother, great-grandmother, friend.  
Because she lived life well, what's there to grieve?

Sheena Blackhall

# The Hector: Nova Scotia

In seventeen seventy three by Western Ross  
The Hector dropped its anchor off the land  
Where crofter-fishermen lived at a loss  
Two men professed their fate to understand  
Pagan and Witherspoon offered a berth  
Free passage to the far Canadian strand  
A farm, a year's provisions, fertile earth  
All this they promised to the Ross-shire men  
At last...a country that rewarded worth  
And so they came, from shieling and from glen  
Bringing their families to the waiting boat  
MacKays and Frasers from each cloudy Ben  
Grants, Chisholms, clad in torn plaid and coat  
McKenzies, Camerons and Pattersons  
McLeods, McLennans, owning scarce a goat  
Douglasses, Murrays, Munroes Mathiesones  
And one lone piper playing a lament  
To kittle up the blood in Highland bones  
The old Dutch ship was leaky, creaky, spent  
And in this ailing tub they took to sea  
Enduring storms that cracked its masts and rent  
The straining sails. After this purgat'ry  
The children, Finlay, Angus, Janet, Kate  
Succumbed to smallpox, hunger, dysentery  
Folk lived by eating worms, mouldy oatcake  
Come into Nova Scotia at Pictou  
With eighteen dead. The Hector, two weeks late  
No cleared land waiting. Disillusion grew  
The forests, tall and frosty, winter near  
And no provisions, plans and hopes askew  
But they endured. Made of the past, a bier  
Put down new roots, these seeds of Highland sprays  
From this small offshoot, thousands flourish here  
In Nova Scotia's mighty, wooded ways  
Whose mist enfolds the ghosts of Gaelic lays

Sheena Blackhall

# The Heilanman's Sporrán (35 Scots Poems)

## 1. THE HEILANMAN'S SPORRAN

The Heilanman's sporrán hauds dauds 0 fluff  
An a troot frae the windin Lui;  
A liberal dose 0 the Athole Brose  
An the bogIe 0 Ben MacDhui.

The Heilanman's sporrán is stappit wi mist  
An a stag frae the wids 0 Dess;  
There's a monster doon at the sporrán foun  
Frae the mids 0 derk Loch Ness.

It hauds a jeelip 0 barley bree  
An a kebbuck 0 Tarlan cheese;  
A coggie 0 hinney frae back 0 Colquhonnie  
An geans frae Glen Gelder's trees.

The Heilanman's sporrán is stoorie an deep  
An the mochs flee ooto it whyles;  
An the things that bide in yon leathery hide  
Are cairriet fur miles an miles.

The stag an the troot they thrive rale weel,  
Bit the monster's aywis girnin,  
Fur traivellin roon in the sporrán's foun  
Sends his stammach kirnin, kirnin.

At the Braemar Gaitherin aince a year,  
Fin the pibroch skreichs an skirls  
An the towrists steer frae far an near  
An the shop till trings an dirls,  
The Heilanman's sporrán is opened wide  
An the ferlies traivel the howes  
The monster hirples North an Wast  
An he dines on tatties an yowes  
Ye'll see the troot in the burns about  
An the stag at the croon 0 the howes!

## 2. SCIENCE

Doon the saft dwaum berries drapt  
The glaikit pressed them, kept the seeds.  
'Fact is harder than fancy, ' quo they.  
'Science satisfees aa fowks' needs.'  
They delled the yaird tae plant the facts.  
Science raxxed far the erne showds  
It brocht furth acid rain an grue  
O Lochans deid an mushroom clouds.

## WALLIE

She starts bi giein suck... an efter, succour.  
It's kent that she's a sucker ilkie wye.  
A mither is an icon bairns can ay con  
The wallie bountifu that's niver dry.

## NAY

The hale O Scotia hauds its braith,  
An erne, paused in flicht.  
The clangin bells O Hogmanay,  
Tollin the daith knell, oorie, wae;  
Nailin the kist O Yesterday,  
In the mids O a Winter's nicht.

The cradle O Hope is wytin teem,  
Fur the Birth O the Infant Year  
The fiddler's rant, the piper's skirl,  
The ceilidh garrin the rafters dirl,  
The heistit dram an the dauncers' birl,  
Are aa fur the Littlin's cheer.

The New Year's a conundrum,  
In mist, yon Kintra's happt.  
Nae guidin star hings ower yon lan,  
Nae compass charts its shiftin san,  
Wi virgin snaws it's tappt.

Oh, preen-prick galaxies nicht burn,

Like glitterin hoolets' een,  
As auld as Nicht, as Ice, as Cloud,  
As auld as Yird, as Steen...  
Even tae thon celestial clan,  
The morn wytes unseen.

Bigg up the lowe. Oh gar it sen  
Reid dauncers tae the lift!  
Man's Girse an Stoor, 0 puny pouer,  
A Snawflake in the Drift.  
An, like the watter in the linn,  
He tummies forrit, swift.

## N SHOW

Tarlan Show! Ticht towes are wippit  
Roon the pens. Fite yowes are clippit;  
Dauncers hirple hamewird, hippit,  
Fin the hoolichan is bye.

Tarlan Show! Broon bulls are grippit,  
Shelties' manes wi ribbons tippit.  
Shires' tails bi shears are snippit  
Hear the lowin 0 the kye!

Tarlan Show! The simmer's plottin.  
Roon the ring smert gigs are trottin,  
Harness glentin, wheel hubs stottin,  
Ower the divots, trig an s pry.  
Tarlan Show! There's stockmen meetin,  
Candyfloss, braw bradies heatin;  
Waltzers furlin, bairnies greetin,  
Grumphies gruntin in the sty.

Tarlan Show! There's midgies heezin;  
Antrin drooth (three quarters bleezin):  
Kilted pipers quines are teasin,  
Snatchin kisses on the sly.

Tarlan Show! Auld bodachs gaither,  
Droothy drams they doon wi blether.

Neath the beer tent nieves like leather  
Teem the glaiss as seen's they buy.

Tarlan Show! The stallies steerin;  
Rinnars racin, lauchter, cheerin;  
Claik an courtin; luvvers sweirin  
They'll be true till Dee gangs dry!

#### FOWER AGES O MAN

##### BELTANE

The spirk o life is kinnelt in a bairn,  
The flame lowps up, faist as a stertled hind.  
The' world's new... an aathin in't's tae ken,  
As pure's a drap o dyew, a littlin's mind.

##### LAMMAS

The kinnlin bleezes cracklin tae a lowe.  
The halflin growes an ripens, sonsie, swack.  
A gangrel body, trampin youthheid's knowe,  
Gaitherin gear an lear inower his pack.

##### MAIRTINMAS

Halo o frost, the tinchell roon the meen,  
Burns fite an cauld... the firelicht o decay.  
The dwinin flame is wanin, weirin dane,  
The rosy chikk o youth turns crine, turns blae.

##### YULE

The foonerin flame is crummlin inno aisse.  
Kiln-crackit the physog, the spinnle-shank.  
The gammy fit slaws tae a shauchlin pace;  
Braith's bit a line o rikk, dweeble an rank.

#### 7. STAG AT BAY

Why do you hound and hunt me?  
Hate -is that the spur?  
Does my vegan state offend you?  
Is it my cloak of fur?

The thrill of bagging a trophy  
Is this why we are felled,  
Like a forest of gentle giants?  
Must all brute beasts be quelled?

Do you covet my moorland freedoms?  
I, who was once a God?  
Does it thrill when you pull the trigger?  
Spilling my bright life-blood?

I do not challenge or chase you  
We fear you, buck and hind,  
For you are Christian gentlemen,  
For sport, you kill my kind.

## 8. DEVOLUTION: THE OPEN DOOR

On the eleventh day we treetled doon,  
Tae makk wir merk, the voters 0 the toon:  
Nae fiery cross tae set the warld ajee  
A scrat, jist pencilled in; syne, hame tae tea.

September '97: fine gairdenin weather,  
Fowk scalin frae the wark began tae gaither  
At pollin booths in Nellfield, Northfield, Nigg...  
Seeven hunner year afore, at Stirlin' Brig,  
Wallace tuik tyranny, an thrawed its thraipple.  
A secunt bite, thocht I, at yon same aipple  
o self-determination... nationhood.  
Oor Past's preserved (Preserve's!) bi Hollywood;

Setterday Bravehairts at the fitba match.  
The Flooers 0 Scotland dinna play -they watch,  
A puckle luikers-on... bit at yon poll  
We got tae kick the baa, an score a goal!

I waukened on the Friday. Yon wis rum.  
Jist ae lane seagull skreichin on a lum  
Nae pipe band's cheer. Nae Common Good bunfecht.  
Nae gun salute, tae show we'd got it richt

A queer hello, tae Devolution's daw  
A bittie in the Press, an yon wis aa.

Twis like a moose, trappt bi a muckle steen  
That lowsed, can scarce unsteek its captive een...  
Sae fooshunless, uneesed tae Liberty  
It canna grasp the aim 0 bein free.

Setterday, tho, the Mither Kirk gied voice  
Wi peals 0 bells that we micht aa rejoice  
Her grey doos rang a paeen frae their reest  
Frae thon great belfry at the civic breist.

Their clangin, unsnibbed Jubilation's gate  
Let celebration in... a thoctie blate.  
While far ablow, an elder Iiftit up  
The siller glory 0 a haly cup  
Studded wi pearls, a treisur, lang concealed,  
Thon day 0 days, it shone... a gem, revealed.

Like this, oor kintra. Ancient, is the line  
Far fiery Celt & Viking intertwine  
Hid bi the shadda 0 a neebor-Ian  
Times turn. In risin sunlicht, noo, we staun.

#### IN THE KNOCK

From a fragment of a Glen Gairn Gaelic song.

Ahin the Knock, afore the knock,  
Ahin the Knock foraye  
Trauchelt am I, the king's mile,  
Ahin the Knock foraye  
Trauchelt am I my leesome lane  
Scythin the bracken ay.

The peesie cries abeen the muir  
Her warld's the clouds sae high  
Ower glen, ower Ben, she wings an sings  
Her pibroch tae the sky  
While here I bide my leesome lane,  
Scythin the bracken ay.



The rowan's chikks are reid's the rose  
Sae ripe, sae fair tae see  
Bit bitter is yon berry's taste  
Preed frae the rodden tree,  
As bitter as my true luv prued  
Fa lang deceived me.

The aيدر in her glimmin coils  
Her forkit tongue's sae slee  
There's pyson in her sleekit faulds  
Her kiss is perfidy  
A stang as sair's the stoun 0 skaith  
Ma fause luv gied tae me.

#### 10. THE STOOKIT SHAIIF

A shuggle 0 fairy bunnets  
The corn sweyed on the stem  
Ahin the binder, the hairsters  
Booed, stookin it, but an ben.

The sun abeen wis a lochan 0 licht  
An the clouds war knowes o 00;  
The peesie-wheep wis a skirp 0 flicht  
In a lift 0 poother blue.

The deistin fairm-cairt hamewird hurled  
The baillie's jynts mischievin;  
The slidderin peat rikk lazy furred  
A question merk tae Heiven.

Reid sky at nicht wis the fairm's delicht  
Braid backs wad boo the morn  
Twis stook an bigg on the cuttit rigg  
Sma wigwams thigged wi corn.

The jeel 0 gloamin cweeled the broo  
A hi'nmaist glisk 0 the park;  
Syne I'd hash hame tae the wytin flame  
An oorie thing the dark.

It's lang sin I trampit the growthie grun  
o ma gandsire's weel-ploood braes  
Bit the sicht 0 a sea 0 the corn a-swee  
Can chairm me, an bumbaze,  
As it did fin I watched the gaithered hairst  
Wi a bairnie's winnerin een  
Yet my fowk war slaves tae yon fuserin shaives  
That the thin wins wyved atween.

#### CAT AND I ARE BONDING

The cat and I are bonding. Keep all the world out!  
With palm on fur, with strokes of silk,  
We sit contented, mild as milk.

He thrums a purr, I heave a sigh  
We are well-met, my pet and I.  
The cat and I are bonding; keep all the world out.

The cat and I are bonding. I must not break the spell  
Drop clumsy book, in dusty nook he'd flit, before it fell.  
Those eyes, slit-shut in ecstasy, would widen like a yawn;  
My whiskered muff, as light as fluff, would slither and be gone.

The cat and I are bonding: a sloth, with a gazelle.  
I sit, inert's an ironed shirt, a rooted pimpernel;  
The cat and I are bonding, like lobster with its shell.

The cat and I are bonding. The sky may tumble down  
And parliaments may perish, and walruses may drown.  
Piglets may ski, and cows grow wings;  
Mice may recline on zither strings.  
Pheasants may skip to John 0' Groats  
With heather posies round their throats.  
TVs may jig around the room;  
Jellies may curtsy in Dunoon.  
Salmon may sing, and adders yell  
And badgers play at bagatelle.  
The cat and I are bonding. I must not break the spell.

12. YULE [FRAE AN INGLIS TRANSLATION O' 9TH CENTURY IRISH, BI DAVID GREENE & FRANK O'CONNOR]

I hae news fur ye;  
The lanely stag makks mane.  
Yule, doondraps snawflakes,  
Merry Simmer's gane.  
The win is heich an caul.  
The sun lies laigh,  
Brief, brief, its course.  
The tide rins swallt an grey.  
The bracken's reid.  
It's deistit,  
Hapt bi snaws that lie.  
The wild geese hae heistit,  
Their itherwardly cry.  
Cauld his caught an quivered  
The gangrel wings o birds.  
Noo is the time o Ice  
Takk tent o these my wirds.

13. THE BEE

The yalla bee maun hash frae howe tae howe,  
He traivels lang an far, aneth the sun.  
Sae blythe, he flees ootower the muckle muir  
Tae reest wi'in the hive, his roadies run.

BLACKIE'S SANG

The birdie wheepies merry frae the willow,  
Bonnie, his wee neb, o caller cry,  
Yon bill that's sweet an yalla. Sturdy loon,  
Playin his furly tune, thon blackie wye!

15. DAITH O A PRINCESS Screived on September 6th, 1997, on the occasion o  
the kistin o Diana, Princess o Wales.

A coffin stopped a nation's pulse  
In Lunnon toun, in Lunnon toun,

Thon nerra hame wi aa maun share  
Baith laird an loon, baith laird an loon.

Westminster hoosed a greater Prince  
That hummles aa, that hummles aa  
The Prince o Daith, fa kens alane  
Fin flooers maun faa, fin flooers maun faa.

Thon Tawny Angel's dusky wings  
His shedda casts in ilkie hairt  
Fin, frae their faimly, friens an foes,  
Princess or common fowk maun pairt.

A rose draps doon, its beauty daen,  
In Winter's thraa, in Winter's thraa, •  
Full-blawn, its passin's lichter murned  
Fin tapped wi snaa, fin tapped wi snaa.

Sair neuk, the nest that hauds a b'rood  
o fledglins smaa, o fledglins smaa,  
Fin frae its mids the parent bird  
Is wyled awa, is wyled awa.

A coffin stopped a nation's pulse,  
In Lunnon toun, in Lunnon toun,  
A nation, an the warld, watched  
Twa halflins lay their mither doon.

#### 16. WINGS OF DEATH ...RABINDRANATH TAGORE

[translatit frae the Bengali bi Aurobindo Bose, here owersett inno Scots.]

Ane bi ane, the lichts on the stage are snibbed;  
Teem is the haa.

At the caa o Silence,  
Profund peace faas ower aa  
Like dreamless sleep.  
The actor's mask I wore draps  
Meaningless, fine'er the curtain flaps,  
Sae deep the quate. Sae deep.

Afore the thrang, I clad masel in mony fey rigoots  
In mony colours.  
Aa yon's washed awa.  
In blate bumbazement,  
I teet inno the foun 0 ma ain natur,  
Somelike, wi stammygaster, in hushed awe,  
The lift keeks at the starnies  
Fin the sunlicht dees an  
Kent lanscapes vanish frae Eird's birlin baa.

-EYN 0 THE YEAR (Owersett frae a poem bi HE QIFANG)

Shakkin doon the dyew 0 early mornin,  
A chinkin, clunkin soun wachts frae the muckle heuch.

The scythe, ower-reamin wi the yoam  
0 rice  
Is pitten doon.

Showdered creels haud sonsie melons  
An fruits frae the busses.

Autumn's reistin in a fairmer's hoose.  
A roon net's haived ower the river  
0 cauld mist,  
Colleckin shaddas 0 derk cypress leaves,  
Like blae, hoar frost on the taps 0 reeds,

Fyle hamewird oars drap an pu.  
Autumn's playin in the fisher's boatie.  
The girssy park seems braider fin gollachs chirrup.  
The burn seems clearer, fin it dwines awa.  
Far did the bamboo tooteroo on the kye's back gyang,  
Its holes reamin wi Simmer's guff an warmth?  
Autumn is dwaumin, in the herd quine's een.

18. THE LAW 0 ASYLUM ...A Scots owersett o the poem bi WITOLD WIRPZA  
(1918-1985)

Asilon: a bield. A hidie-hole.

Bit far tae lay yer herried heid?  
Neither the Greeks nur Romans made eese 0  
This alliterated 'h'... tho they, tee, whyles  
Hid herried heids an kent  
The law 0 asylum.  
Asyle des allienes.  
Herried, hapless, hameless heids  
Are the knob o't.

Heids.  
Bit fit 0 the lave 0 the corp?  
Far's the asylum fur latchie lungs,  
Stappit stammacks, hurtit hairts,  
Laith livers, skyty spleens?  
Are there special biolds fur special puddens?

Fit registers dae sic-like puddens hae?  
Vox humana?  
Fa pu's the registers frae their staas & shelves?  
Fa draws up the lists? Fa redds up the files  
Upon this registry 0 puddens?  
This organized orgy, this normalized enormity?  
There are files, an there are registers  
Mebbe, there's asylum: Bit the law (0 asylum an non-asylum)  
Is jist fur heids.  
Fur haimmerin heids.  
Heid agin heid  
Heid-on.  
Heid-ower-heels.  
Chap, an the heid shall be opened.  
Hard-hittin alliterative 'H'  
A law kent tae the auncients  
Wi'oot alliteration.  
Asilon tout court.

Owersettins inno Scots 0 poems frae modern Chinese poetry,

19, GAMBLIN CHIELS (AI QING 1910–)

At the cweel foun 0 the toun waa,  
In thon derk neuk bi the hooses,

Gamblers hunker doon mids 0 the steer,  
Wytin the ootcam 0 a throw  
Like buckies hotterin on the bile.

Orra, raggety, gypit an wrocht up,  
Their bodies trimmle,  
Their heids shoogle,  
Banns an cheers  
Mell wi the clunk 0 siller.

Weemin an hudderie-heidit bairnickies  
Glower at them.  
A hungeret Iittlin squallochs an girns...  
Bit the mither's reeted tae her man's ploy.

They dowp doon, they strauchen up.  
They skelp their hurdies, skreich in stammygaster.  
Their chooks grow reid,  
Their moos drap, gapin,  
They ettle tae cheenge their weird  
At ae shottie 0 the dice.

They loss, they win, they loss again.  
Puirtith, soss, glaikitness:  
THEY niver cheenge  
At nichtfaa, the gamblers skail awa, doonhairtit,  
Gyaun hame tae their dreich biggins  
Ane  
Bi Ane

## 20. SOUN 0 THE NICHT (XU YUNUO 1893-1958)

In the derk, lanely nicht,  
Naethin is seen.  
There's jist a reeshlin  
The soun 0 Time, ettin Life.

IN IN LINE (MIECZYSLAW JASTRUN 1903•1983)  
Owersettins 0 poems bi Modern Polish poets.

Newlyweds wi fite flooers  
Skailed frae the kirk an caught a cab,  
Their lugs still reamin wi the organ's benediction.

Ootbye, there's a stramash. The guff 0 exhaust-rikk,  
Weemin wi sheepskin buits rugged tae their knees,  
Stappin lowse hair aneth their knottit scarves,  
Braid i the beam, wrinkled, nae wi age  
Wi connached lives. Hoosewives,  
Eesed tae girn in queues, scraunin fur the maet,  
Derk kitchies an derk tables wyte fur.

Gin they dinna bring hame maet, their man gyangs gyte,  
He's tholed fur oors the factory din,  
The blatter 0 conveyor belt, the teemness  
Etter the nicht shift, fin the day begins,  
An sleep sypes throw the shaded winnocks inno bed.

The morn's the day. The wye twixt days is nerra.  
They've learned foo tae girn, in vyces sherp as razors,  
Tae warssle inno queues. Tae borra bairns tae win them extra helpins.  
Fertile, leastwyes, their hurdies mind the births  
o loons grown skinny-malinkie-heich, fa snichter at the queues,  
Even at the mithers 0 life.

They'll wyte in this coorse boorich, till the doorwyes sweenge ajee  
Wide as a winnock on a sunny day.

## 22. Owersett in Scots o 'Funeral' by Wislawa Szymborska 1923

'Sic a begeck. Say? Fa cud see it comin? '  
'Stress an fags. I wis foriver tellin him.'  
'Nae bad, ma frien. Fit like are ye yersel? '  
'Yon flooers sud be unrowed.'  
'His brither tuik a hairt attack anna. It's in the faimly.'  
'I'd nae hae recognised ye in yon beard.'  
'Twis on the cairds. Ay, he wis in a snorrel.'  
'Yon new chiel's gaun tae gie the fowk a speech. Far his he gaen? ' 'Kazek's in  
Warsaw. Tadek's ower the watter.'  
'Ye war smert. Ye've brocht the lane umbrella.'  
'Fit's it maitter noo, gin he hid talent? '



'Na. It's an orra chaumer. Barbara winna takk it.'  
 'Ay, he wis richt. Bit yon is nae excuse.'  
 'Wi bodywirk an peint, fit price wad ye jaloose? '  
 'Twa egg yolks an a tablespeen 0 sugar.'  
 'Nane 0 his business. Fit wis in't fur him? '  
 'Anely the blue, an jist in smaaer sizes.'  
 'Five times I speired... wi niver ae repon.'  
 'Aa richt... I cud hae daen. Bit sae cud ye.'  
 'Guid thing, say I, his widda's ay in wark.'  
 'I dinna ken ava. The kinsmen, mebbe.'  
 'Yon meenister's the marra 0 Belmondo.'  
 'I've niver bin in this pairt 0 the kirkyaird.'  
 'I dreamt 0 him last wikk. I hid an inklin.'  
 'His dochter yonner's a guid-luikin quine.'  
 'Frae yird we cam, tae yird we aa return.'  
 'Excuse me tae the widda. I maun rin.'  
 'Yon Latin garrs it soun sae gran, sae solemn-like.'  
 'He's gaen. Naething ava will bring him back.'  
 'Ta-ta.'  
 'Ta-ta. I've got a byous drooth.'  
 'Ye ken ma nummer.'  
 'Fit bus gaes tae toun? '  
 'I'm gaun this wye.'  
 'Fareweel syne, because, ye see, we arna.'

### 23. THE BLATE LUVER CATULLUS: A CLANDESTINE AFFAIR

Flavius, yer new dearie maun be teem  
 o wit an chairm, or ye wad reeze her oot.  
 Is she some peely-wally, dough-faced deem?  
 Sae blate! Ye canna even tell yer frien  
 Catullus, o the hizzie. Yet yer flute  
 Plays many's the cheery tune on her hoch been.

The bed is touzled, buckled in the beam.  
 Yer nichts ream ower wi pleisur; there's nae doot  
 Ye're like a Cheshire cat fa's supped the cream.  
 The bowster's thumpit. Scentit, ilkie seam.  
 The bed posts shakk an crakk. They binna mute.  
 They tell me houghmagandie's nae some dream.

It's real eneuch. Fell worn oot ye seem!  
Thon midnight plisky's wrung ye like a cloot.  
Confess! I'll screive an ode: she'll be its theme,  
Nae maitter be she nymph, or some auld troot.

#### 24. THE LAIK-WAKE VIGIL CATULLUS: POEM CI

Ower many seas an kintras I hae come,  
Brither, this laik-wake vigil tae owersee;  
The hinmaist dues a Sarra tae confer,  
The eirdly rites that steek the weird ye dree.

An sae, tae yer quate stoor I spikk these wirds  
(Though wirds are wastery. Listenin lug wis stopt  
Bi Daith, the sleekit reiver a Man's soul)  
Ye're bit a Threid, frae Life's rich fabric cropt.

Ayont aa gift or gettin, still I gie  
Full honours, brither, tae yer dowie lair  
Weety wi tears, that rain upon the mools  
o waefu tryst. Fareweel foriver mair!

#### 25. THE SERPENT'S SANG

Gin I war ivy, I wid twine  
Yon lang, lean limbs, unyieldin's stane,  
Sear laggard thocht; a kinnelt vine,  
Wi leaves 0 langin fill his een.

He'd learn tae loue me quick eneuch,  
Gin he war bane, an I wis bluid  
A flytin tide, I'd draw awa,  
Leavin him pale, as I am reid.

I am the serpent in the stoor;  
Though lower than the dust I lie,  
I haud the knowledge 0 delicht,  
o far daur pass me by?  
A thousand-fauld they crush my heid,  
I hissin rise, an multiply.

POEMS OWERSETT IN SCOTS FROM THE GOLDEN TREASURY OF CHINESE  
POETRY

26. THE CHASTE WIFE'S REPON ZHANG JI (768? -830?)

Tae me, a wadded wife, as is weel kent,  
A gift 0 rarest pearls ye hae sent.  
Pleasured bi sic a merk 0 chivalrie,  
I preened them on ma dress 0 crammosie.

Ma hoose is heich, wi bonnie gairdens girt,  
Ma guidman is a sodjer at the coort.  
Constant, yer luv may bide till hinmaist braith  
Ma merriege vows, guidsir, staun firm till daith.  
Sae I return yer giftie, rare, an fine  
Bit 0, that I hid kent ye fin a quine!

27. ON BARDERIE ZHAO YI (1727-1814)

Sangs bi Li Bai,  
Du Fu, aince aa the rage,  
Noo dinna suit ava wir modern age.  
A Genius frae ilk generation briers  
He's honoured, fur aboot a hunner years.

28. KEEKIN AT FUSHES BAI JUYI (772-846)

As roon aboot the puil I gaed, watchin the fushes glide,  
Plyin the auncient fushin trade my littlins I spied.  
The luv 0 fush did tryst them oot jist as the fancy tuik them:  
Bit I cam oot tae feed ma fush -the bairns cam oot tae hook them!

GEESE GYANG HAME QIAN Q1 (722? -780?)

I winnert gin they'd sikk tae shift, tae steer  
Tae the wud Norlan frae this bonnie muir,  
Far watters gleam an glent like palest jade,  
Bi siller sans, an cweelin, foggy shade.  
An syne, a zither's music cairriet clear

Along the meenlicht, loud, that aa micht hear;  
A waesome music, wingin ben the nicht,  
As thon hame-haudin geese, raise up in flicht.

### 30.. RICHT ROYAL DRAM

We brew a dram at Lochnagar  
As strang's the Cluny steen  
It's pouerfu as the Linn 0 Muick,  
As heidy as Mount Keen.

This usquebagh's abeen them aa:  
Ye hear at howf an ingle  
The yoam 0 yon byordnar dram,  
Wad thaw the drifts ower Shenbhal.

It pits the skreich in Coilacreich  
At Inver, bears the gree;  
In Pannanich, each heid's held heich  
Fired bi yon potent bree.

The still, wi skill an virr we fill  
Wi Heilan watters, peaty;  
The burnies' dyew, 0 amber hue  
Is swalled wi shooers, weety.

It slokes the drooth 0 age; 0 youth,  
Frae Linn 0 Dee tae Lui;  
Frae Cairn Toul tae ghaistly ghoul →  
Gray Man 0 Ben MacDhui.

A cairngorm in the glaiss  
It skinkles like a jewel,  
It kittles up the dancers' feet  
Frae Lammas throw tae Yule.

Fur Winter's sairs, an cauldribe cares  
A tooshtie 0 this lotion  
That's Lochnagar -tis better far  
Than pheesick's soor-moothed potion.

Distilled ahin Balmoral's haa,  
As prood's a chieftain's crest  
Here's tae this Royal dram 0 Dee  
Weel-Ioued, an honoured guest.

The bairns a Mar, in howff an bar are sweet in tongue an thrapple  
A kelpie's nectar's caught an kept, in ilkie precious bottle!

### 31. ULYSSES

Neist time that yer menfowk are late winnin hame,  
Spen a thocht fur Penelope sittin her lane  
Fur twinty lang years in byordnar ill-teem,  
Rehearsin ae question 'Jist far hae ye been? '

He hummed an he heyed, vowed it gied him nae joy,  
Ten years tae be fechtin ower Helen 0 Troy  
Fur, man! she wis bonnie an, fegs! She wis braw,  
Bit yon wisna the reason he'd bidden awa  
A war's like the measles, it's terrible smittin:  
The wives hae the best o't at hame wi the knittin!

'I'm listenin', quo she  
He'd cornered a Cyclops an poked oot its ee  
Syne dauchled wi Circe, her strang witcherie  
He cudna refuse; she'd hae made him a grumph,  
Fur she'd cookit the bacon 0 mony a sumph!

He'd jinkit the Sirens, escapin their tunes,  
Wi Tiresias helpin tae redd up the runes  
(fa files is a lassie an files is a loon  
A transvestite tricked oot in a unisex goon) .

Penelope glowered wi a doon-turnin lip,  
Fin he telt foo Apollo hid scuppered his ship.  
Tae the isle 0 Calypso he'd swum, on a plank  
An, drooked tae the been, splytered up on the bank  
Fin (widn't ye ken it?) new ooto the tide  
Anither quine spied him an forced him tae bide!

Nae his wyte ava, twis a whimsy 0 Fate,

An the wyles 0 the Gods, that hid made him sae late!

Syne, his ill-rowin boatie cowpt ower in the drink,  
An a nympho caad Nausicaa tipped him the wink.  
Bit his shanks were rheumaticky; weary an lame  
He myn't on Penelope, wytin at hame...  
A wife in the haun is wirth twa in the bush  
Better carin an couthie nor fey an fantoosh!

An noo he wis hame, wid she nae dasht-weel deave him!  
He'd telt her his story, she widna believe him!

### 32. ALANENESS...BIAN ZHILIN (1910-)

Feart 0 alaneness,  
A kintra laddie keepit a girse-lowerper  
Bi his bowster.  
Fin' he grew up an vrocht in the toun,  
He bocht a watch wi a lichtit dial.  
Fin he wis wee, he envied the girse on the mools  
A hame fur girse-Iowpers.  
He's three oors deid. His watch is tickin yet.

### 33.A FLIGHT OF SWANS Twa fragments frae poems bi Rabindranath Tagore

Fin dyewdraps jibble frae the mornin lift,  
Fin trees along the burn bricht sunbeams sain,  
Sae close inbye ma hairt their shaddas fa,  
I ken fu weel the Warld an I are ane.

The Universe, a muckle lotus, floats  
Upon the haly lochan 0 ma mind.  
The Universe, a muckle lotus, floats  
An aathin in its sphere is intertwined.

I ken I am the vyce inbye the Vyce  
I ken I am the sang inbye the Sang  
I ken I am the life inbye the Life  
The licht that throw the mids 0 Derk nicht gyang.

Atap this bruckle raft,  
Life's choppy river currents I will cross,  
Fin gloamin faas, I'll anchor... disembark,  
Lettin it drift awa, like eeseless dross,  
An forrit gyang, tae glisk the Future's sights  
Sic Shaddas loom! Sic Shaddas, an sic Lichts!

#### 34. THE MAID O BENNACHIE

The sun wis heich ower Bennachie  
The corn sweyed back an fore;  
A swarthy chiel as blaik's the deil  
Chappt at the kitchie door.

The maiden o Drumdurno raise  
An up the snib did yark:  
'Oh fa be yon cams ower the Don  
Tae wyle me frae ma wark? '

'Oh I am bit a gangrel lad,  
That braves the win an rain,  
Cam here tae wager, bonnie quine,  
Yer skills agin ma ain.'  
'Afore the gloamin cweels tae nicht  
I makk this bargain free  
Gin I pruve swifter nur yersel  
My wife ye'll pledge tae be.'

'Gin I can lay a steeny road  
Richt tae the Mither Tap  
Afore a firloot ye hae baked o bannock, scone an bap.'

The lassie leuch at sic a styte:  
'Yer wager's lost, ' quo she.  
' As seen the Dee cud wad the Don  
Yer wife I'll niver be.'

As licht as oo her fingers flew  
The pooth'ry floer amang  
Bit ower the hill wi richt guid will  
The muckle steens he flang.

She teeted tae Pittodrie Wid  
At settin 0 the sun  
The road wis feenished, tap tae foun,  
The wager he hid won.

She left the hoose, she left the fairm,  
Faist ower the parks she ran  
For he fad daen yon mighty darg  
Wis niver mortal man.

The Deil wis fain his bride tae claim  
He rode upon the win;  
At Rabbit's Neuk, he raxxed his cleuk  
An caught her frae ahin.

The lassie cried fur clemency  
On the Guid Lord abeen  
He turned her frae the Deevil's prey  
Tae slab 0 granite steen.

Her showder brakk like stick 0 chakk  
Ill-fated be the fair  
The maiden 0 Drumdurno stauns  
Cauld steen forivermair.

An at her breist, her keekin glaiss  
An in her haun, her caimb  
Are blazoned on the livin steen;  
She disna bide her lane

Fur birdies smaa aroon her caw  
She's cweeled bi shooeries sweet  
The floeries 0 her faither's lans  
Wyve softly at her feet.

### 35. HAMEDRAUCHTIT CATULLUS: POEM XXXI

Sirmio was a small rocky tongue of land on the south shore of Lake Garda, where Catullus owned a villa.

Sirmio, pearl 0 peninsulas an isles,



Heistit bi Neptune, God 0 seas an linns,  
Sae swete, sae pleisunt is the sicht 0 ye,  
Leavin the plains 0 Turkey far ahin.

Tae set life's trauchles doon, a wechty pack,  
The foonert fit tae set on its hearth-stane,  
Aa fremmit paths an perils at yer back,  
On yer ain bed ootraxed, aa traivels daen.

Aa tcyauve an warsslin throwe, I greet my hame,  
Ma bonnie Sirmio, my best-lued airt!  
Yer lochan's waves lauch licht, wi lythesome tongues,  
Lowpin wi aa the joy that's in its hairt.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Hellfire Club

Medmenham Abbey housed orgies  
Enjoyed by politicians and aristocrats

Built on the site of an early Cistercian abbey  
a plaque above the building said 'do what you will'

Sir Francis Dashwood, the Earl of Sandwich et al  
Dressed prostitutes as nuns to fuel their fantasies

Little changes. Politician, aristocrats  
Continue to wield power and blot their jotters  
Profumo, Clinton, Kennedy. Cyril Smith

Sheena Blackhall

# The Hen's Siesta

Hen lies flopped on the grass  
One wing out splayed like a fan

Her glittering eyes are sealed in waxen lines  
Like two sharp, licked envelopes

In the tiny pocket of her head  
Pictures of grass, bees, grain  
And swaying honeysuckle

Sheena Blackhall

# The Heron

Cement is lashed to a frenzy by showers of rain,  
Envelopes sigh like fans at the postman's knock,  
Piglets scream like kettles  
As the mash bin announces its coming;  
Beads grow incandescent beneath a chandelier,  
And have you noticed how cash-cards  
Twitch when tills start to ring?

Gatherings, meetings, events,  
Have their effects  
In crowded rooms.  
There are definite modes of behaviour.  
Definite ways of being in the world.

I learned mine  
From the heron I saw  
By the long pool last midsummer.

Shifting from one leg to the other,  
I watch the silver river of trays flow by.  
I dip and sip,  
Dip and sip  
On the edge, on the cool periphery.  
Conversations rise like mayflies,  
Drift in snatches over the busy rooms.

The door is near  
The yellow evening  
Waits outside like a taxi;  
Waits outside with the trees  
All rustling green

Sheena Blackhall

## The Heron (2)

The heron is an exquisite  
Piece of plumbing

Regard the u-bend of the neck  
Porcelain white  
With fashionable dove grey overtones

Woodpeckers sigh in envy  
At its beak, the heron's leister,  
Elegant and deadly

Its eyes would make  
Stunning studs for an antimacassar

Its Rumpelstiltskin legs  
Are a heron-ic tour de force  
Of engineering

It stands on its high rise stilts  
Like a hunched hanging-judge  
Ready to don its black cap  
Prior to lunging

Sheena Blackhall

# The Hiccupping Directory

Anderson, A Anderson, B

And- And- And- And

Anderson, C.

Cruickshank, B

Cruickshank, D

Cruick-Cruick-Cruick-Cruick Cruickshank, V

Macafferty, F

Macafferty, G

Mac-aff-aff-afferty Macafferty, T.

Jones, F

Jones, I

Jo-o-o-ones Jo-ones, Y.

Williams, A Williams, P Will-ill-illiams Williams, V

Sheena Blackhall

# The Holocaust

Herded into the transports  
Beaten and struck. Defiled  
Stripped of hope and possessions  
Man and woman and child

Lied to, betrayed, tormented  
Starved in the bitter cold  
Cattle-trucked off to horror  
The weak, the young, the old

Where were the men of conscience?  
Where was the will to save?  
Where were Pity and Reason?  
At the wrong side of the grave.

Harvesting hair and fillings  
Harvesting bones and rings  
Apocalyptic gleaners  
Where death's cruel sickle swings

Dachau, Stutthof, Treblinka  
Ravensbrueck, Buchenwald  
Mauthausen-Gusen Plaszow  
Blood-hungry, wired and walled

Auschwitz, Majdanek, Chelmno  
Belzec and Bergen-Belsen  
Flossenbuerg and Natzweiler  
Neuengamme and Gross Rosen

How many potential leaders,  
Einsteins, Chagalls and Heines  
Mendelssohns, Kafkas, Mahlers  
Were killed in those killing times?

The tree of pogrom and ghetto  
It grew a bitter fruit  
And the air and the dust you walk on's  
Where the past lies underfoot

Europe today as always  
Is a fertile, ancient place  
But for the ghost-filled cities  
Of one persecuted race

Sheena Blackhall



# The Hoose O The Cacklefart Hen: (23 Scots Poems)

Fickle Fire

'The flame tuik fast upon her cheek, tuik fast upon her chin  
Tuik fast upon her faire bodye, she burned like hollins green'  
From the ballad Young Hunting/Earl Richard, Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border,  
(Volume II of three) , Sir Walter Scott.

Fire that cleans the stibble park  
That keeps alive the hairth  
Warms the banes an heats the pot  
Reid star, drapt doon tae earth

It brunt the twa-fauld carlin-wife  
The ootlinned Jew, the traiveller  
It brunt the buik, the heretic  
Adulterer an dissenter

Kind an cruel it sains or kills  
It tortures or relieves  
See it flichter, twa-faced jaad  
Kent stranger neth the eaves

in a Plant Pot: Inspired by My World: Ivan Rahuzin (b1919) Zagreb. Gallery of  
Primitive Art Yugoslavian naive painter

There aince wis a clachan, a pie-shaped clachan  
Wi slices o river an muir, in its hett intimmers.  
Oh, it wis a giant sunflooer o an airt  
An airt for giants tae daunder, wi rowin knowes  
An days fin rain peppered the reefs.  
Aathin wis gleg an blithe in its Heilan howes.

Wikks war buiks openin, ilkie foreneen,  
Steekit at nicht, wi picturs o merle,  
Mavis, the ivory stems o bagpipes  
Fishin rods, kelpies (seen an dwaumed)  
An a lift the colour o opals.

I could keek for oors in the face o a copper puil

Fin Sabbaths war kirk bells, choirs,  
Wud gean floers faain, sarks on the line,  
Heistin lumberjack airms in hame-ower Halleujah.

This clachan wis my playgrun, my leal frien.  
Noo, like a neuk in an auld cathedral's side  
I haud its unguents sacred, a host thrice blessed.  
I am becam my granmither, grey fog on a rock.

Eenoo the Coyles o Muick's cauld corries glent  
The larick's skein o boughs is brandy-broon  
A wren, hings bi a threid. I saw a stirlin,  
New killt on the road, its feathers shakkin.

Aft-times in sleep, I'm back in this same airt  
It's aywis nicht, the hills ableeze wi starns  
Naethin is left alive bit the derk river.

ie

Her fitman carries her buits an sheen, her heidman cairries her croon  
An polar bears in their icy lairs wad kill for her ermine gown

Her corgies sit wi their serviettes roon plates o pedigree steak  
Fin she's aff tae bag a couple o stags or engaged in affairs o state

Her fillins are 19 carot gowd. Spa watter fills her shooer  
Fin jeelies are made for her birthday bash, they're heich as the Eiffel Tour

An hunners o busbies staun aa day tae gie her a wee bit cheer  
Like the Forth Road brig, tae clean her hoose the skiffies wirk as year

Naebody else has a Queenie like oors wi her heid on coins an bars  
Tae gie oot honours tae Sirs an Earls an rock an fitbaa stars!

Hoose o the Cacklefart Hen

Atween Chartered Accoontants, an Screw-its Tool Hire  
There's a buikshop wi treisurs that's sure tae inspire.  
There's a richt hurlygush o fowk: customers, choosers

Stravaigers in brogues or in kenspeckle troosers

There's page-turners, flechers, there's kecklers an flickers  
There's wifies in sandals an cream cami-knickers  
Aa threidin their wye throwe the final editions  
An wydin ben sonnets an poetry submissions  
Watched ower bi a stag's heid wi whiskery lugs  
That sings in the shop, as it hodge an shugs.  
Beau Nash cam tae veesit, decidit tae stop  
He's the maist loyal customer here in the shop

Backie

Ahin, there's an orchard, wi fish puils an plums,  
Far hinney bees whizzle ben reid pollen crumbs  
Three Muses keek oot frae a table's blaik legs  
An a muckle fat puddock lowps ooto the seggs

There's a Celtic heid vrocht fae an auld Druid-stane  
An a Buddha that smiles: (he's a neuk o his ane)  
There's a maiden seat yonner for maidens tae wyte  
For the whinney o shelt an the kiss o a knight

Twa thrissles staun flankin an iron fit-scraper  
And a puckle wee trees fur a squirrel micht caper  
Here, boorichs o poets sit lauchin an newsin  
In dreidlocks an toories, while tea is infusin  
In Alice in Wunnnerlan teapot... wi toast  
Served up on a plate bi a gweed-hertit host

The slate reef is auld. In the warm, scentit air  
A kirk bell that's cracked cries the faithfu tae prayer  
Ower braw Chinee pots skail reid trails o Tam Thumbs  
Wi dragons as furly's the rikk ooto lums  
(Fand in Chelsea posh hooses an Callander ferms)  
Here a sundial keeps time...there's nae eyn tae the chermis  
O this backie, fa's waa rins wi green ivy linns  
An a Greyfriar's Bobby's stauns guaird ower the bins

There's a sieve for removin the nits frae horse hair  
There's a birk that's been Bonsaied, There's foxgloves oot there

Far bumbees could creep, if they're seekin tae hide  
It's a gairden far Thomas the Rhymer micht bide

### Up-Abune Chaumer

In an up-abune chaumer, there's timmer swordfish,  
There's three cheena doos heckty-peckin a dish  
A Victorian roaster for chestnuts at Yule  
A plinth haudin violin bows, an a jewel  
O a pictur o Venice's auncient canal  
Auchtermuchty's auld brig, and an elephant shawl

There's photies o weemin in lang lacey smocks  
Battalions o volumes an thick worsit socks  
A keekin glaiss haudin a hidden spy-hole  
(wad suit a James Bond or an MSP mole)  
Candelabra an tea clippers, beached an lan-lubbit  
And, wytin fur Easter, a porcelain rubbit

A buik aboot mongrels, gods, freaks, unbelievers  
Aboot oddbams, tinks, heidbangers, saunts an deceivers  
Sits wi Suffragettes, framed aside Em'ly Pankhurst  
An a Leda, that buxom, her bra should hae burst

### Kitchie

The coo jugs are Dutch. The Feng-Shui's their ain  
The brakkfest bar's traivelled fae hyne-awa Spain  
A wummin glowers doon fae an up-abune deck  
In a keekin glaiss peintit bi Toulouse Lautrec.

Berry pans hotter wi bree frae the vine  
Makkin soups o young carrot an blackberry wine,  
Coriander an cucumber, herbs fae the glen...  
By a wee peintit coop wi a cacklefart hen.

Japanee plates wi a smachrie o brie  
Sit bi Rochester Ginger, an green herbal tea  
There's a Delft coffee grinder. There's fennel, there's spice,  
Faith, it's stappit wi aathin frae rhubarb tae rice!

## Lobbies an Stairs

There's a Newel stairwye (for a left-haundit cheil)  
There's rosemary hung on the ceilin, as weel  
As a wheen peintit puppets, (Ms. Plath an Ted Hughes)  
An eneuch buiks tae service a roon-the warld cruise

There's an elderly Teddy wi grey jogger's paps  
An a stuffed, dozy zebra, fa dovers an draps  
His heid ower a volume o erudite prose  
A Scots Dictionary, propped neist tae his nose  
While Finlay an Whisky, the resident cats  
Step ower auld photos o chiels in cravat

## Lavvie

Sic a lavvie! The door hauds twa porcelain flooers  
Ye cud cock on yer dowp, clean dumfounert fur oors  
Watchin goblets o gowd ringed in derk emerald green  
An a ted up abune wi a glent in his een  
He's watchin ye piddle, leave nae single dleep  
Fur he'll ken an he'll clype, sae be dry on the seat.

## Lave

There's a coffee- pot weirin a Prussian Duke's topper  
That luiks like a Dalek's bin steepit in copper  
There's a white merble leopard, a goddess abune,  
There's a bust o Napoleon's wife, Josephine

There's leather for buik-bindin, pictures o kye  
An the Saltire and Reid Scottish lion, ootbye  
There's a bellus, aince used on a smith's roarin fire  
There's even a room for a coo tae retire  
Eftir grazin the girse since the braikk o the dawn....  
Wis there iver a hoose as weel-fittit as thon!  
It's pliskies oot-ploy Downing Street's Nummer Ten  
Hurrah fur the Hoose o the Cacklefart Hen!

## Civic Shield

Aiberdeen toun. The heraldic shield's  
Twa leopards uphaudin three castles  
Plaistered ower letter heids, ceevic speens,  
Rubbish bins, the antrin sweemin puil.

I've niver seen ane rinnin ben the cassies  
I've niver seen ane purrin roon the Green  
We're the leopards...the castles, oor toun biggins  
We canna cheenge oor spots, us leopard fowk  
St Nicholas an St Machar ay staun stinch  
Tho councillors come an gyang wi each election  
The grey sea scrats its claws at oor back yett  
Sattin the weety san wi foamy slivers

Fin ile rins oot in the rip cord o the future  
The toun, the fowk, the spikk'll ay be here  
We'll flick wir tails, set aff fur ither prey.

time

I luiked in my granmither's memory an fand:  
An ice cream scoop that wummled on my lip  
Nasturtiums far gollachs cam tae sip  
A wave that brukk in cups on a beach trip

I luiked in my faither's memory an fand:  
A littlin's feet splish -splyterin in a puil  
Lessons o bawd an erne in Natur's schuil  
A troot that lowped an cheenged intae a jewel

I luiked in my mither's memory an fand:  
Reid sandals that maun nae be scoored or scuffed  
A sharger joy that maun be earned nae snatched  
An Autumn park far winter shaddas hatched

I luiked in the sun's memory an fand:  
A ley o girse that reeshled like a sea

A galleon in the tap branch o a tree  
Freedom tae rin ayont the bouns o me

### Tiger

Let's nae tell a sowl, but oor hoose has a tiger  
Wi a lowe, an a skirl, an a killer inside her

She dines upon heroes. She teirs at her cages  
She's restless in taxis. She rins an she rages

She's cweel fin she raxxes her cleuks on the mat  
Let's nae tell a sowl, but oor tiger's a cat!

### Butterflee

The lift wis cushie-grey... an azure-blue  
A thunner-mix. Reef slates seemed varnished weet.  
Fa'd think thon antrin trysts ye shruggit aff  
Like rain frae ile-skins I wad myne on yet?

I met ye first fin Simmer trees were fu  
O birds an rain. The weety sun was sealed  
Inbye a purse of pearl, like yer hairt  
Ye were the biggest flirt fa played the field

The evenin TV'd cleared the street o bairns  
Rowans were reid as splyterins o bluid  
I stood, neb pressed agin the buik-shop pane  
While buses made a spreidin fan o dubs

Aneth the dreich umbrella o the day  
I felt yer finger rinnin doon my spine  
An unread buik. Ye leuch. I luiked awa  
An read in ilkie wink a deeper sign

Ye'd had yer fingers burned. Yer wife bedd leal  
Turned butterflees tae aisse fa neared yer flame.  
My teasin ghaist, there's pleisur in the weet  
That frae the yird, brings echoes o yer name

in the Border

Great Waa o Cheena, miles o cloud an drap  
Frae Shanghai Pass tae Lop Nur in the west  
Snakes ower heich Bens, a steeny showder strap  
A muckle stammygaster, biggt tae laist

Tae Antoninus Pius' ploy, it's kin,  
(thon girssy-theekit borderline o rock...)  
Thon dyke, that Caledonians stude ahin  
Tae gie the hee-haw tae it, an tae mock□

Sic Roman virr an smeddum laid tae waste  
Fur, as the auld spikk rins, tho they be stoot,  
Bigg't ower centuries, or vrocht in haste  
Snibbed yetts jist keep an honest body oot.

The dynasties o Ming an Mongul kings  
Maun birl like peeries in their regal yird  
Tae see fu fremmit hordes hae sprootit wings  
A plane hurls roon the world like a gird

As lang as fowk can lowp an planes can flee  
Like Auld Canute, fa tried tae stop the tide  
A border's bit a sieve o leakin bree  
Gin fowk are thrawn, they'll win the ither side

Far dis oor Scottish border rin eenoo?  
Ower lan or sea, in air miles or in state  
Is it the leid that's fashioned in the moo  
Or far like-mindit bodies congregrate?

The Falkirk motto is 'Touch ane, touch aa'  
In Aiberdeen, the motto's Bon Accord  
Fur ilkie chiel that biggs a Chinee Waa  
There's fifty at its foun wi fire an sword.

Ridin o the Pairliament: The third session o the Scottish pairliament, 300 years  
efiir the 'eyn o an auld sang'



The touns o Falkirk, Stirlin, Airdrie, Ayr  
Perth, Dundee, Dumfries, Aiberdeen an North  
Waukened tae news fae Lunnon..a bomb scare  
Terror an floodin far ayont the Forth

In Embro, fowk war met on blyther ploys  
Oor phoenix pairliament maun rax its wings  
Three hunner year since it wis brunt tae aisse  
It clears the haar ooto its throat an sings

The auldest croon in Europe played its pairt  
That sat awhile on mony's the royal heid  
Squired intae pairliament, tae stert the day  
Tae fire the smeddum in oor leaders bluid

Ootbye, a mixer-maxter kinna crew  
A dizzen banners, a hale clanjamfrey  
Stinch academics, ushers, polis, guairds  
Culture an Science, Sport an Industry  
A hobby horse, Blaik Angus, hobbits hirplin  
Madam de Pompadour on lanky stilts  
Twa Gaelic choirs...a Chinee dragon birlin  
Japanese drummin, hett chillis in kilts  
In siller armour, merched the Shetlan Jarls  
Berserker warriors in reindeer skin  
Wyved aixes, skirled alood like steekit bulls  
Admired bi hauders on an hingers in

Here, wis Montrose dragged in the hangman's cairt  
Here, Jenny Geddes raised a soople airm  
Here, Robert Fergusson gaed jinkin by  
Here, Mary lay in jizzen-bed wi bairn  
Her peintit mummies, lairds, her warrior bards  
Yet thrang the hauntit cobbles o this street  
Sic ghaists hae wauked these cobbles, banner-hung,  
This Royal Mile far Past an Present meet

The Ridin ower, the riders tuik the air  
Queued fur their picnic, sookit in each sicht  
Their empire biscuit wi industrial jam  
Sae sweir tae brakk, the shortbread held on ticht

A chiffon-wippit wifie sank in girse  
Skyrie in Ascot hat an teeterin heels  
A tartan sahri'd lassie dowpit doon  
Watchin the wide-screened skirl o echtsome reels  
Abune the frienly claik, the clink o glaiss  
On the horizon, snipers lay upbye  
Their silhouettes o blaik upon the reefs  
A grim necessity agin the sky

The Heivens opened ower Dynamic Earth  
Doon Salisbury Crag it cowped a linn o weet  
Fowk warssled fur their bus, like drookit rats  
A lauchin bairn gaed plyterin ben the street.

Twis meant tae be a day o perfeck joy  
Weel-guairded guests, performers, Heids o State  
While Embro celebrated, Glesga vrocht  
Tae dowse the lowes o terror an o hate.

## Rumours

Fowk say Prince Albert wore a ring aroon his nether pairts  
Tae stop his manhood risin up, fin quines wi beatin hairts  
Daunced near the Royal personage. Thon prince o auncient bluid  
Wis ower strang a moralist, tae let lust rule his heid.

He aye stude tae attention, niver let Victoria doon  
The man fa gaed us Xmas trees, the mainstey o the croon.  
His legacy wis mournin hair, his famous Albert chyne,  
And a sonsie brood o princelins, tae cairry on the line.  
Fowk say that Jack the Ripper micht hae bin a future king  
Prince Eddy, Albert's grandson: bit fowk say onything.

## Scots Owersets o Poems bi John Clare

I Am: Owerset frae John Clare

'I Am' was written by John Clare in the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum.

The House Steward of the Asylum, transcribed the poem for him and it appeared in the Annual Report of the Medical Superintendent of Saint Andrews for 1864. It is said to be the last poem Clare wrote.

I am: yet fa I am nane kens or cares,  
My friens forsak me like a thocht forgot;  
I'm etten up bi waes, like swallaed tares  
They brier an dee, an unattendit lot  
Like shades in love and daith's untendit plot;  
An yet I am! and live wi shaddas fraught

In mids o naethin'ness, its sair stramash,  
Inno the leevin sea of waukent dwaums,  
Far there's nae sense o life, nor joys tae fash,  
Bit the braid shipwrack o my ain life's plans;  
An e'en the dearest- that I lued maist strang-  
Are fey- faith, raither feyer than the thrang.

I lang for airts far man has ne'er stravaiged;  
A neuk far wumman niver grat nur leuch;  
Yonner tae bide wi Him, fa aathin made,  
An sleep as does a bairnie, sweet eneuch:  
Nae tribbles there tae grue, or gar me shift;  
The girse ablow—abeen the ootraxed lift

The Nest o the Mavis: Owerset frae John Clare

Inbye a hawthorn buss, spread thick an wide  
That hung, a yirdy mowdie-hill abune,  
I heard a mavis sing at mornin-tide  
Hymns tae the dawn, an I drank doon the soun  
Richt cheery; an betimes, an unsocht guest,  
I watched her secret tcyauve frae day tae day -  
Foo weel she wyved the fog tae bigg a nest,  
An vrocht it ooto timmer twigs an clay;  
An syne, like hare-bells skirpt wi skinidin dyew,  
There lay her sheeny eggs as bricht as flooers,  
Ink-skitterins ower shells o greeny blue;  
Yonner I watched along the sunny oors,  
A swatch o natur's sangsters cheep an flee,  
Gled as the sunshine in the heavens sae hie.

The Brock: Owerset frae John Clare

Fin midnight chaps, a heeze o tykes an men  
Gyang oot tae dog the brock tae his derk den,  
An stap a pyoke inno the hole an lie  
Till thon auld snocherin brock gaes shauchlin by.

He comes, takks tent -they lat the strangest free  
The auld tod draps his goose at the melee  
The poacher sheets an hashes frae the cry,  
An the auld bawd hauf hurtit bizzes by.

They takk a forkit stick tae haud him doon  
An clap the tykes an takk him tae the toun,  
An deave him aa the day wi gurrin dugs,  
An lauch an skirl an fricht the skitterin hogs.

He rins alang an bites at aa he meets:  
They skreich an skirl doon the soundin streets.  
He birls aroon tae face the hale set-oot  
An tae their ain doors gars them turn about.

Aft-times a steen is flang as on he pechs  
Fur aabody's a fae fin a brock fechts  
The tykes are clapped, tae charge an bare their mawe  
The brock furls roon an drives them all awa.

Though he's scarce hauf their size, a craitur sma,  
He fechts wi tykes for oors an beats them aa.  
The muckle mastiff, coorsest o the breetts,  
Turns hamewird an lies doon, tae lick his queats.

The bulldug kens his match an waxes cauld  
Brock grins an niver sikks tae leave his hauld  
He drives the hale kiboodle bi the heels  
An bites them through - the piss-heid sweirs an reels.

The frichtit weemen haul the loons frae sicht  
The bully lauchs an swaggers tae the fecht.  
Brock tries to reach the wids, an unca race,  
Bit sticks an cudgels quickly stop the chase.

He birls again an drives the skirlin crew  
And beats the heeze o tykes, an gars them grue.

He drives awa an beats them ilkie ane,  
An syne they lowse the rick-ma-tick again.

He faas as deid, is kicked by loons an men,  
Syne starts an grins an drives them back again;  
Till cloured an riven, threwshed, the fecht upgies  
Laid low, brock keckles, gaes a girn, and dees.

## 19. Scots Owersets o Poems by Anne Sexton (1928 —1974)

Young: Owerset frae Anne Sexton

A thoosan yetts langsyne  
fin I wis a lanely bairn  
in a muckle hoose wi fower  
garages an it wis Simmer  
as lang as I could myne,  
I lay on the girse at nicht,  
clover lirkin aneth me,  
the wyce starnies sleepin abeen me,  
my mither's windae a funnel  
o yalla heat rinnin oot,  
my faither's windae, half steekit,  
an ee far sleeper's pass,  
an the boords o the hoose  
war smeeth an fite as wax  
an likely a million leaves  
sailed on their fremmit stalks  
as the girse-lowpers ticked thegither  
an I, in ma spleet- new body,  
which wisnae a wumman's yet,  
telt the starnies ma speirins  
an thocht God could really see  
the heat an the peintit licht,  
elbucks, knees, dwaums, goodnicht.

Wirds: Owerset frae Anne Sexton

Ca-cannie wi wirds,  
even the eildritch anes.

For the eildritch we dae oor best,  
whyles they heeze like gollachs  
an leave nae a sting but a kiss.  
They can be as guid as fingers.  
They can be as trusty as the rock  
ye clap yer dowp on.  
Bit they can be baith gowans and clours.  
Yet I am in luve wi wirds.  
They are doos faain oot o the ceilin.  
They are six haly oranges sittin in ma lap.  
They are the trees, the shanks o Simmer,  
and the sun, its physog fu o virr.  
Yet aften they lat me doon.  
I hae sae muckle I ettle tae say, s  
ae mony tales, picturs, proverbs, etc.  
Bit the wirds arenae guid eneuch,  
the wrang anes kiss me.  
Whyles I flee like an erne  
wi the wings o a Jenny-wren.  
Bit I try tae ca-cannie  
an be gentle tae them.  
Wirds an eggs maun be haunlit wi care.  
Aince brukken they are ayont repair.

Reid Roses: Owerset frae Anne Sexton

Tommy is three an fin he's coorse  
his mither daunces with him.  
She pits on the record,  
'Reid Roses fur a Blue Leddy'  
an haives him ower the chaumer.

Mind ye,  
she niver laid a haun on him,  
anely the waa laid a haun on him.  
He gets reid roses in different neuks,  
the heid, thon time he wis as sleepy as a river,  
the back, thon time he was a brukken tattiebogle,  
the airm like a diamond hid bitten it,  
the shank, twisted like liquorice stick,  
aa the daunces they did thegither,

Blue Leddy an Tommy.

Ye fell, quo she, jist mynd ye fell.  
I fell, is as he telt the doctors  
in the muckle hospital. A fine wifie cam  
an speired him questions bit because  
he didnae wint tae be sent awa, he said, I fell.  
He niver said onythin else although he could spikk fine.  
He niver telt about the music or foo she'd sing an skirl  
haudin him up an haivin him.  
He makks on he is her baa.  
He tries tae fauld up an stot bit he squishes like fruit.  
Fur he lues Blue Leddy an the spots  
o reid reid roses he gies her.

Owersets intae Scots o Poems bi Hans Magnus Enzensberger

The Hinnereyn o the Hoolets (Owerset frae Hans Magnus Enzensberger)

I spikk fur nane o yer kin  
I spikk o the hinnereyn o the hoolets.  
I spikk fur the flounder an whale  
In their unlichtit hoose,  
The seven-neukit sea,  
Fur the glaciers  
They will hae calved ower sune  
Corbie an doo, feathery witnesses,  
Fur aa thon fa bide in the lift  
An the wids, an the fog in chukkies,  
Fur them wioot paths, fur the blae bog  
An the awesome Bens.

Glowerin on radar screens,  
Interpretit ae hinmaist time  
Aroon the briefin table, fingeret  
Tae daith bi antennas, Florida's swamps  
An the Siberian ice, breet  
An buss an basalt, throttled  
Bi Earlybird, circled  
Bi the latest manoeuvres, ayont help  
Aneth the hoverin firebells,

In the tickin o crises.

We're aa guid as unmyndit  
Dinna scutter wi the orphans.  
Jist teem yer hams  
O its langin fur nest eggs  
Glory, or psalms that winna roost,  
I spikk fur nane o ye noo,  
Aa ye plotters o perfeck coorsenesses,  
Nae fur me, nur for onybody.  
I spik for those fa canna spikk,  
Fur the deaf an dumb witnesses,  
Fur otters an silkies,  
For the auncient hoolets o the yird.

Bill o Fare (Owerset frae Hans Magnus Enzensberker)

Ae teem efterneen, the day  
In my hoose I see  
Throw the kitchie yett, ajee,  
A milk joog a chappin boord  
An ashet fur the kittlin.  
A telegram lies on the table  
I hinna read it.

In a museum in Amsterdam  
In an auld picture, I saw  
Throw the kitchie yett, ajee,  
A milk joog, a breid basket  
An ashet fur the kittlin  
A letter lay on the table.  
I hinna read it

In a Dacha on the Moskwa  
A fyew wikks syne, I saw  
Throw the kitchie yett, ajee,  
A breid basket, a chappin boord  
An ashet fur the kittlin.  
A newspaper lay on the table  
I hinna read it.



Throw the kitchie yet, ajee,  
I see skailt milk  
Thirty years' wars  
Tears on chappin boords  
Anti-rocket rockets  
Breid baskets  
Class wars.  
Laigh doon in the left neuk  
I see an ashet fur the kittlin.

□

e-Sang o a Midgie myndin on a feast frae the Hurdies o Post War Brownie Baby-Boomers at a Ballater Simmer Camp

Gie me a belly-fo o bluid,  
Frae Broonies, fed on dauds o breid  
An hamburgers, fair ower the heid  
Wi reid sauce. Wee balloons,  
They're mair tae midgies' taste ye ken,  
Than leaders o platoons  
O Girl Guides, Scouts or Boys' Brigade,  
Wi hochs as dry as prunes

## 22.A Dirge fur British Rail

Wad passengers wytin on platform 19,  
Desirin tae traivel as far's Aiberdeen  
Takk note that it's late, sae ye've aa twa mair oors  
Tae bide here in Embro, tae sample its tours,  
Its howfs an its shoppies...is thon nae a boon?  
British Rail his arranged a wee brakk in the toun!

The food service north o Montrose is shut doon  
(Fit need they o meat north o Angus, ma loon?)  
Due tae cleanin, stock-takkin, an teemin the till  
Ye should be relieved....coffee jist makks ye ill!

There's nae reservations...there's nae seatin plan  
(A mishanter doon Sooth) ...faith, it's better tae staun  
For sittin encourages deep vein thrombosis  
Piles, middle aged spread, even myxomatosis

The laavies are chokit, the cairraige is blockit  
The luggage rack's stappt an the trolley's nae stockit  
There's five sweirin ilemen aa drinkin frae cans  
Noo on comes a fitbaa team's rip-roarin fans!

Yer thinkin the decor's gey auld on the cheers?  
Ye should thank us fur botherin tae patch up the teirs!  
I canna wirk miracles, snaa on the line  
Will shift fin it's ready tae melt. Gie it time!

In Japan, trains are fined gin they're twa meenits late?  
Ye ken the solution frien...jist emigrate

Cod an the Berry

Ken in the year 3003?  
Ye'll see a straaberry sweem in the sea  
Ye'll see a cod in a bush o breem  
Ye'll see a coo ett a chukken been

Eftir the eco-wars are lost  
Fit'll be left tae coont the cost?  
A hare wi fins in the cauld blin-smore  
An a twa-headit dug at Pluto's door

Sheena Blackhall

# The Horticultural Poem

This is a horticultural poem  
About horticultural things,  
Of reeds and weeds, where sycamore seeds  
Have horticultural wings.

The wind in the West has all the zest  
Of a punch from a fist of clover,  
In the wheezy East it's a perfect beast  
When the cabbages bowl you over.

I'd go for a walk, but on every stalk  
The whin seeds are exploding.  
By that quiet rill, drawn up for the kill,  
New rifles of pods are loading.

From armies of sedge, platoons of hedge  
Breed bristles strong and sharp.  
Beware that petal, it hides a nettle  
Whose bite's as bad as his bark!

Sheena Blackhall

# The Human Guinea Pig (2 Poems, English)

Do you know what it is to be poor?

I was paid 1 anna  
For every mosquito that bit me  
One hot Bengali summer  
During the time of the Raj  
The white man's power and money outweighed fear  
And for a while my plate was piled with food

Do you know what it is to be poor?

It seems that I gave my consent  
By thumbprint, (I cannot write)  
To trials of something or other  
(The doctor talked so fast  
And seemed so kind  
Telling me that my baby son was special)

Now my child is dust and tears  
On the Delhi pavement where I lay my head

Do you know what it is to be poor?

My family are Dalits, Indian Untouchables  
5 rupee voucher, that's the stretch of our medicine

The hospital head man said that my wife was lucky  
Chosen by a charity, for treatment  
Costs ran to hundreds, even a Bollywood star  
Could not afford such very expensive treatment

I should have smelled a rat  
There was no autopsy, no answers  
In the Western war of drugs against disease  
We are collateral damage.

Do you know what it is to be poor?

A Buddhist Valentine

I love the silence that invites the birds  
To hop un-frightened round the open shrine

I love the heart that welcomes sky and earth  
Where all things intermingle and combine

I love the mind that opens up to all  
The lotus in the mud, whose petals shine

Sheena Blackhall

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# The Humpty Dumpty Man (36 Scots Poems)

y Dumpty

At a gaitherin o the glitterati,  
Efter the raw salmon wis communin  
Wi a daud o mutton, A heeze o peas  
An a purple pudden,  
A fooshty orral hytered tae his feet  
An reesed oot standard English ower Scots.  
'It's so refreshing.' sez he  
'To hear a language everyone understands'.  
Rinnin up the flag fur Reductionism,  
Aabody reduced tae a twa three nasal whines.

On the road hame,  
Banquo's bogle jyned me on the bus.  
'Egg heids like thon, ' quo the ghaist in ma lug  
'Think spikkin Scots makks ye a tartan numpty.'  
Bit I said, 'Na, a shitehoose  
Is the same in ony leid.  
Fit maitters are the hams inbye yer heid  
Scots is a waa that isnae gaun tae faa  
I'd raither be a steen, than Humpty Dumpty'.

rd an Lion

Leopard an Lion gurred ower a bane:  
City or kintra, fa's greater claim  
On the fowk o this lan. Hame, or Embro sae braw?  
Leopard an Lion... it's cauld in the snaw

O Scotlan, far pickins are lean-like an bare.  
Leopard an Lion maun learn tae share.

Pass-a-fist

I bide awa fae bampots. Heid bangers nip ma heid.  
Haud the blanket ower the parrot's cage has aywise bin ma creed.



Causin rows in empty hooses his niver bin ma style...  
Raither Minnie Moose an Bambi, than Harry Crocodile.  
I'm a pass-a-fist bi natur, bit dinna ding ma bell..  
Fur gin ye pit ma birse up...ye'll be in a villanelle.

culture

A neep isnae culture-specific. Tatties are fand  
Fae Spain tae Bogendreip.  
It's nae foo ye parlez-vous that draps ye in the merde,  
It's lack o thocht ahin the spukken wird.

Aipples gie me the pip, an grapes turn black.  
I'd raither be an ingin, culturally spikkin,  
The spitfire o the veg, it ay cams roarin back.

Robin

Blin Robin wis a fiddler, he played his tunes sae weel,  
They skipped doon tae the herbour, tae gie the waves a reel.  
Syne, wi the Nor East breezes, his melodies tuik wing...  
Their rhythm's in the ocean, thon tidal beat can bring  
A lichtness tae the gloamin, a thrill ye'll nae forget,  
Blin Robin's deid an beeriet bit his music's playin yet!

langlegs

Daddylanglegs like a crane, stots agin the windae pane,  
On his stilts he styters ben, wanderin willies in the fen,  
Like a muckle lang giraffe ower mony legs bi hauf!

es, RIP

Far dae plooks an measles gyang fin they lowp aff yer face?  
They hide thirsels in dumplins, the cake an pudden race.  
Flee cemeteries are different, fin ye chaw a bap that's nice,  
Think o the Angel bluebottles, that bizz in paradise.

ns at Auchensheen

Twa mobile phones an a piper's drones sat doon tae hae a blether,  
Wi a singin kettle fae Auchensheen on the state o Scotlan's weather.  
A hoodie craa drooned oot them aa, their skreichin an their textin,  
Wi a deefenin caa fae his orra mawe, which wis maist byordnar vexin!

-Room Bogle

Doon at the foon o oor fite bath, dowpit on echt black legs,  
A wyver sits wi a smirk on its mou, wytin tae gie fowk flegs.  
Turn on the tap. Sweel him awa, belly oexter an lug!  
Ae black wyver on echt black legs vanishin doon the plug.

Fa's that stottin ower the sna?  
Robin Reidbreist, roon an sma,  
Wi a fire upon his sark  
tae licht his hoodie in the dark.

wi a Hedgehog

Dauchle awhile an gie's yer crack.  
Michty, siccan a jobby back!  
Preens fur a sark like a besom's bristles,  
yer as stobby as dykeside thrissles.  
Fin danger threatens, yer heid's in yer dowp.  
Heestergowdie, ower ye cowp.

Wee Harmonica

My wee harmonica flashes its gap-toothed smile  
Weirin its thin livery. It tastes o wid an tin  
Thon pigeonholes far notes flee oot an in.

### 13. Een Twa Three a Leerie

Een twa three a leerie,  
Bingo keeps Ma Peerie cheerie  
Specially fin fuskers beerie  
cream aff aa the gravy.  
Een twa three a leerie, dole cheat mannie wi a query  
Fan did she see Mr Peerie? Hear he's jyned the Navy!

### Rain in Toon

The rain in toon cams teemin doon,  
It weets wir hats an heids.  
A richt doonpish is gran fur fish,  
Bit fowk hae ither needs.

Thor, silkie, kelpie, keep yer bree  
Fur poorin ower the flooers,  
They've greater need o't. Gie's the sun  
Tae wyle the Simmer oors.

### Licht

Hauf licht. Aa's blae  
Mochie Ben. Misty brae  
Weety smirr. Fyaachie day.

### 16. Fire (i)

Electric's fine fur heatin haas  
Gie me real fire...it his baas.

### Fire (ii)

I'm oot. She thocht she caged me,  
that the stove wis aff at the waa...  
Bit I lowped fae the cooker, a flame sae wee,

I'm reid an I'm hett an I'm rinnin free,  
I've brunt the mat that lay in the haa,  
I've brunt the picturs...hear them faa,  
I've brunt the bed an the cot sae sma,  
Birssle an hiss I've brunt them aa!  
The wummin thocht she'd caged me...  
I'm oot an rinnin free.

The sofa's blaik an rikkin,  
As I daunce fae cheer tae fleer.  
I sterted aff as a spirk o flame,  
Sae wee that naebody spakk ma name.  
Noo Fire, they skirl an Fire they skreich,  
As I lick the reef wi ma dragon's braith.  
The hoose is aisse an kinnlin,  
An I am the maister here!

### Fussle

Wolf-fusslin, quine, is nae a slur,  
Ower seen men winna even gurr.  
Takk aa the fussles ye can muster,  
An auld wife winna raise a fusker.

### n Smachrie

A wasps' nest, tapsalteerie in the win,  
Is teem o stingers. Pyoke o paper pooches  
Sae delicate, the ghaistly gollach chaumers!

Smachrie o fur an wippit tooshts o strae,  
A nest that held a wheeplin blackie's breist  
Is showdin in the boughs, a wicker coracle.

Howked clean's a neep at eildritch Halloween,  
A hurcheon's prods. Its tenant's in the mools.

The siller birk sproots umpteen elfin mowers,  
Green halflin bum-fluff hingin fae its chooks.  
Taedsteels blicht the sides o timmer trunks

Far twa birks blythely sweyed sax year thegither,  
An aixe replaced their reeshlin leaves wi silence.  
Twa jewel boxes ryped an stown awa.

e tae a Hyterer

The leerip o a skelpin bough, the lapper o the loch,  
The wallop o a cuddy's tail, drooth-slokin fae a troch,  
Hillwauker...tie yer pynts richt weel, muir roadies can be roch.

lin Skirts Gaun Ben the Muir

Draiglin skirts gaun ben the muir,  
Treelipin hem, bi the weety linn,  
Drawn bi the skelp o the drappin wave,  
Breengin brakk-neck, ramstam din  
Inno the foun o a peaty weir.

Heels that dig in the glaur, sae sweir,  
Draiglin skirts gaun ben the muir  
Fa dae ye gyang tae tryst wi here?

17.A Hint o Rain, Keith

Nests o shiny raindraps, are clouds baith grey an roon,  
Wytin ower the toon o Keith tae shakk their cargo doon.

Nests o shiny raindraps, leaky as a seive,  
Wytin fur a thunnerstorm tae cam an shakk its neive.

Admiral

Twa Geisha sleeves, jyned wi a pitmirk preen,  
The wippit furlieorum o her tongue  
Is a lasso fur catchin thrums o gowd.

Lichtnin

The heich tree's boughs are lichtnin stangs that forkit wins are knappin,  
As caul an snell the gurly clouds, wi storm the Bens are happin.  
The reets are anchored in the grun, far mowdies howk the yird.  
The bog an fen, fower cheenges ken, rowed in the Sizzens gird.

Fowk steer like wasps roon hinneypot, here, in the simmer weather.  
They cooer awa in the Deid Thraa, fin Winter wauks Balquidder.

n

Fin Autumn flichters ben the streets, her plumage will be reid.  
She willnae stop fur car nor man. She willnae prigg fur breid.  
She'll nest in sheuch, in stank, in drain. She winna beg nor busk,  
Fur Autumn in her wizzent cleuk hauds seeds in ilkie husk  
That keep the infant tree an flooer safe coddlit till the Spring...  
Fin Autumn flichers ben the streets, new life's aneth her wing.

Caunles kinnle kin-rikk roon the shrine  
A quine's heid boos like a snaadrap  
On the fite stakk o her neck

Cross-leggit, barfit, in the shrine-room  
Quaet breathin, gowden bliss in bowls  
Liftin the lid on day, bubbles o thocht float aff  
Like tooshts o mist.

I hae sidestepped aa connection wi the warld,  
The warld that gars me tichten like a neive,  
Like a cut flooer in a cleaned glaiss

Inbye, the lotus petals stert tae open,  
Inbye the tarn saddles, peace grows clear.

wi Guitar

The curves o the guitar are smeeth,

Gracefu its thrapple, sweet its string.  
It's willin fowk tae touch its sides,  
The slichtest stroke will garr it sing.

Wi flooers in her tummelt hair,  
Its mistress stauns, hauns on her hips.  
Her derk een dinna say fit pit  
The lichtsome smile upon her lips.

Her flooers will dwine, her chikks turn pale,  
The quines admirers will forget her.  
The broon guitar, tho plain o face,  
Will age richt weel, its tunes growe better.

Wishes war Shelties

Gin wishes war shelties, beggars wad ride.  
Gin wishes war seas, I wad leave wi the tide.  
Gin wishes war tears that drapt soft as the rain,  
I'd use them tae wash awa as the warlds' pain.

ral Bree

Grippin anther's haun, is nae great shakks.  
Is merely pumpin win.  
Hoochmagandie's a cocktail mix  
O luv-juice. A quick fix.

Bit thocht, dear bocht, that bares the sowel itsel  
Yon's intimate fin harns thegither mell  
Cerebral bree, sharin the same shell.

Scots Receptionist's Wish

I wish I wish  
fae foun tae croun  
The Sun-Bed God  
could bake me broon

s the Braid Atlantic: tune: Corachree

Across the braid Atlantic, there's siller an there's gear,  
Across the braid Atlantic, there's industry an steer,  
Across the braid Atlantic, there lies a steeny foun,  
The stoory lair o grief an care far the twin touers cam doon.

The quine at the computer, the porter in the haa,  
The skiffie booin ower her clood, heid bummers heich an braa,  
The lover wi the diamond ring he'd niver live tae gie  
Aa wheeched awa in thon firebaa fur ilkie lan tae see.

The chat room an the internet far fortunes they are won,  
Held oot nae sanctuary fin the towers struck the grun,  
As faimlies watched aa hopes war dashed fin fowk fell throwe the air,  
Like files deleted fae a screen they wadna see nae mair.

Across the braid Atlantic the pouers that shakk the warld,  
Tae commerce an tae indusry, tae progress they are thirled,  
Fit price is profit, fame an gain, fin Sorra weirs the croon?  
Fur trust wis tint, wi fire blinnt, fin thon twa towers cam doon.

Hate crosses ilkie boundary it disna weir a face,  
It disnae see a citizen, it anely sees a race.  
It disnae coont the penalty o fit its minions dae,  
An noo it stalks the thoroughfares far hawk an eagle flee.

This warld o yird an ocean, it birls like a baa.  
Its big eneuch fur continents, bit whyles its unca sma.  
Fin lions roar fae desert tents can we ignore the soun?  
Or wish awa fit brocht thon faa that shook the mapamoun?

in

Arrivin is a steen drapped in a puil  
The ripples brakk in, nae oot

the Heather Briers



The bawd gaes breengin ower the park as cloudy August clears,  
An syne the Dee sets claim on me; it's far the heather briers.  
The roddens boo, wi berries fu, each fir the emerald weirs,  
The ernes glide far rainbows bide hyne far the heather briers.

Spring may be brawe fin breezes blaw, the wid wi blossom steers,  
The hairst is best wi ripeness blest, it's fin the heather briers.  
The barley broon is bendin doon, the grain it shines like tears.  
The hinney bee wauchts ower the lea, roon far the heather briers.

I've wauked the stran o furreign lan, ower fremmit paths an muirs,  
Gie me the stag an steeny crag, up far the heather briers.  
As Time wins roon tae cut me doon, wi'ts deidly prunin shears,  
I winna lie neth coastal sky, bit far the heather briers!

h Missed

I am a mythical Scot,  
I niver read Kant or Jung.  
I'm hung like a haggis aneth my kilt,  
which I ayewis weir wi a West Coast lilt  
The laird o the ludicrous up tae the hilt,  
beer belly wi hauf a lung.

I am a mythical Scot, a Disneyland-Scott amalgam,  
I swallae ma parritch wi fusky, as I stick on a Corrie's album.  
I am a mythical Scot, sae mind yer fuckin langwitch!  
Wi smack in ma stream o consciousness,  
I'll gie ye a knuckle sandwich!

I am a mythical Scot, a Jekyll an Hyde persona.  
I'm neither here nur there. I'm Charm, wi a Carcinoma!

□

. John Skinner (1721-1807) : tune: The Flower o the Quern

Fae Balfour's Braes tae the Howe o Echt the Skinner faimly cam,  
Tae makk their wye on a dominie's pye at the tail o the Barmekin.  
At thirteen years, the auldest son pit on the scarlet gown,  
In Marischal's steer, tae gaither lear as a Bayjan in the toun.

Fin he quit thon waas tae Kemnay's haas he set aff tae earn his breid,  
Syne at Monymusk, he'd tae rise an busk fin Sir Archie Grant decreed  
That he maun dine an sup gweed wine wi the laird an his fine ladye,  
An a great strathspey wis born thon day about fowk fall ne'er agree.

Tae the icy flowes o the Shetlan voes he sailed tae Scalloway,  
There his sweethairt won, far a Viking sun shines ower the skerries grey.  
In Meldrum toun he set him doun, wi faith an a Christian zeal,  
Tae read the wird o the Risen Lord wi peats an a pucklie meal.

Syne he fand a reest as a pairish preist, in the leylans o Langside,  
An the Bethle'm star, throw skaiths o war, blessed the Reverent an his bride.  
Fin his chapel brunt, defeat he scornt tae preach bi a tree ootbye,  
An the verses flew fae his pen sae true, they're as fresh as the buds in Mey.

Wi bairns an sang his Name wis thrang, wi Scots an the Latin wird,  
Till wi wecht o years an a rowth o tears they'd tae kist him in the yird.  
Bit we canna tyne, fur we'll aywis myne, the yowe wi the crookit horn,  
An the weel-lued chiel, wi the hairt sae leal, the airt far the sangs war born.

### Wids Spikk Oot

We hae heard the cooncil planners, will come here wi rules an spanners,  
Bringin saws tae cut us doon, flattenin wids tae swall the town.  
Brither Brummil, scrat the jyners, teir the plumbers an designers  
Holly, caa the hard hats aff, ilkie haimmer-haudin nyaff.

Sister Tod eat up the sannies o the architecture mannies  
Brither Spider gie them flegs. Sister Hedgehog powk their legs.  
They wid pit a multistorey far the beech tree in her glory  
Shelters birdies, squirrels, ants. Forkies, nest inside their pants!

Doon the braes o wyvin girse, they wad bigg an underpass  
We'd appeal tae Holyrood, Brocks an Hoolets, gin we cud.  
Win an Storm an Thunner pelt them. Hailsteens wi yer anger belt them! Drook  
them, sook them, cleuk them, hook them!  
Let the bobbies come an book them!  
For offences against trees. Save us fae the planners, please!

A Scots owersett in o the poem 'Lost' frae the North West American Indian tradition

Staun still. Staun still's a stook. The trees ayont, the buss aside ye,  
Arena tint. Far e'er ye be's caad HERE  
An ye maun greet it like a pouerfu stranger,  
Maun prigg tae be alloued tae ken it, an be kent.  
Takk tent! The wid is breathin. It is fuserin  
' I hae vrocht this airt aroon ye.  
Gin ye gyang awa, ye micht return sinsyne  
An murmer 'HERE'.'

Nae twa trees are the same tae craikin corbie.  
Nae twa branches are the same tae cutty wren.  
Gin the wyes o tree or branch tae ye be fremmit,  
Syne, ye are fairly tint, ayont as savin.  
Staun still. Staun still's a stook. The wid kens far ye are.  
Staun still. Staun still's a stook. Let it find YE.

n an Elephant Tae Sleep OWERSETT O A POEM BI MIRCEA IVANESCU

Sleep-Ticht Jumbo

Saftly at first, set doon his shadda in the box bed.  
Takk tent o the flichterin halo roon his lanely thocht,  
Ca cannie aroon the dreich lirks o his pachydermatous hap  
Faain ower an inbye his shooders.  
Myne, frae his tusks. A priest-like fite moat  
Will creep along the nail o yer orange pinkie.

Hooiver still ye bide, myne, that it maitters  
That even the quaetest jumbos  
Shoogle their trunks fin asleep.

Aroon ye, the blythe breengin o watters,  
Watters o sleep,  
Wytin fur the dwinin o thon crined circles  
Roon the hinmaist shards o thocht  
Until sleep takks ower,  
An the image cams back, weariet an winkin,  
An the oor purrs on, tailin aff its fringe

Wi the hinmaist last meenit reeshlin.

Hooiver little ye micht hodge is a maitter o import,  
Fur elephants takk tent even fin asleep.  
Fin smeethin the blanket, ca cannie gin his lug cocks  
For ower an ower, heidfirst...secretly....  
Ower the rugged tartan plaid, he's luggin in, wide- reengin,  
Aa the unkent neuks o the deid knowe  
That he kens the oots an ins o.

Hooiver little ye micht hodge,  
Is a maitter o import  
Fin a jumbo's sleepin.

Fairmer Spikks tae the Scholar (after Alojz Gradnik 1882)

Aneth, I finn the solid grun,  
An coontless starnies see owerheid.  
Foo dae ye show tae me insteid  
Abysses anely....derk, profun?

Far div ye staun? I've after thoct,  
Yer bit a spider in a neuk.  
Ae breeze...ae roch win's reivin cleuk,  
An aa yer spinnin's gaen fur nocht.

I lue the yird, the starns that flame  
An glimmer ben the skinklin nicht,  
An haein faith, I ken nae fricht,  
Fin on the road that takks me hame.

I'm weel acquaint wi Yule, wi Spring,  
I ken that Time will on me turn,  
Bit fin I cross the dowie burn  
Daith will uplift me, on his wing.

me on yer Anvil (after Oton Zupancic)

Forge me on yer anvil, life,  
Gin I'm flint, a spirk I'll makk.

Gin I'm steel, syne I shall sing.  
Gin I'm, glaiss, syne I shall brakk.

### Bonnie Fite-Haired Loon: Tune, Tramps & Hawkers

Twis on a braw sunshiny day fin blossoms brier in June,  
A bairn lay in the Mither Kirk rowed in a christenin goon,  
The meenister held up his haun fur fowk tae gaither roon,  
Tae hear the blissins heaped upon the bonnie fite-haired loon.

He toddlit at his mither's skirts, his faither's pride an joy,  
An innocent an merry wis his ilkie bairnhood ploy,  
A tender sprig o Scotia's stock, soft curls upon his croon,  
A rosy future at the feet o the bonnie fite-haired loon.

A haflin grown he raxxed his wings wi ithers o his age,  
An mony's the time his mither wished his hame cud be a cage,  
Tae keep him safe fae aa the wrangs that crowd like craws aroon,  
Oh it's nae easy bringin up a bonnie fite- haired loon.

A young man noo he trod the streets his fortune fur tae try,  
Far dealers in the shaddas staun, their pysonous gear tae ply,  
His friens fan hames an destinies in different pairts o toon,  
His anely luv wis heroin the bonnie fite-haired loon.

Ae nicht the streets o Aiberdeen aroon the Music Haa  
War thrang wi fowk in festive mood, in festive claes sae braw,  
As tae the glitterin orchestra decked oot fae heid tae foun,  
They walked, bit didna drap a luik at the bonnie fite-haired loon.

He coories like a cooshie doo or seagull in the street,  
A hudderie heeze o yirdy cloots, at the city's passin feet,  
In mony's the door his kind ye find, ye dinna daur luik doon,  
Fur fear ye see a face ye ken, some frien or neebor's loon.

Ay, Aiberdeen's o granite biggt an steeny is its hairt,  
As far frae Tilly tae Steenhive are rich an puir apairt,  
Sae if yer family's safe an warm, jist takk it as a boon,  
Fur they micht aa as easy faa as the bonnie fite-haired loon.



# The Hypothetical Tiger

A hypothetical tiger  
Walked into my work today.  
It didn't even knock.  
How it got past my alarm I can't imagine.

I gave a hypothetical scream  
And immediately jumped on the table.  
Who let it in?  
Who let it out?  
Would it be p.c. to trap it?  
Should I phone for a Pizza man  
To come and feed it?

Maybe I should befriend it?  
Would it use the office bin as a litter tray?  
Would it make a scratching post of the computer?  
If I stood stock still, not breathing,  
Would this prowler think I was dead,  
The growler that sprang from my head?

Tigers on stamps can be licked and sent through the mail.  
Cartoon tigers are funny as Bugs, the Easter Bunny.  
Plastic whiskered ones make splendid prizes  
Or cushions for whimsical bums.

This one jumped from the jungle  
Of neural transmitters  
Disjointed synaptic clefts  
And rivers of serotonin you could drown in...  
A crackerjack of a frisker.

I flick my whip and he leaps hypothetical hoops  
Cat scans knew he was there  
This tiger glowed like Blake's  
Which burned so bright  
It almost set fire to the page.

Mine, roars like a diesel train  
As he thunders out of his cage!

Sheena Blackhall



# The Inconstant Lover

He vowed he'd love me till the moon dropped dead;  
I was the dawn, the turtle dove's refrain  
Why did he take back all the things he said?

He took my hand, I followed where he led  
He was my joy, my soulmate, that was plain  
Why did he take back all the things he said?

He sprinkled petals on a featherbed  
But proved as constant as a weathervane  
Why did he take back all the things he said?

Once I was his, his love I came to dread  
He wished to change me, make me new again  
Why did he take back all the things he said?

He browbeat me until my spirit bled  
So low I was, I near forgot my name  
Why did he take back all the things he said?

I should have been a lump of clay instead;  
That he could mould and pummel and constrain  
The mirror never lies. Inside I'm dead.  
Why did he take back all the things he said?

Sheena Blackhall

# The Indian Lavatory Attendant

The lavatory attendant rolls her eyes  
At filthy Westerners who wipe with paper  
The Asian drains can't cope with such excess  
Each sanitary sheet, thin as a wafer's  
Deposited in wire mesh open bins  
Where flies cavort around and love to caper

The lavatory attendant sells the sheet  
Lifting her hand for tip, or paper fee  
Like a trapped butterfly in this grim spot  
Where sour-faced tourists step inside to pee

All day she squats as graceful's a gazelle  
Her crimson sari's vivid in the heat  
Gold anklets, bracelets, earrings, nose-rings, flash  
On the wet floor, her slender, naked feet

She hears each tinkle, sprinkle, plop and drop  
This low-caste girl, gem in a stinking setting  
The hiss of piss, the Westerners' complaints  
Who snub the water bucket douche and wetting

And here you have it. Forest trees are felled  
So western bums can rise up squeaky clean's  
A squid, gold pants, a puppy Labrador  
The left-hand water way, they think's obscene

Yet water's free. No packaging. No fuss  
So East or West, what's best for them, and us?

Sheena Blackhall

# The Ineffective Scarecrow

Perhaps he is sick of being a scarecrow  
As I sometimes ache to be anything other than me  
Now that I'm all dried up, like a squeezed orange  
Like a swan on tenterhooks  
Treading a path between broken dreams and ashes

The scarecrow wants to go back to being a stick  
No more predators, loneliness, crows  
With their constant cawing

He is sick of being a warning in the wind  
He is sick of being one foot stuck in the dark

He dreams of being a spoke in St. Catherine's wheel  
A moment of burning glory, then adieu  
Of being a broom in Hitler's final bunker  
Sweeping aside the bullets and swastikas

Sheena Blackhall

# The Irish Famine

Gaunt cheeked, spindle-limbed  
This exclamation mark of life-sized famine sculptures  
Frozen in time, pull you up to a full stop  
On their way to the coffin ships on Dublin's Quay.

They carry dying children in their arms,  
Themselves half dead, dogged by a skeletal cur  
That waits to devour the stragglers  
The comma of its tail wags in anticipation

They have left behind their blighted, rotting crops  
Where the smoking turf of their rooves  
Still blackens the sky, like a question-mark to their God  
To face the horrors of the coffin ships  
Typhus, cholera, lice  
And the fierce Atlantic with its teeth of water  
Exactng a heavy tithe from those who cross it

'To be sure' the guide from the good ship Jeanie Johnston  
Says in passing, 'Doesn't your heart go out  
To those poor souls fleeing Africa today,  
And not a country keen to take them on? '

Sheena Blackhall

# The Irish Sea

As I walked along the shore of the Irish Sea  
Up he rose from the water, uninvited  
My husband, young as a rowan sprig in flower  
Having left his gun on the ground of Ulster's troubles

As I walked along the shore of the Irish sea  
Out he walked from the waves, my kilted son  
Turning his back on the war-drum beat of Derry  
Its walls of orange and green, its mask-faced terror

The tides of the Irish sea today are gleaming  
White as Antrim linen, cool as corpses  
Slapping the lardy thighs of British tourists  
The gulls are screaming the paeons of old battles

The ghosts from the Irish sea should be met by harpists  
Not blaring bands of Blackpool, brash and brassy  
Not candyfloss, the froth of a drunkard's spittle  
Hissing into the sands where lugworms creep

Sheena Blackhall

# The Irish Soldier

The Irish Soldier

Edward Marshall is my name  
Ireland is my nation  
Leeds is my dwelling place  
And Heaven's my expectation

My mother came from Erin's isle  
She's buried in Dungannon  
My sweetheart is a Limerick lass  
The Rosebud of the Shannon  
I came to Blighty seeking work  
And listed for a soldier  
For when the drums of war beat out  
There is no man that's bolder

They gave me three square meals a day  
A uniform for drilling  
A place to sleep, a private's pay  
A gun and blade for killing

I dreamt to Ireland I'd return  
With gold and tales a-plenty  
But on a stretcher here I lie  
And both my pockets empty  
They'll patch me up and send me back  
To trenches, rats and slaughter  
Gas! Gas! the cry. For sure I'll die  
By bomb or poisoned water

My soul will go to God above  
My body cannot follow  
For 'twill be filled by German lead  
Dead, in a war-torn hollow

Edward Marshall is my name  
Ireland is my nation  
Leeds is my dwelling place  
And Heaven's my expectation

Sheena Blackhall

# The Killing Of George Cornell

No one shoots a member of our gang  
And gets away Scot free

He was drinking in the Blind Beggar  
Typical yobbo, muscling in on our patch  
It was as though he wanted to be killed

I couldn't have felt calmer if I'd tried  
It was very quiet and gloomy in the pub

The barmaid she was putting on a record  
'The Sun Ain't Gonna shine no More'

He turned round. A sneer came on his face  
'Well look who's here, ' he said

I took out my gun. I shot him on the forehead  
He fell over onto the bar, and that was it.

There was silence, after. Everyone disappeared

I had killed a man. I was a man to be feared

Sheena Blackhall



# The King From The Car Park, Richard Iii

The nesting birds in the bitter sun  
Are remote in time and space  
From the life of this crook-backed king

Shadows from his mediaeval reign  
Breed mysteries, modern conspiracy theories

Wounds are stamped  
On his body's bony scaffold  
With its jaw in a silent yell  
Words spilled out in the soil  
Of the intervening centuries

In the grounds of Leicester Cathedral  
A thrush shatters the frail armour  
Of a snail. Somewhere, a mute swan's gliding

Scandal's been dragged through the mud  
For a second telling  
The dead have no right of reply

Remember this, both lilac and laburnum  
Like kings, have a limited flowering  
Their scent lingers a little  
The air moves on

Sheena Blackhall

# The Lake

Lady, your winters of snowflakes are chilling.  
Rain-seconds tick on your face; too late!  
You are making the many none  
Dissembler, dissolver, leveller.  
Moon is a reckless bather,  
Dipping his toe on your elegant Japanese plate—  
A buttercup-olive Mandarin,  
Glazed on blue-boned china.

That salt-shake-sprinkle of stars,  
Those ripe-red poppy suns,  
Smalled, in your shrinking retina  
You drank them down and in, all gone, all gone.  
The incautious river,  
A slant-eyed junkman from Old Siam,  
Lowers his sails in the iceberg of your calm—  
Lake, how like a woman you are!  
How still, how slow, how graspless as a shadow,  
Sheer as kimono silk.  
A swanlit Ophelia pillow,  
Your midnight milk  
Could fit me, snug as a moleskin pelt  
Of velvety, velvety brown...  
Rockabye water of treacherous eiderdown.

Black lotus, your honey is venomous.  
Oh most exquisite foe,  
How full I divine each gleam,  
Knowing each window-veil  
Clasps in its rotten seam  
Lost stars, a silt of sequins.  
Lady, lady, the busy, unstitching pike  
Will pick and pick them clean.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Lambing

Like grey fur boulders rabbits huddle down,  
Ears pressed back like sleeves,  
Raiding the grassy larder of the fields.

The car goes cobbling over  
Ruts and pots of pasture,  
Stops and fixes the ewe  
In its twinned spotlight.

Under the cold stars,  
Stuck between push and pant,  
She's hard by the dyke,  
Womb filled with lamb  
Jammed in the breech position.

This is not an occasion  
For caution, for gentle introduction,  
For 'How do you dos';  
A flying tackle topples her off  
Her four black matronly pegs,  
A capsized table, wearing a face of fleece.

Her master thrusts his hand into the bloody darkness  
Closing around his arm like a mouth.  
His sinews tauten.  
One pull jerks out a slimey, slithery flop,  
All dangly legs and head  
Swung like a pendulum over the racing ground.

He cleans its mouth of muck,  
Lays it down,  
Kneads its sides like bellows.

The baa when it comes is beautiful;  
Thin and reedy, ancient and new.

Here is craft at work,  
Satisfactory as sliding glass into wooden grooves  
Properly fitted, every corner plumb;

Like setting a ship in motion down a slipway.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Lan O Tea & Tigers (17 Scots Poems)

the Purdah o Calvin an Holyrood

Cardamom, popadom, jungle an vines  
Henna an hinney an swack dauncin quines  
Rubies an meensteens an aquamarine  
Fite merble palaces fit fur a queen

Suttee an thuggee, stervation, disease  
Beggars that crawl ben the dubs on their knees  
Dysentery, cholera, these ye can fin  
Wi malaria, doon far the broon waiters rin

Turmeric, ginger, biryani an wheat  
Poppy seed, aniseed, drummer's belled feet  
Cinnamon, tamarind, jasmine an jute  
Mustard an nutmeg: the snake chermer's flute

Shanty toon skeletons sleep bi the road  
The monsoon fur sheets. Wint's a licht-cairriet load  
Hunger an skaith in a cripple's teem bowl  
A rickle o beens, aa the cage fur his sowl.

Silverweer, sandalwid, rosewid an spice  
Basil an fennel, crushed mango on ice  
Canewirk an leatherwirk, silks in fine haas  
Jewellery an perfumes in open-air staas

Bollywood adverts hing braw ower the streets  
Ower reefs o torn plastic that's hame fur sterved geets  
India, India, aulder than time  
Far the lotus growes pure fae its birthbed o slime  
A tiger wi teeth, baith a purr an a roar,  
Yer a lowe in the bluid that the mind canna smore.

Gandhi's Shrine, Raj Ghat

Efter the thrang derk alleys  
The stooshie o the bazaars

The thunnerin larries  
The goat that stauns an bleats

Efter the buying an bribin  
The priggin, swickin venders  
The stoor an the bumbazement  
O rickshaws' dirdin seats

Efter the bamboo scaffoldin  
The saris cairtin cement  
The cricket, the polo,  
The staas of baccy an treats

Efter the wechty bullocks  
The cobras wyvin an dauncin  
The glaur o the gutters  
The fowk fa sleep on the streets

Here is Delhi's oasis.  
Here, far the shade is sweet  
The verra girse cries 'Gandhi'  
The chief fa cowpit an Empire  
Walkin in wyes o peace on twa bare feet.

#### Lord Siva's Jungle Shrine: Bharaptur Bird Sanctuary

Here, far the jungle smores the sun  
Here, at Lord Siva's temple door  
The dance o destruction's daithless beat  
Throbs in the air, ahin, afore

Auncient deities lichtly sleep  
The cobra kills an the cobra saves  
Yestreen's leaves fae the jungle's eaves  
Shakk their fetters an jink their graves

Here, in the raxxin tangle-tree  
The heron, the lang-legged crane, the stork  
They nest in equanimity  
Provin that tolerant wyes can wirk

on

Fae Bombay tae Rangoon, fowk will say the Monsoon  
Is a blessin that's mixed fur the peasant  
Fur fin there's a drought, there's nae doot he's pit oot  
An the hardship is unca unpleisant

Bit fin ye hae flown fae a cauld Scottish zone  
Tae traivel an savour the East  
To be drooked in the rain, like rat doon a drain  
Is a dreidfu event, at the least.

Oh oor Aberdeen weet, may be dreich, bit its fleet  
An it's shortsome, tho dowie an gray  
But in Delhi the rain cams again an again  
An can bide fur a month and a day!

Watterbuffalo

Ye'd makk a bonnie hat rack, bit yer kyte it maun be leid,  
Gin I drank yer puil in Delhi, I'd be merked as maggot-feed  
Bit there ye staun, in ecstasy wi watter roon yer rear  
Like an alcoholic in a tub o beer, beer, beer.

Tell me Watterbuffalo foo is yer milk sae sweet  
Fin ye glugger doon sic clorty dubs an girse is aa ye eat?

Lan o Tea an Tigers

The lan o tea an tigers hauds oriental views  
Far richt o wye tae traffic is gien ower tae coos  
The sanbags at the airport hid armed guards, I ken  
Bit karma's wheel birls better, fin helped bi cannie men.

There's nae a pick that's British.  
They serve ye wi a grin!  
Oh gowd an scarlet saris fae shantytowns o tin  
Like dragonflees that flichter, up fae a rikkin lan,

Far gangrels prig an barter, fit is't that keeps ye gaun?

Ye, wi yer thin-shanked bairnies,  
fas beens powk throw their skin  
I'm chappin at yer culture.  
Please, cud ye lat me in?

I'd like tae pye a veesit..tae unnerstan, ye see  
Foo baith at the same table, sit grace an poverty.

se Coo

There is a small Burmese community living in the jungle around the Pa-la-u waterfall. The waterall is part of the La-u forest in Kang-Kra-Chan national park's compound. It covers 43,700 hectares

Tinkle tinkle Burmese coo,  
aa ye dae is ett an moo  
Lugs as lang as cricket bats  
skelpin swarms o fit d'ye cats.

In a bield amang bamboo,  
swytin like a roastin soo  
I spy Buddhist monks nip by,  
on their scooters, trig an spry

Muckle leaves waucht ben the breeze.  
Michty me! They're butterflees!

8.A News wi a Parten

Foo mony birsslin British dowps,  
wee parten, on yer Cha-am beach  
Hae birlid like satay sticks o meat  
birssled tae reid fae fite an peach?

Tell me, ma armour-platit frien  
fit think ye o these fremmit fowk?  
Rolex, Gucci, Chanel they buy...  
Aa fake.. bit names impress a gowk.



The world's ill-pairtit. Nicht an day  
pyed guairds wi guns stappt in their belt  
Maun stalk the waukwyes, jist fur fear  
the fowk fa vend takk back fit's selt

Dug

Yalta dug aneth the staas  
foo d'ye aywis scrat yer baas  
Like a waukin plague o scabies?

Yalla dug, dae ye hae rabies?  
In a butcher's, on a hook,  
yer ma is hingin. Takk a luik!

-Lai

Kam-Lai is a 65 year old elephant at Wat Neranchararam, Cha-am

Kam-lai can niver smile because her moo's set up an doon  
Wi yon lang trunk atween her een she canna even froon  
As sae ye niver really ken exactly fit she thinks  
Bin fin ye feed her sugarcane she shuts her een an blinks.

This MIGHT mean 'Foo idyllic' or `Nae sugar-cane fur tea! '  
Or, 'The breeks yon wummin's weirin wad bring tears tae a gless ee.'

Gin ye'd like a game o bools wi yon fine set ahin her feet.  
I widna. They're fit elephants drap efter they've hid meat.

Elephant's Moo

Fae auld Siam across tae China,  
an elephant's moo's like a vagina  
Stap in a tongue an ye hae got  
a meal machine that chaas the lot

Bananas, chocolate, in it goeses.  
Niver a thocht o brucellosis!

I'm feart I catch e-coli bugs.  
The elephant lauchs an skelps its lugs

Is salmonella in thon breid?  
The elephant lauchs an shakks its heid  
An wolfs doon 23 bananas  
afore I'm intae ma pyjamas

She maun hae reinforced intimmers,  
fur this hett sun turns as tae cinners  
Sae, fin a hunner years she's seen,  
will telegram cam fae her Queen?

Tae Ganesh I gie thanks. Thon God  
His elephants keeps hale an snod  
Fur skitterin elephants wid blad  
The Thailan towrist trade fur guid.

River Kwai

For the men of the Second Battalion the Gordon Highlander Regiment, buried in  
the POW cemetary at Kanchanaburi

Kanchanaburi's green an quate.  
The sun, sae hett it stouns  
In birsslin drouth, in frozen youth,  
the deid men makk nae souns

A poppy here, a garlan there,  
rich scents each grave festoons  
Peace ower the grun..bit dearly won  
bi the Daith Railway loons.

Far fae the teuchit's dweeble wheep's  
the skreichin o baboons  
An here the Thai, alang the Kwai  
tend weel the Gordon loons.

They didna dee far bullets flee.  
Their war brocht ither wouns  
Far dysentry kept company  
wi rain as big's dubloons

Aside the Kwai the smilin Thai  
in bricht sarongs an gouns  
Sell mango slice an tea wi ice,  
wi orchids at their crouns.

Thailan's the larder o the East.  
It wyles awa the pouns  
There wis nae beer nor buffet here,  
fin coorseness kent nae bouns

An fin the jungle lowsed its rage,  
the peetiless monsoons  
Cholera, typhoid thinned the ranks  
ben bitter nichts an noons

A different fecht, a different airt,  
fae Waterloo's dragoons  
Maleria gied the Deid Thraa  
tae the Daith Railway loons.

The war's lang gaen. They bide alane.  
Nae wives aside them lie.  
Bricht butterflees abeen them heeze,  
aa sufferin ower an by.

Culloden, Flodden, Bannockburn..  
grim pipers play the tunes  
The leaders o a nation screive  
tae mobilise platoons

Is liberty as gweed a cause  
tae dee fur as the lave?  
Nane kens, dry banes haud nae discourse  
that full a sodjer's grave.

Kanchanaburi's green an quate.  
Noo, fyew are left tae greet,  
Far thistles fell...Bit merk them weel..  
The wins o peace are sweet

## Driver's Buddha

Taxi driver's Buddha, fit div ye see?

Are yer een on traffic or some transcendental lea?

Buddha on the dashboord, fin yer maister drives

Are ye watchin ower him ensurin that he thrives?

Fare-pyin punters dinna sit sae snod as ye

Taxi-driver' s Buddha yer a top-speed rarity!

## in a Hotel Complex

The palm weirs streech merks roon its belly

Leaves, hett an droothy ettle tae reach the puil

Tae lick it up like forkit lizards' tongues.

The watter sweels aroon like crème de menthe.

Last nicht a taed cam here,

creashie's a Wall street banker

While the palms swyed in the breeze

Lord! Foo he likit tae craik.

Fu o hissel. He fartit twice

Like a German in Speedo trunks

Nae speedin, twa towels doon.

## Seller

He pykes his barfit wye along the stran Cannily steppin abeen

The anchor towes o boaties,

The smachrie o coral an shells.

Deid puffer fish sweels in wi the tide

Bumbazed tae hae puffed its hinmaist puff

A playthin o the sea coost ooto this melee

O froth an sweeshlin bree.

Aneth the cweel bit shade o his coolie hat

The broon flute seller fussles.

His shanks are shilpit

His breeks are torn an green  
His semmit fu o holes  
Flaps fae the lean  
Coat-hinger o his frame.

He smiles wi twa mauve lips  
Like coconut flesh, his teeth  
Sae fite they daizzle ye

This Thai pied piper blows  
Ben bamboo tubes.  
Thon hollow reeds  
Echo the lanely lappin o the sea

Bead sellers jostle ye  
Silk venders hassle ye  
Horse hawkers dog yer steps

The flute seller cocks his heid sidiewyse  
His reedy notes waucht fae his bamboo pipe  
The music furls like rikk along the stran

His easy-osy joy in his wee tunes  
His melodic wares  
Eneuch tae wyle the siller fae yer pooch.

Lion and the Eagle Sung to the tune Sleepytoon  
Written and performed during 'Scotland at the Smithsonian' (2003)  
The Lion Rampant is the symbol of Scots smeddum. The Eagle is the symbol of  
American power.

Aa nicht forked lichtenin rent the sky,  
it sent a thunnerclap doonby  
Noo Thor's weet dish-cloot's nearly dry  
in Washington in the morning

Aff plastic ponchos raindraps dreep,  
throw weety girse the broon dubs seep  
Yet the Metro's stappit an the mobiles bleep  
in Washington in the morning.

Rikk rises up fae a cowboy's grill.  
Towrists trek tae the Capitol  
A bird pykes mealies wi its bill  
in Washington in the morning

Schule pairties steer an mozzies heeze.  
Flags waucht on flagpoles in the breeze  
Stane eagles glower atween the trees  
in Washington in the morning

The Lion rampant's cleuks are strang,  
wi the Eagle's fowk the wauks are thrang  
See the Eagle's pouer, hear the Lion's sang  
in Washington in the mornin

gollach

His heid's crooned bi a twig.  
He slalems doon a leaf like ony Olympic skiier,  
Syne tightrope wauks  
a trailin jungle creeper.

Anely a grenade could bomb him oot  
Could heelstergowdie him.  
Explorin his crackly kingdom  
His shanks cut throwe the air like a tailor's shears,  
Like a Roman Catholic bishop dispensin crosses.

His gollach- intimmers snod in his sheeny shell,  
He sweys like a hammock,  
Launches aff like rain sikkin a puddle.  
It makks me wabbit watchin  
His ceaseless rinnin.

His richts takk precedence ower mine,  
Here, I'm the tourist, he's the acceptit local.  
Syne, he takks flicht!  
His wings whirr like a copter.  
This gars me grue,  
The sicht o sic an ugsome ferly fleein!

His hame's this Asian steamie.  
Unreason's cleuks claa cauldly at ma wyme.  
Fit gin this horny gollach choose tae veesit me?  
Explore ma frailties wi his fyaachie taes  
I ken that I wad kill him gin I cwid.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Last Angel In Town

The last angel came into town on a Friday  
The doctor noticed he walked without a shadow  
The preacher noticed the angel spoke in tongues  
The teacher noticed his writing was perpendicular  
The lawman noticed he broke the rules of transport  
He wouldn't speak to the media or the people  
The mob feared that the angel was an alien

One by one the angel unpicked his feathers  
Two gold tears fell as he rolled into the boneyard  
He lay down under a statue of himself and died

Sheena Blackhall



# The Last Bus Home

The last bus home is always full of drunks  
Wanting to pour their soul all over the seat

The moon doesn't care  
The moon's seen it all  
No shocking the moon

Occasionally it sends down rain  
On the queue for the last bus home  
Just for the hell of it  
A bit of moon fun

The last bus home clanks on  
Like cooking pans falling  
After mother's had one too many

It passes the parked cars  
Sulking in the street  
The ones you have to jump start  
To begin with

It passes the dog-walker  
Letting his pooches off the leash  
To foul the kiddies playpark  
(No flies on him)

It passes the door  
Where every Saturday night  
Regular as clockwork  
Tick tock bash bop  
Mr Arkwright thrashes his wife  
To keep her on her toes

It passes the harbour street  
Where junkie girls with unpronounceable names  
Turn tricks and think of home

It drives through pools of sick  
And wastes of take away wrappers

This is why the last bus home  
Is always sad  
It always hopes for a modicum of loveliness  
Like the boy in the skyscraper who dreams of owning a horse

Sheena Blackhall

# The Last Hillman

The slates of the farmhouse roof  
Know every weather.  
Today it is sunny. A broken scythe  
Smiles up from fiery nettles.

Inside, the cluttered parlour is a fly trap,  
A dust collector, a century's detritus.  
Wind, with its cherry fingers,  
Taps at the window.

I have come to study him, the last Hillman.  
He is a prize specimen.  
He greets me with tea,  
Bitter and stewed from the pot.  
Tea leaves swarm at the spout;  
I shall drain this day to the lees.

Over the cluck of the pendulum,  
Weeps the wail of a kitten  
Picking its wobble way between two plates.  
The Hillman bends his head,  
A hawk mantling a lamb;  
Opens his stubble jaws, bares yellow teeth  
And lifts it with the tenderness of a girl.  
Limp as a rag it hangs from his crooked mouth.  
It does not struggle or cry,  
As he carries it down to its mother's furry side.

The pendulum ticks on over the rattling wind,  
The squawk and scrape of a hen.  
Each year the brambles creep a fraction closer.  
Whumff in the dying fire,  
A birch log falls, into its own cremation.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Life Bluid O Cromar (95 Scots Poems)

## 1. THE CHAUMER

Hard bi the byre, Dod bothied in the chaumer  
The byre, far rattens feeties nichtly pammer  
An milkit kye staun chinkin in their chynes  
An fuskered moosies squeak, like kittled quines

Richt o the chaumer stude the reamin midden  
Left wis the peat stack, bi a binder hidden  
Dockens, nettles, roosty hyews, a harra  
Boorich o wandrin willies roon a barra

A lang dyke, keepin gowd corn frae the road  
Far neep cairt cairriet mony's a dubby load  
A road, flanked bi roch girse, an clover sweet  
Far mauve an cream, the hairt-faced violets teet  
Whyle ower the midden, midgies heezed abeen  
Strang sham, wispit strae, an glaury steen.

Dod's doorstep wis a forum fur the hens  
A cluck o matrons reengin frae their pens  
Fa hottered on the bile wi fairmyaird claik  
A mither's meetin, newsin on the haik.

Ower tae the park, far Hillie's reid-caimbed cock  
Screiched frae a palin, Dod's alarm clock.  
His tacket buits stude scrapit bare o sharn  
Set up tae dry, upeyndit, in the barn

Thon bield far green-eed kittlins prowled the nicht  
Fin gloamin dwined, an slippit ooto sicht.  
Bide yonner. Yark the chaumer door ajee  
Step in, gin ye can thole sterk poverty.

There wis ae windae, happit wi a screen  
Cobwebs an stoor beglaurin ilkie peen  
The windae, like a pictur on the waa  
Cheenged wi the Sizzens... floerin Spring, or snaw.

Neist tilt, a sink that wis as big's a troch  
Wi ae cauld-watter tap, its plumbin, roch,  
Fed bi a wall. It splootered watter oot  
As weel's the antrin leaf, or girssy sprout.

Tap o the sink, a braid shelf ran abeen  
An on't, a lean-tee mirror, roon's the meen  
That showed the greive his mornin, blae, physog  
Fin raxxin fur his blade. an mower mug.

His heid wis bare, as roon's a peesie's egg  
His neb wis roondit like a tinkler's peg  
His chooks was fuskery. Hair grew frae his snoot  
His skin wis pasty as a baker's clot.

Carbolic hid him smellin like a rose  
Tae sikk the fairm kitchie fur his brose.  
The fairm-wife fullid his bowlie till he scunnert  
Nae feed man iver left her table hungeret

At hairst time, tae the park she brocht the fly  
O buttered bannocks, tea & scones forbye  
An steered the sugar smertly wi her speen  
An cowped the dregs o tae-leaves ower the breem.

Spring Cleanin saw the chaumer's inside waas  
Fite-washed an skinklin like an angel's brows  
Steen-cauld, an besom-swypit wis the fleer  
Far sat his guid sheen, buffed fur Sabbath weir.

A clotie rug ower flags wis clappit doon  
Brunt bi the antrin spirk o chercoal broon  
Far spittin sticks flang stobs, like angeret chiels  
Frae yont Auld Nick's hett furnace, reid-chikked deils.

An iron poker, that the smith, sou-mooed  
Hid vrocht, lay on the hearth, a cromack, booed.  
Tae claw the mornin's aisse oot, far it lay,  
A pyre o coal, a howp o poothery gray

The skuttle wis a coo's pail frae the byre  
Keepin the coal, that reigned, the King o Fire

The fire itsel, a squar blaik hole, weel biggit  
Wi twists o paper, kinnlers, crossed an riggit  
Tae catch the evenin spunk that cracked ablow  
Thon ruck o timmer, tae a lowpin lowe.

The lum wad sab, an sough, an mane, an greet  
The win some nichts, blew doon a cloud o seet  
Fin Winter gurred an grummlit in the lift  
An roon the park blew wauchts o rikkin drift.

A bulb that swung unshaded frae the reef  
Brunt like the sun, in its electric sheath  
An raxxed the evenin oot tae lat him read  
The papers. Gie the fairm cat a feed

He liked tae garr it purr an straik its wame  
His hackit hauns wad straik it like a caimb  
An syne, on a wee stove, he'd bile his tea  
His fitbaa shotties fill, till closin ee  
Drave him tae bed, a caff matrass on shanks  
O iron. O sweet clover banks  
He'd dream, an o quines fite an saft as snaw  
While roon the chaumer, Winter's chooks wad blaw.

Aneth the bed, there sat an auld gizunder  
An trap, fur fear some moose nicht sikk tae plunder  
The piece bocht frae the baker fur his fly  
Efter he'd rigged, an bin tae sort the kye

Twa timmer cheers stude comfortless an sterk  
That held his danngers, galluses, an sark  
An on a kist, far callers dowped their docks  
Bedd Jimmy Shand inbye the wireless box.

A calendar wis haimmered in the plaister  
He crossed the days, tae garr the wikk rinn faister  
Till Sabbath saw him cycle doon the track  
Fule washin fur his sister ower his back  
Efter he'd mucked the byre an sortit stirks  
Whyle weelshod fairmers gaithered in their kirks.

The chaumer's teem...the cottar hooses, tee.

The fairmer's yett is brukken...hung swkeejee  
Swallas are reistin neth the chaumer's eaves  
Thrissles creep ower the kailyaird, tarry thieves.

Nae cheery fussle rings ootower the lea.  
Bit clank an chug o cauld machinery.  
Fairmed bi an absent tenant. Corbies, caa.  
The fairm-toun's teem. The girse, wides oweraa.

## 2. THE LIFE-BLUID O CROMAR

Snod in the lea o Morven  
Bi snaw-winged Lochnagar  
Fuspers the bearded barley  
The life-bluid o Cromar.

Raw upon it reeshles  
Far caller breezes swey  
Doon amang firelit fairmtouns  
Far coos-lick peesies cry,

Its gowden plumes hing wechty  
As steerin souns o day  
Dwine in the glaur, syne gloamin's  
Saft mist, makks aathin blae.

A ripplin, reamin riverie  
The barley's sang is sweet  
It sings o Spring, an brierin  
A world baith wud an weet.

It sings o sun an starlicht  
Rich hairst an groanin cairt  
Cromar's befusked backbeen  
Its speerit, an its hairt.

## 3. TRYST WI A HEDGEHOG

Hinner awhyle, an gie's yer crack.  
Michty! Siccan a jobby back!

Preens fur a sark, like a besom's bristle  
Yer as stobby's a dykeside thrissle!

Fin danger' s near, yer heid's in yer dowp.  
Tapsalteerie, ower ye cowp.

#### 4. THE PLAID

Ballochbuie Forest, near Braemar, was sold by a Deeside MacGregor to a Farquharson for a single woollen plaid. It has been described itself, as 'the bonniest plaid in Scotland'

I hae a plaid that gleddens cauldribe gloamins  
Fin wyes are wearisome, an pleisurs fyew  
A plaidie, wivven on a loom o pinewid  
Fas rosit needles steekt the ling wi dyew.

Sae winsome are the colours o thon plaidie  
The warp is girse, the weft is yalla whin  
The shuttle is the cone that wallops eident  
Caad bi the fragrant pouer o the win.

The clouds are cairdit oo, as salt's a bowster  
The fringes o the plaidie's bracken-broon  
An oh, the happiness o its enfauldin  
Bitter the sorra, o its settin doon!

#### 5. HORNYGOLLACH GAMES

The bees are busy bizzin  
A-tunin up their drones  
The emmacks are a-rinnin up the knowe  
The foggy bummer in his strippit semmit pechs an groans  
He's the heavy fa will gar the caber rowe.

The daddylanglegs deintily, traverses a Strathspey  
The forkietail's the compere in the ring  
The flech's lowp is a thriller  
As the gleg collecks the siller  
While the leddylanners daunce the Heilan fling.



The wasp gies oot the prizes  
As the slater haives the steen  
The minnie-monie-feet hauds up the bar...  
The muir-moch sells the pieces  
(Hinney, gaithered frae the breem)  
An the flees sign up, tae jyne the tug o war.

At the Hornygollachs' Gaitherin, the butterflee's the Queen  
The dragonflee's the lairdie o the ling  
The midgies an the wyvers saddle doon tae watch the spree  
Sic a heeze o hornygollachs on the wing!

## 6. RAIN CYCLE

Splyter splyter  
Plowp plowp  
See the dauncin raindraps lowp!

Plink plunk  
Doon the drain  
Frae cloud, tae lan, tae sea again!

## 7. TOWRISTS

Manna-bringin, true-blue Uncle Sam  
Dollar spennin hame tae Alabam.  
'WE'VE DONE PITFODDELS. HOWDIE AMSTERDAM'

## 8. TUDUN AN KINTRA

Peely wally  
Basic wages  
Battery chuckens  
Kept in cages.  
Processed like a tin o sprats  
Battery fowk in high rise flats.

## 9. MACCAIG

Frae Assynt tae Assissi  
This Scots Vermeer o the pen  
Cameos fairm an fountain  
Freudian labyrinth an Buddhist puddock  
An oyster, coddlin Suliven  
Biggin a Surreal Causeway  
Frae ee tae mind  
Wird snashots...  
Gael MacGog.

## 10. FAITHER'S LILTIN

Lythe leaves in the lush meadow o his airs  
Wud notes drapped sweet as geans his hale lay lang  
The mavis stopped her wheeplin fin he'd lilt  
Sae gowden, the Strathspeys ma faither sang.

## IVELLER'S BALLAD

Green Aprils's tendrils...luv, an langin furlin  
Strung on a lyre, an thon lyre in his throat  
Strummin an air, that dauchles, lowsed an trimmlin  
Auld as the starns yon ballad. Larned bi rote.

Sprung frae a wallie, rinnin deep inside  
It raise like ony rainbow, in the room  
As the roe deer, throw gloamins, eildritch, glides  
O itherwarlds he sang, far speerits soom.

## 11. GAELIC PSALM-SANG

Corbie soars keenin frae a dreichsome airt  
The dirge dirls cauld as snaw  
A beeriet blade, drave hard in bleedin hairt  
Thon tune. A burnie jeeled in the Deid Thraw.  
Lang siller chime, wi steeple-peal's repon  
Solo an chorus- geese, circlin a swan

An farrer back, derk sweep o Celtic cowl  
The hunger in the wolf's unhaly howl  
As falcon, brukk frae storm cloud, stoops an gyres  
Sic psalms are winswept muirs...nae civic spires.

## 12. NOVEMBER

The tinklin Dee strums ben the wids  
A busker, settin taes a-tappin  
Linked airms o beech abeen him streech  
Their copper leaves, like cheenge doondrappin.

The turnin fern, the rodden reid  
Are lowes that smuchter, bleeze an growe  
As Autumn cracks its crimson spunk  
Kinnlin the hearth o knowe an howe.

Ferfochen flee, an wabbit bee  
Desert the jetty skirps o brummil  
Wins keen & sab. In wyver's wab  
Cauld dyewdraps, tinkle, trimmle, tummil.

Fite thistledoon wauchts ben the breeze  
Like tapsalteerie tooshts o snaw  
Blaik parks are teem. Frost nips the breem  
Sma birds, like rikk, flee hyne awa.

## 13. WINTER

The jaws o Winter gant  
Fite fangs o ice bite deep in sides o Mar.  
A wechty win, aslant  
Soughin wi shouers o snaw  
Clooers chitterin trees  
Ptarmigan, bawd an stoat  
Cooer unner larick's eaves  
Blin drift wauchts oweraa.  
A vice-like grip  
Hauds burnies bi the throat  
Derk clouds o storm

Are coffin-ships afloat  
The rikkin blin-smore  
Cairds the world a coat.

#### 14. LĒDDYLANNERS

Spottit semmit  
Gollach's wings  
Reistin far the harebell hings

Leddylanners, ruby-reid  
Yer a drap o fleein bluid

Pitter patter  
Doon ye faa  
Dowpin, deintie, on the waa.

#### 15. RETURN OF AN UNWELCOME GUEST.

Jist fin we thocht he'd gaen,  
WHOOSH  
Back he cam  
Like seet blawn  
Doon the lum!

#### 16. ANE HYMN FUR HYMEN: For Charles & Vera King, 1996, Ruby Wedding.

Hymen's a blank buik at the openin line  
Merriege, the pages...fashious fyles, or fine.  
This pair we ken, hae full'd a rowth o chapters  
Raisin a sturdy loon an bonnie dochters  
It's unca croodit roon their ingleside  
Fin Music, Poetry, Art, cry in tae bide.

Scots luv is gowf an bools, as weel as passion  
Skirly an stovies niver faa frae fashion  
A merriege wioot spice wad gar ye grue  
The antrin argy-bargy satts the stew.

Guid crack, guid fare, guid friens, guid company  
Twa notes lang-tuned fur perfect harmony  
Delius an opera...herrin an oatmeal  
Charlie an Vera, gyang thegither weel.

#### 17. ÆILAN BREEZE

A dyewdrap  
Trimmlin in a wab.

The lirk  
In a lochan's keekin-glaisse.

#### ING

Spring.  
Lammie  
on  
trimmlin  
shanks

#### ISTIE

Ah wadna be a ghaistie  
It's hard tae keep yer pride  
Fin fowk can see richt throw ye  
An oot the ither side.

#### TS

On the drum-skin o the mind  
Thochts knap  
Like chappin neives

#### 30. STORM

Lichtenin's a stag

In the antlered rage o the rut  
Teirin the lift asunner.  
His roar's the Thunner.

### 31. FUR A BARD:

A TRIBUTE TO SORLEY MACLEAN, WHO DIED IN NOVEMBER 1996

The waves o the warld, dunt at the herbor waa  
A skirlin skurrie brakks frae the gurly faem  
'I cairry bitter news frae the Western Isles  
The tides rin wersh, at the daith o the Great MacLean.'

A shag gaed slidderin doon the stormy strand  
Grave cloots, its wings, as blaik as the gapin mool.  
An cauld, its skreich rang oot ower the ocean's mane  
The Lan o the Gael this nicht, is steeped in dule.'

`A new birk grows, ' cry the geese, 'in Hallaig's wid.  
Its eildritch leaves shine gowd in the dour Deid Thraa  
Its sap is the tear o the starns, an the Mapamound  
The lear o the auncient Bens, an the robin, sma.'

Dowie, the dun deer liftit its held tae list  
The spurgie held its wheesht in the willow tree  
'Oh Raasay's beatin hairt's in a timmer kist  
He his jyned the shades, in the Glen o Eternity.'

`He wis the torc, on Scotia's grizzled Craig  
The thrum o its clarsach, thrillin abeen the corn  
In the mids o war, he'd pause tae murn a foe  
Tho lesser men, gied sic puir stock the scorn.'

'MacLean wis a dauncin flame in a drift o snaa  
A quaff o hinney ale in a droothy throat  
A seannachie, o infinite pouer an grace  
He wis the win, in the sail o Gaeldom's boat.'

The waves o the warld, sab at the herbor waa  
The pulse o the Norlan, freezes in the vein  
The keenin wins, rise in the coronach  
The star o the West has set. Sleep weel, MacLean.'

SOS SOS

I am a phone box, in distress.  
Jeannie Murphy's quine wis greetin  
Said she caughted her boyfriend cheatin

Big Joe Christie's giro's tint  
Phoned the Broo tae say he's skint  
Auld Ma Sangster's neebor telt her  
Vandals smashed the new bus shelter  
Jocky Todd is stootin foo  
Baxter's laddy's sniffin glue.

SOS SOS

I am a phone box in distress  
If the news I gie is bad  
Ten tae wan the fowk get mad  
An they catch me bi the lug  
Gie ma wires an heid a rug

Takk me, Lord, frae Cooncil scheme  
Tae be a phone box on the meen!

HONE CALL

Pream pream...pream pream pream pream..  
The telephone birrs like a kettle  
Blawin aff steam.

'Fit are ye wintin?  
I dinna believe it.  
Fit are ye gaun tae dee?  
Are ye sure? Are ye certain?  
Ye're sayin the faither's ME?  
'I telt ye tae stert wi.. Nae strings, nae ties  
I ay tuik precautions It disna HAE tae be.'

Pream pream... pream pream pream pream

The telephone birrs like a kettle  
Lettin aff steam.

Somethin's arrived.  
Somethin new as the dyew  
Somethin fresh, an bonnie  
As birdsang in early mornin

Somethin's arrived  
Like an egg, in a thicket, hidin...  
Bit it winna be bidin.

#### 34.IN THE GLEN FAR I WIS YOUNG

Catched in the heather's twinin airms,  
The nameless burnie, secret, lies  
As my fond luver, efter-stang  
Ferfochan, slept neth Simmer skies.

The jynin fever's like the win  
That shakks the fertile Tullich corn  
As in the lift ower Lochnagar  
The gaitherin thunner breeds a storm

The lichtenin sets the lift ableeze  
The fern faas drookit tae its knees  
Aa leevin craiturs in the glen  
The stang o eirdly passion, ken

A pleisur, sic a storm tae brew...  
Efter the lichtenin, cloud, sae blue  
The nameless burnie threips an thrums  
Reefed bi the heath, like ony skin.  
I laid my haun upon his breist  
His hairt gaed brakk-neck like a linn  
An as yon blin-eed, bonnie burn  
Curves, glimmin, like the aidder race,  
His fite hause-bane, his lithesome hoch,  
Booed roon, the bracken tae embrace.

The lang linn, breengin frae the loch



Mells wi the puil, its thrust abated  
Sae did my luve, on the muir lie  
Still as a corp, wi jynin, sated.

As the gray gloamin gaithered roon  
The mavis poored its sweetest tune  
Unheard, bi the soun-sleepin loon.

The nameless burnie on the muir's  
The luv-sap o the lowerin Ben  
Weety an warm, it slips inbye  
The foggy crevice o the Glen

Oh, Allt -an-t-Sneachda hashes, braw,  
The Alit Darrarie clashes, churnin...  
It's tae the nameless burnie, though,  
My thochts, like salmon, keep returnin  
As the dun hind that caimbs the braes  
Follaes ae stag, as ithers spurnin.

### 35. INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Heh, Teenie Anne... I wint yon herrin guttit  
Yer name's FIONA is't? My by-name's better.  
It makks ye luik mair glekit-like, an gypit  
As common as a cooncil-roadie's gritter.

Industrial relations? Mercy, Teenie  
I've plenty bluid relations back at hame  
I crack the wheep, ye lowp, that's as that maitters  
Jist ma wee fun tae malagrooze yer name.

It's nae polite? Fegs, quine, yer jist a gutter  
Yer feelins coont fur nocht fin I'm aroon.  
Jist mind, that I'm yer Ford, or Mussolini  
And him that pyes the piper, caas the tune.

I cry a spaad a spaad. Hae ye a problem?  
YE DINNA MEAN TAE TELL ME THAT IT'S ME  
Bit Teenie Anne, there's naethin in yer contrack  
That says I hae tae show ceevility.

Ony shite tae hit the fan...it's YE'LL be clartit  
A boss maun aye be blameless. Squeaky-clean  
An YE'LL clean up the sotter I hae stertit  
I didna hire...bit I can fire ye, deem.

A gutter, Teenie Ann is ten a penny  
I'd fill yer sheen the meenit ye wauked oot.  
Sae ye maun thole ma tongue, an ma ill-natur  
Fur jobs are scarce as feathers on a troot.

Get yer finger oot ye eeseless vratch.. I'M WYTIN  
An patience niver wis ma strongest suit  
Fit's this? HARRASSMENT? Ay, let's see ye pruve it  
As weel yon haddie pit doon reets an sprout.

Lord, luik doon upon this table, let the denner nae be teuch  
Gin it's cauld or brunt or fooshty  
Let us ett wi a calm sooch.

Save us, Lord, frae Salmonella, oor cholesterol levels trim  
Keep wir arteries frae cloggin

An wir waistlines, beanpole thin.  
May this food, oh Heavenly Faither, be a gastronomic boon  
Wi a muckle dram fur efter  
Jist tae wash the hale thing doon.

## WADDIN: A POEM-SONG DOCUMENTARY ON SCOTTISH MATRIMONIAL CUSTOMS

The Meenister...Tune: For the Beauty of the Earth.

A flock o wayward yowes, my congregation  
I name them, wad, & beery, my vocation  
They lichtliffie, they show nae veneration.  
Junk food, junk gear junk God. Junk generation,  
Ma kirk's a prop they hire, fur the occasion,  
Last time the chancel hoosed this bride & groom

They war cairriet in a christenin gown.

The Organist...Tune: For His Mercies Ay Endure

I play roon the herbor bars  
Heavy metal, base guitars  
Spit & sawdust, fechts, tattooes,  
Blootert skippers on the booze.  
Perfect Luv, Amazin Grace  
A waddin makks a cheenge o pace  
I can sleep atween the hymns  
Dream o drams & whisky Pimms.

The Kirk Moose...Tune: There is a Happy Land.

Communion's wine, & crumbs o breid  
A kistin's dreich an dowie  
A waddin's fine, Scotch broth, divine,  
An whyles, hett buttered rowie.

The Faither...Tune: Men o Harlich.

Fin her ma an me war merriet,  
16 teasetts we war gien  
19 bedspreids, 13 toasters,  
an a photie o the queen  
Aa oor sheets, if shewed thegither,  
They cud girdle Gretna Green.

Ma Aunt Jessie, sent a chunty that cud haud the Torry tide  
Langsyne it his bin recycled, postit tae anither bride.  
This is fit a waddin's fur, gifts tae full a high street store  
Gifts tae full a high street store.

The Mither...Tune: Phil the Fluter's Ball

Oh, the claik ower the dry sherries,  
Oh the scandal, oh the news

Spennin siller is ma forte,  
Taxis, flooers, braw hairdoes,

I will shine like Mata Hari riggit oot in furs an frills  
Hard won siller flees like pertricks shot doon bi this waddin's bills!

The Sister...Tune: Ding Dong Merrily on High.

Ding dong merrily on high, she's movin oot the morn  
Left a bedroom like a sty, her room's mine noo, ma's sworn  
Nae mair tae-nails ower the fleer, nae mair beer tins on the cheer  
Fit the bridegroom disna ken, she's haen umpteen ither men.

In the bath I wish she'd droon, she's soor as a prune  
My assessment o the bride, a pain in the backside!  
Waddin claik ad nauseam, in her cake pit laudenum  
Ye can see I wish her weel, weel awa the feel.

The Groom...Tune: She was Poor, but she was Honest.

I'll eclipse fierce William Wallace, splendid in ma kilt an plaid  
I'll be mettlesome an fleein, fur this do, her faither's paid.  
Ilkie wummin's plumbed fur pleisur, merriege vows pit sex on tap  
Foo ging oot, tae drink frat puddles, riskin Aids, VD an Clap?

My stag nicht, wis a bumbazement, at ma blackenin, pruded a man,  
I fell doon an hit the pavement, sae blin-fu, I cudna staun.

The Bride... Tune: Ricky doo dum day

Like a box o spunks in a kangaroo's pooch  
Ma train it'll crackle up the aisle  
I'm the Bella o the Ball,  
I'm the ring -pull in the can  
Nae mair sizzlin the midnicht ile  
Noo I've nailed ma man, it's the safties bi the fire  
An the diets can float doon the burn.

Cheerio tae fruit n' watter, noo it's haddies smored in batter

Anorexia foriver I will spurn,  
Hail the hippens, hail the hoosewirk, hail the soaps on TV screen  
Baby's due the morn's mornin, fairly spyled the hinneymeen  
Noo I've nailed my man, it's the safties bi the fire  
An the diets can float doon the burn!

The Guest...Tune: We're Nae Awa Tae Bide Awa.

The soup's ower thin, the gravy's thick  
My photie's ooto focus  
The best man's snoot, suffused wi wine  
Is purple as a crocus  
A modern merriege laists five years  
Or if yer lucky, ten  
Syne, cut the knot, & cast yer net  
We'll aa be here again!

For we're nae awa tae bide  
We'll aa be here tae grieve ye  
We're nae awa, tae bide awa  
We'll ay come back an deave ye!

TORRY TERROR

He bladdit his sisters' wee hooses.  
He peltit the collie wi kelp  
The dominie ettled tae dunt him  
Bit anely a bully can skelp

He haived puss in the Dee, an he dunked it  
It floated awa tae Portsoy  
An naebody clyped fin he plunkit  
Fin he skyved frae the skweel, twis a joy!

He cowpit wee Jean in the nettles  
Chased Auld Mither Broon, wi a moose  
Fin the aiblich wis lowse roon the herbor  
Twis safer tae bide in the hoose!

They tell me, he's thrived, spite o aathin,  
Grown bigsie an flitted awa...  
He's got on, as the centre fur Celtic,  
As iver, a richt heid-the-baa!

### 39. THE CHECK-00T QUINE'S LAMENT

Tatties, neeps, an ingin  
Poother fur the wash,  
Wullie's needin new sheen-  
Grip, skyte, flash.

Sweeties, ale, some flooer  
A tinnie wi a bash,  
I'm wirkin like a robot-  
Grip, skyte, flash.

Safties, glaisses, bacon,  
Intment fur a rash,  
Ma hoose is like a midden-  
Grip, skyte, flash.

Mealie jimmies, ganzie,  
Cheque, or card, or cash,  
Ma dowp is dottlit sittin-  
Grip, skyte, flash.

Aathin's in a hurry,  
Fowk, in sic a hash  
Customers, anonymous-  
Grip, skyte, flash.

A trolly like Ben Nevis  
Michty fit a fash!  
I'm scunnert, & I'm foonert,  
Grip, skyte, flash.

Noo ma shift is endin  
Beans & orange squash,  
Hame tae dae the hoosewirk-

Up, oot, dash!

### SHIELIN GUEST HOOSE

(To the tune of 'Oh my, she's wonderful, beautiful, ' etc)

#### CHORUS:

Oh, me the midgies are hotchin  
The rain is poorin doon like a linn  
Dearie me, the venison's menacin  
Pibroch's are skirlin like cats in a bin.

The howf caad 'The Shielin' is terribly Heilan  
Wi stags' heids, Drambuie, & tartan duvets,  
The paper is fooshty, the taps are as roosty  
There's mould on the mantle, the broth, the bedclaes.

There's mochs on the ceilin, the peint it is peelin,  
The cook has a beilin, the rins, an a hoast,  
At the heicht o the Season, wi flechs he is heezin  
He's three-quarters bleezin an he ay burns the toast.

The blankets are stervin, the skirly's unnervin  
The anely ane servin, gaes missin fur oors,  
The stovies are bowfin, the manager's gowfin  
The last guest tae bide here is pushin up flooers.

The scones are like granite, I'd sweir that a gannet  
Wad turn up its beak at the kirn on the plate,  
The porter's tattooed, an the shrimps are sae stewed  
That the troot in the burn winna takk them fur bait.

The howf caad 'The Sheilin', is Arctic an jeelin,  
A hame fur a walrus, or a big polar bear  
If yer an ice floe, or a fat Eskimo,  
Ye cud ski ben the lobby, or skyte doon the stair.

CHORUS etc....

#### THE PARTY'S OVER

The pot pourrie is reamin in bree

It cud be Lambrusco or hamster's pee  
The sofa's guffin o vin ordinaire  
Sax pair o knickers war fand on the stair

The cat socht sanctuary up the lum  
Fin they lichtit a sparkler aneth its bum  
The pianie's drookit in Schnapps & cider  
The dug's at the vet wi cork inside her  
It shot up her mou fin the champagne bottle  
Gaed 'Bang' like an aeroplane set full throttle

Somebody spiked the meenister's drink  
His Sabbath sermon's cowked doon the sink  
Alang wi his denner o mince an tatties  
An last nicht's supper o hett chappatis

The aspidistra's hauf hung tee  
Bein used as an ashtray didna agree  
The goldfish grew fell gleg an frisky  
Efter it snappit a treble whiskey  
90 laps o its bowl at speed  
It flew, syne chokit an drapt doon deid.

There's chuddy stukken tae ilkie seat  
The blinds are torn an the duvet's weet  
The bath wi empties is ram-stam-fu  
There's 10 drunks left in the upstairs loo

The lampshade's tint frae the outside lobby  
It brukk, fin they used it tae batter the bobby.  
The ambulance lichtit at hauf past three  
Wi the fire brigade at the heicht o the spree.

The fists war fleein, an sae wis the host  
An noo is the time tae coont the cost...  
Saxteen glaisses in smithereens  
Twalve heids stoonin. Brukken beens  
A bleedy neb an nine blaik een  
A bra ower a photie o the queen

The cover wis fairly aff the parrot  
Its beak wis plugged wi a monster carrot



In aa the beds the springs are bust  
A Roman Emperor's nicht o lust  
Wadna hae made as muckle sottar...  
As pairty's gyang...twis fair a stoater!

#### PURIST'S POSEETION

Oor Doric leid wis biggt fur fowk  
Tae claik on dubs or kye  
Fur kitchie deems an orra loons  
Tae news wi, ower their fly  
Bit losh bi here. Oor Mither Tongue  
Wis niver meant tae be  
A plinth fur maitters politic  
Or waur...philosophy  
An come tae think o't...whyles  
They hae a service in the kirk  
That's preached frae stert tae feenish In the Doric....weel, a stirk  
Cud compreheen the wurdies  
Bit a MEENISTER sud ken  
That INGLIS is the anely spikk  
Fur EDUCATIT men.

The Inglis spikk, flees far, like rikk  
On issues monumental  
We purists like wir Doric keepit  
Easy-peaky simple  
Fur bairn-rhymes... or Music Haa  
A Musie o the Troch...  
Bit nae tae reenge the Muckle Furth.  
We like it rank, an roch!

#### OLOGY

Heistin the cover's  
Like takkin tent  
O an ant's intimmers  
A snorrel o microchips  
That's nae fur beginners...

Auld farrant wyes are like jeely..  
Kent, an set.  
Forrit's the fey cuisine  
O the internet.

#### 44. THE LOCAL

I'm the teem seat on ony commattee  
That's stapt wi a hale squatter o incomers  
A haggis-bag o gad-aboot heid-bummers  
I'm local. Nae vocal.

I am the divot, beaurocrats wauk ower  
Exploiters, washed in bi the ily tide  
Aimin tae line their pooch, bit nae tae bide  
They're vocal. Nae local.

I am the dot in their computer's print  
The unemployed, the puirly-hoosed, the skint...  
They implement the laws that gar me lowp,  
Ben hoops, an I obey like ony gowk  
I'm local. Nae vocal.

I am Anon. Here, North o Hadrian's Line  
Oor maisters sneer, an caa us 'Philistine'  
Sayin, 'It's for your good', Sooth politicians  
Sell aff wir birthricht. Makk ill-liked deceesions..

Kept in the dark, we wauken up ae day  
An hauf the toun's bin bulldozed inno clay!  
I'm fooshionless, ye cry. I'm wintin sap....  
Bit ye maun ponder on ma handicap....  
I'm local. Nae vocal.

#### 45. BUS HURL

At the foun o the pit, in the glaary derk  
The mechanics wi grease are clartit  
As they yark-tee screws, an ile dour jynts  
Neth the bus, they're tarry-sarkit.

Their faces, blaik as the deils o hell  
Are straikit wi swyte an sotter  
At the chap o twal, the kintra bus  
Maun staun on the kerb, an hotter.

It's cairriet coffins an bubbly-jocks  
Auld earls, an the jist-new-mairriet  
Pipers, loggers, skiers anna  
An the antrin laird, it's ferriet.

It mauna be late..och it CANNA be late  
Tae the lane fowks o the snawline  
Frae the Braes o Mar tae the stoory toun  
The reid bus is their lifeline.

In Simmer, wi virr, the bus will birr  
As the gleg conductress thwacks  
The ticket machine that's beltit ower  
The blue serge stuck tae her back.

As weel's yer cheenge, she'll gie ye the crack  
O aabody's business tae Birse an back  
An wyve tae the chiel that leans on his hyew  
An tring the bell, fin the journey's throw.

Mangst passengers, claik rins back an fore  
There's lauchter, wheeplin, flytin,  
An whyles the rooze, fin the waur o booze  
A drouth's dram jug gaes skytin.

The barley nods its braided heids  
As the duntin wheels dird doon  
The kittly neuks o the nerra roads  
Wid-girt, frae tap tae foun.

Camper, towrist, ghillie an grieve  
The clash o the near an far  
The birks hear aa, as the saft wins blaw  
Bi noontide's heat, or star.

A heeze o craws leave their tattie shaws

Fur a streak o fur an bluid  
A bawd caad doon, on the cats'-ee-croun  
O the road bi car at speed.

A cushie dovers abeen the girse  
A podge in a suit o feathers  
Tae gant at the bus gyaun birlin by  
Like the goats, that raxx their tethers.

A roosy tyke bowfs ben a dyke  
Bi a roch-n-tummle roadie  
An a wee quine pykin a pucklie flooers  
Luiks up, frae a carl doddie.

In the den o a glen, a mist lies thick  
An a tractor, slaw's a mower  
Garrs the bus near crawl, an the driver bawl  
'Div ye ain the road? Haud ower! '

Knell..Ower a knott on the ruttit road  
That snaw-bree runnles traivalled  
Auld Mither Farquharson draps her oo  
Her worsit, clean bumshayvelt.

Ower the rattlin braes on birsslin days  
In blin-drift, frost, or thunner  
The reid bus fechts throw storm an hail  
Ben muirs far ghaisties chunner

In the mids o a park, a single stot  
Is staunin, hunched an stourin  
The fleas are steerin aroon the strang  
Sic sights, ye see fin towrin!

A craftie coories aroon its lum  
As a larick skelps the reef  
O the bus gyaun by.. Foo far'  
Fowk cry, ' Frae Dess tae Coilacreich? '

The scraggit yowes frae the heathery knowes  
Rin doon tae see it pass  
The reid bus cairryin laird an loon

An lover, tae meet his lass.

Tween trees, lang-luggit rubbits breenge  
Their flashin hurdies lowpin  
Racin on, till on tussocks o girse  
Their docks o snaw, doon-dowpin.

Neth ilkie birk, lang shaddas lirk  
Moch-etten's a threidbare plaid  
For the sun i' the lift  
Wi the shades that shift  
Plays catchie, along the glade.

Warrior thrissles stinchly merch  
Their stobs like stangs o bees  
As skelpin on, wi Braemar near won  
The bus takks wing an flees

Near journey's en. A toonser, girns  
'I'm hippit, an bored tae tears.  
Naethin tae see..'  
The driver lauchs,  
An slawin, cheenges gears.

#### GENTLY, GENTLY RINS THE DEE

Oh gently, gently rins the Dee  
Aside the clachan o Abyne  
The blin-eed meen, casts doon a sheen  
O siller, far the watters twine  
Far twinty thoosan meens teet back  
Frae watter's cup, aneth the pine.

The knowes aroon, sink saftly doon  
The nicht pits on a pit-mirk plaid  
A lanely echo, hyne awa's  
The whaup, that wheels ower muirlans braid  
The reeshlin birk far currents lirk's  
A skeely clarsach, richly played.

Oh gently, gently rins the Dee

Aside the clachan o Abyne  
The firs are newsin, burns sing sangs  
The darklin watters jink an jyne  
Here, tribbles, like the gloamin lowes  
Slippin ower Mortlich, crine an dwine.

Tho I maun bide in steeny toun  
Wersh is the taste o bitter wine  
Oh bonnie clachan, reply loued,  
My happy thochts will as be thine.

#### 47. LOCHNAGAR

A dweeble thing's Mankind.  
A sma mishanter dings us doon  
Like rain-tashed corn.  
An fit brings joy the day,  
Brings dule the morn.

My mentor's Lochnagar...  
Thrawn, stinch an wry  
Gin it can throw its muckle heid  
Agin the winter sky  
Makk Licht o shouer an storm...  
Then sae can I!

#### 48. WATTER-MUSIC

Hear the watter, cowpin clearly Coilacreich  
-acreich  
-acreich  
Sliddrin roon in pulis o amber  
Glimmrin serpent, mangst the heath.

Neth the Darroch, blaik's a corbie  
Dee, faulds wings o deepest jet  
Necromancy's in yon cauldron  
Mony midnichts, in it met.

Clishmaclavers o the shallows

Rin like littlins late fur skweel  
Gairn, an Dee, an Muick thegither  
Wi quicksilver in each heel.

Sklaikin, bletherin, claikin watter  
Newses on bi Kinker toun  
Till each gossip tips a boulder  
Blethers aa, come scalin doun.

#### 49. IN COILIE'S WID

In Coilie's wid, the birk tree stauns  
The win comes fiddlin ben the braes  
He plucks her leaves, he strums her boughs  
She daunces, throw sweet Simmer days.

Her sap's a wine as fine's champagne  
Her siller bark, wi bangles shines  
Her leaves weir haloes bricht wi sun  
Gowd pendles, mangst the darklin pines.

Aroon her foun wild rose blaws doon  
Like snaw on Simmer mountainside  
An ay the sough o win on bough  
Yon great God Pan's unbridled tide  
O reeshlin breeze mangst swyin trees  
Green ocean, far heich cheepers bide.

In Coilie's wid the Birk tree stauns,  
Reeted in Mar, it skiffs the clouds.  
My warldy gear, I wad foresweir,  
Tae jyne her, far she softly showds.

#### 50. MAIR SANGRIA POR FAVOR

Hame eenoo, cauld wins are keenin  
Licht the lowe ca-tee the door  
Spanish sunlicht's rich an reamin  
Mair Sangria, por favor.

Rug the luggage frae the airport  
Twa grey cases..cud be twins  
Ye gaed aff wi Miss McGregors  
'Mills an Boon' an knittin pins

Mozzies whinin, ripe fur dinin  
Sookin haggis-creashie queats  
Rare advert fur contraception  
Spanish wife wi umpteen geats.

Bi the Med, its like Spring-cleanin  
Neuks ye niver usually dee  
Aired an biled an bared an iled  
An hingin oot fur as tae see.

Inglis sprauchle, peely-wally  
As fite-puddens in a raw  
Latins, in their skyry dookers  
Sun kissed hurdies luik fell braw.

Ice cream rins, a sweet Niagara  
Melts afore it meets yer mou  
Like pesetas in the shoppies  
Is't a winner fowk get fou?

Scottish Aphrodite tannin  
Heich's a kite on Spanish hooch  
Dominie's at schule she's bannin  
Here, a phrase buik's in her pooch...

Beppo wints tae takk yer dother  
Past the pynt o nae return  
An yer loonie's kyte, wi vino  
Sweels like butter in the churn.

Dookin can be rale unchancy  
Octopus sweems close inby  
An her bosie's far frae cosie  
Better bidin beached an dry.

Pechin Pedro's frae the Tiber  
Saville's plottin Pepe's hame



Plooky Pierre's frae France's Midi  
Spikk may differ...fowk's the same.

Furreign watter cairries skitters  
Boeins cairry beilin Scots  
Hame, like waas that's bin new-strippit  
Colour o geranium pots.

Oh the warld is fu o treisurs  
Lans o icebergs, lans o heat  
Lans o silences an spaces  
Lans far new an auncient meet

Wars micht eyn, gin fowk wad traivel  
See the Eird fur fit it is  
Ae wee baa, we as o's birl on  
SAME PEA-POD...JIST DIFFERENT PIZ.

## 51. BIG ISSUE

'Tinkie tinkie tarry breeks'  
Hear the tounsfowk cry  
'Dinna cam tae oor door  
Beggin on the sly'

Brukken teeth an ragnails  
Hauns as thin's a cleuk  
Like a tattiebogle  
Creepit frae a neuk.

Hooded een an flechy sark  
Jaiket, wallopt wide  
Fa wad lat him coorie  
Roon their clean fireside?

Styterin on spinnle shanks  
Spurtles, weirin sheen  
Sookin frae a bottle  
Oblivion, his frien.

'Tinkie tinkie tarry breeks'

Seen in ilkie toun  
Some ither body's dother  
Some ither body's loon.

## 52. THE BLACK COLONEL

As I cam doon bi Inverey,  
I saw the likeness o a man  
An at his side, a comely lass  
His Heilan dearie, Annie Bhan.

Wi flames, like roses at its throat  
I saw the Castle o Braemar  
The Lion's face wis gaunt an grim  
An ay it spakk tae me o war.

Near haun, the kirkyaird o Glen Muick  
The Gordon banes began tae shakk  
At hearin hoofbeats drawin near  
Wis yon the Colonel ridin back?

Aneth the Darroch's misty tail  
I heard the doonfaa o a stane  
I thocht a rider rode the cliffs  
I keekit up, bit there wis nane.

Oh, far's the lad dinged Braichlie doon?  
That reived the Gordons fatted kye?  
Foremaist in fecht, far ben in luv,  
The bonnie lad o Inverey?

He's sleepin licht, in mools o peat  
His warriors, hard by.

## 53. THE POETRY O SORLEY MACLEAN

A tether o Norlan geese, his wirds.  
Thocht upon thocht they brakk  
Like a braid, brukken caa  
Hauntin the lan ablow

Lang efter the flicht's awa.

54. Braemar Gaitherin 1995

A drookit birk's dispensin dreeps  
(A Heilan linn dreich-drappin)  
An ilkie wab's a washin line  
Far plashin pearls are plappin

Luggit bunnets, willie-draiglit  
Kilts an hose wi peat-bree taiglit  
Dubs an clag an glaur an sottar  
In the Games Park there's a hotter  
0 events, an fowk, an steer  
The world an his wife micht hear

A mochy smirr obscures the fir  
The lift's a clot wrung oot  
Hale watter's scalin frae the clouds  
A loch, tae droon a troot.

Rinners duntin roon the clachan  
Foonert, trauchelt, fair ferfochan  
Boozie boorichies o cronies  
(Real Mackay, an Yuppie phonies)  
Brollies mushroom ower the heather  
Deevil-takk yon Heilan weather!

Wioot a tae dippt in the Dee  
(Braemar gies unca dookins)  
Yer coddlit curls will as unfurl  
An hing like catties' sookins.

Dauncers heist their swippert queats  
Birl like peeries, sweyin pleats  
Barin hurdies blae wi cauld  
Bairns, an bodachs gaun twa-fauld  
Kirn about the piper's skirl  
Rebel-rant, or hairt-brakk's dirl

The bracken's lashed...the barley's tashed

The rodden's washed in rain  
Ker-plink ker-plunk, the girse is dunked  
In Autumn's blae refrain.

The tug-o-war team digs a daud  
O grun, heels yark tae takk a haud  
Syne RUG their muckle showders pu  
The losers ben, like puffs o oo.

The sypin aik, a fountain stauns  
Jibblin a doon-pish ower yer croon  
The Cluny's reamin...streets are sweemin  
Watter-warld sweels as aroon.

Rosit cabers, heavies, swytin  
Haivin haimmers, syne the wytin  
Fur the winnin throw, an skreich  
That tells he's won the siller quaich.

Purple an gowd...a regal shroud  
The heather an the barley  
Their Autumn braws, wi roddens reid  
Set aff Kyndrochit brawly.

The Gaitherin...maut o Heilan mauts  
The world is dowpit on its deas  
Scotia's ambassador's Braemar,  
The Rose o Glamis, preened tae its breist.

#### 54. DAVIE GREEN THE GROCER-OH

(A fragment of a cornkister written by Alexander Middleton of East Mains Aboyne, the poet's grandfather, set to the tune of Rothsay-oh. He wrote many songs and poems in Scots, only two of which remain.)

A kintra chiel made up his myne  
Tae stert a business in Abyne  
Abune the door he fixed a sign  
Twis Davie Green the Grocer-oh.

An if at nicht yer feelin dry  
The Charleston it will not supply

Jist takk a dander roon the wye  
O Davie Green the grocer-oh.

A stud o splendid horse he's got  
At cairtin jobs he's keen tae cote  
Auld Middleton he cud see him shot  
Davie Green the grocer-oh

A stickin plaister fur a sair  
Or soothin intment he'll prepare  
The druggist caas him something mair  
Than Davie Green the grocer-oh.

#### 55. CLEAN CONNACHED

Late fin the fire brunt doon  
Ma feeties cam treetlin ben  
Fur I wis a clean- spylt bairn  
Finiver ma da cam hame.

He'd rowe me roon in his airms  
Happit frae hairm or wrang  
I'd wummle ma taes like a troot  
As he steekt ma een wi a sang.

The cauld win rochled an roared  
Bit it niver blew on me  
Fur I wis the tap o the milk  
The broth o the barley bree

I cocked on a pianie steel  
Fur I wisna bred tae wark  
An tuik nae tent o the thrift  
In ma faither's darned sark.

I wyled his siller awa  
Wi scarce, a thocht tae thank..  
Quo he, 'It's gran tae see her thrive..  
She'll beat them as fur swank.'

The tap o the milk turned soor...

The barley bree's, cauld kail...  
An noo, it's wark or wint  
An the cauld win's blawin a gale.

A boddomless pooch ye'd need  
My gorbles moos tae stap  
Fur a faimlies the slawest hairst...  
An aywis-wintin crap.

#### 56. JOGGER

Hippit hams, plottin broo  
Snochrin, pyochrin like a soo  
Masochism a la mode  
Jogger, duntin doon the road.

#### 57. IN MA FAITHER'S CLACHAN

In ma faither's clachan  
The kirkyaird, wi ma kin  
Is reamin ower

Ma sires sprang,  
Frae thon peat-mirled stoor.  
A chyne o bluid  
Cleeks me tae yon derk yird  
Tethers ma hairt  
Rings ben ma ilkie wird.

In ma faither's clachan  
I wis socht tae read.  
Ma poems war stooks  
Grown gowden bi the Dee's  
Broon, birlin puils.

Unlike ma crofter-forebears  
I cultivated lear  
In city skweels  
Won a degree.  
Nae in brakkin grun, or burnin whin...

Or calvin roch-haired kye  
In lanely byres,  
Dredgin the tarn o Jung's psychology  
Nae clachan bee,  
Hummin aroon the hinney o ae hive  
Rogue bummer, I hae powked  
In far-flung caimbs o human thocht  
Far fey an femmit thrive.

In ma faither's clachan,  
The bungalows proliferate like weeds  
Their ainers cam frae Manchester or Leeds  
Their hame-touns bein bladdit, like the vulture  
They flit, syne faa like locusts on wir culture.

In ma faither's clachan,  
A Cockney body turned tae me an spakk  
'I'm local here, and bid you welcome, stranger'  
(An incomer's maist natural mistakk)  
Sae foo, bein ceevilised, educatit,  
Politically polished an correct  
A graduate wi letters at ma back  
Like a muir-fire did I bleeze up  
An ache tae gie, ay ACHE tae gie  
Yon Inglis gob a crack?

## 58. The Legacy

Faither an bairn on the reid-deer's road  
Tramped the wiry heather  
Raiked throw fen, in the glysterie glen  
Kennin o peace, thegither

Watched the puils fur a splash o troot  
Niver a wurd wis socht  
Tap o the glen, bi the erne's den  
Far the gowden gloamin's vrocht

Learned the wyes o the trinklin burn  
Bi pit-mirk watters, massin  
Deep an dear wis the luv o the lan

Faither tae bairn wis passin

An thon is the finest legacy  
That sire tae bairn can gie  
Pride o race, an a sense o place  
A North East pedigree

#### 59. On Supposed Sighting of a Haggis

I ay thocht a haggis, a ferlie ye ett,  
Fin ye t oasted The Bard wi a dram  
Served up wi the tatties, rich, reamin, an hett  
Or stodgy, an stiff as a clam.

It appears that its nae..that it's livin the day  
That it's lurkin about in the gorse  
It's a wee feathered beastie that bides in the knowes  
(O The Grampian Region, of coorse)  
At the stert o the sheetin. (Merk weel fit I say)  
It winna be pheasant, ye'll bag  
Bit a haggis or twa, wi the feathers blawn aff  
Frae the tap o some heathery crag.

They'll be tellin me neist, that a skirlie's bin seen  
Fleein ooto a neeborin midden  
Bit I'm nae a feel...I wis learned at the skweel  
That a pudden is anely a pudden.

#### 60. WEATHER

Jeeled tae the been frae queats tae croon  
Weirin a ganzie aneth ma gown  
Blaikit an barkit wi humfin coal  
An hackin kinnlin... ma sufferin soul  
Cries 'A polar bear micht think it nice  
Tae dip its taes in the snaw an ice  
Bit Lord, or faiver decrees it's time  
Fur shielin the slush, frae roadies o rime  
Gin Winter canna be warm as porter  
FOR THE LUV O JEHOSEFA MAKK IT SHORTER.



## DRAUGHT

A draught's a creepie-crawlie chink o cauld  
Tit-tittin steekit windaes, snibbit doors  
Whizzin roon neuks  
Wi rochles, raps an roars.

Dammit, there's ay a something at the latch  
Anither flee tae saddle in the in the intment  
Like joys, sae aften jeeled bi disappyntment.

## 62. TV TOPPERS

Media-fowks' perfections, overawa  
Conseeder...pint an poother makks them brow  
It's anely surface gloss  
They daurna fyle their decor wi a soss  
Bit ay maun watch the laidder disna slip  
Kerfufflin their image wi a trip.

## IRDEN

Mowdies bide in ma gairden  
An craws, wi flappin wings  
Wummlin wirms, an slaters  
An slivvery, slippery things.

Merles, bide in ma gairden  
An fearie forkietailies  
Wi yeities three, on brierin tree  
An furry mochs, an snailies.

A kittlin bides in ma gairden  
He hides akin the burrs  
He stalks the spunky spurgie  
Wi sherpened cleuks....and purrs.

#### 64. GOWK

Wintin, wintin, wintin  
The gowk's a girny, gapin mou  
A millsteen in the nest  
A parvenue  
The pea that bursts the pod  
The tither gorblied chitter, sterve, an grue  
The gowk, is God.

A human gowk, puir stock, is bit a neep  
A feathered gowk's a tyrant, wi a cheep.

#### 65. GIRSE

Reeshlin, reeshlin reeshlin  
The lang girse fuspers memories o simmer.

#### 66. BULL IN THE SHOW RING

His legs tapped forrit  
Pechin, weet o snoot  
Curly powed, promiscuous as Pan  
The bull. Blaik seed bag  
O the horned fruit.

#### 67. OWERSETTINS FRAE AN INGLIS TRANSLATION BI JOHN MONTAGUE O THE ANONYMOUS 9TH CENTURY IRISH POEM, THE HAG O BEARE.

Ebb tide's claimin me  
Ma life wauchts doonwird  
Like the draaback o the sea  
Wi nae bakk-turnins.

I am the Cailleach o Beare  
Bonnie petticoats I eesed tae weir  
Eenoo, peelywally wi puirtith,  
I raik fur cloots tae hap me.

These airms, a rickle o beens  
(Eeseless tae young callants) Aince straikit skeelily  
The shanks o Princes.

Ochone, I can nae langer sail  
Youth's sea.  
Days o ma glamourie  
Hae dwined.  
Desire, is foonert.

Flood tide.  
Syne the ebb, dwinnlin on the san  
Fit the flood rides lanwird,  
The ebb, wheeks frae her haun

Blythe, the isle in the mids o the sea  
Washed bi the incomin flood..  
Bit ma auld bluid  
Slaws tae a wersh ebb.

I hae scarce a biggin noo  
On this Yird.  
Far aince wis ma life's flood,  
Aa, aa, is ebb.

#### 68. LEOPARD: OWERSETT FRAE THE YORUBA.

Douce hunter,  
His tailie plays on the grun.  
Bonnie Daith, he riggs in spottit claes  
Fin he gings furth tae his prey.  
Ill-trickit killer,  
His luvin bosie  
Teirs the antelope's hairt.

#### 69. FRAE AN INGLIS TRANSLATION BI EZRA POUND & NOEL STOCK O BORIS DE RACHEWILTZ'S ITALIAN TRANSLATIONS O HIEROGLYPHIC TEXTS (ANONYMOUS EGYPTIAN 1567-1085BC)

We gyang back tae the tree-fulled gairden,  
Ma airms wechtit wi flooers

I see ye creepin, cannie  
Tae kiss me frae ahin.

Ma hair, heidy wi perfume.  
Wi yer airms aroon me,  
I feel gin I belang  
Tae the Pharoah.

I am the foremaist o yer luvs  
Like a gairden o girse an perfumed flooers  
New skinklin wi dew.

Pleisunt is the sheugh ye hae delled  
In the caller Norlan win  
Tranquil wir roadies  
Fin yer haun's happin mine in blythness  
Yer vyce gies Life, like nectar

Tae see ye's  
Mair nur breid an wine

I fin ma dearie fishin  
His shanks in the shallas  
We brakkfast thegither, suppin beer  
I offer him the magic o ma thighs  
He's catched in ma spell

AN INGLIS TRANSLATION BI JAAKO A. AHOKAS O A POEM BI KATRI VALA  
(19901-1944) FINLAND

WINTER IS HERE.

Winter is here aince mair  
Gin I war young,  
Mebbe I'd sing  
O the blaik, blaik bowl o the Eird  
Reemin wi cweelin snawflooers.

Mebbe, the dyew o the starnies  
Wad skinkle alang

The nicht-blue glen o ma sang.

Bit the sangs o ma youth are jeeled.  
Ma sang is puir, an ferfochen  
Like a cailleach wi wizzent blue hauns  
Gaitherin kinnlin  
Tae warm her draughty hame.  
I circle the path o ma scanty breid  
Cauld, as a jyler's yaird  
Ma thochts,  
Ma senses,  
Roch wi wirk.

Winter is here  
Tae sherpen Dule  
Tae torture hungeret bairns  
Wi the wheep o his wins.  
Bit the berries, thick on the rodden  
Burn like cracklin lowes!

71. FRAE AN INGLIS TRANSLATION BI TEMIRA PACHMUSS O A POEM BI ZINAIDA  
HIPPIUS (GIPPIUS) (1869-1945) (RUSSIAN SYMBOLIST POET)  
L'IMPREVISIBILITE

Accordin tae the wird o the Aybydan Bein  
The burnie o Time's niver-eyndin.  
I anely sense an incomin win  
The chime o a new meenit.

Dis't lead tae a doonfa?  
Dis't cairry Glory, or a sword?  
I dinna ken its face  
I anely see the win o meetins.

Meenits wi happit faces flee,  
Flee like birdies frae anither warld  
Forrit, inno the circle o Life.

Foo can I reist them, in their flicht?  
An sae, intae the taigles o their interwuvven wab  
Whither I sikk tae or nae

Ma boatie slices ben  
Blaik shaddas o uncertainty.

72. FRAE AN INGLIS TRANSLATION BI RIINA TAMM & SAM HAMILL, O A POEM BI  
JAAN KAPLINSKI.

The East -Wast border's aywis flittin...  
Fyles, Eastwird. Fyles, tae the Wast.  
We dinna ken exack fur it lies noo:  
In Gaugamela, in the Urals, mebbe inby wirsels□  
Sae that ae lug,  
ae ee  
ae nostril  
ae haun  
ae fit  
ae lung  
ae baa  
ae ovary

Lies on ae side. Tither, lies on the ither.  
Anely the hairt, anely the hairt is ay on the same side  
Gin we luik Northwirds, it bides in the Wast.  
Gin we luik Soothwirds, it bides in the East.  
The moo, noo, dinna stert tae ken  
Fur which (or baith)  
Tae spikk.

73. FRAE AN INGLIS TRANSLATION BI RENE EULOGE, O A POEM BI MRIRIDA N'  
AIT ATTIK, (MOROCCO, BERBER, CIRCA 1940. MRIRIDA WIS A HOOR IN THE  
SOUK O AZILAI)

LIKE RIKK

Lalla Halima \*. Takk tent o cast aff quines  
Fa can ye believe, Mercifu God?  
Me, I'll nae trust chiels...  
Their promise is rikk an win.

Fin I wis herdin the nowt in the park  
The Moquaddem's laddie made mony promises

Bit the cuddy fa's stoked his drooth  
Sikks nae langer tae supp.

\*Lalla Halima wis a Mohammedan hermit, fa proteckit unmerriet mithers fa  
invokit her.  
Moquaddem; The heid o a puckle museecians.

#### 74. FRAE AN INGLIS TRANSLATION BI MARY BARNARD O A POEM BI THE GREEK BARD SAPPHO (6th Century BC)

We dowpit the urn doon onno the boatie  
Wi this bit screivin...  
'This is the stoor o wee Timas,  
Fa, unmerriet, wis led  
Inno Persephone's derk chaumer.'

An she, bein hyne frae hame,  
Quines o an age wi hersel,  
Tuik new-sherpened blades  
Tae hakk, in murnin fur her  
Curls o their soft hair.

#### 75. FRAE AN INGLIS TRANSLATION BI KO WON, O A POEM BI HWANG CHIN-I

The blue Ben's my desire  
The green burnie's  
Ma dearie's luv.

Tho the burnie leaves,  
Foo can the blue Ben cheenge?

Ay mindin on the Ben, I winner...  
Dis the burnie greet,  
As it rins aff?

#### 76. TWA OWERSETTINS IN SCOTS, O POEMS BI CHANG SHIANG-HUA'S COLLECTION, 'AFFECTION IS EVERYWHERE'

TEACUP.

Dinna bann the teacup.  
It gaes flat oot  
Tae satisfee yer gutsy moo an tongue.

Nippit inno its present form  
It lats ye haud an pett it.  
Captures the guff o yer tea  
An treetles oot a stringgle o crystalline bree  
Tae sweel oot yer soored intimmers.

#### 77. TEA KETTLE

It hauds the caller watter  
O a burn o the Ben,  
Haein wided throw  
Braid, deep riveries  
An wallies, steerin wi fowk.

Efter lang stravaigins  
Its weird is nae tae chuse.  
Fin watter sings in the kettle  
The tale o its life's  
Biled doon tae a threnody.

#### 78. REID STAR LILY

EFTER A POEM BI THE LADY OTOMO NO SAKANOUÉ, 669-781 IN THE JAPANESE ANTHOLOGY MANYOSHU.

Aneth the shadda o a buss  
On this sun-druchtit Ian  
A stammygaster, unremaiked  
The reid star lilies, staun.

Tae burn wi luv, an yet tae be  
Nae even noticed.  
AGONY.

The Lady Otomo no Sakanoue was a major Japanese poet. She was head priestess (saido miko) & clan 13, she was married to Prince Hozumi.



78.SIMMER GIRSE

EFTER AN ANONYMOUS POEM IN THE JAPANESE MANYOSHU ANTHOLOGY

Ma Iuv-thochts are like simmer girse  
In the lang, lang, days o rain  
Nae suner scythed, an raiked awa  
Bit up they steer again  
Strang an alive, wi aa the roch  
Green energies o pain.

AN INGLIS TRANSLATION BI PETER LEE, O TWA POEMS BI HWANG CHIN-I (1506-1554, KOREAN)

I cut in twa a lang November nicht,  
Pit hauf aneth the bed-claes  
Sweet-scentit's a Spring breeze  
An fin ma jo cries by,  
I'll akk it oot  
Unfurl it, bit bi bit  
Sae, I'll stretch oot the nicht.

Bens are aybydan.  
Bit the heich knowe's burns,  
Rin free they free

Yestreens are like yon breengin burns,  
They fleet they flee....  
An vauntie heroes  
Fur ae day,  
They deet they dee

ETTINS O INGLIS TRANSLATIONS O JAPANESE HAIKU  
THE PRIEST: EFTER A POEM BI MEITSETSU

The traivellin priest  
Mells wi the mist...  
The ching o his bell.

WYE: EFTER A POEM BI HEKIGODO (1873-1937)

This wye  
Ootower the wizzent muir  
Is aa God gies.

S: EFTER HEKIGODO (1873-1937)

The winter storm  
Blaws aa the dyeuks thegither  
Teetle the steen waa.

MOOLS: EFTER A POEM BI SEISENSUI (1884)

The muckle fitpreints  
In the doon-duntit yird  
O the mools i the gloamin.

CLAIK: EFTER A POEM BI SEISENSUI (1884-

'Hey, ' cries the lanely chiel.  
'Hey, ' cries the lanely Ben.

SHELT: EFTER A POEM BI KUSATAO (1901-

As the shelt shauchies alang  
He cairries ower his hochs  
The winter sunlicht.

86. LINTIE: EFTER A POEM BI TAKEO (1908-

Frae the mids o the hairt,  
Trauchelt wi soun an styew  
A lintie rises, wheeplin.

87. CORBIE: EFTER A POEM BI FUKIO (1902-1930)

The mid-winter corbie  
Draps doon, an stauns on  
His ain shadda!

88. OWERSETTINS O INGLIS TRANSLATIONS O JAPANESE HAIKU.  
BUTTERFLEE: EFTER A POEM BI MORITAKE, CIRCA 1510

Drappin petals  
Seem tae gyang back tae the branch...  
A butterflee.

89. MUIR-GIRSE: EFTER A POEM BI SHIKI

The girse o the muir's  
Sweet-scentit  
On the boddom o ma sheen.

CKS: EFTER A POEM BI MEISETSU, 1847-1926

Shawin their kytes,  
The puddocks plump  
Throw the sluice-yetts.

91. TIMMER: EFTER A POEM BI MEISETSU

A daud o timmer  
Showdy powdy  
Floatin doon  
The Spring burnie

92. SEA: EFTER A POEM BI ARO 1879-1951

Cweelin on the beach  
Waves cam breengin  
Ooto the pit-mirk.

93. DAITH-EMBRACE: EFTER A POEM BI ARO

Clingin onno the girse  
An dwinin wi't  
The winter flee

94. MEEN-FLOOERS: EFTER A POEM BI MOKKOKU 1889-

Petals ski er an faa  
Frae the branches  
Ower the meen's physog.

95. PLAYIN: EFTER A POEM BI MOKKOKU 1889-

The first East win  
A pine cone plays  
In the watter.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Life I Wish I'D Lived

I sleuthed with Sherlock Holmes, won his cold heart  
I posed for Dali naked with a peach  
Folk paid on e-bay for my every fart

I shot down Cupid with a well-aimed dart  
I meditated on a Ganges beach  
I pulled each single Rubik cube apart

I turned Mount Etna to a giant wart  
And every dog poo fouler to a leech  
I sang like Edith Piaf, off the chart

I studied in Montmartre steeped in Art  
Conversed with Dickens, heard Erasmus teach  
Kicked over Adolf Eichmann's applecart

Sheena Blackhall

# The Light-House Keeper's Sighting

From my glass-house on the cliff It's a sheer drop  
Into the icy seaweeds of the fjord.

This morning I clearly saw five sheep,  
Against all recommended procedures,  
Against recognised animal practices,  
Against the clock,  
SwimmIng boldly and strongly out towards the horizon.

Each fleece was sodden with brine,  
Each tough black face was nosing forcefully forward.

The lead sheep floundered first;  
Spun by the ocean,  
Round it turned as if on a roasting spit.  
One by one the others sank and drowned,  
Five pieces of flotsam bobbing like buoys.  
One slim black leg was pawing a wave  
As if it hoped to climb it, having a whale of a time.

I was a fly on the wall,  
Watching from the porthole  
High on the fissured cliff, half dead - or half alive -  
But safe, safe, from the tentacles of the ocean,  
Its seaweed swaying coldly to and fro.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Lion Rampant

We Scots are a free reenge breed  
See the diaspora? Like thrissle seeds in a gale  
We're aawye, ony wee crack or neuk'll dae  
Fur us tae saddle, trailin oor reets  
Like navel towes, tied tae Mither Caledonia

Stirling, Bannockburn, Falkirk,  
Otterburn, Flodden, Culloden  
The bluid o a warrior tribe rins ben oor veins  
Bratach rìoghail na h-Alba's  
The sail that steers oor boatie.

Hector MacKay in Quebec weirs  
The Lion rampant on his t-shirt,  
Proodly on Hogmanay

Elroy Zanzibar-Farquharson in Jamaicay  
Has stukken a lion magnet on his fridge  
'Och ay the noo' he says  
As he cracks open anither tinnie

Felicity Menzies jogs aroon New York  
Wi a lion rampant frontin the peak o her cap  
She ains twa cds o the Glesga polis pipe band

In Majorca, Rab C. Buchan  
Dichts the san frae his taes  
Wi a Lion rampant tool

Thon lion gaes aawye  
Pencils, shortbreid tinnies, car stickers  
It's aa tae dae wi attitude  
Nemo me impune lacessit  
Mess wi me an I'll batter ye.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Lipstick's Muse

Why do you want to be human?  
Asked the lipstick's Muse.

Their conscience is like a cochlear implant  
They are glued to work  
For fun, they kick a leather ball or fornicate  
Lust makes them jig like a fish on a bent hook

Whereas you are a slider, a glider  
Slipping out from your glamorous metal sheath  
To smear their lips like sweet fudge, melting

Paste can shine the dirtiest brass  
Makeup is about identity, you were carefully christened.

You were not named Whipped Caviar  
Dissolved in Dreams,  
Pinky Nude Sinner  
Or Catfight

Truffle Tease....that suits you to a T.

Sheena Blackhall



# The Listening Ear

Age and Youth are well combined  
One, too young to be considered  
T'other, ancient, thus consigned  
To the scrap heap, faded, withered

All the wisdom of the Old  
To the thoughtless wind is told  
Age is but a listening ear  
Where childish worries disappear

Sheena Blackhall

# The Locket

It rests beside my heart. I keep it warm  
Your baby-hair. I rub it like a charm  
To plug the dam of tears from spilling down

Unconsciously my fingers stray to hold  
This talisman, to shield it from the cold  
I close my eyes, you're in your christening gown

It isn't done, today, to wail or keen  
Grief must be hidden, antiseptic, clean  
Without this silver anchor I would drown

Sheena Blackhall

# The Lodgers

In middle age my dad was made redundant  
Laid off, put paid to, thrown upon the scrap heap  
No cash kiss off for loyalty back then

Daily he trudged to the newsagents and back  
Scanning the job lists, writing applications  
In his copperplate script, while the wolf sat at the door  
Licking its chops politely

No call for managers. Ma stepped up to the plate  
'We'll take in lodgers, clever folk, nice students  
Paying guests, ' she said in her best clipped vowels

A flaxen haired young Saxon public schoolboy  
Studying law, blue eyed, with teeth in braces  
Stood with a scholar's stoop and pressed the bell.  
A Classics man, he got an upper room  
'He'll suit, ' ma said. 'Yes, he'll do very well.'

Nest month our local minister came calling.  
Apologetically, he framed his question  
'Would you object to colour, Ms M?  
The gentleman in question's a chief's son  
Malawi-born, and studying for the church.'  
Church was the clincher. Saindi was next in.

Third to the household, Murray, reading Physics  
With pebble glasses, sniff, and halitosis  
Freckled, with ginger clump of scrubby beard  
Distastefully my mother washed the sheets  
(Those easy-care bri-nylon, slippery things)  
'Who'd think a scientist would have wet dreams?  
So often, too, the carnal little beast.'  
(His eggs and bacon shovelled on his plate,  
Not nicely placed like those of lawyer James,  
No toast in quarters like God -loving Saindi

Last in, the teacher trainee, moustached Maisie  
The clothesline groaning with her corsetry

And every mealtime soggy with her memoires  
In tremulous falsetto, of lost loves.  
Ma always handled Maisie with kid gloves  
An unexploded bomb in furry slippers

Each room was fitted with a locked slot meter  
Each bath hour was allotted, towels dispensed  
No late night stop outs. Never any visitors  
'It's a real home from home, ' my mother said  
Lights out, the house was quiet as the dead.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Lost Soul

Suburban West London's Mortlake neighbourhood  
The occasional jet roars past to Heathrow  
A pleasant place, quite free of crime and congestion.

And then a lost soul fell from the sky like Lucifer  
Thumping onto the sidewalk of Portman Avenue,  
Close to the Variety Box(a convenience store)  
An underwear boutique,  
And a Chinese shop selling herbal remedies.

Early risers walking their dogs  
Assumed he'd been mugged, or struck by a passing car

Others had heard the unusual noise on impact;  
Opened their doors on a badly battered body  
Sprawling there on the flagstones of their street.

Police quickly established he'd died en route from Angola  
And dropped to earth when the landing gear was opened

'To think that the end of the line for him  
is a suburban street, miles away from his world.'  
A woman remarked.

What was he running away from?  
Why ever did he choose there?

Angolans laid flowers in his memory  
(Even though no-one knew him)

The bouquets were swiftly removed  
So as not to set up a site of unwanted pilgrimage

'Is this about the man from the sky? '  
Asked a woman, of a reporter. 'That was my house  
I don't want to talk about it.'

The lost soul was unavailable for comment  
Shedding no light on his presumed effrontery

In choosing to die on a British suburban street  
Where he had, it was established, no right to be.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Maggie Centre Aberdeen

A rug-mandala ripples like a coral reef  
Egg-shaped windows invite the landscape in  
Minimalism and shawls, a fabric hug  
Pools of sunlight flood the open space  
This building breathes in hope, hints at transition  
This is a womb-world, comfort's at its core  
Passing through, so many fragile souls  
A spirit-house, washing away rain's tears.  
The Elephant in the Room is faced, embraced and welcomed

Snøhetta, design for hope, the cosmic egg  
White hope on the thin shell of humanity  
Inglenooks, thin forest of souls in extremis  
Openness is key unlocking the soaring clouds

Sheena Blackhall

# The Man Who Refurbished Gargoyles

The man who refurbished gargoyles  
Had nails like mother of pearl, with large half moons

In conversation he tilted his head like a bird  
Perched on an oak  
Accustomed as he was to working at altitude

He articulated words, sharp and clean  
Like the neat bites a ferret takes from flesh

At night when the TV flickered its half-light in his home  
Sucking his wife into its cosy fantasies  
He knotted the cord of his dressing gown  
Like a flagellant's whip, against his naked thigh

He never ate sliced bread, preferring to handle  
The baker's boulder whole, another craftsman's labour

In dreams he walked through  
The Garden of Earthly Delights  
Where devils emerged from strawberries  
Pinch nosed and hissing on delicate cloven feet

His sandwiches were larks' tongues  
Cow pit, crazies made on the sly  
He tossed the cheese and ham lovingly made by his wife  
Into the grass as crow bait to gather his familiars

He liked to lunch in the graveyard  
He liked to run a crafty eye  
Over the stone faced angels  
Wings folded like resting dragon flies  
Tomorrow he'd make his gargoyles  
Ten times wickeder

Sheena Blackhall



# The Man-Hole Cover

Walking along a dusty deserted street  
I have the urge to lift the man-hole cover  
Peep into the syrupy depths  
Where the sewer flows, the Styx of the subconscious  
Like the drowned past I've learned to keep the lid on.

I learned this trick from my mother  
A very private person  
Who, walking down stone steps  
Felt the elastic snap  
On her wartime peach-silk knickers  
Felt them slip to her ankles

Without faltering, she stepped out and away  
Commando style, after the drop  
Leaving a creamy gusset,  
Two coy black pubic hairs,  
Virgo intacta, dignity preserved.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Marriage Of Blue And Yellow

It was a primal love-match:  
The Navy-blue officer  
Walking out of the ultramarine of the sea  
Holding a white balloon marked 'Cloud'  
Gave a blue sigh that escaped like a small blue bubble.

He spotted her right away  
On the yellow sand,  
The girl in the yellow bikini,  
Golden hair cascading down her back.

They went to the fair together.  
All the golden goldfish  
Circled their bowls  
As they looped the loop,  
As they shared their first wet kiss.

Everyone came to the wedding  
Poppy holding a posy of blushing rose,  
Reverend Black, his bible edged in red.  
There was no going back.

Now little green children  
Dance down watery fields.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Mermaids' Last Gig

A flash mob formed from nowhere  
Word spread like fire on a moor  
Mermaids were in town, giving a live performance  
An aquatic happening

The buzz was amazing,  
You couldn't invent a better piece of staging  
Folk scrambled up the cliffs,  
Hung from the lip of the lighthouse

The sea was the mermaids' platform  
Unaccompanied singers, some said their song  
Sounded like whales or swans in their death ecstasy

The words were religious, an obscure hymn or chant  
Whatever, the crowd were enthralled, entranced, enchanted.

And the dancing! Dolphin leaps in the air  
Those half-fish women were awesome.  
Took your breath away, their wave routine

Three hours it lasted in all, without an interlude  
No compere either and no amplification

The audience went frantic. The atmosphere was electric  
And nothing there to record it for posterity

The tide shuddered and shook like a wet cat  
The sea-blown song rolled into the ears of shells

We sensed this was the merfolk's farewell tour.  
We hear they have no plans to sing again.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Merry Dancers 17 Poems In Scots

Fermer an the Craa: Swedish Folk Song owersett in Scots

A fermer drove tae a fine fir wid  
Far he heard a craa caa rare  
An the former syne he turned back hame  
Thon craw will pyke me sair

His wife sat spinnin by her spinnin wheel  
Quo, Craas are a coordie breed  
Sae the fermer pit an arra tae his bow  
An he shot the craa doon deid

He brocht the craa doon tae his hoose  
Twa caunles frae its creesh made he  
An its meat, wi satt, he pickled in a vat  
Wi a steak for his granda's tea

Fae its coat, eichteen o bonnie pairs o sheen  
He fashioned, an for auld grandma  
Twa bauchles she could weir tae shauchle roon the flair  
As soft as the new drappt sna

The fluff fae its breist made siven mattresses at least  
An bowsters a hunner an twa  
Fae the big craa's wings, feather fans he pued  
For his dochters fin the sun shone braw

He heistit its neb fur a muckle kirk touer  
Wi its heid fur the spire's tap  
Fae its corp he made a traivellin boat  
Tae sail ower the wide Kattegatt

n's Hinmaist Voyage: A Scots Owersett o a Sami Legend  
Langsyne twa brithers sailed awa  
Morten an Anders, frae their hame  
Each wi his ain boat fu o fish  
Tae Vadso ower the rollin faem

The day wis fair fin they returned

Near gloamin nigh Klubbvik they drew  
Bit an eastern win blew up gey strang  
Near heidlan far the storm grew

Morten's boat struck the grey sea foun  
Aneth the boat he quickly drooned  
Anders his brither sailed on by  
Inthe bay he anchored safe an soun

Bit as he wauked alang the beach  
Oot o the sea tae the guid dry lan  
Morten his brither catched him up  
An grabbed him up wi his clammy haun

Ye didna try, fause brither mine,  
Tae save me in ma oor o need  
Noo ye maun wauk intae the sea  
An jyne me, drooned in the green seaweed

In terror, Anders he roared oot  
'Come tae ma aid, aa ye that lie  
In yer widden kists in the kirkyaird mools! '  
'Help me, Ye Drooned!' wis Morten's cry

There wis a ragin frae the sea  
A horrid cracklin frae the Ian  
The sea-deid raise frae the gurly wave  
Each wi a kelp-hyeuk in his haun

The lan-deid focht wi coffin boords  
The sea-ghaists focht as they maned an raved  
N eist morn at dawn, the fecht wis ower  
The lan-deid won, Anders wis saved.

Gurluovta wis thon battle place.  
Tae fetch his boat, survey the scene  
Neist day, Anders himself cam back  
An raised tae the deid the Fish Ile Steen.

3. The Queen o the Baltic, from a Polish Legend  
Aince Queen Jurata ruled the sea

The bonniest quine ye iver saw  
Wi gowden hair an glentin een  
Nae ither Goddess wis sae braw

Perkun the mighty thunner God  
He lued Jurata best o aa  
For she wis kind tae sea-bred fowk  
Fair in her luiks an fair in law

Fishers could catch eneuch tae live  
An nae a fin or fish-scale mair  
Gin she ae hauf a flounder ate  
She'd sen the lave back tae its lair

Alive, this hauf she tossed awa  
Wad sweem aboot, growe back its heid  
Jurata's magic wis sae strang  
Naethin she touched could lang bide deid

Bit wurd cam tae Jurata's haa  
A fisherlad caught fish tae sell  
Tae buy braw claes, a vauntie chiel  
She vowed his pride she'd quickly quell

Nearhaun the shore she swam sae close  
Tae trap an droon him in the sea  
Bit at ae luik o him, ochone,  
She lued him deep an helplessly

Nae God can wed a mortal man  
Tae wrack Jurata's palace fine  
Perkun flang doon his thunner bolt  
An killt the luvlorn hapless quine

He chyned the fisher doon ablow  
The waves, frae far his cries are heard  
Greetin for his tint ocean love  
Like sabbins o a lane sea-bird

An aa that's left o her braw haa's  
Bitticks o amber on the stran  
Washed up wi dulse an ither smush

Strewn ower the braid uncarin san

#### 4. Ca-Cannie: Luck a Omens o Fife

Twa, three tooshts o tay-stems, bobbin roon yer cup  
Fremmit fowk'll cross yer yett, lock yer siller up

Dinna brakk a keekin glaiss or gie a preen in pairtin  
Dinna makk a gift o satt. Ye'll bladd yer weird for certain

Rowan wippt wi reid threid, hauds ill luck awa  
Maukens, meenisters an bells, gar the storms blaw

Help a new- born bairn tae thrive, waucht rikk roon its claes  
Keep the meenlicht frae its face tae gie it blithesome days

Swap a penny for a knife or love ye'll quickly sever  
Takk these wamins tae yer hairt an luck be yours foriver!

#### 5. The Third Earl o Balcarres

The third Earl o Balcarres, he fand a bonnie bride  
Mauritia de Nassau, her dautin faither's pride

The merriege bells war ringin, the kinsmen gaithered roon  
The bride aside the altar, aa present bar the groom

The third Earl o Balcarres, forgot his waddin date  
In his nicht goon an bauchles, still at his brakkfast plate

Fin wird cam tae his quarters, he riggt for kirk wi speed  
Bit left the ring ahin him, that should hae blessed the deed

The meenister wis wytin, the lassie douce an pure  
Her finger raxxed an trimmlin, in thon onchancy oor

A frien stept up an offert his mart ring, beens an skull  
Imprintit on its surface, a sign o Daith an Ill

Mauritia de Nassau, the bluid drained frae her face  
The waddin barely ower, still in her bridal lace  
She tuik it as an omen, thon dowie murnin ban

Quo' I shall dee fu early. A derk smitt's on ma haun.'

The third Earl o Balcarres, within the year wore black  
His bonnie bride wis beeriet. Nae prayers could win her back.

#### 6. The Plague Demon (an Estonian Legend)

The Plague aince sat in a muckle boat  
Tae the Isle o Rago sailin  
An aa aroon Him the crew lay deid  
Frae His dreidit smitt's roon-sharin

The Plague wis heich, wi a three-neuked hat  
An a cruel scythe in His haun  
Fariver he steppit the Laird o Daith  
Brocht dule an wae tae the Ian

In the mids o a roarin storm He stept  
In a shielin ooto the smirr  
An the cailleach sat bi the ingleside  
Cried, 'Welcome, in God's name sir.'

She'd saved herself, bit wi an aith  
Tae the Isle o Nucko He ran  
Wi a buik, a caunle, a cruikit staff  
In the shape o an auld grey man

An as He wannert frae hoose tae hoose  
His fearisome buik He preed  
An gin their names appeared therein  
Wi a touch o His stick, they deed

Ae day He drave doon a rickety brae  
His axle brakk an He cowpt  
A ferm-chiel waukin along the road  
Richt faist tae His aid he lowpt

'For yer gweed deed, ' the Stranger quo  
'This day will stay ma haun  
For I am the Plague, wi the dreidfu pouer  
O life an Daith in the Ian.'



The Plague syne promised the clachans nigh  
For the ferm-cheil's sake, He'd spare  
Then, syne, He vanished like a cloud  
An bonfires cleansed the air

Takk tent gin yer shadda should iver cross  
A heich black chiel wi a scythe  
He has nae peety for man nor maid  
Roon his belt hing the scalps o Life

#### 7. Tiidu the Flute Player (an Estonian Legend)

A puir man wi a rowth o bairns, had ane  
Caad Tiidu, lazy clort tae the backbane  
An naethin else aa day he'd rather dee  
Than frae a pipe tweet skirps o musardie

Ae day a bodach hirpled by his yett  
An speired on fit darg Tiidu's hairt wis set  
The laddie said the twa things he wad be  
War tae be rich, an aywis tae be free

The bodach coonselled syne tae leave his hame  
Tae play his pipe an thus tae gaither fame  
An siller, jist eneuch tae buy a flute  
An baith his mortal wishes wad bear fruit

Fin Tiidu left, fowk didna miss him sair  
Richt sune he bocht his flute, bit wintit mair  
He'd heard the lan o Kungla hid great wealth  
An vowed he'd gain some, bi fair means or stealth

Frae Nazrva toun he sailed wioot a groat  
A sailor hid him, an they hatched a plot  
They tied a towe aroon his waist. He lowpt  
Intae the sea. The sailor raised the shout

The captain crossed hissel bit threw a line  
Tae save this chiel bob-bobbin in the brine  
Syne Tiidu cut the ither towe, an vowed  
He'd drifted oot tae sea aneth a cloud

Free passage aa the wye! He played his flute  
An reached Kungla, its splendours aa spreid oot  
Taen on as kitchie loon. A stammygaster  
Swine supped frae siller pails jist like their maister

An fin the maister' s bairn reached christenin age  
Tiidu wi ither servants, swalled his wage  
Wi claes o richest sheen the Mistress gaed  
Sae aa nicht share her blitheness, an be gled

Intae a pleisur gairden he did stray  
His frien the bodach priggitt him tae play  
His flute... an quick a boorich gaithered roon  
His musardie wis Tiidu's greatest boon

He sailed for hame, bit a great storm brakk  
His ship, his gowd his gear aa gaed tae wrakk  
Beached on an isle, his closest thochties turned  
On faimily an the parents he had spurned

He spied a tree wi aipples ruby reid  
An feastit on them, dullin hunger's need  
Syne slept aneth its boughs an raise at noon  
Tae visit a swete spring an hunkered doon

Bit luikin in the watter...sic a shock!  
His neb, like wattles o a bubblyjock  
Hung blae an lang, till spyin a wee tree  
0 nuts, he ate. His snoot shrank speedily

Thon magic nuts an aipples, Tiidu stored  
A passin boatie liftit him on board  
An back tae Kungla's coort he made his wye  
There, selt the aipples. Watched snoots growe agley

He dressed himsel like a physeecian chiel  
Fed them the nuts, an watched them aa growe weel  
Frae this fey smitt, for curin coort an king  
They shooered him wi gowden gear an ring

Tiidu sailed hame. Shared wi his fowk his gear

An merriet a young lassie, fair bit puir  
An in the bridal chaumer, fand a kist  
Wi shipwacked ferlies ower great tae list  
A paper stapped inside it, writ in black  
'A leal son earns aa his treisurs back. '

8. The Auld Wife Sat bi the Fire: North East Folk song from the poet's grandmother

The auld wife sat bi the fire  
Naebody nigh for tae spy her  
Naebody nigh bit an auld tom cat  
Sae she liftit her petticoats higher.

The tom cat saw somethin nyaaki  
For a moose or a rat he did tak it  
An he took ae spring at the auld wife's thing  
An fearfully did shakk it

9. Charlie Chatts: North East Rhyme from the poet's grandmother

Charlie Chatts he milkit the cats  
An Gollachy made the cheese  
An wee Willie White Breeks  
Fleggit awa the bees

10. Extract from Papaless and the Greedy Troll (Faroese legend)

An orphan loon caad Papaless  
Wi twa brithers bedd in a wid  
An fin the brithers cut doon the trees  
He cooked as best's he cwid

Ae day fin the eldest bedd at hame  
A puir auld chiel cam by  
Chapped at the door, an chitterin wi cauld  
Speired tae sit at the fire tae dry

Wee he wis, an ugsome tae  
His beard huug doon tae his knees  
He spied the stew-pot on the byle  
Quo he, 'Micht I taste some please? '

The brither tuik peety on this puir sowel  
Gaed him breid tae soak up the bree  
Fin the wee man' d suppit the tasty stew  
He swalled up three times three

For he wis a Troll, an a roosie ane  
He socht aa the stew an breid  
He focht wi the brither, an hurt him sair  
Tae crawl tae a neuk hauf deid

11. Cave, Cave, Deus Videt: Beware, Beware, God Sees  
(On Hieronymus Bosch's Garden of Earthly Delights)

Judgement, Glory, Daith an Hell  
Thus are men brocht tae their knees  
Bi the Seeven Deidly Sins  
Tak tent, tak tent, God sees

Here, a deevilock shaws a quine  
Wadded tae her keekin glaiss  
There's a chiel about tae kill  
A quine, throwe rage an beastliness

Angels wauken up the deid  
Misers byle in pots o gowd  
Deevil's wye a sinner's sowel  
Skeletons shakk aff the shroud

Judgement, Glory, Daith an Hell  
Thus are men brocht tae their knees  
Bi the Seeven Deidly Sins  
Tak tent, tak tent, God sees

12. Gavin Greig (1856-1914)

Born at Parkhill in the cauld North East  
In Februar' s snaa an gales  
He wis sib on his mither' s side tae Burns  
Wi a love o forgotten tales

On his faither's side he wis sib tae Grieg  
Fa won Norwegian hairts

Kent as the Chopin o the North  
Twa kinsmen... different airts

In Norway, Grieg saved peasant sangs  
In Buchan, Greig adored  
The ballads o ferm an tinkler chiel  
Baith biggit a music hoard  
Sae here's tae Buchan an Norroway  
An the tunes an the sangs men sing  
May there ay be fowk tae cherish them  
Fitiver the years micht bring

13. The Milky Wye: an Estonian Legend  
Sune eftir aa the warld wis born  
Lindu, Auld Uko's bonnie dother  
Wis chairged wi watchin ower the birds  
An cared for them like any mither

Aabody socht tae win her haun  
Sae fair wis she, sae fu o grace  
The North Win brocht her presents ten  
She ordered him tae keep his place

An neist the Meen in siller coach  
Brocht twinty gifties for her favour  
'Ye aywis rin the same auld road  
Will I wad ye? The answer's niver'

The Sun drave up wi gowden coach  
Wi thirty presents rare an fine  
Tae nae avail, she turned him aff  
His woin dinna please the quine

Syne in a diamond coach there cam  
Wi rowth o gifts, the Northern Licht  
Won Lindu 's hairt wi scarce a wurd  
Sae pleisunt wis he tae her sicht

They war betrothed...he gart her makk  
Aa ready for their bridal nicht  
An back tae Midnight, than great Lord

In glitterin greens an blues tuik flicht

Sae lang awa wis he, she murned  
An grat, till birds forgot her name  
An Uko, hearin o her grief  
Ordered the wins tae bear her hame

Noo she's becam the Milky Wye  
Her bridal train's in Heiven sae blue  
She guides the traivels o the birds  
An tae the Northern Licht bides true

#### 14. The Egg-Born Princess: Estonian Legend

Langsyne there wis a bairnless queen  
Fas king wis aff in furreign wars  
A carlin-wife chapped at her door  
Wi ferlies fey in pyokes an jars

She gaed the queen a teenie kist  
O birk, wi a wee egg inbye  
Three months tae haud it at her breist  
Till a live dall should hatch an cry

Maun bide till grown tae new-born size  
Nae maet nor drink should she be gien  
Bit keepit warm's a June sunrise

Nine month eftir this quinie's birth  
A human son the queen wad hae  
The king wad tell the citizens  
That twins war born than fatefu day

The queen maun suckle her real loon  
A weet nurse, feed the dallie-dother  
The carlin-wife, be her godmither  
Summoned at will bi a bird feather

An on the christenin day, the plume  
Raised up the carlin-wife, richt chynged  
Intae a beauty wi a coach  
Drawn bi sax yalla shelts, gowd-ryned

She tuik the princess in her airms  
'Rebuliina shall be her name'  
An caad the young prince Villem, syne,  
An aa the coortiers did the same

She warned the queen she maun keep safe  
Eggshells an feather in the case  
Bit fin the queen grew seek an deed  
A stepmither stude in her place

Nae skaith tae Rebuliina cam  
Her godmither luiked ower her weel  
Till war cam tae the stricken lan  
Villem escaped bi manly zeal

The princess, tho, bi magic turned  
Intae a hermless peasant lassie

An wi her kistie, wannered aff  
Taen in tae be a fermer's skiffie

A lady traivellin in thon airt  
Tuik Rebuliina for her maid  
Fin war wis ower, the prince wis King  
Back tae the toon the lassie gaed

An fin a year wis ower an gaen  
Mournin his fowk killt in the strife  
The new King vowed he' d hae a feast  
An chuse a bride tae share his life

Rebuliina wi dowie hairt,  
Riggit her mistress, dothers three  
Syne sat an grat wersh tears o wae  
Till, myndin on the kistie wee

She wyved the feather, aa wis cheenged!  
Braw claes, gowd coach aa glimmerin  
Bit hauf wye tae than feast o feasts  
She myned she'd left the kist ahin

A spurgie brocht it tae her side  
She won the castle, sat tae dine  
The King wi winnerment luiked on  
Dumfounert at this bonnie quine

Fin midnicht cam the thunner roared  
The godmither appeared wi speed  
An telt the king this lassie fair  
His sister wis, bit nae by bluid

An sae they merriet, bit the kist  
Bi eildritch wirk wis wheeched awa  
Bit happy iver eftir they  
Lived oot their lives in Royal haa.

#### 15. The Stottin Cats (Kattenstoat, Ypres, Belgium)

Minnieke Poes is a muckle puss  
That wauks the streets in the Kattenstoet  
Fin cats are flang frae the Claith Haa touer  
Bi a Feel, doon tae the meltin pot

O fowk rigged oot as witches o auld  
Fin spells war spukken an cauldrons steered  
An Cats war the Deevil's special friends  
Familiars, pouerfu, fierce an feared

Think o the soss an the mieuws o fricht  
Aabody kens cats dinna stott  
Bit noo, instead o a 1eevin puss  
They haive toy cats at the Kattenstoet

#### 16. Gyte: A Scots Owerset o tile poem 'Funny', bi Anna Kamienska

Fit's it like to be a human?  
the bird speired

I masel dinna ken  
it's bein held prisoner bi yer skin while reachin the Aybydan  
bein snibbit in bi yer skirp o time while touchin the Aybydan  
bein fooshionlessly uncertain an fooshionlessly hopefu



bein a preen o cranreuch an a haunfu o heat sookin inthe air  
an chokin wurdlessly  
it's bein in a lowe  
wi a nest vrocht o aisse  
ettin breid  
while fillin up on hunger  
it's deein wioot love  
it's lovin throwe daith

Thon's gyte, quo the bird  
an flew effortless up inno the air

17. The Body Snatchers  
A humfy-backit aiblich deed  
An Shotty wis his name

Bi Drumoak kirk they beeriet him  
In his last yirdy hame

Bit wurd won oot an reached the toon  
Syne bodysnatchers rade  
Wi gig an shelt bi the meenlicht  
Tae ply their orra trade

The local fowk sent for the smith  
A Peterculter chiel  
On a faist shelt he caughted them up  
An newsed them up wi zeal

Until assistance wis at haun  
Syne speired 'Fit's in yer sack? '  
The men tuik fleg an Shotty 's corp  
In's grave twis plunkit back

Sheena Blackhall

# The Migration Of Mother's Clothes

Every spring my mother's winter clothes  
Began their migration to the loft

Her leather gloves,  
Like dead swifts' folded wings  
Were laid to rest in the press

Her fur lined boots,  
Like skinned caribou calves  
Trekking to the attic floor

Her hats of astrakhan and musquash trim  
Were borne up the chilly stairs to their Arctic mausoleum

Her mink coat huddled with its wool and tweedy brethren  
In the gloomy entombment of the wardrobe

Up there in the dark, they were wiped from the mind's slate  
The fickle body forgot them  
Turned to the breezy pleasures of linen, cotton, nylon, polyester

Up there in the dark, they sulked through summer in shadow  
Breathed in mothballs like Lazarus, awaiting resurrection

Sheena Blackhall

# The Millennium Clock (In Scots)

Raxxin up like a mediaeval kirk  
10 metres heich an mair, it merks the time  
Shawin the 20th century's best an warst

The crypt's fand at the foun o this touer-hoose  
An aunciend speerit carved frae aik bides thonner  
Alang wi a fey puggie, hingin breistit  
The puggie gars the clock's mechanics birl

Daith as a skeleton striddles a keekin glaiss  
This is the nave- ugsome reflections splay  
O Lenin, Stalin, Hitler -despots aa -betimes  
A Chaplin figure lichtens the era's crimes

The Belfry hauds the clock an requiem  
Twal bodies vrocht tae represent each month  
As weel's the waes that gar aa mankind grue  
War, slavery, stervation, persecution  
The clock's physog is skyrie coloured glaiss

The spire is teem, barrin a single bell  
Richt at its pynt's a waesome-like Pièta  
Johann Sebastian Bach's dowie concerto  
A minor, sets the mood for sombre thocht

Five maister makkars vrocht this muckle touer  
Kinetic sculptor, clock-makker, glaiss artist  
Illustrator an a skeelie jyner, their darg o pouer  
Gars public staun, think on the weird they'll dree  
The clock birrs on, like a fey threnody

Sheena Blackhall

# The Mind Archive

My mind is murmur-filled with perches  
For little lines of swallows  
Such as the squelchy day you caught that fish,  
Your mouth gone melon happy

Sometimes I hear your feet  
Thudding up the path to an old house  
Its flowers long perished,  
Sonorous, then, with bees

A laugh can whirl me round  
To a disappointment  
And then I sit and polish your photo-face  
Buffing it thin,  
As if behind the lens you still stand watching

Could I lure you back with chants and incantations?  
Could I drop crumbs back to life  
Through the crunching years?

Sometimes, memories break the dam of defences  
I'm flooded into the reeds, where Moses rocked  
No solace even there, the heron stalking  
A menacing steeple, raising his piercing beak

The Winter air is dry, the loch gleams darkly  
Another dreary day drags darkly by.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Mink (Bairn Rhymes) (33 Scots Poems)

## 1. The Doric Alphabet

A is fur aipple that faas fae a tree  
B is fur buttery, wi twa wings tae flee  
C is fur coatie ye weir fin it's cauld  
D is fur Deirdre, a wee cloutie dall

E is fur Elly, the egg o a dyeuk  
F is fur forkietail hid in a neuk  
G is fur goosers, they're wersh in the moo  
H is fur hoolet fa cries wit-too-woo

I's fur Iona, an isle oot at sea  
J's fur a Jenny-wren, jinkie's can be  
K is fur Kenneth McAlpine, a king  
L's fur a lass wi a bricht gowden ring

M is fur midden the flees heeze abeen  
N's fur an erne's nest...leave it aleen  
O is fur orangies, squeeze them fur juice  
P's fur the pammerin o mice in the hoose

Q is fur queuin..it niver seems quick  
T is fur tattie soup, sappy an thick  
U's an umbrelly ye need in the weet  
V's fur the violet sae bonnie an sweet

W's fur the win that can boo the hare bell  
X is fur xylophone, gie it a knell  
Y's fur the yalla breem up on the brae  
Z's fur the zoo far the parakeets play!

## 2. The Violent Poem

I'm a violent poem. I lue thrissles  
I dinna like violets nor daffs  
I like stoosies, stramashes an fechtin  
An batterin wee haddies fur laughs

I'm a violent poem. I like fechtin  
An scrattin an gougin oot een  
I've an ASBO fur bullyin sonnets  
An blooterin odes wi a steen

The haikus aa rin fin they see me  
I'm tattooed frae ma dowp traе ma broo  
Ma lugs are baith stap-fu o piercins  
I've got ten pynty teeth in ma moo

I dinna spikk saftly nor fuser  
I flech an I gob an I roar  
I'm thinkin o cheengin ma address  
Wid ye bide, if I kick doon yer door?

### 3. Jinty the Traivellin Man

I'm Jinty the traivellin man  
I bide in a transit van  
I'll redd up yer gutter  
An save ye the scutter  
I'm Jinty the traivellin man

I'm Jinty the traivellin man  
Ma kettle's an auld tin can  
Yer gairden I'll tar  
Or I'll service yer car  
I'm Jinty the traivellin man

I'm Jinty the traivellin man  
Ma pairtner is Mary Anne  
Jist haud oot yer haun  
An yer fortune she'll scan  
I'm Jinty the traivellin man

### 4. The Rugby Player

Connor Wabster's favourite game  
Is rowin in the dubs

Heid doon in a rugby scrum  
Wi pechs an dunts, an rugs

His mither disnae cam tae watch  
She thinks that rugby's roch  
Her Connor turns the bath watter  
As broon's a cattle troch

'Connor... hame tae tea! ' she skirled  
'Yer lugs are affa big! '  
Bit fin she lookit closer  
Twisnae Connor bit a pig!

### 5. Sawney Bean

There wis a Scottish cannibal  
His name wis Sawney Bean  
He didna dine aff smokies  
Or troots frae Pittenweem

He didna ett fajitas  
Or feast on curries hett  
He hunted passin towrists  
He caughted them in his net

He roasted the Americans  
Stir-fried the Japanee  
He pickled fowk frae Ullapool  
He biled fowk frae Dundee

An some he tinned for eftirs  
Or crisped them, fine an flat  
Fur tasty snacks ower winter  
Nae winner he wis fat!

### 6. The Vulcan Pupil

I'm a Vulcan pupil  
Ma faither's Mr. Spock  
An if I canna space wauk

He says he'll skelp ma dock

I'm a Vulcan pupil  
Wi twa green pynty lugs  
Ma tribe are aa descendit frae  
A pair o Vulcan bugs

I'm a Vulcan pupil  
Ma neb is bogie-free  
Cause I breath frae ma bum cheeks  
I'm different, ye see.

### 7. Humpty Dumpty

Humpty Dumpty gaed tae the toon  
Tae buy a pair o knickers  
The anely thing that fittit him wis  
A line o sparkly stickers

### 8. The Plastic Surgeon

I sook bits oot, I stap bits in  
Makk thin fowk fat,  
Makk fat fowk thin  
An fur a fee I cheenge yer smile  
Wi gnashers fite tae gie ye style  
I rug te wrnkles aff yer broo  
I plump yer lips sae that yer moo  
Looks like a troot or mummy's mask  
I'm skeely at thon beauty task  
An flush the leftowers doon the drain  
Bit beauty's wirth a bittie pain

### 9. On the Plane

The plane connection's rinnin late  
The trolley dolly's oot on strike  
Volcanic ash flees by like rikk  
It's faister gaun tae Spain bi bike



We've sat strapped in fur fifteen oors  
Nae sweeties, juice, nae toys for play  
Next year, please ma, can we bide hame  
An holiday in Montrose Bay?

#### 10. ~~J~~essie the Jumbo

I'm Jessie the Jumbo, I'm up fur a dare  
I'm fond o balloonin hyne up in the air

I sky dive, I snorkel, I skateboard each day  
I scuba dive, paraglide iver sae gay

I'm nae easy fleggit. I luv fin the win  
Gaes wheech ben ma lugs fin I gyang fur a spin

#### 11. ~~S~~tuntman Rick the Ratten

Stuntman Rick's a ratten  
He lowps frae bleezin cars  
He gets shot doon bi gangsters  
He blaas up bombs in wars

He's nae like ither rattens  
As orra as can be  
He weirs ticht Gucci troosers  
An spikks on the TV

#### 12. ~~H~~eids or Tails

Malcolm the secunt wis murderet at Glamis  
Duncan wis killt bi Macbeth  
Alexander the third hytered aff o a cliff  
Leprosy brocht Bruce's daith

At Perth James the first he wis murderet  
His son met a rale bluidy fate  
A cannon explodit aside him

An turned him tae maggots maet

James the third, he wis woundit in battle  
An socht oot the help o a priest  
Fa wisna a fan...wi a dirk in his haun  
He steekit it richt in his breast!

James the fourth led his army at Flodden  
He wis mincemeat e'er battle wis deen  
Queen Mary o Scots wis beheidit  
Fa'd staun in a sovereign's sheen?

### 13. Assembly

I'm sittin at Assembly  
The fleer is hard an cauld  
I've sat fur 40 meenits  
An I'm anely 5 years auld

A wasp's crawled up ma troosers  
I wint tae skirl an rin  
The teacher's glowerin at me  
I've tae haud the skirl in

The heidie's giein prizes  
We aa sit up tae see  
Ben Duthie's got a medal  
I'm burstin fur a pee! ! !

We're staunin fur the singin  
We've sang...we're shufflin oot  
It's brakk time. Far's ma playpiece?  
Nae anither daud o fruit!

### 14. Big Bad Wolves

Big Bad Wolves are makkin a comeback  
Ilkie pack has a government warnin  
Has yer tortie or cattie gaen missin?

Big Bad Wolves can be sleekit an charmin

They'll chap at yer door an they'll tell ye  
They're the gas board tae check oot the scheme  
Bit ithers will sneak roon yer backie  
An rin aff wi yer new trampoline!

#### 15. The Coorse Crocodile

Crocodile, crocodile, foo dae ye smile?  
I hinna seen granny nor ma fur a while  
I hope ye've a dose o the skitters an bile  
Fur ettin ma family, coorse crocodile!

#### 16. The Wannerin Win

Far are gaun tae, wannerin win?  
The far side o Cathay  
Roon far the pirates eesed tae sail  
For the pearls o Botany Bay

Fit are the souns that fill fill yer lug?  
The plink o a raindrap's faa  
The crack o a monsoon thunnerstorm  
The sough fin I drive the snaa

Fit sights dae ye see, upon yer wye  
As ye traivel lan an tide?  
Oh that I had braid wings like yours  
Tae reenge the world wide!

#### 17. The Peinter

I'm the fairy that peints the flooer beds  
Reid, yalla, siller, gowd  
I peint the leaves in autumn  
Fin the birk trees showdy-powd

Bit the rain dreeped in ma peintbox

Ma colours ran again  
Their grey an broon an purple  
Noo I'll hae tae peint the glen!

#### 18. Tweedledum & Tweedledee

Tweedledum an Tweedledee  
Took the train doon tae Dundee  
Jist tae ett the famous pies  
Drooned in gravy an French fries

Bit the pies war aa selt oot  
Aa they got wis pickelt troot  
It lowped aff the plate an ran  
Back tae jyne the fishy clan!

#### le Twinkle

Twinkle twinkle jeely car  
Bides inside ma sweetie jar

First I'll ett the driver's seat  
Wheels an bumper...fit a treat!

Noo ma teeth hae holes tae bore  
I dinna think I'll ett the door

#### 19. Incy Wincy Wyver

Incy Wincy Wyver  
Climmed up the bathroom plug  
Doon cam a dreep  
An it landit on her lug

Alang cam a cloot,  
Shook her oot the windae pane  
An Incy Wincy Spider's  
In the wheelie bin again!

Fee fi fo fum  
Fa can help me dae this sum?

20 wasps an twenty flees  
Bizz aroon a heron's knees

Fa can coont the total oot  
Fin they're heezin roon aboot?

, Crackle, Pop

Snap Crackle an Pop, we're three hoolets  
We'll nae ett a paddock or moose  
Rice Crispies or Cornflakes oor supper...  
Wi a nebfu o fine orange juice.

Syne we sit on oor branch in the meenlicht  
An we sing karaoke till dawn  
Snap Crack an Pop, we're three hoolets  
We're vegan, an fond o a sang

in

We're flittin the morn an I'm scunnert  
I ken the new hoose'll be queer  
I winna ken nane o the neebors  
An aathin will be in a steer

I've spukken aboot it tae Teddy  
An he thinks the same thing as me  
If it's fooshty, we winna be bidin  
Bit da an ma'll hae tae leave, tee!

Green Puddocks

Ten green puddocks, lowpin ben the waa x3  
An if ae green puddock,

Should play at heid the baa  
Aa the ither green paddocks  
Will heid the baa an aa

Mole: traditional

I'm a mole, fol-de-roll  
I'm a mole an I bide doon in ma hole

Wi ma little furry coat  
Roon ma heid, ma bum, ma throat  
I am ower deep doon tae show it in ma hole.

Tattiebogle

A craas amang the tatties  
I'll wag ma airms aboot  
Makk on that I'm a monster  
An flegg the nesty brute

A moose bides in ma pooches  
He rins aroon ma sark  
I like tae him near me  
Especially in the dark!

on

Wheech...I'm lowse. I'm up in the air  
Heicher an heicher an heicher I flee  
Ower the wids, the kirk an the toon  
Naebody, naebody's gaun tae catch me!

Hampster

Hetty Hampster staps her mou  
Her chooks are like twa melons  
An fin her feedin dish is full  
She disna need twa tellins.

She rins aboot her wheel at nicht  
Wi supersonic speed  
A wee bionic hamster  
Fuelled bi watter, nuts an seed

## 28. Lingle Lingle

Lingle lingle lang tang  
Oor cat's deid  
He skytit aff the garage  
An he laundit on his heid

We arenae gaun tae beery him  
We're cheerin up his wives  
They ken oor cat'll live again  
Cause cats hae seven lives!

Jakey Jinky  
Wee Jakey Jinky rins roon the toon  
Deliverin the papers, he's an affa busy loon

He's chappin at the front yett  
An on the windae pane  
Here's yer bairnies' comics  
Takk them in afore the rain!

## 30. Tae Embro

Tae Embro, tae Embro at Festival Time  
There's ice cream an pokey hats...staun in the line!  
There's dauncers an puppeteers, mummers sae rare  
There's buskers an drummers in the open air

Tae Embro tae Embro tae climm Arthur's seat  
For Arthur's awa..takk the wecht aff yer feet  
An play hide an seek, or a wee game o bools  
Or veesit the castle an see Scotlan's jewels!

### 31. The Mink

I'm a mink, I'm a mink  
An I hate a sink  
Soapie Watter gars me cowk  
I've a plook on ma snoot  
An ma lugs grow fruit  
An I pick ma taes an howk

I'm a bogie machine  
An I've nae bin clean  
Since I wis anely three  
I fairly hum like a fooshty plumb  
I'm as ripe as midden bree

I'm a mink, I'm a mink  
An I makk a stink  
That could clear a beach or twa  
Bit ma best frien Dean  
Is a mink frae Gretna Green  
As he thinks I'm jist braa

### Rescue Brigade

Aloysius, Archie an Pudsey  
Sooty an Winnie the Poo  
Are huntin the neuks an the crannies  
O toy box an garage an zoo  
For aa o the run-awa teddies  
That's lost, or forgot, or alane  
They find them new ainers an hoosies  
Sae aabodies' happy again!

### 33. Cluckingham Palace

There is a Saxon steeple  
It isna fu o fowk  
Its fu o hens an roosters  
Fa cluck an flap an howk



They snap up aa their seedies  
Fur they lay the Royal eggs  
The dyeukies are fair jealous...  
Their hames are in the seggs

Sheena Blackhall

# The Minotaur

If I ever saw a Minotaur,  
I know I'd cut him dead  
He eats young girls for breakfast...  
Oh, he's terribly ill bred

It isn't that he eats them...  
(They're his diet, so he must)  
But he doesn't use a napkin,  
And he don't cut off the crust.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Mongolian Spot Et Al (11 Poems)

Museum of Curious Objects, San Marino

Loiter in St Marino's curious museum  
Admire Venetian aristos' platform shoes  
Stilt-walker high, should flood tides try to wet them

Eureka! A watch to wear at the end of your nose  
Come, gawp at glasses made for cross eyed people  
A petrol-powered hair drier that stinks and blows

Moustache cups, neat for moustaches spired like a steeple  
(Dali's variety's Spanish, most Surreal  
Chaplin and Hitler- a toothbrush under each nostril

Captured minds and hearts with their crowd appeal  
Neitzche sported a gloomy walrus outgrowth  
Stalin's handlebars showed a face of steel  
Oh, the pencil moustaches of Errol Flynn, Clark Gable  
Made ladies sigh and swoon beneath the table!

A flea trap might possibly catch your fleeting eye  
The world's largest crab, or the tallest man  
An umbrella whip for a carriage, nice and spry

The world's longest nails were Indian  
Shridhar Chillal, his nails like spirals curling.

See the weird electric device, a cunning plan  
Stopping teenage boys from masturbating

Madonna's credit card's absent...an omission  
The Elephant's man's own items can't be found  
No Dennis the Menace comic. No magician  
Such as Houdini's props, all world renowned

You'll find no Jack the Ripper's relics here  
But much that's weird, mysterious and queer

r  
Hiccupping frogs land in the palm of the earth  
Under poppies, red as stigmata

Two snot filled boys on a bench  
Swop punch-lines, secrets, scabs

Wasps suck on the cherry tree's nipples  
Honesty's wearing its lacy summer frock

How much blue can one sky hold  
Before the darkness comes?

3.(for Manjusvara)  
There is only one human story: it ends in leaving  
That summer I cupped my hands  
To catch the mellifluous wisdom of bees

An eagle soared over Loch Voile  
But no-one noticed

It set you in its sight  
Coming, ready or not it croaked,  
In the playtime speech of childhood

The day was perfect in that hilly, happy land  
Glimmering with petals and birds  
The dappled grass, bright with jade green beetles  
You couldn't have picked a better day to die

4. Into Darkness  
I walked one night beneath the winter stars  
The frosty dews of dark lay wet and grey  
Where the sick moon looked ghastly on the wood  
As if a death-blow might unseat its sway

And every thought was chilly as the loch  
Where Malachi became the black reed's catch  
An innocent, one slip and all was done  
The water swallowed him in one quick snatch

I had forgotten him until that hour  
Loss brings its own attendants, grief and pain  
We get one crack at youth, its shining days  
And life, once spilled does not return again

y  
Finlay the cat is an author  
He has oodles of 'Je ne sais quoi'  
He features on poetry book covers  
With a studious air of sang-froid

At readings, a most astute critic  
Although he appears to be dead  
He is listening to each single cadence  
As a poet, he's very well read

If he thinks a performance is gruelling  
He stalks from the room quite aloof  
With his tail held as stiff as a poker  
While rolling his eyes to the roof

He's been heard to purr loudly at Ginsberg  
Walt Whitman, Chrys Salt and Ted Hughes  
But beware of his claws during rappers  
On which he holds quite catty views

His approach is quite concrete and visual  
He's been praised for his flair and his nowse  
In the garden, it's quite elegiac  
The way he unwraps a dead mouse

Yes, Finlay the cat is a poet  
A cat melancholic, true Gael  
But to book him, you must use his agent  
Otherwise he'll say 'talk to the tail'

Commonwealth  
What is the Commonwealth? Who Lives there?  
54 Countries, Hot and Cold

Rich and poor lands, wet and dry  
Some of them new and others old

All speak English, all are friends  
We meet together from hills and plains  
Commonwealth nations it's Scotland's turn  
This year, to welcome them for the Games

India, Kenya Australia, Wales  
New Zealand, Canada, just a few  
Of Commonwealth nations round the world  
Some of their tales we'll share with you

Hungry School  
Everyone's heard of the Hungry School  
It isn't clever, it isn't cool  
Middleton Park will show the way  
To keep it trim in an eco-way  
Plastic bottles should stay together  
Recycle them all whatever the weather  
At dinner time please don't fill your plate  
With things you'll leave that you really hate

Keep your paper to use again  
Reusing scores ten out of ten  
Turn off the computer, switch off the light  
That is the rule to get things right  
Work together to save the planet  
If you see waste be sure to ban it

to a Mongolian Spot  
Has your child a Mongolian spot?  
A bruise or a stain it is not  
It is smoky and blue  
As a violet, it's true  
But it's only a birthmark she's got!

Inspired by the sculpture of Jackie Kay, a bronze head by Michael Snowden

## Red Bordeaux

It's not the knee, it is the heart that's grazed  
By words like sticks and stones, flung at the pane  
Of a Scots childhood. Racist chants declaim  
That pink or white's the colour to be praised  
So thoughts must stray where lion cubs are raised,  
Such twists along the DNA blood-chain  
And yet, and yet, the Scots words came to sain  
An soothe the cot where that loved child was lain

Identity, lost paths, lost tongues those themes  
All in that fertile mind, find space to grow  
Lost love, the winds that scatter infant dreams  
The child birth parents did not choose to know  
Like grapes, from pitch-black earth, comes red bordeaux

Inspired by the Installation The Rowan is Learning to write.  
The Rowan is Learning to Write: photograph by Robin Gillanders from a stone in  
Little Sparta, the garden of the sculptor, Ian Hamilton Finlay

The rowan is learning to write.  
Her leaves are moving shadows,  
Like bird plumes etching a stone

The rowan is learning to write  
Her berries are commas  
Pausing between the winds  
The rowan is learning to write  
Italics, of course,  
She is composing a charm  
To banish witches

House of the Russian Dolls  
Two jigsaw pieces dropped behind the bed  
A teddy posted through the scanner lid  
A lollipop in fluff beside the fridge  
A bin that's full of nappies, poems, junk mail

Cuddles with two wriggling giggling toddlers  
Snail-trail of incense by the household Buddha

Tiny handprints patterning the windows  
A trampoline beneath the drying washing

Four redundant smoke free chimneypots  
A bumble bee zigzagging, drunk on dew  
Three ghosts of hamsters live beneath the hedge  
A three-legged tom cat spraying April's daffs

Two glossy magpies eyeing up the kitchen  
A jar of thirsty dandelions drinking  
Chopsticks drying by the knives and forks  
Baby squid as small as Quan Âm's tears \*

Daughter-in-law combs down her Zen black hair  
A plastic duck is bobbing in the bath  
My grow-up son recovers my lost glasses  
Alex Salmond smiles from the TV

Time's turned me into a slowly plodding tortoise  
Uplifted by the joyful whoops of children

\*Quan Âm is the Vietnamese Goddess of Compassion

Sheena Blackhall



# The Moon Speaks

I sometimes wish the earthling had not come.  
When he first landed, I did not like him at all.  
He reassured me he only wished to explore  
With the minimum of disturbance.  
Then you see, I began to grow accustomed  
To his presence.

Until I felt his foot on my cracked surface  
I had not realized my limits nor my vastness  
I had not known what sharing was about.

Even in silence, I felt his cupped breathing  
Gently fluttering in one of my many craters  
I learned to withdraw my rays to let him rest.

But he should have said... it was cruel, cruel, not to  
That earthlings wither quickly, a moment's warmth.  
Now I endure, as I have always endured  
Staring into the eyes of the terrible stars  
Watching the earth for signs of a second coming.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Moon-Pulled Sea

Dreaming at midnight by the moon pulled sea  
Dark pebbles mouth their melancholy tales  
Each one has crossed the Rubicon of death  
Has known the keening of the ghosts of whales

The sucking sand drags shells to the unknown  
Sinking like coffin nails in the dead day  
And thought rolls over in the bone white mind  
Nudged by the shroud of sea mist and tide spray

Sheena Blackhall

# The Mountain Hare

Every night when I was wed  
In my mind's eye, in my wishful head  
I'd leave my man in the marriage bed  
And dance like a mountain hare

When day was done and the small things said  
The dishes dried and the papers read  
I would lie in the house like a thing half dead  
Till I danced like a mountain hare

When was the second I knew love fled?  
When I hung on a hook like a shot deer, bled  
And my heart stopped still like a ball of lead  
Till I danced like a mountain hare

For the bounds of life had shrunk to a shed  
Spidery-dark, with a noose-like thread  
Where ill-will glutted by grievance fed  
No place for a mountain hare  
I would wish each wife who lies in dread  
Waiting the creak on the stairs, the tread  
Of the mate who shares her daily bread  
The joy of the mountain hare

Up where the setting sun burns red  
To run like the wind, with the whole world spread  
Under your feet, to freedom bred  
The flight of the mountain hare

Sheena Blackhall

# The Muse Is Like

A dog, shaking a cloth to shiver its timbers  
A hare come in from the woods with glowing eyes  
My shadow in the form of a griffin  
A small excitable child crying 'Now! Now! Now! '  
The pod where peas lie hatching  
My dreaming self, the one that holds the pen  
The muse is male, a proper Spring Heeled Jack

Sheena Blackhall

# The Musical Toaster

I sing English folksong to Hovis  
And Wagner to German rye bread  
When it's waffles, I hum them some ragtime  
Or Blues, Jazz or Country instead

Welsh soda bread likes a nice hymn tune  
Scottish pan loaf responds to a reel  
When it's bagels, I warble in Yiddish  
As an extra to clinch the meal deal

If it's Greek I sing extracts from Zorba  
But Italian warms to Puccini  
Spanish loaf clicks with snappy flamenco  
To an Indian naan I chant Hindi

French toast thinks my Piaf's stupendous  
Irish step bread's so chunky it hinders  
The way that my temperature rises  
So I usually burn it to cinders

Sheena Blackhall

# The Narcissist

Along the narcissist's body  
Selfies break out like boils  
Coming to a head

Faces sprout in every direction  
The Twitter bird flits from ear to ear

Look at me, look at me it whispers  
Am I not adorable?

Sheena Blackhall

# The Neighbour

His Saxon wife had skin like alabaster  
He was a scientist- a brilliant mind  
Liked Bach. Despised pop dirge and ghetto blaster

He had a mistress, this was no disaster.  
She lived in Rome (he was the secret kind  
In Scotland, a good husband, honest master)

Couples have cracks, stay wed by using plaster  
To fool the world around, in street or wynd  
A lie once told next time is spoken faster.

It suited her to act as a pilaster  
She had her children, so she acted blind  
And for his soul, she'd say a pater noster

My father talked of gardens with this mister,  
A cultural bridge, all difference left behind  
The thistle and the rose, bluebell and aster

At Hogmanay, he gave him drink, a gesture  
Of goodwill, to this English gent, refined  
By learning, widely travelled, knowledge vaster  
Than ours, whose marriage was a small disaster.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Nobodies

One summer evening, walking along the river  
I imagined the children  
Other men could have given me.

What would they have looked like  
These nobodies,  
These airy non-contenders?

Like runners awaiting the starter  
In a race that never began

I imagined them as a moth imagines light  
Each pale half-face no cell had ever filled

In the woods, in the dark spaces  
I glimpse them from the corner of my eye  
My lost darlings, my coveted ones

I never brought their fathers to the sticking point  
Those shadowy Euridices,

Sometimes from the walls of night  
I hear the seductive echoes of their voices.

□

□

Sheena Blackhall



# The Ogre

When I walk on the sea, my stride is longer than Norway

Cruisers, tankers, frigates  
Sail under my legs, tiny as tuna

I drink in tides,  
Leave fish and small crabs beached for gulls to peck at  
The dew is my morning sweat on glistening Bens  
My furry chest is like a heather moor  
After a fire's passed through

My teeth are whiter than snow that lies on Everest

When I snore, Earth splits in two  
People tumble down cracks like sugar

I see eye to eye with the clouds.  
Starlings rest on my ears  
When I breath, skyscrapers strain to break their moorings

Sheena Blackhall

# The Ordinary Miracle

After a dish of porridge, a milky coffee,  
The sun being out for once  
I took a walk in the woods beside the river

The sun sent little boats along the water  
Like ferries carrying mirrors of pure gold

It was warm as melting butter,  
That in itself was a miracle in my Northland  
High on a knoll overlooking the rickshaw waves

I sat between a fir tree and a birch  
Needing to be nowhere or somewhere  
A floating moment of freedom

What happened next was this  
The birch leaves, elfin green,  
Danced in the sun like fireflies  
And as I looked, it seemed I disappeared  
Became, as it were, a nothing  
A speck of happiness, a part of a joyful Whole

It may have lasted seconds or an hour  
Then I was drawn again into my cell of flesh  
My flawed and ageing sack of bones and failings

The sun was still as warm, the river shining  
No blind man saw. No corpse rose from the dead  
An ordinary miracle, nothing to shift the spheres  
But there it sits, forever in my head

Sheena Blackhall

# The Owl At The End Of The Mind

Blinking its cloudy eyes  
The owl at the end of the mind  
Sits in its cowl of feathers  
A seer, crippled and blind

Its dainty beak is tipped  
With torn strips from the past  
Its head, a tethered Janus  
Has weathered winter's blast

The owl at the end of the mind  
Greets time with a loud 'Huzzah'  
Beyond the Domain of Reason  
It feasts on life's viscera

Sheena Blackhall

# The Owl Hour (9 Scots Poems, A Scots Cantata)

a Africa

Fower doors ben, new neebors.  
Immigrants. Black Africans.  
Foo are they fittin in?

Wytin fur the bus, he nods an grins  
Like he wints tae hug ye  
Like he'd gie ye his last penny

Ten meenits pass. Naebody's brukken the ice,  
An the bus, late.  
He's hummin, bumming awa in African  
Swingin back an forrit on his heels  
Like his jynts are swackenet bi ile.

Rain dreeps frae the reef doon knife-scoored glaiss  
Naebody cracks a smile.

Sabbath brings a line o limousines tae their front door  
Compatriots poor oot like movie stars  
Like it's a weddin...pittin on the style  
Wi hats an lipstick, jewellery, shiny sheen  
Their hale hoose shakks wi joyfu celebration

`At home, our meeting place might be a tree  
In some back yard. Your churches here are lovely  
Why are all the worshippers so old? '

Trauchlin up the braeheid in the derk  
Wechtit wi eerins, ilkie step a thocht  
I spied twa teenagers come skippin doon  
The verra age that like tae gie ye lip  
Or waur. I cooriet in tae let them by..  
`Madam, would you like we carry those? '  
Polite, respeckfu, ....I wis fair dumfounert  
Africa, Africa....halflins wi guid mainners?  
They hinna cottoned ontae British wyes..

## Classmates

At thirty, Ian wore a sodjer's sark  
The local weemin focht tae win, tae date him.  
Shined his buits tae perfection, liked a pint.  
Served in Iraq, bit niver met Saddam  
Flew ower tae Thailand fur some R an R.  
Sippit exotic cocktails on the beach.  
A wave ate him.

John hid in librars, tint hissel in buiks  
He'd the luik o a frichtit armadillo  
Grat oceans inno his pillow, had weet dreams  
Nae live lass socht him till he tuik up law.  
His life acquired a savour.  
The scales o justice tilted in his favour.

Neil, the classroom gowk, wad swear and fart.  
His school report card said, 'Neil lacks application'  
He had a ping-pong mind, a gallus air.  
A trolley-pusher for the NHS, he's a heid bummer noo  
Sometimes by accident, life gets ye there.

Dauncin Piper:

in memory of David Low: tune, Whistle Ower the Lave o't

March an fling, strathspey an jig  
Even the waves aneth the brig  
Lowped in time. Sae blithe an trig  
Wis the Dauncin Piper.

Lear that ye dinna learn in skweel  
Broon an Nicol taught him weel  
Royal the lilt in ilkie reel  
Played bi the Dauncin Piper.

Nae at Isla or Strathmore  
Ower the fermlans o Kintore  
Did ye hear the Ceol Mor  
O the Dauncin Piper?

He wis diddlin in his cot  
Tunes aince heard he ne'er forgot  
Naethin could caa him aff his stott  
Garioch's Dauncin Piper.

Fin he wore the scholar's sark  
Inverurie set its mark  
On the chiel - the life and wark  
O the Dauncin Piper.

Served wi Gordons' sodjer band  
Stinch tae their motto o Bydand  
Fa wis the finest in the Land?  
Low, the Dauncin Piper

Tcyauved wi halflins ithers shun  
Fu o virr wis he and fun  
Harns an hairts war easy won  
Bi the Dauncin Piper;

Dee as ye'll telt an ye'll be fine  
Thon war the wirds his pupils myne  
Teachers wi flair are ill tae tyne  
Like the Dauncin Piper.

He brocht cheer tae mony's the bride  
Swallin Scottish briests wi pride  
Maestro o fair Urie-side  
Wis the Dauncin Piper.

Hawks aneth Fyvie's castle waa  
Hung in the air tae hear him blaw  
Even the skreichin hoodie craa  
Lued the Dauncin Piper.

Ay the kilt wis his delicht  
Kittlit mony's the Ceilidh nicht  
Even Auld Cloutie lued the sicht  
O the Dauncin Piper.

Music, his passport ower the seas

Canada, Sydney, he could please.  
Fowk roon the far Antipodes  
Thrilled bi the Dauncin Piper

On the brods the lassies staun  
Sword an scabbard in the haun  
Kennin the music will be gran  
Fae the Dauncin Piper.

Sae, MacCrimmons, greet yer fier  
Pipin's tint its maister here  
Set a place an nae be sweir  
For the Dauncin Piper.

Road I didna Takk owersettin from 'The Road not Taken' by Robert Lee Frost

Twa roads forkt aff fae a yalla wid  
Sair I sikkit tae traivel baith  
A gyangin fit, yet bide I did  
Glowert doon ane as far as I cwid  
Tae far it bood in the girsy swathe.

Syne tuik the tither, as jist as braa  
An likely haein the better claim  
As it wis girssy, nae worn ava  
Tho as for thon, feet braid an sma  
Hid trod the baith o them near the same.

An baith thon foreneen equally lay  
In leaves nae step hid trampit black  
I keepit the first fur anither day  
Yet kennin foo wyes gang aft agley  
Dooted that ever I wad come back.

I shall be telling o this wi a sigh  
Ages syne as an auld greybeard  
Twa roads forkt in a wid an I  
I tuik the ane that less gyang by  
Yon wis the choice that cheenged ma weird

Braif Toun: Cantata based on the battle o Harlaw  
Words by Sheena Blackhall Music by James D. Reith.

Eerily, wearily rins the tide, washin the shores o a Norlan Toun  
Up in the sky far starnies bide, sleeps the meen in her siller gown.

Doon the derkness the Northern Lichts cast their magic on crest an flag Stepping  
ooto their civic frame, city unicorn, leopard, stag.

Sae in a nicht o stars an frost, the market cross like a caunle shines  
The unicorn stag an leopard lowp ootower the city's streets an wynds

They're the heralds o history tellin tales o bluid an sword  
Provost an tradesmen marched tae save Aiberdeen fae the Heilan horde

### Song of the Civic Beasts

A unicorn's hame is the cauld an weet,  
The hurly-burly o spire an street  
Wi the skirlin gull an the cushie doo..  
'Neigh' say I an the doo says 'Croo'

Aa the gossip an sklaik we hear,  
Tittle-tattle fae far an near  
Me, the gull an the cooshie doo..  
'Neigh' say I an the doo says 'Croo'

Fa's bin pilferin...fa's bin hired.  
Fa's bin promoted an fa's bin fired  
The gull finds oot, he's first in the queue..  
'Neigh' say I an the doo says 'Croo'□

Quarrymen, ploomen, fisher brides,  
We can tell far aabody bides  
Enter a provost's parlour noo..  
'Neigh' say I an the doo says 'Croo.'

### Provost an Wife

Foo can ye deal wi council ploys,



Kennin the morn ye lead the Trades  
Oot fae the toun tae fecht the foe,  
The Heilan horde wi their tartan plaids?

Wheesht guid wife wad ye hae them come  
Intae the toun tae raid us aa?  
Merchin ahin their pipes an drums?  
I maun meet them at Reid Harlaw.

Ye're the provost sir, bide at hame,  
Send the Trades tae the sodjers' game.  
Cauld's the promise o praise an fame,  
Tae greetin widows that sleep alane.

I could never sit quaet an see  
Heilan armies bi Don an Dee  
Pledges come wi the provost's gown.  
I maun buckle tae save the toun.

#### Tradesmen and Wives

Oh husbands maun ye leave us  
Tae learn the arts o war?  
There's breid an bannocks on the plate  
There's whiskey in the jar.

We've set doon the fishin net  
The haimmer an the saw  
We maun face the enemy  
Campin at Harlaw

Oh husbands ye hae bairnies  
That need a faither near  
Nae cairriet tae the kirkyaid  
Upon a sodjers' bier.

Ye maun wirk the leather, wives,  
Makkin doublets braw  
Keep the shuttles weavin.  
We're merchin on Harlaw.

## The Leopard an the Ladv

Lady sittin by the fireside  
I bring cheer an sorra baith  
For yer husband, oor dear Provost,  
Noo maun fill a sodjers' grave

Oh how peacefu is his visage!  
Sae he could be sleepin soun  
Never mair tae smile or please me,  
Aa tae succour this braif toun

Lady sittin by the fireside  
He will live in sang an tale  
For he chose a hero's endin,  
Martyred by the plunderin Gael.

Nevermair fin springtime breezes  
Pairt the buds on ilkie tree  
Will he walk, ma ain sweet luver,  
Bi the bonnie banks o Dee

Oh tae never hear his fitstep,  
Oh tae never ken his touch  
Aa tae gain a city's freedom.  
We hae won..an lost sae much! ☐

## Haar

The haar creeps up fae the herbour waa  
The days drain doon tae the lees  
The smush that lies in the braid North Sea  
Is the banes o history.

ture In Granite: commissioned for a film on the granite industry

Aiberdeen is the granite toun  
Her crest is carved in the brigs aroon  
Granite sculpture's in square and street

Far grace an glitter o mica meet

College an hoose in granite claes  
Will thole the weather for centuries  
Gray lion guairds the Cowdray Hall  
Oor stern war memorial.

Challengin win an rain an sleet  
Granite thrives on the wild an weet  
Ice may bite, storm howl aroon  
Granite's the armour o the toun

George, Duke o Gordon's civic lair's  
A plinth on busy Golden Square  
Watchin the world gae by, as grand  
As ony Pharoah in the sand  
First Colonel o that name weel-kent  
The Gordon Highland regiment

Twa hunner years this granite womb  
O Rubislaw gaed steens for tomb,  
For bank an hooses. Its grey sheen  
Shines oot frae hauf o Aiberdeen.

A platform, heich's an eagle's eyrie  
Owerlooks a drap baith deep an fearie  
The weety quarry boddom lies  
A mirror for the passin skies  
Five hunner feet's a lang wye doon  
Tae the green watter at the foun.□

The Blondin ropeway through the air  
Heists blocks o granite frae their lair.  
By Rubislaw quarry, fu' o' soun  
The granite wirkers mill aroon  
Far crans uplift each muckle slab  
That drillers, syne, can catch an grab  
Tae howk holes oot by force an shock  
Then, haimmer pegs tae split the block

At granite yaird mair steens await  
The larry drivin through the gate

A heavy chyne can easy lift  
The slabs, tae start anither shift

A white hett flame, a metal spark  
Goggles an blow torch set tae wark  
Tae cut teeth inno the sharp blade  
An sae a frame saw's quickly made  
Then back an fore a muckle saw  
Eats oot, wi its unceasin jaw  
A block that's smeethed wi weat an friction  
Unner a wirker's close inspection

The frame saw wi abrasive teeth  
Its steel blade cuts the steen aneth  
As fine steel grit wi watter's fed  
Intae the groove, bi craftsmen led

Hear the machines that crank an whirr  
The watter spray, the constant berr  
A saw that's circular an quick  
Wi diamond tips cut straicht an slick  
Tackles the thinner slabs of steen  
Timmerin on till job is dane.

The blocks of granite noo are braced  
For masons' haimmer, chisel faced  
Each uncut surface, noo, tae form  
Buildin or gravesteen tae adorn  
Clatter o mallet strikin' steel  
Chisel an sculptor wirkin weel

The dunter smooths doon like a rammer  
Compressed air wirks as weel's a haimmer,  
The granite dust frae this commotion  
Breathed in, gaed masons lung- consumption  
Air-filterin masks assist the wye  
Fur men tae earn a safer pye.

The Jenny Lind is the machine  
Tae polish granite tae a sheen  
Sawn granite's bedded on a bogie  
Wi stucco. Flat an lyin steady

First wi revolv'in iron ring  
An steel shot, hear the whirr an sing  
Then wi some carborundum grain  
Followed by floor, a glaze obtain  
That's bricht's a mirror. Putty pooder's  
Applied wi felt-faced blocks o timmer

Five hours per process, till the state  
O granite's like a polished plate  
Curved steens are polished doon the yaird  
The wirk is sair, the labour's hard

Wi iron ring the steen's filed roon  
Wi fine steel grit tae grind it doon  
Then carborundum, putty pooder  
Wirk that is sair on mason's shooder.

A wikk or mair the wark can takk.  
Haun-polishin, a cross tae makk  
Ready for carvin. Cannie haun  
Is nott tae cairry oot the plan

A brush is loaded weel wi paste  
Then paper wi the pattern's traced  
Pneumatic chisel's guided ower  
The traced design o kirk or flooer  
The chisel then completes the carvin  
Guided by haun, an ee, an feelin.

Anither time...A later day.  
We see the feenished masonry  
Logo, portcullis, fish an wave  
Frontage for bank far aa may save  
The granite's polished tae a shine  
An syne, tae haud a fresh design  
There's molton rubber poored upon  
The surface. Logo's noo laid on  
End product o the artist's pencil  
The rubber's cut tae form a stencil

Sand blastin weirs the steen awa

In dust, like meltin winter sna.  
By skill an craft, thus licht an shade  
Wi shadow blastin are portrayed.

A steen may show a rural scene  
An auld kirk windae, calm, serene  
Or leaves, nymphs, sunset on the hills

Here's granite weirin sculptor's frills  
Oor silver city by the sea  
Has led the granite industry  
Technique, machinery an men  
Exportin business acumen  
Tae USA, tae Canada  
Germany, Scandinavia

Five years tae learn the mason's trade  
A carver isna born, he's made  
By years o practise, haun an ee  
Wirkin in perfect symmetry  
Fin name and date are carved an set  
The letters may be peinted jet  
Or set in gold leaf, jist tae show  
The Midas touch, archangel's glow

Or letters made o leid are haimmered  
Holes drilled tae keep them tichtly anchored  
Anither skill...a steady ee  
Is needed for calligraphy

Aa ower the warld the granite yairds  
O Aiberdeen serve kings an cyards  
A tomb for Emperor or Queen  
Is aften set in Rubislaw steen  
The Heilans, land o cliff an rock  
Are aptly marked bi granite block

Back at the mason's yaird the licht  
Tells it's the oncam o the nicht  
Men dunt the stoor frae cap an beet  
Then, hame bi bike or weary feet  
A wash, the news, the supper dish

Stovies fur tea or maybe fish.

The monument's neist stage is planned  
Access, erectin, trip inland  
Fine simmer's day...Newhills kirkyaird  
The funeral's by, the grun's prepared

A steen's erected. Raised an splashed  
Wi watter, till its face is washed.  
Hett, sunny day. Wi his back bare  
The wirker steps up tae the lair.  
Cement is shovelled at its foun  
Tae keep the hale frae tummlin doon  
Like London brig in the bairn's sang  
A cheery crew, the graveyaird gang

A warm Broch greetin starts the day  
Then they locate the cemetary  
This een lies up on hilly lan  
The heid-steen's rugged by ramp an han  
An then a cairt hauled up the hill  
Teamwirk, tenacity, an will.

Photos inset, a passer kens  
These fowk war Scots-Italians  
A mither an faither's restin place  
Their names on polished, roundit base.

Traffic an steer an busy street  
Whirr by. Step oot, on weary feet  
Intae a world o gray an green  
The douce kirkyairds o Aiberdeen

The sleepers here hae a lang lease  
O monument an quaet, an peace□  
Here is a plinth, an here a pillar  
Sorra has lowsed a grip on siller  
Here, Roman letters ower the grass  
Whisper the name o some deid lass  
Auld matron, or a bonnie quine  
A timmer bed their limbs enshrine

Mair intricate, a curvin crest  
Stauns ower a final place o rest  
A laird, a provost, dignitary  
Fa kens? Tint in antiquity  
They canna tell us. The bare steen  
Bears witness tae their lives, aleen.

The age an name o the deceased  
Far wis he born? This is bequeathed  
Fur aa tae see. His job, his wife  
His bairns, the rig banes o his life

Fish merchant, baker, wee seamstress  
This is their forwardin address  
The metal names show aa aroun  
Deid citizens o oor stinch toun

Scott Skinner's set in masonry  
Playin tae aa posterity  
See spirit o maternity!  
Love cut in granite canna dee.  
These scultures, secret or weel kent  
Each, a beloved's monument  
FINIS

## 7. Fower Bairn Rhymes fae Sherwid Forest:

Rich Fowk

I ken rich fowk can be gey queer  
Ae thing they share..they arena puir

Baron Broon wis roon's a baa  
Like Humpty Dumpty on the waa

A skinnymalink wis Miser Mooch  
His wecht wis keepit in his pooch

Sheriff Black had bandy legs  
An bullies tae gie beggars flegs



Sir Widdershins had hairy lugs  
An wolfskin for his manor rugs

The Abbot, Hubert Slow-tae-Sleep  
He didna snooze bi coontin sheep  
He'd lie in bed an think o money  
The clink tae him, as sweet as honey

Dame Gimme-Mair, like an auld coo  
Wad eat aa day an nae be fu  
She'd 16 pairs o silky sarks  
A pie made ooto singin larks  
She needed 15 kegs o mead  
Tae wash hersel fae taes tae heid  
An fin she visited the toun  
Ten horsies hauled her cairriage roon  
An whuspered 'See Dame Gimme - Mair? '  
Tae aa the littlins staunin there, `  
She's richer than a queue o Queens  
Bit money disna buy ye friens.'

Limerick

There aince wis a robber in green  
An arra he fired tae the meen  
It shot a bit cheese, jist as nice as ye please  
An since then it's niver been seen.

Nottingham Fair

Nottingham Fair's got a deer on a spit  
A merriematanzie...a bear in a pit  
Jugglers an jesters...an archery coort  
Knights at the joustin an aa kinds o sport  
Friars an pedlars an wee snappy dugs  
Gypsies wi muckle gowd rings in their lugs  
Ploomen an bakers an herdsmen wi kye  
Winnerfu things. Come an buy! Come an buy!

## Wanted

Friar Tuck's got a baldie heid  
A big bahoochie. A face that's reid  
He's got a tomatae fur a snoot  
His taes turn in. His teeth stick oot  
His belly's roon as a parridge pot  
Is there onythin, noo that I've forgot?

He disna ging tae the kirk an pray  
He wolfs doon venison pies aa day  
An fin he snores, it's like giant drums  
That's fin the rain an thunner comes.

## e Bruce

Minnie Bruce frae Ythan Wells  
Thocht she'd learn some magic spells  
Found inbye a witch's buik  
In a spidery, fooshty neuk

First, she turned her sister's braces  
Inno caterpillars' laces  
Neist, tae vex her brither Freddy  
She made spells tae shrink his teddy

It fell doon the lavvie pan  
Flushed aff tae the Isle o Man  
Her mam said 'Minnie, ett yer greens'  
She cheenged them inno fairy queens  
They flew ten times aroon the telly  
Frictenin tae fits, her Aunty Nelly

Fin Pa grew cross and tried tae roar  
His teeth gaed finggin oot the door  
They lowped across the room an flew  
Inno her granny's Irish stew  
And there they sank aneth the gravy  
Like twa auld dinghies frae the navy.

Grown bold, she cheenged her cousin's cat

Inno a tiger coorse an fat  
It gaed wi her tae the theatre  
An at the curtain drap, it ate her

Sae aa ye quines fa'd like tae be  
A witch o pouer an mystery  
Makk dog, or moose, or fish, gyang splat  
Bit niver IVER cheenge a cat!

#### 9.A Buchan Ferm in Spring: Faldies, New Deer

Fower birds pyke ticks frae trimmlin lammie's back  
A fermer ploos the grun, his ain best lass  
Lang courtship o a Buchan ferm wi Spring  
Dawn dauchles shiftin frost on sliddery roads

A fermer ploos the grun, his ain best lass  
Hawks rype the buddin hazlebuss o sang  
Dawn dauchles shiftin frost on sliddery roads  
Sax clouds o fite carnation ring the sun

Hawks rype the buddin hazlebuss o sang  
Yowes crop the girse, fite hedges on fower legs  
Sax clouds o fite carnation ring the sun  
There's blin-drift catkin blossom in the wids

Yowes crop the girse, fite hedges on fower legs  
Fower birds pyke ticks frae trimmlin lammie's back  
There's blin-drift catkin blossom in the wids  
Lang courtship o a Buchan ferm wi Spring

Owerset frae Gabriel Rosenstock's collection *Portrait of the Artist as an Abominable Snowman*, Forest Books, London 1989

Tell Lees  
'I am the Truth' Quo Sufi Hallaj,  
An they killt him.

It's feary eneuch Tae tell the truth,  
Bit gin ye ARE the Truth

Ye'd better keep  
Yer big moo steekit.  
E'en gin ye dae,  
Truith wad brakk oot  
Frae yer een  
An makk a halo ower ye.  
Levericks wad sing,  
They wad reest on ye,  
Bigg nests in yer beard.  
Ye'd be like the chiel in Lear's limerick.  
Tell lees,  
It's safer..

pictur o the artist as an abominable snaaman  
I'm scunnert o the Himalayas. I'd like  
A but n' ben in Connemara (I hear nae snaa faas yonner)  
Learn auld-farrant singin, weir hame-spun, howk peats  
Sup pints, gyang on the dole.

Sir Edmund Hillary says I dinna exist  
Bit I intend tae gyang on Radio na Gaeltachta  
An pruv him wrang (Sassenach shitehouse)

I'm scunnert o the Himalayas – nae fiers  
Bar haley bodachs in caves (they'd caa ye gyte)  
Fa spikk tae naebody, anely God, OM OM, frae dawn tae nicht.  
Scunnerin, the cosmic glimmer o their een,  
An the blae skinkle o ice.  
I'd like tae larn perfeck Irish, an be the first Yeti iver  
(An the hinmaist) Yeti on the staff o the Royal Irish Academy.

Gin I sud fin ma wye bi some miracle  
Tae yon noble islan, wad I be taen on?  
Or wad some Gaeltacht Authority factory  
Makk a fite carpet o ma fur?

I'm scunnert o the Himalayas – ower near Heiven  
Ower hyne awa, ochone,  
I'm neither breet nur human, an foo I wish  
The lift wad swallae me.

Clock

I pit the clock in the fridge the nicht  
(Fowk say I'm gyte)  
Clocks gar me grue Makk me deaf.

There's a patic'lar clan (frae God kens far)  
Fa hinna maistered Time yet.  
Yestreen is like  
Last year tae them.  
(Fowk say they're gyte)

Fur example ye nicht get  
Yer lang deid gransire' s  
Milk bill there,  
Bit ye can certainly  
Ignore it.

I pit the clock on the fridge the nicht.  
Tae pruv some pynt  
That I canna recaa.  
The beet, the cheese, the jeeled carrots  
Will wauken at ten tae echt  
Let them lowp on the bus an takk a hurl,  
I dinna gie a hoot.  
I pit the clock in the fridge the nicht.

An gin yer ee gars ye hyter, powk it oot!  
I glowered at a quine  
Richt ower frae me  
On the station platform.  
Ye ken yon luik,  
Aften screived o in wummins' magazines

I kent I wis affrontin her –  
She shoved a tooth inno her boddom lip.  
I wis readin a buik

On literature engagee.  
Noo an then I raised ma heid,  
Ma gleg sherp een  
Strippit her clean bare-buff.  
The train wis lang, wis latchy

An lang her leevin act  
On the cauld platform.

Lang oor twinned pain An indivisible.  
Oh bonnie Christ  
On the cross  
I am the reiver  
Ye didna takk  
Wi ye tae Paradise.

finis

Sheena Blackhall

# The Painter, Dadd

Sir Alexander Morison was glad  
To see the patient coming on so well  
The schizophrenic painter, Richard Dadd

As cases go, the strangest that he'd had  
That portrait/landscape painted in his cell  
You'd never guess by that, the man was mad

Newhaven's where the medic loved to gad  
Sir Alexander knew each brook and dell  
On leave from Bedlam- his own Iliad

Seeking the perfect cure to aid the sad  
To lift them from their black, psychotic Hell  
To drive out every phobia, fetish, fad

But when the painter's canvases were clad  
With fiendish fairies, dwarves, and arsenal  
Of Elfland's worst: a fluttering myriad

Of raw insanity. All that was bad  
Arose from there...it cast a wicked spell  
On filial love. As cold as Leningrad

Richard, behind a welcoming façade  
Murdered his father, butchered when he fell  
Dead in the daisies, a grotesque salad  
The schizophrenic painter, Richard Dadd

Sheena Blackhall

# The Palace Of Holyrood

The Darnley jewel still sparkles like the spring  
King David hunted here, through passing showers  
His falcon soared on predatory wings

Today, at garden parties strewn with flowers  
The honoured guests and servants stroll around  
Where Royal favour still exerts its powers

Rizzio's murder here stains regal ground  
Does he still walk on eerie, starless night  
Where Mary Queen of Scots no respite found?

Here Knox harassed the queen with rage and spite  
When, for her home in France her heart did ache  
When life was all romance, warmth and delight

Monastery, Palace, Order of the Thistle  
The Royal Standard shows the lion's mettle

These ancient stones hold memories of dancing,  
The crunch of Cromwell's soldiers' heavy tread  
The hectic hooves of Jacobite troops fleeing,

Sunset turns the ruined abbey red,  
Imagine a lone archer flex his blow  
The Earl of Bothwell in his bridal bed

Imagine swish as courtiers' wives bow low,  
The Stewart dynasty's sweet nest until  
The winds of change across the county blow

Once clarsach strings the gallery did fill  
With some forgotten minstrel's mellow air)  
That rose to Arthur's Seat, from park to hill:

Lie peaceful now the wicked and the good  
Entwined within the roots of Holyrood



Sheena Blackhall

# The Paris Café

See the pretty ladies  
At the Place Sorbonne  
In the Latin Quarter  
Proud and waited on

Puff! A little perfume  
A flutter of the eyes  
See the ardent suitor  
He sees, he loves, he sighs

Sheena Blackhall

# The Pearls Of Morning

The pearls of morning  
Wet my feet  
The baptism of grass

Sheena Blackhall

# The Person From Porlock

The person from Porlock  
Phoned three times on Saturday  
E-mailed twice on Sunday  
Desperately knocked on Monday

I am never at home to persons from Porlock who call.  
Look! He's bypassed the burglar alarm!  
He's clearing his throat.  
He's wanting to bend my ear,  
To twist my arm.

I'll wager it's double glazing or changing to British Gas  
Or the Church of Latter Day Saints...or he's wanting to cut the grass  
Tarmac the loo or collect for dysfunctional dogs  
Or he's bearing a huge petition to save Britain's wetlands and bogs.

Rats! He's done it! He's conned himself on to my page  
That drowner of dreams in a bucket, de-railer of poems unpenned  
There's always a person from Porlock who'll get you in the end.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Pierrot's Narrative

'I was a high wire artist with a circus  
I kicked my legs in the air, hung over Death  
My aunt's a thirteenth cousin to Camilla'  
The girl announced. 'I'm terribly well bred.'

` I seen you Saturday last at the supermarket  
Fillin shoppers' bags, ' the small boy said.  
` My ma says not to believe a word you tell me-  
Says you're a crack-pot, not right in the head.'

Off went the girl with a toss of her golden mane  
Like a circus lion, melting into a sieve  
Her face as white's a Pierrot, lips like thunder  
Not every grown up fits her narrative

Sheena Blackhall

# The Pierrot's Narrative (16 Scots Poems)

Daith o Merlin

The wizard, Merlin, dreed his weird  
In Stobo, ower the altarstane  
For here, St Kentigern made  
Him Christian, baith in fact an name

Neist day he met the three-fauld end  
Lang-prophesed that he wad dee  
Sae passed awa the greatest Lord  
In aa the haas o Druidry

Staned by the shepherds o the Queen  
Hunted, and mired in bluid an dub  
He slippit doon the banks o Tweed  
Ontae the stakes the fish traps haud  
The river turned traitor. Syne,  
Gript bi the timmer spikes, he drooned.

By Drumelzier, his corp wis laid  
Near whaur he got his mortal wound  
Along the Tweed the yowes graze yet  
Cream roses cup the dyews o dawn  
Merlin's a name writ in the mist  
Whaur ay the murderous waves rin on.

Wids o Snaa

The wins come wi a whimper  
Intae the snaa's snare  
The hoolet's laidder o holly  
Leads tae a hunter's lair  
Berries like draps o bluid  
Hing in the frostit air.

Silent's the hut an midden,  
Hoodie craa-wings flap,  
Far the meen floats on a lochan

An the aik losses its sap,  
An the ruthless snaa faas saftly,  
Ower a boosed snaadrap.

Wids are the deers' chaumer  
Sic a wintry hoose!  
Their reef is cloud an blizzard  
They drink o winter's juice;  
The adder tichtens its coils  
Like a siller noose.

Wids are wechtit wi cranreuch  
Like whale boats locked in a sea  
Steeked in the grip o winter  
They thole fit the storm can gie  
Hail, like a shooer o arras,  
The Sizen's perfidy

### 3.A Paeon in Praise o Backies: tune Men o Harlech

Morag's backie guffs o kippers  
Fooshty bedspreids, clorts o dung  
Rhubarb peelins tattie sweelins  
Posts wi dreepin hippens hung

Mrs Peerie's got a barbi  
Q she canna licht ava  
Omar Agra stots his fitba  
Up agin her lavvie waa

Dinna utter't there's a futterat  
Lockit in a hutch an pen  
Cannie! It will takk yer haun aff  
Spitfire in a glaury den

Kyle O'Reilly birls his skateboord  
Roon an roon frae morn till late  
He has chippit as the peintwirk  
On his neebor's gairden gate

Myra Mislav's backie it is

Fu o sparkies, brickies, skips  
Her extensions an their skitters  
Stap a hunner cooncil skips

Backies orra, backies bonnie  
Backies happit, backies seen  
Reeze them oot, oor kintra's backies  
They're fit keep oor cities green!

4, Rajah on a jumbo

See thon chiel on the jumbo's back  
His heid wipped roon wi a turban blue  
Swyte, nae gowd, fills his cotton cloots  
Wi his dhoti reid roon his tooteroo

Fine, tae hurl on a jumbo's heicht  
Jist the dab fur a rajah's pet  
Fine tae move like a waukin hoose  
Better nor bike, nor ship, nor jet

Sea Dugs

Their een weir farawaa luiks, like they war tint  
In some thick haar nae ship micht penetrate  
They guff o fish an satt, o salmons' semen  
Their pooches bulge wi mariners' lucky chermes

At nicht they dream o herbour hoors langsyne,  
Labsters wi snappin cleuks, an scaley mermaids  
Auld sea dugs cock their lugs at tidal roars  
Their snoots are mirled-reid like vintage claret

Bed

The teem bed says it aa.  
It winted to be entered bi a couple  
Regular or itherwise. Eftir the luv act,  
It winted tae haud them close, twa pearls in an oyster.



The bed wis lanely, it needed tae be a harbour.  
It needed tae be a berth tae banes an flesh  
It was a thochtie like snaw at nicht

It wintit tae be a hearth fur the eftir-stang  
It wintit tae be a cup far love cud sip.

## Sisters

If, fin the family hame is sounly sleepin  
an the bairn hoasts in its crib  
and the meen is a wersh, cracked plate  
preened tae the waa o heiven

If ye could veesit the chaumer  
o twa young sisters  
binnorie, o binnorie, fit dae ye think ye'd fin?

` We are alane, alane, ' they micht cry  
` born alane an like tae dee alane,  
bit in atween, fa'll come tae tryst us oot  
frae this chaumer that anely the meen an sorra veesits?

Oh we are ladies in wytin. Fa will open the screens  
an luik on oor separate bodies an choose ane ower the tither?

Twa sisters, ane perjink, ane hallyrackit  
baith wytin fur a fitstep at the door.

n

Twa covers o ae hynmbuik, luvvers leanin  
Thegither. Love's fit gies thon couple meanin  
Sic-like the Touer o Pisa, it should faa  
Upheld wi anely sunlight for a waa

Sic-like the gorblies in a hoolet's reest  
That lean for warmth intae their mither's breist

Sic-like the staff o life...a daud o breid  
Tae keep man upright, on it man maun feed

Sic-like Balgownie Brig, frae bank tae bank  
It leans sae traivellers aa may cross dry-shank

Whyles, aa maun hae a crutch, tae stop thon list  
That cowps us sidiewyes inno the kist

in a Tree

There aince wis a cat in a tree  
Fa thocht, like a bird, she cud flee  
Bit her heid wis sae big  
She got jammed on a twig  
Noo she canna climm doon fur her tea

again, Grampian

Weel, Grampian, I hae bin aff on ma traivels  
Hob-nobbin wi a wheen nearhaun Strathyre  
Bit I aye come back tae ye, Grampian.

'Mmmphm', ye say. Ye niver say muckle

`Yer affa quate' the fowk doon yonner telt me  
Bit I'd spukken fower hale sentences as wikk  
An this, as ye ken, Grampian, is a lang langamachie  
Fur ain o yer North East bairns.

es I Tint

I tint ma beads in the burn  
Far the kittlin threids the seggs  
Wi thrums o purrs

I tint ma name fin I wed  
Till the merriege ring  
Sank in the midden's glaur

I tint ma mither's kirk  
Throw the harns' riddle,  
Tho its spire stuck in ma craw  
Like an auld cod's bane

I tint ma maidenheid  
Like a coin doon quicksand  
Nae amount o scrattin  
Cud win it back

I tint ma waes in the wid,  
Far the keekin sun  
Steeked blitheness ower ma skin  
A bonnie quilt

I tint ma faither  
Bit fand him in ma showders  
A ramrod aywis haudin  
Me stinch an straicht

I tint ma fear o Daith  
At the open kist  
The kent face cheenged tae steen  
The warmth, flittit

Mither

The mould cracked fin they poored her intae mither  
Bairnhood wis nae apprenticeship fur this  
She'd played wi swords an rifles, like her brither

The efterstang brocht service tae anither  
Thon early months o milk an tears an piss  
Aa selfish thocht, aa freedom she maun smother  
Add nurse, cook, skivvy tae the role o luvver  
Bit sooklin brocht a kind o bovine bliss  
The cord's prehensile steel she'd sune discover  
Duty an luvver are pouerfu yoked thegither  
Twin chynes that rugged her back frae the abyss  
The tides o bluid rin deep, arnae fair-weather

Aa bairns are blended whisky...hauf the faither  
Hauf mither, speerit, rowed in a fite dress  
Syne, fur tradition, blessed wi haly watter  
Somewye a sacrifice at a high altar  
Wis vrocht, the meenit that she booted tae kiss  
The newborn bairn. Her neck accepts the halter

It's far ower late tae rewind fate, dae better  
Like baas thrown at a fair, some bowls ye miss  
There is nae re-sit course fur a begetter  
In ilkie Eden, happit serpents hiss

tree

Reid rowan rings the cradle  
O the littlin, gin the derk  
Widdershins, comes bringin in  
A changelin bairn, in borraed sark.  
Nicht-time warlocks at their wark

Tie the rowan, ticht an guid  
Reet this seely, weirie-tree  
Eildritch, sae that luck an licht  
Evermair will follae ye

at Dhanakosa

Plap the paddock plyters ben  
Up an doon the sappy brae  
In his jaiket, emerant green  
Like a creashie-belly't fey

At the foun o segg an weet  
Treetlin a splay fittit breet  
Doverin dunderheidit flooers  
Hing like bells the bummers ring  
Anthem o blinkbonnie oors  
Nestin swifties skyte an sing

Aathin's growth. The Sizzen staps  
Kists o pollen in the sheugh  
Ower the hairstin wings o bees  
Saftly, simmer breezes sooch  
Autumn, syne, will cry 'Eneuch'

tian in a Dwaum A Scots Owersett o a poem bi Georg Trakl (1887-1914)

Mither cairriet the wee bairn in the fite meen,  
In the shadda o a walnut, o the auncient elder  
Fu wi the bree o poppies, the coronach o the mavis  
An seelent. A fuseret physog fu o peety bood abeen her.  
Saft the windae's derkness; on the forebears' auld gear  
Lay dwinin, luv in an Autumn dwaum.

Sic-like derk the day o the year, dowie bairnhood,  
Fan the loon saftly cam doon tae cweel watter.  
Siller fishes, quaet on countenance,  
Fin he haived hissel steenily afore breengin blaik shelts  
An his starnie cam ower him in grey nicht  
Or fan he crossed St Peter's Autumn mools  
In the gloamin, haudin his mither's ice-caul haun

A delicate corp lay seelent in the chaumer's derk  
An liftit its cauld eelids ower him.  
Bit he wis a wee bird on nyaakit branches  
The bell lang in Novemmer gloam  
His faither's seelence fan in sleep he cam doon  
The gloamin's twinin stair  
The sowl's quaet. Lanely Yuletide nicht  
The derk makkk o shepherds bi the auld puil;  
A wee bairn in a strae hut; o foo saft  
Its physog dwined awa in blaik fevers Haly nicht. □

Or, fan haudin his faither's hard haun  
He wauked in seelence up Ben Calvary  
An in the gloamin neuks o rock  
The blae makk o Man stravaiged throw his legend  
An purple bluid ran frae a hurt aneth the hairt  
O foo saft the cross raise in the derk sowl  
Luv, fin in blaik crannies the snaa thawed

A blae sooch o win played peaceful ben the auld elder  
In the shadda-vault o the walnut  
An the loon's crammosie Angel stude saft afore him

Bytheness, fan in cweel chaumers a sonata soundit at gloam  
An in broon timmer beams  
A blae butterflee creepit frae its siler chrysallis  
O the near-haunness o daith. In the steen waa  
A yalla heid booed, the bairn seelent  
While thon Merch the meen crummlit  
Reid daffie in the kirkyaird vault o nicht  
An the siller voices o the starnies  
Sae that a derk wud-ness sank chitterin  
Frae the sleeper's broo.  
O foo quaet a wauk doon the blae burn  
Thinkin on tint ferlies while in green boughs  
The mavis cried unkent ferlies intae crocanation  
Or fan, haudin the auld chiel's beeny haun  
He wauked in the gloam ayont the crummlit city waa  
An the chiel cairriet a wee reid bairn in his blaik jaiket  
The speerit o coorseness appeared in the walnut's shadda

Sclimmin ower the green steps o simmer, o foo saft  
The gairden dwined in the broon seelence o Autumn  
Guff an was o the auld elder, fan in Sebastian's shadda  
The siller soun o the Angel deid awa.

etts inno Scots, o threads an thrummles taen frae the wark o Rene Char (1907-1988)

The nicht, a heich clachan o birds  
Giein it laldy, flees by

Fan the young chiel gaed on his wye  
Gloamin lay on yer face like a stane

A sang feenishes exile  
The lammie-win brings back fresh growthe

Apairt frae ye, may ma flesh  
Be the sail that cooers frae the win

A birdsang gies the foreneen's branch a begeck

I wis naethin mair thon day than twa shanks waukin  
Ma veesion dwined, a zero in the mids o ma face

In the park at Nevons the girse-lowerper sleeps  
Fite cranreuch an hail bring Autumn in  
An the win decides fit'll fa first,  
Leaves or nesties.

Sic a sang is the cushie-doo's fin the shooer draws near  
The air is poodered wi smirr, wi ghaistly sunlicht I  
waken washed, I thaw as I rise  
I gaiter the douce lift

Foo this road rather nur thon?  
Cryin us on sae urgent, far dis it lead?  
Fit trees an friens are alive ahin  
The horizons o thon stanes?

Sheena Blackhall

# The Pieta Of Egg And Twig

The business of suffering  
Begins with the egg  
Which may be a stone laid in thorns  
By a cuckoo with grave intent.

The world of the egg's a mandala  
Bleached of colour;  
Shadows, darken its surface,  
Two twigs uphold it,  
Though it goes against the grain  
To do so.

Hatched, cuckoo flexes its wings  
After the dawn chorus.  
When the dried saliva  
Moistens in the mouth,  
When the braying donkey's  
Tethered to its post,  
An ox steps up to the stone,  
Bearing a virgin sacrifice,  
Laurel leaves on her brow.

A megaphone announces  
Her imminent dissolution.  
Ice-cream will be served,  
After the blood and sawdust

Sheena Blackhall



# The Poetry Lesson

'5 minutes to chat to a friend'  
I told them. 'The theme today is reflection.  
On someone with whom you've had a close connection.'

A black eyed boy with Byronic hair  
Told of a runaway wheelchair. We had to laugh!  
Another, spoke of Husky pups in Alaska.  
Teenage banter flew like harvest chaff

So it went on at a tangent until  
A tentative hand rose up,  
Apologetically. 'It's a bit deep really  
When my friend was two, her father left  
She's never seen him since.  
She pretends he's there, all the time  
Even a made-up father's better than none.'

The thin sun struggled to warm the chilly room  
'Is that what you mean, Miss, by the word reflection? '

I had opened a running sore with a single word  
How deep and aching the cut of such rejection.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Pool Of Peace

It is summer  
It is Belgium  
It is dawn

The wakening frogs decide to parp at once  
Water lilies decorate the pool  
White cups of sunshine float on a black mandala

The pool is ringed by willows and brambles  
It could be a Monet painting but it's live

Rising up from the deep like a submarine  
A grey torpedo, a mighty tin-eyed fish

The fish is unmoved by the past  
That nightmare doesn't penetrate its scales

A bird sings beautifully in the harvest sky

Sheena Blackhall

# The Prosthesis Speaks

I'm reliable,  
Not pliable.  
I never tan,  
Rain is water  
Off my back.

I enjoy, however,  
The laying on of oils.

I never lose an ounce  
Or gain a pound.

I am very supportive,  
Programmed to serve.

I have no secret agenda,  
No axe to grind;  
Metal fatigue's  
My only niggling angst.

My cousin Henrietta  
Spends her life in a hammock  
Lazy hussy!  
She's Mrs Alfonso-Parker's Silicon implant.

She has been fondled  
By a peer of the realm  
And a short-sighted postman.

Fortunately,  
She's quite a tactile creature.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Psychiatrists' Safari

We are going on safari today to catch psychiatrists.  
You must be quick to catch one,  
As a tribe they are slippery as a slide in Vladivostok.

Their chemical constitution  
Is two thirds sulphur, one third gas and treacle.

They cultivate anonymity under white coats  
Their diet is diagnosis  
Fed by the slow dissection of egos  
Succulent as vol aux vents.

In the human zoo, someone is always outside,  
Someone is always in.  
We are going on safari today, to capture psychiatrists,  
Pied Pipers of brats and brawlers  
And mind-states of no fixed abode.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Pugilist

The pugilist is thick as a stick  
Of fairground rock

Too many times he's been knocked  
Into a cocked hat

He's dished out plenty of gob stoppers  
On the way  
Lickety-spit, he's turned teeth into sherbet  
But he's taken too many bulls eyes  
To the head.  
Now his brain is a rattle bag of blue smarties

His nose is pug-shaped,  
Smooth as a Toby jug  
His hollow legs are full  
Of the cup that cheers and deadens

His veins are strings of jingle bells  
Ready to pop like bubble-gum

A heart attack waiting to happen

Sheena Blackhall

# The Pulley

I sat at the open door, Pocahontas of the porch,  
Wearing my broth-plucked feathers. My mother  
Was hanging the washing over the pulley.

The rope snapped with a twang, the wooden spar  
Cracked on her skull like a cricket bat on a ball

She lay in her washday pinnie, Woolworth's best,  
Cheap and flowery cotton, one slipper off,  
Her eyes sealed tight together like a dead bird's beak.

A grey wet sock slumped over the berry pan  
That still boiled on,  
Oblivious to this small domestic disaster

Time froze, or I froze it. Ma's perm  
Was corrugated iron wearing a red rose  
Who'd pot the jam if she didn't rise  
Like Lazarus off the lino?

Sheena Blackhall

# The Quarry

His body looked at her,  
My little dancing cousin  
Taboo. Forbidden fruit  
Unripe and lovely in her summer frock

He led her up through fiery clumps of nettles  
To the grey quarry edge  
Wanting to wear her womb like a tight glove  
Her shining eyes too young to read the runes  
Far below, great stones like giant's lego  
Lay on the cracked ground

A great gallumping dog came barking up.  
Its anoraked owner tipped the scales of luck  
In the nick of time.  
High in the sky's vortex  
A hovering hawk sheered off  
Wheeling off to the housing scheme in the North

Sheena Blackhall

# The Queen Of The Frost

The queen of the frost  
Kept her heart tight on a choke-chain  
Froze her feelings against thieves or knaves

The queen of the frost  
Kept a lock on her vagina  
Her eyes were barbs, her sorrows, open graves

The queen of the frost  
Was born in a land of icebergs  
Her mansion, built of Bibles, black and gold  
'Women born of Eve are made to suffer'  
That was etched on her lintel, cruel and bold

The queen of the frost  
Was dutiful, righteous, cold

Sheena Blackhall



# The Rabbit's First Snow

It was soft as the fluff  
Of the birth nest deep in the burrow  
White and silent  
Chilling to the touch

It lay like a loose skin  
On the roofs of trees  
It bent the fronds of bracken  
Like Carmelites praying

The rabbit's paws were muffs  
Mute on the woodland floor  
Where the snow held tell tale tracks  
From each dropped paw

The hawk's forensic eyes  
Were on the case in an instant  
Prints never lie

The verdict, a black cap affair  
Came out of the blue  
Red on white, under the tumbling snow

Sheena Blackhall

# The Ravens In The Tower

We are the ravens in the Tower□  
Guardians in sooty livery  
If we should perish, have a care  
Down will fall state and monarchy

Drawn by the corpses of the crown  
We watched the death of Anne Boleyn  
And pecked the eyes from Lady Grey  
Who had displeased the sovereign

We're soldiers of the Kingdom, and  
Are ravens of superior cast  
Vladimir Putin was impressed  
By our 'Good morning! ' as he passed

Our wings are clipped, our beaks still bite  
We've coloured band upon our legs  
And Raven George was sent to Wales  
For snapping aerals like pegs

Conduct unsatisfactory, means  
From service we could be retired  
We hold a corvid's funeral  
When friend or fellow crow's expired

Here is our roll call. Hardey, Thor,  
Odin and Gwyllum, Cedric, gay  
Hugine and Munin. We consume  
6 ounce of raw meat every day

Our treats are biscuits soaked in blood  
An egg, plus rabbit in its fur  
This keeps us sturdy. We can live  
Up till the age of fortyfour!

We are the ravens in the Tower  
Guardians in sooty livery  
If we should perish, have a care  
Down will fall state and monarchy

Sheena Blackhall

# The River Kwai: For The 2nd Battalion Gordon Highlanders (Scots)

Kanchanaburi's green an quate. The sun, sae hett it stouns  
In birsslin drouth, in frozen youth, the deid men makk nae souns  
A poppy here, a garlan there, rich scents each grave festoons  
Peace ower the grun..bit dearly won bi the Daith Railway loons.

Far fae the teuchit's dweeble wheep's the skreichin o baboons  
An here the Thai, along the Kwai tend weel the Gordon loons.  
They didna dee far bullets flee. Their war brocht ither wouns  
Far dysentry kept company wi rain as big's dubloons

Aside the Kwai the smilin Thai in bricht sarongs an gouns  
Sell mango slice an tea wi ice, wi orchids at their crouns.  
Thailan's the larder o the East. It wyles awa the pouns  
There wis nae beer nor buffet here, fin coorseness kent nae bouns

An fin the jungle lowsed its rage, the peetiless monsoons  
Cholera, typhoid thinned the ranks ben bitter nichts an noons  
A different fecht, a different airt, fae Waterloo's dragoons  
Malaria gied the Deid Thraa tae the Daith Railway loons.

The war's lang gaen. They bide alane. Nae wives aside them lie.  
Bricht butterflees abeen them heeze, as sufferin ower an by.  
Culloden, Flodden, Bannockburn..grim pipers play the tunes  
The leaders o a nation screive tae mobilise platoons

Is liberty as gweed a cause tae dee fur as the lave?  
Nane kens, dry banes haud nae discourse that full a sodjer's grave.  
Kanchanaburi's green an quate. Noo, fyew are left tae greet,  
Far thistles fell...Bit merk them weel..The wins o peace are sweet

Sheena Blackhall

# The Saddhu

Today I lunched with a Saddhu;  
The tangled cow dung knotted in his hair  
Smelt dreadfully. The hard skin of his feet,  
Like hooves, left little scuffmarks on the floor.

He was invisible to everyone but me;  
When the postman arrived with the mail,  
The Saddhu was picking dustballs from his navel  
The telephone frightened the Holy Man to fits —  
Worse than rutting elephants, he said.

The screens reminded him of jungle leaves,  
Computer leads resembled bullocks' entrails  
Tomorrow, I'm having Krishnamurtri in for lunch;  
Possibly, he'll be joined by the Dalai Lama.  
We're share each others thoughts, a global cake  
And not a single crumb of time we'll waste!

Sheena Blackhall

# The Scotland Bus

The Scotland bus queue shuffles forward,  
More and more get on, strands of Scotland's plaid  
Off they set up 21st Century Road

Scotland's tartan is now a complex weave  
Indigo, saffron, marigold spice it up

The balanced twill of the purple heath of the Gael  
Is set in the weft with the thin red line of St George

The warp has the green of Erin  
The hoary lichens of Harris

Mulberry, mimosa, turmeric, tea  
Add pungency to bramble juice and peat

The fare's a passport, the right to board the country.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Scottish Parliament (In Scots)

Parlàmaid na h-Alba  
Vrocht bi a Barcelona architect  
Foun o the Royal Mile...a trystin place  
A kirn? A maisterpiece?

The reef's inspired bi hulls o fishin boats  
Leafs incorporate Queensberry Hoose  
Inbye, hear speeches, argyments an quotes

Here's Kemnay granite, Belfast slab fur claddin  
Here's gweed Scots aik, wi Caithness steen fur fleerin  
Here's glaiss an Italian merble tae be seen  
Saltires in concrete, braw mace frae the queen  
Here's rowan, aipple, pear, here's birk an lime  
Doon frae St Giles stinch kirk that chimes the time  
Here's desks o sycamore, a swatch o green

Here's lavender, rosemary, a granite egg  
O a pink fittit goose on lava rock  
Giftie frae Iceland, the auld Viking stock

Deep natural springs rise up tae cweel the biggin  
An solar panels draw the sun fur heatin

There's concrete bamboo poles ootbye the haas  
Tsunami micht hae washed them ower the waas

The wirds aroon are meant tae strikk the harns  
Fur wirds are tools bi which a body larns

Bricht is the ring o wirds  
Say little, bit say it weel  
An aa we ask, oor maisters,  
Ploo an honest dreel

Sheena Blackhall

# The Sea Quine (27 Scots Poems)

Circle

Blaik in the gloamin five derk trees  
Gaither the hoodies tae their eaves  
Whisperin secrets widlans ken  
Sklaikin o hoolet, bog an fen  
Wauchtin their wid yoam ben the breeze  
Nae fire-flaucht will disturb their ease  
Sic warlock-wids hae histories  
Aulder than Templar Park or Ben  
Here nicht fey Druids' mysteries  
Linger amang sterk boughs as these  
On the heich horizon, still as Zen  
Source tae the labyrinthine den  
Vrocht at the world's genesis

, Skirlin

A sea toun's music is a skirlin gull  
Roch-like paeon o joy at the tides' incams  
Wechtit wi fish an satt. Gulls ride the storm  
A fearless tousle o winged Assyrians  
I takk nae pleisur in a silent gull  
Aa's unca fin it's dowpit, cowed an quaet  
A ship without a rudder, sails bund doon..  
Open yer braw beak - deefen the Castlegate!

e Hairst

Improvers hairst the Gweedman's Craft  
Clouds wyle rain frae the burn  
Tae swall the breist o the barley crap  
Till the fermer gaithers the corn

The ferm itsel is hairsted, syne  
Skyscrapers, ane twa three  
Hunger fur grun, fur roads, fur hames  
Fur widlans eesed tae be



Fin the hyne horizon's ae great toun  
Wi a twa, three, parks atween  
There'll be buiks, an films nae doot  
O an heirskip tint an gaen  
An a puir auld bodach on spinnle shanks  
Tae spikk o the last loch seen.

es

Twa wee boats in a bath o tin  
Ane bobs oot, an ane bobs in  
See their skipper on bendit knee  
Maister o their sma destiny

Wyte till his toys are set aside  
Syne he'll wirk wi a different tide  
He'll nae brew storms nor win command  
Ooto the bield o dreamin-land

Silkie Hunter

Foo dae ye catch a silkie?  
Tryst her up tae the shore  
Tell her o eildtrich ferlies  
Ayont the ocean's door

Bind her wi towes o sail cord  
Beery her selkie skin  
Stap yer lugs tae her greetin  
Missin her seely kin

Syne fin the storm is ragin  
Watch her in hodden grey  
Writhe in the claes ye spun her  
Langin fur sea an spray

Takk her at nicht, my mannie  
Ye anely ride a shell  
The fisher that hunts the silkie  
Maun learn the wyes o hell

## Refugees

Twa mous tae feed an ane ower wee  
Tae wirk, oot playin in the sna  
Twa mous tae feed. Fit dis she see  
His mither, in her crystal baa?

She shakks the globe. The sna furls faist  
An cauld. Nae manna faas. Nae hope  
There's ae wikk's breid. She'll makk it laist  
A refugee maun learn tae cope

A meenit on the media screen  
Her hame wis swallaed bi the grun  
Sma odds tae us, ower gled the scene  
Played oot aneth a furreign sun

Twa birds trapped in a baa o glaiss  
Wi clouds o fire an wings o aisse□

in Milan

It's a rum do.  
Dan's in Milan on a stagger  
Spikes in his biker's jaiket  
The Glesga swagger

Hair, the colour of roosty Iron Bru  
Mair like Klu Klux Klan  
Than Clan Mclbrox  
He's three quarters fou

His temper's dicey  
It's kept on a short tether  
He's weirin platform soles  
This wee hard man,  
For inches maitter...  
Puir, self conscious Dan  
Wishes the groom's stag nicht  
Wis in Japan  
His rig oot's really desperate in Milan

## sh Cuddies

Fower Spanish cuddies, chewin on the gress  
Ane cairries bottle taps the secunt's humphin glaiss  
The third carries tuna tins, teem o ile an fish  
The fourth hauds a pannier o aa the trock ye'd wish

Trottin aff tae rubbish lan, recyclin fur the tip  
Watchin far they're daunerin, worriet they nicht slip  
Fower Spanish cuddies...here's the best ava  
They're made o paper. The win'll blaw them aa  
Fin their wirk is endit, intae ither skips  
They will be recycled, syne, an mebbe haud yer chips!

## Beach Hooses

Wee beach hoosies,  
They hae seen sic sights!

Knobbily knees frae Paisley  
Lirkit dowps frae Dyce

Shoogly breists frae Shetlan  
Plooky bahoochies frae Ayr  
It disna bear thinkin about

Weel, dinna think about it then.  
Jist cast yer ee ower the stripit peint an buntin

## m an Greta

Callum and Greta are posin  
Tae hae their likenesses recordit

They are scunnered and dour  
Sour as a hauf-sooked lemon

Nae conversation.  
A mortgage that's ower big tae mention

They sit apart in their ticht designer jeans  
Nae lauchin. Nae wenchin  
Each coddles their genitals  
The faimily jewels

### Waltzer

Three Elvises in suits o blue  
Sat on a reid waltzer wi silver trim  
A star at their feet  
Three bouffant air heids spinnin

### e Gull

A menseless gull on a Crivie street  
Wytes fur a pipe band merchin through  
A circus, a stooshie, a razzmatazz  
A merrimatanzie, a hullabaloo

Nae laird, nae lord, nae lily nae leaf  
Nae piper, nae drummer, nae hummer, nae thief  
Steers in thon dreich an jeelin neuk  
Far twa floats hing frae a fish-hoose hyeuk

A wheen gray lums hoast rikk in the air  
The cobbles crack like an auld wive's neive  
Her knucklenbanes grown swallt an sair  
Sooked like the sea, throw Crivie's sieve

### eight

This is the wirm that bedd in the yird o Flanders  
This is the yird that grew the girse  
Far wummled the wirm  
That bedd in the yird o Flanders

This is the girse that fed the yowe  
That claithed the man that focht the Hun  
Richt there on the yird o Flanders

This is the poppy, reid an rare  
Its reets rin deep in this cursed lair  
Feedin on deid men's bluid an mair  
That lies in the yird o Flanders

### Ouine

She's got hair that's blue  
The quine frae the Sea  
A fish on her heid  
An a cat on her knee

She's braid in the beam  
An as sure as Daith  
Thon blatterin gale  
Is the sea quine's braith

### Campus Cat

Some cats mochle in the hoose  
Chase a moose they widna  
Some cats bide at hame aa day  
Smokey Duggan didna

Smokey wis the Campus Cat  
Tales o him growe whiskers  
King o aa the cats in King's  
Monarch o the friskers

Nae bit girse will haud him doon  
Sic a restless craitur  
Lyin quaet at peace aa day  
Wisna in his natur

Fin the meen an stars come oot  
An speeirits takk the air  
Sleek o fur an fierce o claw  
Smokey will be there

Ginger Tom an Brindled Tab  
Bi Elphinstane's gray haas  
There's a sleeker than ye aa  
Wauks furth on shadda paws

Fower Friaries o Aiberdeen

There war fower friaries in the toun  
The Black, White, Grey an Reid  
An pleisunt war their lans an airts  
An pious wis their creed

Far precious peintins hing the day  
Aside Blackfriars street  
Aince, douce Dominicans wad kneel  
An jyne in Vespers sweet

The Trinitarians tuik care  
O seamen near the quey  
Reid friars...for the puir an sick  
Their yett wis ay ajee

The Carmelites aside the Green  
White friars preached an prayed  
An delled their grun an brewed their ale  
An nae disturbance made

Far Marischal College breists the win  
The Grey Franciscans vrocht  
Noo doon Ghaist's Raw the seagulls craw  
O labours cam tae nocht

It wisna pox nur yet the pest  
Teemed friars frae the toun  
The Reformation raised a lowe  
That brunt hale King-ships doon

In 1560 rage an greed  
Wi Daith grew weel acquaint  
An mony's the bonnie kirk wis razed  
An martyred mony's the sanct.

Step lichtly roon bi Provost Skene's  
Wheesht by St Andrew's Street  
For there fowk say there's hooded men  
Wauk saft on sandalled feet

Nine Burns o the Toun: Tune The Keel Rowe

The Holburn, the Westburn, the Polmuir sae bonnie  
The Denburn, the Powis burn, hae dwined tae barely onie

The Lochs are drained, the grun's sained fur biggin, shop an cassie  
Bit far's the wee Putachie, the tryst for lad an lassie?

Ca-cannie ower the Spital, on yon hill, fan nichts are still  
Ye nicht hear the burn trill Beware o Leprosy!

The Trinity aside the quey, the Powcreek by the Links  
They vanished by the braid sea that ilkie burnie drinks

-Shots o Easter. Barcelona

Human statues stiffen on La Rambla  
Dr Faust an Daith ride twa bane-shakkers  
Atlas hauds a balloon up as a globe  
A motorcyclist blinks frae a fake crash  
The Green Man, Floerin Loon, Attila the Hun  
Aa wyte fur bawbees..staunin ram rod straicht  
Alang wi three Greek Gods an ae stoot Caesar

The April weather lowsers smiles an jaikets  
Airms growe fernietickelt, faces reidden  
Towrists traik by staas o skyrie smachrie  
Beer-bellied faithers, tattooed bikers, bairns  
Shoogle an camera-click alang the street  
Wyce weemin hug their pyokes like bairns at breist  
Here polis cairry guns like cowboy sheriffs

Aneth fowk's feet, deid petals, affcast, dwine  
An auld wife rypes a bin an etts cauld chips

This seaside town's a kettle on the bile  
A quine steps oot a door on fower inch heels  
Taes stapped in twa triangles o reid leather

Anither labster hits a bed o rice  
Yoams o paella, partens, perfume, bikes  
Sneak inno shutters, steekit at siesta  
Caricaturists sketch fowk warts an aa  
Chuckens glower frae pens. Doos coo an hotter  
Music's at ilkie neuk.. Fowk jig tae jazz

Parakeets skreich an rage ahin steel bars  
Bouquets o roses vie wi a sword swallower,  
Opera, flamenco, a street sex museum  
Antoni Gaudi's kirk, aa fey an fruity  
Funicular railway, trams an cable cars  
Shoals o balloons tittin at nylon tethers  
For siller, they'll takk cheque or caird or cash.

A flash explodes in the verra ee o Easter  
Aside the faithful mutterin psalms an prayers  
Aneth cathedral bells. Confession boxies  
Excheenge their sins an blessins in the derk  
Cathedral geese snap up green cabbage leaves  
Bi a wee fountain, St George and his dragon  
Niver lose nor win their constrant fecht.

Skelp in the mids o as this gay mineer  
A bust o some important lang-deid cheil  
Sits smored in pennants, sorra kens fit for  
Beach bums swyte on the stran, boozed, stoned  
Or fou on plain auld farrant easy-oziness  
Naebody sweems...a shark grins frae a sign.  
Wee aluminium tables ream wi glaisses,  
Tabbies, burgers, duntit tins o beer  
Bare British breists plop inno the hett san  
The fite marina's thrang wi masts o yauchts  
In the Aquarium, ahin blue glaiss, sharks, muckle rays glide roon.  
An octopus wi shoogly legs an oxters, glowers oot at fowk  
Fa glower richt back in, each in its element.

Ten Scots loons on a stag wikkeyn abroad



Stotter, blootert, roarin, doon the road

Fan's a planeload o Spaniards comin tae Britain  
Aimin tae drink thirsels stoshious, doss in the glaur?  
Is oor wee airt nae gweed eneuch tae cowk in?

### 18.A Pussycat's Knickers

A pussycat's knickers are made o fur  
A labrador's hose is hairy  
But it's in doot fit mainner cloot  
Makks the gloves for a gowd canary!

### Bagpipe Player

Ither loons lauch an caa me teuchter,  
I dinna gee ma ginger  
I keep on practisin ma chanter  
Keepin ma heid doon  
Gaun ma ain gate

See fin they get merriet?  
It winna be a disco at the kirk.  
A jazz band,  
A steel band  
A brass band

Na. In Nova Scotia,  
Ooter Mongolia  
Turkey and Lithuania  
It'll be me, or somebody like me  
Dirlin the pipes,  
Giein it laldy  
Screw in the Scottishness  
Ooto ilkie reed.

An fin they're deid  
Fa's staunin at their heid  
Playin them ooto the game  
Frae Aiberdeen tae Embro's Portobello?

At Hogmanay, Burns Day,  
St Andrews' denners  
I'm the ain that's feted

Naebody greets fin Bengy plays his bugle  
Naebody celebrates Scotia wi a cello!

Souter's Loon. For Robbie Shepherd tune: Knickv Tams

In 1936 there wis a squalloch in Dunecht  
The souter's wife brocht mair than ae new order tae his sicht  
She bore a loon that liked a tune her ain wee Shepherd pie  
He'd even gie a commentary as he watched his hippens dry

A cricketer, a fitbaa fan, a snooker player tee  
He'd dirl up the moothie at the antrin waddin spree  
I hinna heard a Horsie sing bit Robbie is the man  
Could makk a sheltie takk the fleer an trot tae Jimmy Shand

Frae village class he won a place at Robert Gordon's skweel  
(He liked the name an it becam his bairn's name as weel)  
He maistered Art an Latin, Shepherd's tartan skeely shewed  
The souter's loon fa niver tint the Doric tongue he lued.

Twis at the stock car racin at Garlogie he wis heard  
A talent scout frae Meldrum quo 'He's got the Horseman's Wird  
Yon cheil could cherm the verra shell frae aff a Torry crab  
Ahin a mike at Meldrum sports he'd be the verra dab.'

As strang's Macallan whiskey that is lang matured in store  
His column in the P& J keeps Doric tae the fore  
That's foo he won his Honours frae the university  
Nae winner that Balmoral gied himsel the MBE

It wis as an accoontant cheil he sterted wirkin life  
An made his best investment a pianie playin wife  
Upon the bus tae Clunie, weel they coortit side bi side  
Fur 13 mile wis lang eneuch tae win himsel a bride

An gin ye speir fit keeps their merriege jist as sweet's their peas

He'll tell ye him an Esme's ay amang the birds an bees  
They're plyterin in their gairden, they're spikkin tae their seeds  
In Doric tae the flooers an English tae the weeds.

er

Dreich, doonpish, dowie, dreepin  
Haar, mochie, jeelin, weetin  
Blin-drift wauchtin ower the howes  
Winter happin braes an knowes  
Come quick Simmer: by-pass Spring  
Teuchit storms wi their on-ding!

TV Olympics

Is there an Olympics fur luikin?  
I'd win it fur watchin TV  
The anely trek I like is Star Trekk  
Or the haik tae the fridge fur ma tea

Fowk say I'll turn inno a tattie  
On a diet o adverts an soaps  
Bit I think that joggin is boggin  
An the best bit o aa's fan it stops.

Last nicht fin I sat on the sofa  
Ma taes gaed a kinno a yark  
As the skin on ma back stertit sprootin  
Sma reets powkin ooto ma sark

Sae I micht hae a shottie at yoga  
I can waggle ma airms an ma lugs  
There's waur things than bein a tattie  
Except fur their neibours, the slugs.

I Meat

On Monday we'd a pizza.  
On Tuesday we'd a Thai

On Wednesday we'd a curry.  
On Thursday we'd a fry  
O tatties eggs an bacon  
(The eggies war free range)  
The tatties war frae Finzean  
(An local fur a change)  
On Friday we'd an omelette.  
On Setterday a pie  
On Sunday we'd a burger, wi burritos on the sly

Jist yer average Scottish denners that ma granny niver ate  
Cause she slaved awa fur oors tae pit stovies on wir plate.

Noo we dinna pluck a chukken.  
We're nae mair the kitchie's slave  
We buy meals at supermairkets  
tae stap in the microwave

urs;

Moorikan Roum wis nae as there  
He didna bide at the heid o a stair  
A doss hoose ludge or a but n' ben  
A hut in the wids wis Moorikan's den

Jumpin Judas, a friend tae flechs  
Hawked roon the toon wi lowps an pechs `  
Maggie Lauder's' the sang he'd gie  
Fur a nod, a smile or a braisse bawbee

Turkey Willie wis humfy-bacicit  
Blin in an ee an hallierackit  
He'd sell ye a bubbleyjock sae braw  
It'd sing like a lintie instead o a craw

Willie Godsman begged fur his breid  
He'd een like a fish an a low foreheid  
A turned up snoot an a cripple fit  
Did ye pyte fur his plenishin? Deil the bit! '

Doon Back Wynd an the Mither Kirk

There's them choose beggin afore they'd wirk  
Better gie soup, than siller fur wirse  
Stap their stammaches an nae their purse

deen: A Tale o Twa Touns

My name is Robin Bruce.  
This is my toun. Ile fuels it. Ile drives it  
The sea that shakks its neive like a heid-case  
Challengin the beach, winna fear me.

The cauld win niver blaws snaw in my face.  
Oor Hoose is granite. It's bigged tae thole the sizzens  
I come frae a siccar race. Like ma faither afore me,  
I'll be a student at King's or R.G.U.  
A doctor, a lawyer, a vet or an engineer.  
A captain o industry, I'll command the crew.

Sundays, ma heid's in ma buiks  
Da says I'll need straicht AAs  
I hae swum wi dolphins in Florida  
I hae scuba-dived in Crete

Joe Bannerman twa streets doon  
Face fu o plooks, kens fowk I'll niver meet  
Hings oot wi chancers, losers,  
Dossers, mingers, bruisers  
His dug pees ower the municipal roses  
He says that my da's company's tae blame  
Fur world pollution, warmin, acid rain  
Ower China, Europe, New York an Rangoon.  
Nae ae wee rose or twa in oor hame toun.

My name is Robin Bruce. I am twa steps aheid o the game  
Like ma faither afore me. Oors reets rin deep an wide  
Incomer, ca cannie. We hae connections. Bluid's on my side.

Five Senses

The flee has monie een sae she can see

The smaarest skirp o sugar left tae pree  
The butterflee's lang tongue unfurls tae powk  
The nectar frae the crimson rose's dowp

The rabbit's lugs are lang tae catch the soun  
Should tod on sleekit paws bi creepin roon  
The wyver in her wab feels ilkie throob  
O strugglin gollachs as they strive an bob

The dug's weet snoot's as eesefu as a sail  
The snuffler in the fur that leads the tail.

The day wad be gey wersh, if we should lose  
The senses. Sic a tycauve t'wid be tae chose  
Withoot neb, fingers, lugs, tongue, an twa een  
That are perception's marra an back-been.

#### Burns Competition

Ali is a Moslem, Lakshmi's a Hindu  
Mary is a Protestant, Moshe is a Jew  
Fit's the threid that binds them, there, upon the stage?  
Freed frae confrontation, let oot frae their cage

Birds wi different feathers..  
Burns fits the bill Fur his meanin's timeless...  
Care, an dinna kill.  
Luik efter yer neebor.  
Ploo a cannie dreel  
Say the wirds an mean them.  
They will serve ye weel.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Seely Howe (English Poems)

Late Holiday, Ballater

August, a dog sleeps two doors near my room  
One flopped ear like an envelope's cream flap

The barley-field lets loose its braided hair  
I breathe in pine, through sun motes dancing gold  
Now the wood's sighing sweeps down like a mist

I am back in my childhood village, my healing place  
staring up at the hill with his face of oak

People pass, anonymous, unknown  
Only the hills, the river and the earth  
Acknowledge me, as one who has shared their days

In the Druid hollows, a bird pipes out a coronach  
Where did the years go, those light-foot leavers?  
The rowans, scarlet red, droop heavy now  
Like blobs of blood, their branches thin and trembling  
Dying, they give birth to the catkin season

Let's Pretend

I am re-inventing your childhood  
Let's pretend your bedroom  
Was specially painted blue  
With mobiles, night-light, music  
Fit for a prince.

Let's pretend  
You only cried if you fell  
And never from fear or grief.  
That everyday adventures were always nice

Let's pretend  
You never held a gun

Were blooded before you were ten with your first kill  
That you never cowered from the belt  
Or ran away, stayed up till the wee tired hours  
Child-gambler, playing daddy for pennies  
Eight turned twenty one

Let's pretend that mummy  
Wasn't a sponge of tears  
That leaked out messy and useless,  
A wreck with no brakes or gears

I am reinventing your childhood.  
Let's pretend that mummy  
Didn't give you away  
Believing the lie that the Nanny State knows best

Intelligent, musical, quick,  
A natural leader and athlete, the teachers wrote  
But all those early apples withered on the bough  
Counted for nought

I am reinventing your childhood  
Indulge me kind ghost  
And all those other ghosts  
Who walk that bitter track  
On torn, bleeding feet

The Past is gone away, beyond pretending  
Ah, could I take it back!

Amuse Bouche: Finlay the Callander Cat

Finlay the cat is a poetry buff  
He purrs through a spiced villanelle  
He arches his back, if you're not to his taste  
He meows at a slab of Rondel

If doggerel's on offer he picks at his paws  
A haiku's his best Amuse Bouche  
But sonnets, and ballads, found poems and odes  
He swallows them down with a whoosh



Finlay the cat is accustomed to thrills  
He watches his mistress spin honey  
Like a dervish...the nectar that's culled from the hills  
Sits in jars that are twinkly and sunny

Not a lover of hens, how he laughs when one flies  
Off to plop like a plumb in the grass  
As he watches a poet's attempts to retrieve  
It while drenched to the giblets, alas

He will sprawl on a chair, lift a curious eye  
On poets, with striped socks or none  
Wearing retro, or Celtic, or post-hippy garb  
As they read in the midgies and sun

Finlay the cat is a legend to all  
He'll dispense the occasional nip  
If his neighbour nods off in the mids of a verse  
And a glass of wine's threatening to slip

His fur is the furriest, purrs are the best  
He's the mascot of poetry dos  
A Scottish Renaissance cat, down to his tail  
With his whiskers and velvety trews

Kings of the Cobbles

Skateboard pirouettes and tips  
Cracks like nuts the shoppers' shins  
Baseball cap on back to front  
The mad assailant strikes and grins

Cyclist pumping hairy legs  
Mows down strangers, scares grandmothers  
Bombs through green man's flashing sign,  
The healthy option? Not for others!

Buggy - mummy pushing babe  
Like ninepins, folk are toppled over  
Shoves past queue. Her bum on bus

Takes up two seats, a cow in clover

Silver surfer wields her Zimmer  
Boadicea on the warpath!  
All should respect the elderly  
Zimmer shover causes bloodbath

The Idols

Who do you idolise? Chaplin or Dali?  
Madonna or Elvis? Or Mohammed Ali?

Leonardo da Vinci? The Beatles? The Who?  
Stravinsky? Beethoven? Gandhi? Or Lulu?

What makes you worship them? Jealousy? Pride?  
Or a feeling that you could be them if you tried!

The Old man from Dunoon

A lusty old man from Dunoon  
In the sun, wooed a clippie from Troon  
He lost his bus pass  
When they romped in the grass  
He walked home by the light of the moon

Pet Shop

Would you like an alligator  
For your swimming pool?  
Or a sloth to keep your toes warm  
Or a vampire bat that's cool?

Would you let a monkey  
Enjoy your trampoline?  
Would you let it make your breakfast  
Spread your toast with margarine?

Have you got nosey neighbours?

Why not buy a tall giraffe?  
It'll spit into their barbecues  
And give your kids a laugh

Maybe you'd prefer a porcupine  
To keep as a foot scraper  
Or a floppy jawed retriever  
To fetch home the morning paper  
I think an elephant would be  
The grandest type of pet  
When it rains, I'd sit beneath her  
She would stop me getting wet

### The French Poodle

There was a French poodle called Jean  
Who crawled into the washing machine  
When the drum was on spin  
She flew round like a Ginn  
And came out like a skinned runner bean

### What Every Woman Wants

Chunky Mrs Chatterley, bursting from her coat  
Chases after chocolate like a jet in flight  
Chunky Mrs Chatterley, what floats her boat  
Is Mars Bars, Toblerone and Turkish Delight

Pammy Barrecuda in her kinky boots  
Peroxide blonde, she is desperate for a man  
Red skirt flying like a matador's flag  
Hungry for a lover who can fill her can

Purple Widow Pimberely, knickers in a twist  
Purple Widow Pimberley down on her luck  
Purple Widow Pimberley, permed and crimped  
Looking for the dream of an easy buck

### Tsunami (a Pantoum)

Floundering boats of asylum seekers  
Displaced nationals, frightened, lost  
Drowning children all at sea  
Terrified flood of male war-fleers

Displaced nationals, frightened, lost  
Waves of Moslems, swept off board  
Terrified jungle of male war flee-ers  
Crocodile welcome with cactus teeth

Waves of Moslems, swept off board  
Crocodile welcome with cactus teeth  
Seismic shift of cultural change  
Tsunami of refugees. What's the cost?

Seismic shift of cultural change  
Floundering boats of asylum seekers  
Tsunami of refugees. What's the cost?  
Drowning children all at sea

## Apocalypse

Can be sung to the hymn tune 'Jerusalem-  
And did those rigs in oceans deep,  
Poison the life force in each stream?  
And did man's greed prove Nature's death,  
And pleasant fields be no more seen?  
And will the skies drop acid rain,  
Over our ancient suffering hills?  
And will all creatures pay the price,  
As Man's corrupts and coffers fill?

Bring us the Wisdom to cry Halt;  
Bring us the sense to stem the flood:  
Bring us the power to save the world  
Bringing an end to wars of blood  
Midst darkening skies and climate change  
We have destroyed our planets gifts  
Give us the power to tilt the scales  
As oceans rise and desert shifts

## Urban Gorilla

Fox is an urban guerilla.  
She is taking up arms against her persecutors  
Her type of warfare is irregular  
Fast moving sorties into gardens

Her strategy is to outsmart humans  
To feed her family, save her way of life

She is villified in the press as a savage,  
A bandit, an outlaw, a child of Satan

She suffers harassment, ambush, seige  
The bloody campaigns of hunters,  
Stalkers, predators, architects, builders

Forced to take refuge in suburbs  
To furnish the basics for her boisterous cubs,  
Fox must be resourceful  
Be on guard against snares and traps

Fortunately, she hasn't mastered  
The finer points of shouldering arms  
Of setting mines and dropping acid rain

Whee!

What's life for if you can't go Whee  
Like a jet or a supersonic bee  
If you can't throw caution into the air  
Like confetti over a Yeti's hair  
Get on your bike and soar downhill  
For the Hell of it- Isn't it such a thrill  
To see the world with a zip and a zee  
Like a blizzard of candyfloss gone whee!

## The Corporal's Son

The corporal's son was handsome, drank Blue Wicked,  
Was loyal, loving, blighted and betrayed  
A legend to his friends, a lady's man  
Sang like a was no happy ending  
Too early, Mr Death knocked on his door  
He has crossed on Charon's ferry, become a shade

Sheena Blackhall

# The Seely Howe (Scots Poems)

Coull Cemetary

The robin threiped frae the castle waa  
Though seeds blaw far frae the parent tree  
The wins o ancestry bring them back  
They aa cam hame in the end, said he

The burn that wynds through the seely howe  
Spikks wi the voice o prophecy  
Tea planters, dominies, fermin cheils  
They aa cam hame in the end, said she

Frae the icy corries o Lochnagar  
The erne cercles his territory  
King o the realm an aa aroon  
They aa cam hame in the end, said he

The grave is quaet, the grave is kind  
Here faimily ghaists find sanctuary  
The gravedigger dichts the yird frae his spaad  
They aa cam hame in the end, says he

In Memoriam

I sikk ye aawye, kennin yer nae here.  
Like a chalk drawin, blawn aawa like stoor  
Intae the eildritch haar o Daith's blae muir

Sae mony hae gaen cracklin tae the bier  
Like san ran throwe the glaiss in their last oor  
Some blythe an cantie, ithers, maenin, sweir

Yer life wis hauf-lived. Eeslessly I speir  
O Fate, foo rype my gairden o its flooer?  
Nae answer cams in ony buik o lear

Life hirples forrit, ay the same mineer  
At nicht ma tint ane fuspers, brings succoor

'I'm bit ae step afore ye, dinna fear'

I saw a Bairnie in a Widdendreme

I saw a bairnie in a widdendreme  
The coorse stramash o war brukk aa aroon  
Tint an alane, the littlin lay  
In a deep loch, aa virr caad frae her breist  
'Sweem fur yer life! ' I cried.  
She tuik nae tent ava, gaed up the ghaist  
Sank like a stane, drappt doon tae daith's cauld hame

The world is riven by the lust tae kill  
Ower fa's God rules the reest  
The price is bluid, an faimlies smashed tae shards  
Touns turned tae stoor, an clachans intae smush  
The stank o murdered flesh, on hatred's altar  
Fowk brocht as laigh's the girse  
That sune wad hap their heids

This poem is neither bonnie, braw nor douce  
For terror's ugsome an its friens are Pain  
Skaith, Scaurs, like slivverin draigons o the derk  
Ooto the orrals o a time gaen gyte

Fowk flee the charnel hoose o their torn kintra  
Temples an palaces in smithereens  
Far priests stoke up the flames o Agony

An fa can blame them? Far's the gowden coggie  
Tither eyn o the wattergaw? The Tir nan Og  
They risk their lives tae reach?  
We fear the smitt o war, offer sma hope  
An like thon bairnie in the widdendreme  
Their boaties cowp, an cryin help, they droon.

Place Names

Bruntshielbog, Bonnie Doune



Bonny Braes, Broo Gill  
Brewer's Burn, Braid Cairn  
Wedder Brows, Bu Hill

Burrowgate, Nisbetmill Cauld  
Corbie Cleuch, Claver Sike  
Todsbughts, Carlincraig  
Clash o Wirren, lowp the dyke

East Comb, Cloybank  
Green Close, Corby Linn  
Cran Moss, thistles rank  
Wescroft, gurlly win!

Easter Davoch, Duchrie Dod  
Cutty Cleuch, Crookedshaws  
Little Doups, Fank Burn,  
Deer Dyke, hips an hawes

Fey Wood, Floskhowe  
Foggy Lees, Stane Fauld  
Gairy Lochs, Canongate  
Garthdee, cranreuch cauld

Gled Brae, West Glacks  
Gouknest, Sma Glen  
Gullet Sprout, Haudgate Hole  
Katie's Hass, Cauldhame

Deil's Jingle, Howie Sound  
Hunterheck. Hemmel Knowe  
Netherhirst, Howierig  
Kail Yard, girssy howe

Auld Wife's Kirn, Kyles of Bute  
Marnock Knap, Netherlee  
Nout's lair, Rushy Lane  
Little Latch, Rashboglea

Braid Loans, Drumbuie lodge  
Mere Cleuch, Mickle Corum  
Blackmiddens, Banklug

Thumb Loop, a muckle jorum

Peerie Breast, Paddockfield  
Nowt Bield, Leitholm Peel  
Park Neuk, Nabhill  
Blackiemuir, rig an dreel

Green Pund, Carse Pow  
Pyat Craig, Blackraw  
Rispiie Lairs, Sauchie Banks  
Throw Rig, Scald Law

Scaw'd Fell, Seggy Burn  
Scar Brae, Scart Rock  
Shank Glen, Scaup Burn  
Scroggiehill, sturdy stock

Thief's Slack, Slap of Setter  
Backsmiddy, shelt's troch  
Brierysink, bushy Sike  
Heathershot, Berrysloch

Starryheuch, Black Stank,  
Foulsteps, Swartmill  
Fir Stell, The Lecker Stane  
Stey Brae, Stot Hill

Upper Tack, Broad Tae  
Laidler's Tail, Craw Tap  
Tappit Knowes. Threip Moor  
Easter Tofts, barley crap

Wee Doon, Wham Rig  
Whinniemuir, Finzean Linn  
Yearn Cleuch, Upper Yetts  
Fox Yird, Wester Whin

A Whistle Stop Tour of Grampian

Auchnagatt & Auchterless

Gordonstoun & Peterculter  
Meikle Wartle, Monymusk  
Rochienorman, Craigiebuckler  
Skene, Dunecht, Blairduff, Midmar  
Boddam. Ythanbank, Longhaven  
Inverugie, Peterhead  
Methlick, Tarves and Stonehaven

Turriff, Maud & Stuartfield  
Crimond, Rattray, Bonnykelly  
Cuminestown, New Leeds, New Deer  
Hatton, Tarves & Balmedie

Cluny, Monymusk, & Sauchen  
Delgaty and Inverugie  
Ellon, Whiterashes, New Deer  
Strichen, Ythan, Inverurie

Kintore, Kemnay, Dess, Aboyne,  
Ballater & Lochnagar  
Dinnet, Tarland, & Strathdon  
Banchory, Rhynie & Braemar

Huntly, Rathen, Finzean, Banff  
Gartly, Inch, the Cluny Brig  
Logie Coldstone, Durriss, Keith  
Lumphanan, Fyvie, Birse and Nigg

Boyndie, Dyce and Aberdeen  
Migvie, Towie, Keig and Slains

Fraserburgh, Alford, Echt  
Portsoy, Kildrummy, Tyrie's Mains

Round each road, a tourist's treat  
Grampian, where hills and heaven meet

Jumper's Brig

Luikin doon thon dowie drap, far Daith grins

Up tae Kelly's cats frae the braw gairdens aneth  
Ye'll see the trains wheech North  
Can ye hear the corbies skreich as they ride the wins?  
Mebbe yer droonin in debt. Nae wirk. Nae hope o wirk

Mebbe yer rattlin wi peels dished oot  
As chemical cosh, tae free up  
Beds in the psychiatric ward  
(We canna hae ye cloggin up the system  
It's yer human richt tae beg fur pence in the street  
Widn't ye rather be oot on yer lug on yer ane  
Than keepit in a ward an luikit eftir?)

Mebbe yer gyte wi depression  
Mebbe ye've tint yer dearie  
(The busy fowk gaun by ken naethin o yer misfortune  
An care even less this braw bricht sunny day.)

The deid space pus ye doon  
Willin ye, lowp...cam on....it wad be sae easy  
Willin ye ontae the tracks, an sweet oblivion

Cannie! Grip ticht the blaik cat's thrapple  
Steady. The meenit passes  
Step back. Re-jyne the weel-balanced fowk o the toon.  
Pent on a smile. Think o the sottar ye'd makk  
On the rails aneth, the cost  
Tae the public purse o scrapin ye up.  
Ye mauna be selfish, ye ken. Ye maun think o ithers

A Scots Owerset o 'Encounter' by Czeslaw Milosz

We wis ridin ower jeeled parks in a cairt at daybrakk.  
A reid wing raise in the derk  
An o a suddenty a bawd ran ben the road.  
Ane o us pynted tae it wi his haun.  
Thon wis lang syne. The noo, neither o them is leevin,  
Nae the bawd, nor the cheil fa pynted his haun.  
O ma luv, far are they, far are they gaun  
The glisk o haun, straik o meevement, reeshle o stanes.  
I speir, nae oot o sorra, bit in dumfounerment

## The Two Seater

Whisky, whisky, the dram's the thing  
Tae caa the waas o Jericho doon  
Maisie McGinty's bra stap's slipped  
Her halo's tummlit aroon her croon  
Whisky whisky, Ewan's sporran's  
Aa skweejee, an his neb is reid  
His bowtie's runkled, his sark's jurmummled  
His hair is huddrie on his ginger heid

Whisky, whisky, it's a teaser  
Raises the will an takks it awa  
Twa fowk bosityn fine an cosyin  
Ower blin fu tae attempt ta-ta

Sheena Blackhall

# The Seer

Crow-black hair, jet-beady eyes  
Crows' feet around her eyelids  
This woman sits in her eyrie, a Scottish Sybil  
Tarred with a Romany brush.

She scans me like an owl  
Missing nothing, sensing mood and need  
Detective of the psyche

I have come to seek her services  
Raw with bereavement  
I have come seeking connection

Her bloodless hands are porcelain white  
Coddling the cracked, thin Tarot cards  
'Pick seven, ' she says, splaying them like a fan

They are black-backed as Bible covers  
Well-thumbed from turnings and tellings

'He's here, your son. He says he's not at rest.  
He says he was not ready to cross over.'

Her eyes flick round the room  
Like flies, lighting on dainties.

A transfusion of or subterfuge?  
Yearning has summoned him here  
Or not, to the land of Usher's Well  
'He stands beside you, radiates regret.'

Dealer in the currency of spirits  
She plucks names from the air:  
Dodd, Alex, Jimmy. Given my age  
And locality, a safe assumption

Her bull's eye punchlines leave me speechless  
How could she divine such private knowledge?

A black cat slides through a hedge in a misty field  
The day breathes frost. It is the sere season

We inhabit the same room  
My son and I, both stuck in limbo

Two kites, tails joined,  
Snagged in grief's barbed wire

He, wishing for life  
That I would die to give him.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Ship Of Fools

38 poets are sailing across Loch Katrine  
Over the city of Glasgow's public water supply  
30,000 sheep were cleared from the hills around  
To keep Glaswegian plumbing ewe-pee free

Their elders were not consulted in this matter  
Driven lamenting off their ancestral pastures  
The mutton clearances, a stain on Glasgow's character.

This loch is 500 feet deep  
A water bull as large as a Clydeside bus  
Stays in its icy depths, waiting  
To hole the hulls of oily polluters  
In the city of Glasgow's public water supply

Green Tagged Kate McLaren, the Gartmore Palmer.  
Black Mini Muddler. Professor Watson's Fancy,  
Black Zulu, the Middle dropper  
All, have got their hooks in  
The city of Glasgow's public water supply.

Meanwhile, above all those jugfuls of pub-mixers,  
Throat coolers, juice diluting gallons,  
buzzards swoop over the trees  
red and roe deer feed on the slopes  
pied flycatcher, tree pipit, wood warbler, redstart  
soar and dive through the leaves  
Occasionally dropping feathers  
On the city of Glasgow's public water supply

Not to mention 38 poets, raising an ode or two  
Like sails in the wind, as poets do,  
Steering by sleight and illusion,  
Over the city of Glasgow's public water supply.  
Uisge beathe with a smidgeon of Bardic tang

Sheena Blackhall



# The Ship Of Fools (19 Poems In Scots)

1. A Scots Owersett o a translation o a poem bi Pushkin:

Gin I wauk the soundin streets,  
Or gyang inno a thrang kirk  
Or dowp doon amang wud halflins,  
Ma harns full wi thochts.

I say tae masel: the years are fleein,  
An noo foiver mony there seems tae be,  
We maun aa gyang unner the aybydan mools,  
An somebody's oor is already nearhaun.

Fin I keek at a lanely aik  
I think: the chieftain o the wids.  
It'll oorlive ma forgotten times  
As it ootlived thon o ma granfaithers'.

Gin I pett a young bairn, Straicht aff I think: fareweel!  
I'll gie ower ma place tae you,  
For I maun dwine while yer flooer briers.

Ilkie day, ilkie oor  
I aywis haud tae thon thocht,  
Ettlin tae jelouse frae their nummer  
The year which brings ma daith.  
And far will ma Weird sen daith tae me?  
In war, in my traivels, or on the seas?  
Or will the nearhaun glen  
Welcome ma cauld aisse?

An although tae the menseless body  
It maitters nocht far it rots,  
Yet near tae ma best-lued kintra  
I wad still raither be beeriet.  
An let it be aside ma kistit mools  
That young life foriver will be playin,  
An impartial, indifferent Natur  
Foray be sheenin bonnie.

## Lankan Safari

They sett us the promise o jumbos  
We anely caught the glisk o grey bihoochies  
Thin tailed in the plottin trees  
Lugs, shanks an muckle heids,  
Happit bi wisps o shadda

The Land rover near cowped us,  
Garrin us lowp in oor seats like flechy puddocks  
The guides grew vexed, kennin their tips  
Grew smaaer ilkie meenit

Twa oors we scrauned oor een doon growthy roads  
Swyte ran ben the Lankans' wide brimmed hats  
Feart o a brakk doon, airmed tae the teeth wi guns.

Hippit, wabbit, scunnered, sterved o breets  
We huffed in the taxi takkin us back tae base.  
Passed lauchin puggies. A snake in the lang girse  
An ugsome lizard slidderin ben a sheuch  
The lan fair hotchin, fegs, an unfenced zoo  
Sri Lankan breets oot on their ain safari.

### 3. Mrs Byron, Heiress of Gight

Fower hunner years the Gordon lairds  
O royal bluid an firey makk  
Ruled ower the bonnie lans o Gight  
A dynasty nae foe cud brakk

Craig Horror, glowrin Carlin's Craig  
The Crook a' Peel, the Whiskey Pot  
Rang tae their war cries an their pride  
The birth-stangs o the Norman Scot

Ane kept his treisur neth the waves  
Hagberry Pot...a dowie puil  
Nae servant daured tae touch it there  
Aa kent thon waters hoosed the Deil

Siller brings woers roon like flees  
Nae Gordon likes a lanely bed  
Tae Bath, a Gordon heiress gaed  
Catherine...a ne'er dae weel tae wed

Fin Gordon fire met Byron cherm  
The lassie's hairt ower-ruled her heid  
Romance skipped aff wi cakes an ale  
An left ahin cauld kail an breid

Her husband wis a bonnie catch  
He bairned her, syne set aff fur France  
An yonner in a pucklie years  
Wi debt, he gart her dowry dance

His laddie, Geordie, faitherless  
Raised in the North at Aiberdeen  
By Queen Street, Broad Street, hirpled roon  
The wynds an neuks o granite steen

Aff wi his buiks tae Grammar schuil  
Hauf Byron lord, hauf Gordon laird  
An aa the whyle, frae Lans o Gight  
The herons raise an left the yird

Bit Catherine lued her cripple loon,  
Whyles, bosied him wi kisses fine  
An whyles, haived curses at his back  
A bizzim fin the waur o wine

A single parent's darg is dreich  
An dreicher wi a heidstrang loon  
Sisyphus stane o crushin wecht,  
Historians, fa ding her doon.

Watchie: A Tribute to Joan Eardley  
n.b. The Watchie was the name of her cottage-studio

Slidderin alang the dubby Mearns braes  
Teeterin ower the cliffs o Catterline

In bauchled sheen, auld breeks, the artist skytes  
Tae reach the Watchie. Weathered bi the brine  
Baith hoose an wumman. Here, she keeps her peints  
Fin driven inbye bi the Winter wins  
In Simmer, cockin like a reestin gull  
Her easel heistit mangst the yalla whin

She loads her brush wi san an girse an peint  
Tae catch the birlin, bylin bonnie sea  
Crashin tae shore an brakkin intae smush  
Or sypin ben the puils in dulse an bree

Her stormy seascapes roar oot frae the frame  
Gurly an wersh, wechty wi ice an sna  
Auld fishermen wad jeel at thon kent sicht  
Myndin on wrackit ships, an turn awa

Her ain hoose in the raw o fisher hames  
Wis like a shell. Bark chippins on the fleer  
Sail-cloots fur waas an ceilins..nae perjink  
Weel seen she bedd ayont the world's steer

Wyles she'd takk tent o bee-skepps on the braes  
The gowden rucks, the linties in the lift  
The Simmer parks, the gowans in the sheuch  
The rowans turnin in the Autumn's drift

Naebody caughted the sea sae weel as her  
She felt it in the marra o her makk  
Fishin fur image wi a peinter's ee  
In Catterline, far storms breenge an brakk

She wis the Watchie o thon Nor East neuk  
Far barley rigs rin tae the world's edge  
An ferms an fishers strive tae thole the dunt  
O cloorin wins on Scotlan's craggy ledge

5.A Traivellin Man: for Stanley Robertson,1940-2009

A gran day's start, wi a blink o sun  
An the barley, gowd an turnin

A skirl o the pipes tae kittle his fit  
An the sun on the birk trees burnin

He's aff tae the widded, wyndy road  
The Queen o the Fairies kens  
Far the leverock sings an the heron wings  
In the hairt o Lumphanan's glens

The crimson rasps an the blaeberries  
Are sweet in the sheugh for puin  
An the spider sits in her nettle hoose  
Her pemickity shawl a-shewin

The laird o the wid, a muckle aik  
Kens a frien is passin near  
Tho a ghaistie's step is licht's the dyew  
An it's monteclara clear

Ay, mebbe the yalla's aff the breem  
Sic seeds it's left ahin it!  
O sangs an tales an a crap o bairns  
A life wi the pearlins in it

The road o Lumphanan's thrang wi fowk  
Far the rainbow booes on the Ben  
There's speerits-a-plenty wytin there  
Roon the reek at the world's eyn

•□

Sae dinna be wae at the kistin day  
Bi the mools o the traivellin man  
His sangs ring oot frae the verra stanes  
He's ane o the daithless clan

Rab, frae the Mearns Lassies Tune: Duncan Grey

In the Mearns a faimily bedd  
Ha ha the woin o't  
Fermin fowk they war tae trade  
Ha ha the woin o't  
Burness wis the family name,  
Forebears tae a lad o fame

Love & coortin wis his game,  
Ha ha the woin o't

A young chiel Walter Burness etc  
Beldie Craig did sae impress etc  
Took the lassie for his wife  
Tae share his tribbles, joys an life  
By Glenbervie, nae in Fife! Etc

Neist there cam tae Brawliemuir etc  
James Burness wi Meg Falc'ner etc  
Ae son George tae Elfhill gaed  
Anither, Rabbie, wooed a maid  
Beldie Keith...echt bairns they bred etc

William Burns took Agnes Broun etc  
Frae Clochnahill tae Embro toun etc  
Delled the bonnie Meadows there  
For a whyle, syne moved tae Ayr  
Fa wis born sae comely there?  
Rab Burns, the wylin o't!

Rotten tatties dinna seed etc  
Mearns stock is born tae breed etc  
Robbie lued the lassies weel  
Shall we name them? A lang dreel  
O flooers he pued, an oor tae steal etc

Anna, Delia, Bessie, Nell etc  
Lesley, Jean, Miss Fontarelle etc  
Polly, Tibbie, Mary Ann  
Bell an Nancy... twis his plan  
Tae pleisur aa, a generous man etc

Phyllis, Chloris, Hannah, Meg etc  
Jessie, Molly, Sophy, Peg etc  
Mysie, Jenny, Clarinda  
Lift the sneck an Rab's awa  
Conquests doon like blossoms faa etc  
Lassies young an lassies auld etc

Say three things keep oot the cauld etc

Firelicht's gran an whisky's fine  
Bit luv is better ony time  
Tae share it Rabbie thocht nae crime etc

### Scots Enlightenment for Helena Anderson-Wright

Lums spewin reek turned Embro's heivens dark  
Frae windaes cam the cries o Gardez-Loo  
Yet, ower thon cobbled closes, stinkin wynds  
Strode men fa's thochts wad makk the Auld World new.

Hutcheson, Home, James Boswell, David Hume  
Hutton an Adam, Smellie, Scott and Reid  
James Watt & Smith brocht licht intae men's lives  
Their genius, blawn world-wide like thrissle seed

In oyster cellar, tavern and inbye  
The Poker, Cape, an mony's the Embro club  
Gleg judges, poets, artists, tuik their ease  
Like spunky mussels byled in a muckle tub

Here Burns reesed oot the tree o liberty  
Urgin that man should brither be tae man  
Here Ramsay opened up his library  
Spikk reengin frae Free Trade, tae Ossian

Tho Lindt cured scurvy, still ye'd hear the skirl  
O fowk like Fergusson, in Bedlam's strae  
Tho Simpson's anaesthetics dulled birth-dirl  
Flees bizzed roon open shops on Castle brae

A mixer-maxter age, bi lear weel-served  
Fin genius grew in Scotlan's smaa back yaird

### Hen-Wife

My aunt Belle wore blue peenies,  
Cried 'tuck-tuck-tucky-tuck  
Tae her feathered chairges

Rattlin their seedies intae their roon tin feeders  
She brocht them heezin roon like ferm blethers  
Kecklin an newsin at a kintra fair

Foremaist ran Chanticleer  
His wattles reid as fire  
A bigsie breet wi a lang-spurred horn strut  
The anely maister in a hotterel brothel

I helped her gaiter the eggs, hett in the strae  
Cowp broody clockers aff their smaa broon boolies  
Cannily, liftin them inno the wuvven basket

Deep litter anely served the toun-fowk's tables  
Ma aunt Bell's free-range hennies served her ain  
The yokes like yalla sun, shells smeeth as cream

Deep litter hennies bedd inbye for life  
Niver lat oot...a flechy, pykit flock  
O shargers, peelie-wallies, hauf-blin birds  
Wi feathers ruggit oot frae skull or dock  
I didna wyle the eggies frae their shed  
Near like tae smoor wi stoor, hen-pish, an dule.

onvale Prize Ram

His loins are strang his body's lang  
A stoot an sonsie craitur  
An let's be hoped like Rabbie Burns,  
He has a lovin natur

He'll hae tae cover nicht an day  
A rowth o yowes, tae sire  
Eneuch wee lambs tae pye the bank  
Fur ilkie lowp's a hire

Nae time for dauchlin in the sheuch  
Or bleatin in the clover  
It's jist slam, bang, an thank-ye m'am  
A maist unceevil lover.



-Luv, Scots-Style

Para Handy sailed roon the Dark Island  
Luikin fur Kate Dalrymple.

Three craws, Taggart, an Nessie pit him richt.  
Taggart telt him that there'd bin a murder  
The three craws made nae comment  
Nessie said aa weeminfowk war fickle.

The Laird o Cockpen wis ettin stovies  
Wi Calvin an Columba, girnin aboot feminists  
Said men war better aff wioot the jaads  
John Knox held his wheesht.  
(there wis nae oatcakes nur beetroot)

Kate Dalrymple meanwhile,  
Hid run aff wi Rabbie Burns an Kitty Brewster  
Tae Balachulish, keepin aa options open

Last heard o, Para Handy  
Wis wirkin affshore roon the Shetlan skerries  
Coortin a silkie yonner on the sly

It maun be true, the neebors aa agreed  
Nae man wad buy sowsed herrin bi the cran  
Unless his bidie-in wis three quarts fish

Mary as a Wattergaw

Aunt Mary's parritch, wis fawn as Heilan kilt hose  
Her hair wis broon's a wee hairst moosie's fuskers  
Her een war blue as cornfloors in the park  
An fin she smiled, the world wis meltin hinney

Bumbaleerie Man

He's glekit, he's bumshayvelt, hudderie an skittery  
Crabbit, pernickety, dowie an wae

He sits on his hurdies, luiks sleekit an buttery  
He's aff-takkin mealie-moued snottery an blae

In winter, he's girnin an mumphin an grumphin  
He's snochrin an pyochrin an dichtin his snoot  
In simmer he's plottin an birsslin an hotterin  
In swyte like a pottie o jam-bylin fruit

His lugs are like joogs wi a theekin o fur  
His oxters are bowfin like bowsters o keech  
He's bowdie, pirn-taed, humfy-backit an waur  
The farts frae his dowp fyle the air wi wheech

Sae dinna ging inno coorse howfs on a Setterday  
Thon's fin he's blootert, pished, connached an fu  
As a puggie on wine or a druggie on tinnie-spray  
Luik in the keekin-glaiss...Mebbe he's you!

### 13. Robert de Brus 1274-1329

Young Robert wis a chiel o mense an micht.  
The bluid o Gael an Norman in his veins.  
Gainst Langshanks an his men wi virr he'd fecht

Reid Comyn's bluid he skaled ower priestly stanes.  
Syne, weariet, dogged bi sorras an defeat  
He hid inby a cave, jeeled tae the banes.

There, saw a wyver ettlin tae meet  
The far side o the waa, seeven times tae try  
Agin aa odds, till victory won complete.

Sir Robert badd the wyver a gweed-by;  
Gaed on tae conquer aa, rise tae the heicht  
O King o Scots, warrior an sage forby

For he could spakk in Gaelic, an delicht  
In Latin, Scots, an Norman, screivit richt.  
At Bannockburn, he sent his foemen fleein,

The English host like Autumn leaves, fell deid

On Scottish grun, the chunnerin wirms a-preein,  
Brus wis a conqueror, hauns steeped in reid,

The killin o John Comyn bladdit aa  
Syne leprosy laid low thon noble heid  
By royal decree, howked frae the rib-cage waa,

The kingly hairt a kist o gowd did fill  
Tae gyang far Moorish breezes softly blaa  
Syne fell Sir Douglas, fechtin wi a will

Flingin the Bruce's hairt far ben the steer  
Ye gyang, I's follae, faes o Christ tae kill  
Robert de Brus, yer fame ootlived yer bier  
Aa Scots thrill tae yer name. Brave ghaistie, hear!

Jonet Wishart

There wis a wife in Aiberdeen, weel skilled in sorcery  
Auld Jonet Wishart wis her name, her o the ringle ee

She gart hens dwinnle on the reest, she pysoned milkers' teats  
She raised up wins like ony storm, howked deid frae galla's reets

Tae Merket Cross wi ither deils she flew at Halloween  
Fin midnight chapped, she daunced wi Hornie neth the eildritch meen

Some o her fiers tuik makk o bawds, futterats, or skreichin cats  
Frae ilkie neuk an airt they cam, a muckle plague o rats

She braggit fu she'd peel the corn, (grown widdershins, twis gweed  
Bit in the hungeret years the crap grew sungates, dwined, an deed)

Tae ony man fa quantered her, coorse widdendremes she sent  
Nae witch-prick, thoomb-screw, thrawsin sair could gar this witch repent

An fin the kirk-fowk sentenced her, a pyot blaik appeared  
Tae pyke the een frae witnesses, a cantrip coorse an weird

An sae, wi peats, tar-barrel, coals, the toun wad hae its fun  
As thon auld body's birsslin, lichtit up the lift like sun

An sae she skreighed an fleeriched there, by fire, driv'n ooto mind  
A dottlit, wrackit, carlin-wife, ane o the scape-goat kind

o Russian Proverbs

Aa cats are grey at nicht.  
Ye should be feart o a quaet dog.

Ilkie seed kens its time  
Ony fish is gweed gin it's on the heuk.

Aabody's nae a cook that wauks wi a lang knife.  
As ye cook the parritch, sae ye maun ett it  
There'll be tribble gin the souter makks the pies.

Nae aabody weirin a cowl is a monk.  
A drap scoops oot a stane  
Ye canna brakk throw a waa wi yer broo

A flee winna get inno a steekit mou.  
Dinna makk a jumbo ooto a flee.

16.A Poem o Belgian Proverbs

It's daft tae wyte for yer boatie tae come in  
Unless ye've sent ane oot

He fa arrives ower latchy  
Fins the plate turned ower

He fa etts flame, keechs spirks  
God heals, bit the doctor gets pyed

Blythe nations hae nae history  
Honour is better nur honours

Ae merk spyles the hale frock  
An auld reef needs a rowth o patches  
A waa wi cracks sune crummles

The shelt maun ett far it's tethered  
Weeds niver dee.

It hings on the faa o the cairds.  
Fin the yowe bleats, it losses its moufu  
Fa kens foo a goose gyangs barfit?

Dinna makk eese o anither's mou  
Unless it's bin leant tae ye.  
Experience is the caimb  
That natur gies us fin we're baldie.

### 17. Stottin Cats

Nae bats in the belfry o Ypres, bit squallochin cats  
Rainin doon tae the grun tae stot or splat.

On cat-stottin day, the cassies o Ypres ran reid  
Wi the bluid o kittlins, mirled an strippit an deid

A queer like ploy, an nae tae be encouraged  
The Dukes o the cats agreed  
Dugs should be flang frae the belfry  
Torties, or rattens, insteid.

alemkerk, Bruges

Ane Anselm Adornes bi name  
Near North Berwick, bi Scotsmen wis slain  
Noo he lies in his tomb wi a sword up abune  
An wishes he'd bidden at hame

Meg

Gyte Meg wis a wife fa wis greedy fur gowd  
On a cuddy tae Hell she did ride  
Wi a bowl on her heid an a poker in haun A  
nd an airmy o weemin aside

They hitched up their peenies, their kitchies they left  
Airmed wi spurtle an ladle an seive  
Wi their querns an their breid knives tae challenge the Deil  
Wi pot lids for shields on each neive

Auld Cloutie wis powkin his hunners o imps  
Wi cinnors a-birsslin their dowps  
Fin ower the brae comes gyte Meg wi her band  
Wwin neep chappers, speens, an soup stowps

There wis greetin an girnin an gnashin o teeth  
There wis derkness as blaik as a craa  
Fur Auld Hornie kent, o the torments o Hell  
A weemin's tongue's warst o them aa

Sae he teemed oot his kisties, his siller an wine  
His Burgundy, jewels an gowd plate  
An Gyte Meg fulled her pooches wi aa they could haud  
An gaed hame, fur twis gettin rale hett

Thank God, quo the Deil as the weemin turned tail  
I wis feart they wid bide here for life  
I wad raither thole drooth, hunger, ony auld sair  
Than be deaved nicht an morn bi a wife!

Sheena Blackhall

# The Shoes

Holocaust relics-  
A roomful  
A raceful  
A hateful  
Of survivors.

Uninvited, unasked, unnoticed  
By leather and lace,  
By sole and tongue,  
By eyelet and buckle,  
We step into the room-

One by one  
Our thoughts take a cold shower.

No cut-price bargains here,  
No nice nostalgia,  
In this shop window installation  
Of quiet horror.

It is not the poems  
That follow you out  
Down Washington's wealthy sidewalks

It is not the family photos  
That dog you, much, much later  
Scratching away at your door,

It is a child's sandal, scuffed across the toe,  
An old man's surgical boot ingrained with dust,  
A dancing girl's high-heels,  
A widow's slippers,  
Inhuman horrid survival  
Of the fittest.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Sickle Moon Revisited

I am the moon.  
Once, the snow fox curled in my smoky craters  
Ivy softened my sides  
Dewdrops breathed my air.

Stuff happens. Life. The usual.  
I picked my hurts red raw  
Opened my scars repeatedly  
The scabs healed over. Only dust remains

Now I hang in the glacial Heavens  
Too dead to shout, beyond all touch and joy  
Your night light. Your comfort.  
Your sad old silver King  
All of my fires burnt out

Sheena Blackhall



# The Singing Bird (41 Poems In Scots)

## SINGING BIRD

A birdie flichters oot an in  
The open doorway o its cage.  
Its flicht is short, its sang is wee,  
Smaa is the circuit o its stage.

The mappamound it disna ken  
It's thirled tae a rodden tree;  
Tethered tae a kenspeckle glen,  
'Twad brak its hert tae set it free.

Freedom is fine fur erne fierce  
That reenges wide wi bluidy cleuk,  
Fur falcon heich wi een o steel,  
Fa jeels the marra wi ae luik.

Gin aa the anchors raise an brakk,  
Gin salmon flew an sun grew black;  
Gin banes gied birth tae mysteries,  
Mankind nicht prize kent boundaries.

## ICH

Dreich clouds, a flicht o greylags ben the lift,  
Drookit biggins squar on tae the caal,  
Driftwid duntin tarry at the quay,  
Dreary a skiffie trauchles hame twa-fauld.

Sea maws are skreichin sorras in the win;  
Seep-sabbin raindraps treetle ower the lan;  
Big Issue seller cooried in a neuk –  
Preint bleeds inno the hair-cracks in his han.

Chooks sunken like the craters o the meen;  
A stibble growth; ringed nichtmares roon his een,  
A wastit druggie hyters down the street:  
Sic hurts thon beeny shadda's kent – an gien.

### 3. DOUR WINTER'S DAEN

Dour Winter's daen. The shepherd Wind  
Herds yowes o cloud; birk branches rowe.  
Dour Winter's daen. The swackenin yird's  
Wi brierin spears o green pierced throwe.

Dour Winter's daen. The teuchit storm  
Skitters its seed o shortsome snaw  
That blossoms furth in branchin storms,  
Glentin like ony wattergaw.

Dour Winter's daen. As weel stop Spring,  
As haimmer nails tae haud the dawn.  
Abune the larick, wheeplin birds  
Welcome a spleet-new trimmlin fawn.

Dour Winter's daen. A nest's the glen,  
Its hatchin littlins soar in flicht.  
Dour Winter's daen. The linn coups ower  
Glimmrin wi sunbeams starnie-bricht.  
A teemin creel o salmon glisks,  
A quaich o glamourie an licht.

### TWA POEMS EFTIR JON MILOS

#### 4. SIC BLYTHENESS

Sic blytheness  
Tae bide in this wide world!  
Science teaches us tae think like Gods—  
Foo mony vitamins tae swallae  
Foo mony oors tae sleep  
Foo tae live healthy, tae dee healthy.

The States wir defence  
Agin neebors an ither breets—  
Teaches us tae mak siller, an bairns.

Politics scoors oor harns  
Frae the creepie-crawlies o fey notions;  
Teaches us tae ay chuse richt  
Nae clouds nur oysters in wir meanin.

The Kirk blesses us,  
Kepps wir sowels frae deevilicks  
An pynts the wye tae Heiven.

#### 5. FOO DAE FOWK?

Foo dae fowk need a heid?  
Yon's far the blicht sterts.

Foo dae fowk need a leid?  
The birdie's caught bi her ain singin.

Foo dae fowk need a neb?  
They miss the guff o their own glaikitness.

Foo dae fowk need a hairt?  
It whumps – syne, o a suddenty, it stops.

#### 6. DEJEUNER EN PLEIN AIR

Twa gutsy kytes. Twa sneekin moos.  
Twa diners, hunched an huddrie.  
Bumbazed, fowk gaithered, raxxed tae watch  
The crowd wad fill Pittodrie –  
As twa hett tatties, jumbo-sized,  
Wi garlic butter reamin,  
Set in a bowl wi fangs o breid  
In fragrant sauces sweemin,  
Gaed clunkin ower yon hungert maws  
Like watter doon a brander,  
As mair an mair fowk heezed aroon  
Tae gie the twa a gander.

As Desperate Dan chawed pies o coo,  
As Moses suppit manna,

Thon twa gourmets cleaned oot the tray  
As cheerie's a Hosanna.  
Nae pearly queens fed frae their teens  
On jeelied eels an pastry  
Cud gollup doon tae ashet's foon  
Thon taffies hauf sae hasty.

As Juno scoffed ambrosia,  
An Eve chawed Cox's pippin;  
As Popeye swallaed speenach tins  
An Saki sipped his tiffin;  
As Rab C. Nesbit relished chips  
An Samson favoured figs  
Thon pair, wi tatties fur their fare  
War cantie's sookin pigs.

Twa Aiberdonians en plein air  
Wi tatties on a plate  
Dined wondrous weel on heels o breid,  
As blythe as Heids o State  
Twa seagulls on the cassies' croon  
Takkin their daily maet.

## 7. THE STAG ON THE BRAE AN THE WEE WEE SANG

The jynts laid on the bracken brae are perfect,  
An ingyneerin maisterpiece in been;  
Immaculate, thon skeleton's fite scaffold  
Biggit as braw's an Inca waa o steen.

Bit far's the quickenin pulse o fur an speerit  
That throbbid at thon imperious leader's throat?  
O far's the warm hairt's bluid as reid's a rodden  
That coursed aneth the breet beast's tawny coat?

Wi Norse-boat symmetry hulled ribs are fashioned,  
Beached on the bleachin bracken bare an still.  
The skull, sicht-teemed, is geometry an pattern  
That Euclid couldna better at his will.

Bit far's the seekin ee that reenged the bracken,

The quiverin hoch that lowpit wi Desire?  
Oh, far's the flytin flesh, the antlers' clashin  
Raised in the rut, Olympus-spirk o fire?

The teem ee sockets glower at sichtless vistas,  
An anatomical sculpture, dreich an deid.  
The wame wi wachts o snaw is cauldly fillin,  
Thon laired loins far wummlin maggots feed...

A wee, wee sang welled up in a bonnie birdie,  
Ae winter's nicht fin firs stude preen-prick green;  
It charmed the chitterin trees wi'ts untrained wirdie  
An brocht a smile tae the soor, dour-faced meen.

The joys o the world war in that sang, and sorra,  
The tear that bides in the breist, wis in that note,  
Nae metronome that birdie sought tae borra  
Tae makk the tune that raise frae its trimmlin throat.

Oh, the Gairdens o Versailles are trig an vauntie:  
Pouer an pride an pelf are in ilkie raw.  
The girse is croppit, the rose is pruned an cantie –  
Bit the storm-tashed dykeside brier beats them aa!

## 8. THE CHAP O TWAL

As lang as salmon sweem the waves an I hae thochts tae myn,  
As boats salute the dwinin year, their anchor towes tae tyne  
O twal month traivels ower an by, tae welcome in the new,  
I'm laith tae haimmer doon the kist an bid the Auld adieu.

Like mochs aroon a caunle-flame, the mirlin mem'ries heeze:  
O April sunlicht drappin gowd on Cluny's scentit trees;  
Blindrift's doonfa, soft Beltane's thaw, ower Tullich's rigs o green.  
A hind gaes steppin stately oot, as prood as ony queen –  
A glidin wraith as licht's a braith slips ghaistly roon Culblean,  
Far weety crags glower o'er peat hags an fowk are seldom seen.

An fa can snib the door o Time wi feint a backwird teet  
At sonsie simmer's reamin quaich wi barley bree replete,  
Fin aa Cromar's a reeshlin loch o sweyin fuskered heids,

An douce Loch Davan's emerant waves wyve doucely roon its reeds?

Come Mairtinmas fin ither airts are dreich's a yowe's rig-bane,  
Noo autumn wi its fiery cross sets aa Deeside aflame.  
The latticed glory o its leaves in copper shoos doonfa,  
As if a caliph's coffers cowped new-minted coins oweraa.

Purple an siller is my lan, wi heath an watter girt,  
An at its hem a braided stem o barley roon its skirt.  
The dram I heist at Hogmanay fower sizzens hae distill't  
O gowden days; wi bracken braes an dowie darg it's fill't –  
Warm memories twine aroon the Dee, wi exiled langins chill't.

## 9. KALE

Alpha, alpha, sang the kale,  
I'm as green's a dragon's tail!  
Bonnier than wren or quail,  
I am fresh far they are stale!

In her sark the wirms are wummlin.  
See her leafy glory tummlin  
In the midden – sair, her hummlin.

## 10. LIFE'S MUCKLE CAIRT (after Alexander Pushkin)

Tho whyles it's screichin wi the load,  
Life's cairt meeves aff, wi fowk replete.  
Grey Time's in chairge; he hauds the road  
An niver leaves the drivin seat.

At dawn we sclimm aboard the cairt,  
Back-spikk and chikk frae littlins flowin;  
Bigsie an ettlin sune tae stert  
We skirl: 'C'wa, get fuckin goin! '

Fin noon weirs roon we're nae sae bauld.  
The muckle cairt begins tae hugger  
At dreidfu draps; syne fears enfauld –  
We roar, 'Slaw doon, ye glaikit bugger! '

The muckle cairt rowes roon the neuk;  
Bi gloamin weel we ken the rhythm.  
Nid-noddin ower oor closin tale –  
Time's muckle cairt, ay forrit driven!

## 11. SCOTLAND

St Andrew's flag Muckle stag.  
Fish an chips Whisky nips.  
Irn Bru Rangers blue.  
North Sea Ile Barlinnie jyle.  
Dark Culloden Scarlet rodden.  
Nessie's hame Curler's game.  
Midgies heezin Salmon season.  
Cairngorm Hairy sporran.  
Capercaillie Forkietailie.  
Athol brose Wee Fite rose.  
Robert Bruce Harvest moose.  
Kent his faither! Grouse an heather.  
Tattie dreels Herrin creels.  
John Knox Torry Rocks.  
Grannies sookers Littlin's dookers.  
Grandpa Broon Gowf at Troon.  
Wee Free Kirk Heilan stirk.  
Buts an bens Misty glens.  
Fitba match Herrin catch.  
Arbroath smokies Sweetie pyokies.  
Bennachie Don and Dee.  
Burns sonnet Tartan bonnet.  
Parritch pot Sir Walter Scott.  
Largs, Dunblane Sleet an rain!  
Shetland seals Echtsome reels□  
Glesga toun Dingin doun!  
William Wallace Yowes on Harris.□  
Princes Street Dreepin weet!

## 12. WADDINS AT KING'S COLLEGE

Ae Setterday at King's, ye ken,

There wis a great to-do,  
A piper blawin fit tae burst,  
A Rolls-Royce spankin-new,  
An me there on the girse, ye ken,  
Wi buiks upon ma knee  
Reading al fresco in thon sun  
We dinna aften see.

The bride wis braw (sae wis her Ma –  
A hat as braid's a tray) .  
This waddin's cost five thoosan poon,  
A dauchlin guest did say.  
An sae it sud! Like Hollywud,  
The cameras birred an cleek't.  
O photies wi their finery,  
Thon fowk wad nae be swick't.

An syne aroon ma feet there lowped  
A cripple-fittit cooshie,  
A bauchled, shauchled, manglit quine  
Bumbazed bi as the stushie.  
Her bladded taes she tucked aneth  
Her bosie as she hirpled,  
An, close ahin, a cock paid coort  
Breist feathers grey and purpled.  
He puffed his bigsie breistie oot  
Like ony Pavarotti  
While at the kirk anither bride  
Arrived tae hae her shottie  
O piper kittlin up his pipes,  
Best man producun rings  
O Setterday's a busy day,  
Gin ye be wad at King's!

Three waddins I watched come an gyang:  
The ane that stole the view  
Wis the bridegroom wi the feathers  
An the cripple-fittit doo.

There wis brawer doos upon the girse  
Bit Cupid hid conspired  
Tae makk yon gammy-fittit bird



Aa that his hairt desired.

Fin the icin's aff the cake,  
Laid by wi ither tooteroos,  
The waddin that will langest laist  
May be the cooshie doo's!

### 13. FEBRUAR: HOWE O CROMAR

The stibble park wi skirps o ice  
Shimmers in sunlight's piercin rays;  
Wave upon wave, the knowes rise up,  
Sclimmin the mornin's frosty braes.

The tarry road ower deid-dry ling  
Links ferm tae ferm, somelike a string  
O steen-grey beads. A futterat sleekit  
Streaks ower parks, wi sna shooers theekit.

Mowdies hae bigged their castles broon  
Far yowies graze at fir-tree foun.  
Pine branches raxx their rosit eaves,  
Wechty wi cones an preen-prick leaves.

Frae cottar's towe, weet washin skelps;  
Rikk furls frae lums. A reid tod yelps  
Far new-ploo'd parks are fulled wi peels  
O water – keekin-glaiss in dreels.

Thin sprays o claret buds, the birks  
Wave beeny fingers ower the stirks  
That graze aside the dimplin burn  
Far the slow sizzens drift an turn.

Cromar's a brock that's strippit blae  
An clammy whyles as deid men's clay.  
Its beauties, hapt bi weety cloud,  
In sunlight shine like fairy gowd.

### 14. ST MACHAR'S CATHEDRAL, ABERDEEN

Aneth the aik tree in the neuk,  
Deef tae the wheeplin blackie.  
Great grandsire lippens tae the yird.  
Requiescat in pace.

Far corn wyved an girse stude heich  
An lowin kye grazed knackie,  
The gutsy toon claims aa aroon:  
Requiescat in pace.

Amang the died raws o the kirk  
Sleep loons fa wore the khaki;  
Twa generations wyled bi war:  
Requiescat in pace.

Here Miss Auchinachie lies laich  
Aside the chukkied pathie,  
Her sangs still hotter in ma moo:  
Requiescat in pace

Professors, fleshers, fairmers, lairds,  
Mell in the mools sae clarty,  
Wi mony a geet scarce draws a greet:  
Requiescat in pace.

A timmer sark fur aa man's wark,  
The ivy in his tassie,  
The daunce o Daith will catch his braith:  
Requiescat in pace.

I've seen prood men come steppin ben  
This kirkyaird, swankin saucy.  
A nerra staa awytes them aa:  
Requiescat in pace.

Twa owersettins frae the Greek

## 15. I AM THE BOUER

I am the bouer, eence fullid wi mony a flooer's

Sweet scent, as bird-sang raise in a glad tide,  
Far dauchlin friens cud fuser secret wirts.  
Inbye ma shady neuk, Luv chose tae bide.

I am still the bouer in yon same airt,  
Wytin in vain fur somebody lang gane.  
Insteid o roses, noo I blossom thorns  
That smore the nightingales far vipers reign.

#### 16. TA-TA AT THE HINNEREYN

Ta-ta poetry! I'm leavin ye  
Tae gyang bummin on wi'oot me –  
Tae makk a kirk or mill o't.  
Fowk's lauchter an the keenin win  
Will hae tae keep yer keel afloat.

Ma notion's tae streek oot, een steekit,  
An lauch the last lauch cheerily.  
Guid nicht, an gie ma luv tae licht I'll tell the hinmaist chiel I see.

Fin we are slawly meevin –  
Ma first time doon yon road –  
On fower cord-bearers' showders,  
They'll ken me fur a wechty load.

Takkin ower ma life's trauchle,  
Ma kistit beens,  
Spadfus will sprauchle  
Bonnily ower me, thrissles, divots, steens.

#### 17. THE BROCH

Lugs dirl in the cauld.  
Squar fangs o grey,  
Steen biggins, bend the win,  
Minimal as Mondrian,  
Edgy as Braque,  
Uncluttered as Klee,  
A roch Jack Tar,

The Broch juts oot its muckle jaw,  
Tichtens its neives roon nets  
That whyles glean fin-fat catches,  
Tyne hale lives in storm,  
In the bylin cauldron o the Nor Sea bree.

Three black craws flee  
Ootower the broon-etched trees.  
The cheengefu lift bleeds blae,  
Colours mell an mirl,  
A mixer-maxter cumulus o pearl,  
A weety, sulky haar.  
A coo's-lick Constable horizon  
Gars cloud on cloud sclimm,  
Frae the dulse-green, glimmerin herbour bar.

Inno the mids o't,  
Skelp inno its satt-scoored weathered face,  
Steps yer man Bruce,  
Bobbin up like a buoy,  
Ninety years tae the day o his Broch birthin.  
Rembrandt! Far's yer brush tae peint this ferlie?  
A retinue o skurries,  
Yolk-yalla beakit birds  
Skreich in pursuit o this mervellous makar:  
Fowk staun wi moos gap-fu as open creels  
Tae scraun the siller darlins o his words.

Ninety years tae the day o his Broch birthin,  
He stauns, a Pictish steen,  
Faced North, feet earthen,  
A symbol carved in symbols  
O as that's finest in this fisher toon:  
His bearins set,  
Pynts o his compass certain.

## 18. THREE DEESIDE DON QUIXOTES

The Tarlan Tink's as black as tar  
An his lugs cud dee wi a dicht.  
He steers his shelt bi the Northern Star

An he rides bi caunlelicht.

The Migvie gent, his teeth they gleam  
As shairp as a coral reef,  
An he only fechts fin his sark is clean –  
Tae as bit Honour deaf.

The Coldstone Cavalier trots oot  
In a suit o thrums an threids,  
Wi a sword as heavy's a fairmer's scythe  
For sneekin aff nesty heids.

It wisna Macduff that slew Macbeth  
On the bywyes o Lumphanan –  
Twas the Tarlan Tink – afore ye cud blink,  
He'd blootered him wi a cannon!

Are vandals spulzyin phones an waas?  
Is Finzean the fount o crime?  
If crooked or bent, the Migvie gent  
Will see that they're daein time!

Gin Al Capone sud traverse the sea  
An fleg the guid fowk o Crathie,  
The Coldstone Cavalier they'd pree  
Tae knell yon gangster chappie!

If warlocks, witches or wizardrie  
Sud terrifee Torphins,  
The Terrible Three tae its aid they'd flee,  
Haive witches tae the whins!

The Tarlan Tink, the Migvie Gent  
An the Coldstone Cavalier  
A trio as auld's the hills o Birse, frae the mists o yesteryear –  
Haein pledged tae richt the warld o wrang,  
They gallop an gallop aboot,  
Three queer-like chiels  
On three grey mean,  
As blythe as a Banchory troot!

## 19. AE MEY MORNIN

Ae Mey mornin, fin dawn the rose  
Wi pearls o dew wis stringin,  
It seemed, sae thrang they war in sang,  
That ilkie tree wis singin.  
A duntin breeze that shook the leaves  
Gart aa the birds gae wingin.  
The shady chestnut cweeled the road  
Wi blossoms heavy-hingin.

A bawd cam breengin, jimp an blate,  
Tae teet atween the boughs.  
A win that reeshled like a linn  
Blew softly frae the knowes.

A blackie in his sable coat  
O midnight feathers bobbit  
Abune the hawthorn's blossom fite,  
Sae sweet his lay it throbbit.

This warld is green! Like hinnymead  
The harebells waucht their scent.  
An elfin witcherie is Mey  
Wi whaup an larksang blent.

## 20. ON A PREHISTORIC CHILD'S RATTLE

Dry steens rattle in a wicker cage  
Tae paciffee some bairn's ill-natur't rage.  
A girn,  
A skreich,  
A skirl,  
Fyles quaetens wi a bosie or a birl,  
Fyles notts a skelpit dowp that gars it dirl.

The antrin sookit titty plugs a moo  
Raxxed in a howl wad deefen a stuck soo.

Rattle awa, ma bairn! I'd raither, far,  
Percussion than the ootbrakk o a war

O nerves atween yer twa stoot lungs an me.  
Wheesht!  
Ye'll hae hairy mammoth fur yer tea!

## 21. LETTER TAE A FAR COUNTRIE

The loons ye daunlit on yer knee  
Are young men noo –Near full the room!  
My nest's stap-fu  
O gorblied, big as me.

Bit yer braid wings,  
That I cud coorie unner,  
Are faulded, an the lugs are steek'd  
That heard the daily threaps  
I liked tae hae wi ye.

Faither:  
The wings ootraxxin noo  
Ower my unfaithered heid  
Are shaddas o the craa that claims us as –  
The erne, the hawk, the spurgie,  
Jenny wren sae smaa  
Like leaves blawn doon, turned broon,  
Aa, aa, are born tae faa  
Intae yon ghaistlie cave  
O Dissolution's maw.

## 22. THE WIRM IN THE AIPPLE

Fur nine lang months in the wame he lay  
(The wirm it turns in the aipple's side)  
She brocht him forth at the brakk o day.  
Blicht's in the blossom o the bride.

Fur nine sma years her son wis he  
(The wirm it turns in the aipple's side)  
There wis nane sae fond o the bairn as she.  
Blicht's in the blossom o the bride.

A sickness cam tae the mither's haa  
(The wirm it turns in the aipple's side)  
It's syne she gaed the bairn awa.  
Blicht's in the blossom o the bride.

Fin nine lang years war past an ower  
(The wirm it turns in the aipple's side)  
The bairn cam back tae his mither's door.  
Blicht's in the blossom o the bride.

` A curse upon yer perfidy! '  
(The wirm it turns in the aipple's side) `  
A cruel mither ye waur tae me! '  
Blicht's in the blossom o the bride.

` I wad hae glen ma luv sae true'  
(The wirm it turns in the aippple's side) `  
Gin ye'd bin saft as a cooshie doo.'  
Blicht's in the blossom o the bride.

` I'd bin a bield fin ye war auld'  
(The wirm it turns in the aipple's side) `  
Gin ye war warm as ye are cauld.'  
Blicht's in the blossom o the bride.

` The ice will bloom on the cherry tree'  
(The wirm it turns in the aipple's side)  
` Fin my twa een luik fond on ye.'  
Blicht's in the blossom o the bride.

### 23. AUTUMN AT KING'S

The scholar hordes hae skailed frae King's;  
Weel happt, a cloud abeen them hings,  
Cagoules like cowls abeen their heids.  
Claik o a hunner different leids  
Dwines tae a hoolet's lanely croon.  
Nicht, like a taed, his hunkered doon.

The skyrie leaves gae tummlin ower,  
Like decades dauncin ben the stoor –



Mair fearfu nor the corbie's caa –  
Portents o cauldriife Daith's fitfaa.

I sit an watch the ticht-lipped meen  
Licht silent lanterns on the steen,  
Peint dragon scales on sclate an steel  
Screive antrin lilies in a peel.

Mim-moued's a corp, the nerra lanes  
Lie straucht an trig, the toon's rig-banes,  
Far starnies glimmer in the glaiss  
Or smuchter in a plaque of braisse.

Syne ghaists creep oot – frae grun, fae waa.  
Barbour an Elphinstane – an aa  
Fa traivelled this sma mappamoun –  
Sweesh by in cape an scholar's gown

Like leaves that flap the antrin oor.  
The seeds bide on: the lave is stoor.

#### 24. THE SINGER (after Alexander Pushkin)

Ah, did ye hear ayont the wids at nicht  
Thon singer, fa o luv an wae dis sing?  
Fin parks stude wytin, quate, fur sun's bricht dawn,  
The soun o pipes sae dowie yet sae licht,  
Ah, did ye hear?

Ah, did ye meet in derkened wids, bi chance,  
Thon singer, fa o luv an wae dis sing?  
An did ye see him lauch, or see him greet?  
Or glisk the grue that glimmers in thon glaunce –  
Ah, did ye meet?

Ah, did ye mane tae hear yon quaet voice?  
Thon singer fa o luv an wae dis sing?  
Fin in the wids ye met him aa his lane,  
Fin on ye his een lichtit, deid tae joy –  
Ah, did ye mane?

## 25. THE FLOOER (after Alexander Pushkin)

I fand a flooer, dowie, crined,  
Nae langer scented, in a buik.  
An syne a fey, ootlandish thocht  
Tuik root an throve in Fancy's neuk.

Far? Fan? In fit spring did it brier?  
Foo auld wis it? Fa picked it? Foo?  
Some unkent chiel? Some bodie near?  
Fit meanin did it hap frae view?

Tae merk the jynin o twa sowels?  
Tae murn the pairtin o their wyes?  
A keepsake o a lane stravaig  
Ben shaddaed wids, far silence lies?

Is he still leevin? Fegs, is she?  
Far are they noo — an far's their neuk?  
Or hae they dwinnilt frae the lan  
Like this tint flooerie, in the buik?

## 26. ELPHINSTANE'S SALUTE TAE DRUM CASTLE

The castle o the Lairds o Drum  
Tells tales o siege, o loss, o luv;  
There hawks wing free ower reeshlin trees  
That aince war tethered on the gluv.

Like fairy castle in a buik,  
Yestreen bides at the forest's core:  
The arra's flicht, the swordsman's thrust,  
The terror o the hunted boar.

An lichtlie, lichtlie, doon the stair,  
The sweesh o Lady Mergit's lace —  
A dowie shepherd's dother born,  
Her dowrie wis her bonnie face.

Hard East, hard East, the Mither Kirk

O Aiberdeen stauns stinch an braw.  
There, in Drum's Aisle, the Irvine lies  
Fa bravely focht at reid Harlaw.

The Dee runs siccar in the Sooth —  
A shield sud ill wins ivver blaw;  
Its wafters deep, like ramparts steep,  
Wad haud the warlike Keiths awa.

An green an leafy tae the West  
Glashmore, Hare's Wid, Queen Mary's Well,  
Far on the bluidy Hill o' Fare  
At Corrichie prood Huntly fell.

For thrice ten thoosan nichts o stars  
Drum's neebor on the Norlan lans,  
Wizened bi witcherie an time,  
Cullerlie's eldritch circle stauns.

Drum's steenie waas are stoot an heich.  
Look doon, frae battlement an lum —  
Are Covenantin sodjers there  
Comin tae reive an spulzie Drum?

The Past's braid tree doon draps its leaves  
Rich loam, that yoams aroon this place,  
The pleisunt policies o Drum  
A sanctuary o green an grace.

## 27. WINTER WALK, GLEN MUICK

The hoose in the wid is framed bi larick an fir,  
Aneth a boorach o pearlie clood, frost-fu;  
The rooms staun teem, nae rikk frae its rikk-black waas,  
Green moss an a fringe o ice on its grey slate broo.

Nae aix rings shairp on the bark o a splittin log,  
Nae lauchin bairns teet oot frae a rosy pine,  
Nae fusslin faither dells in the girse-choked yaird —  
The human tenantry flitted awa langsyne.

The secret fowk o the widlans bide here noo.  
The snaa is patterned back, an fore, an ben,  
Wi a dog's black preints, the pads o a furry fit  
Three brammles pressed on the flat fite page o the glen.

An there, far the copper bracken glints in the haar,  
The trident fork o a pheasant's trampin taes,  
An the pit-pat lowp far a delicate deer stept throwe,  
Like twa twinned teardraps faaen on the wintry braes.

The robin's cleuk is a Chinee Mandarin's pen,  
Scratty an wee, thin lines repeated aft;  
An the sma fut-fut o a mappie's rinnin paa  
Like a cheyne o pearls at the fir foun, roon an saft.

The crunch o ma fit his teemed the burn an the trees  
O feather an fur an siller-backit fin,  
Far the lane hoose stauns that'll nivver be lane ava  
As lang as a wing can reest or a horned hoof rin.

The paths that the breet beasts traivel arena mine.  
In the wids I dauchle an wish they'd bide a wee  
Sae the deer micht share her tales o the heich snaa taps  
An I micht ken the glen throwe a futterat's ee.

Wud bairns o the great god Pan wi their queer breet's een,  
That blink an shy at the crack o a distant gun;  
Like fleggitt ghaists they wyte in the snaa-fillt sheuchs  
Fur me tae leave, wi the drappin doon o the sun.

## 28. LARICK

I am a squirrel's bield,  
I balance the air on ma green an pleisunt boughs.

In spring,  
Buoyant as cork,  
Ma needles stot on bowsters o breeze;  
Ma sap creeps up the sookers o ma reets  
In quaet jubilation —  
Reets that grup the cliff

Like ernes' cleuks

In simmer I ream wi rosin,  
A couthie lan'lord.  
The tod bides in ma basement,  
Birds sit coorieneuchin in ma eaves.

In winter I coont ma rings,  
Cercles o leevin.  
I smore ma fires  
An smuchter ben the frost.

## 29. TWO POEMS FROM THE CHINESE

Fit like! Fit like!  
I raxx oot ma hand tae greet ye,  
I shakk hauns wi ye.

Fit like? Fit like?  
Ye raxx oot yer haun tae me,  
We shakk till we're fushionless,  
Grippin humanitee's discovery.

Fit like! Fit like!  
Fit like? Fit Like?  
A bonnie smile,  
A spring trimmlin

Fit like! Fit like?  
Fit like! Fit like?  
Fit Like! Fit like?  
I shakk yer haun  
Five ice-caul bullets,  
Their tips clartit  
Wi reid nail peint.

## 30. GLOAMIN

Eence mair, straiks o greenish licht  
Doondrap frae the sun's dowp.

In the wee bowlie o ma hairt  
Emblems are kinnelt,  
Dreams stert tae meeve  
In an ooto the derk wid o thocht;  
Doondrap tae the backs  
O breengin breets o the park –  
Breets wi'oot nummer  
Drookit in the gowden styoo o gloamin.

Noo gloamin peints ilk image I can see  
Wi sic profundity, sic glamourie,  
As if a bourachie o fremmit fowk  
War waukin slaw my wye,  
Richt ooto the souns they makk;  
As if the stobs o a sick rose  
War plottin in secret  
Tae draw a tinchel roon me –  
Their reids, their blaiks,  
In the mids o a deep glen.

### 31. ENDS AND BEGINNINGS

(from the Polish of Wistawa Szymborska)

Efter ilkie war  
There's reddin up tae bi daen  
Things dinna redd thirsels up efter aa –  
Somebody maun shiel the muck tae the sheuch  
Sae the cairts, biggit wi corpses, can win by.  
Somebody his tae warssle  
Throwe glaur an aisse,  
Throwe the sofa springs,  
The skelfs o splintered glaiss, the bleedin cloots.  
Somebody his tae rug the post  
Teetle the waa, tae haud it siccar;  
Somebody his tae glaisse the windae,  
Fix the yett back inno its neuk.

Nae soun bites, nae photie fame –  
An it takks years –  
Aa the cameras hae gaen  
Tae ither wars.

The brigg notts rebiggin;  
The railwye station anna.  
Sark sleeves maun be rowed tae rags.  
Somebody, breem in haun,  
Will ayewis min' foo it wis.  
Somebody will ayewis listen,  
Noddin his unscaithed heid.  
Bit tithers are certain shair  
Tae bi breengin aboot nearbye  
Fa'll fin' aa yon  
A bittie o a scunner.

Somebody whyles will aye  
Howk up a roosted argy-bargy  
Frae in aneth a buss  
An yark it aff tae the cowp.  
Those fa kent fit this war wis aa aboot  
Maun makk wye fur them fa kent little;  
Maun makk wye fur them that kent less;  
Maun makk wye fur them that kent naethin.

Somebody his tae sprauchle oot on the girse  
That haps the causes an effectks  
Wi a staak o corn atween his teeth,  
Glowerin at the clouds.

## 32. MILLENNIUM HOGMANAY: AT THE CASTLEGATE ABERDEEN

A crackerjack o Catherine wheels;  
Whirligigs o gimcrack whigmaleeries  
Shooer skyrie spirkin starnies in the lift  
Watched bi a press o fowk  
Ben frae the Tolbooth's yetts,  
Abeen the verra cassies far, langsyne,  
Another heeze o fowk gawped at the gibbet,  
Aa aroon, like sma-cupped floers upliftit,  
Catchin the reflections o the lichts  
The faces o ma brither-citizens:  
Thoosans o preen-prick een  
Gap, roon as champagne bubbles wi delicht,

Weel-pleased wi their  
Twa-meenit man-made firmament  
The finite spirks o firewirks in the derk.

Abeen, the greater starns  
Turn in their cosmic blackness:  
An infinity o lichts  
That ding oor human cantrips intae smachrie  
A pucklie smush  
Ooto the wallopin faulds  
O the pooch o time.

### 33. THE MITHER KIRK O AIBERDEEN

Lang afore Embro's flooers' famous yoam,  
A quill scrieded on a Papal Bull in Rome  
That Nicholas the Sanct hid fand a hame,  
A kirk bigg't in his honour, in his name.  
The sanct, that seamen trust in tribulation,  
In Aiberdeen wad grace a congregation.

Five centuries rang oot a muckle peal;  
Auld Lowrie, gifted bi some provost chiel,  
Dingin Hosannas ower a warrior's banes  
(Brave Robert Davidson's) aneth yon stanes.  
Collison's Aisle haps his kittle clay,  
Kill't at Harlaw yon widda-makkin day.  
Wi Wolf o Badenoch, fur city's guid,  
He saved the toun bi skailin Heilan bluid.

A chapel's biggit yonner: its quate neuks  
St John (the patron sanct o ile) owerluiks.  
Black ile, siller fish, bring gowd straiked grey –  
The scales o wealth gey aften wye wi wae.

The Auld Kirk is the Wast, the New's the East.  
The aisles atween, the treisur at its breist.  
The West hauds Mary Jamieson's tapestry –  
Her Doric Moses bi the Brig o Dee

Sic scenes the Auld Kirk's witnessed – better tint!



Coorse Cumberland, his cuddies stabled in't;  
An tae Drum's Aisle three corpses war convoyed,  
Saved frae the body-snatchers' powkin blade.

In Mey the Wast Kirk makks the Cooncil guest  
(The civic body maun bi kirked an bless'd)  
While the toun's carillon frae yon heich spire,  
Raised frae the aisse o pew-consumin fire,  
Dirks in the lugs o seagull, merchant, doo.  
The merchant manes Amen; the bird clucks Croo.

Frae howff an office, wirkers takk their ease,  
Ettin their denner piece neth kirkyaird trees.  
Puir beggars heist their priggin cleuks fur alms  
An clorty winos droon their drooth wi drams.

The rich despise sic orrals, steenie-hertit  
There's some things niver cheenge – the world's ill-pairtit.

St Mary's Chapel, biggit tae the East,  
Hauds dowie secrets in its Haly reest.  
The Gordon quine fa raised it beeriet there  
Wi tither o her kinsmen shares yon lair –  
Bonnie Sir John, fa focht wi prood Huntlie  
Fan Hill o Fare ran reid at Corrichee,

At Castlegate afore Queen Mary's court  
Boued tae the aix, tae gie the tounsfowk sport.  
(Maist gallants lost their herts tae yon fair Queen:  
John Gordon lost his heid, in Aiberdeen!)

That self-same chapel, caad 'The Pity Vault',  
Jyled witches catched invokin dreid occult;  
Keepin them close till they war cairtit roon  
As kinnlin – human bonfires in the toun.

A sculptor carved in yon same chapel waa  
A ratten that a choirboy's flesh did chaw.  
Wrang-blamed fur rypin aipples frae a tree,  
That grew outside the kirk richt sturdily,

His Bishop cursed him deep, bi buik an bell,  
Wi aa the torments o the Earl o Hell.  
Flang in the fearie chapel tae repent,  
The hapless bairn bi rattens' teeth wis rent.

A Friar confessed the theft wis his alane  
An, fur the truth, the curse he got fur gain:  
The rattens sealed his weird. The Bishop's pride  
Raised dearest price fur aipples ivver peyed.

A green oasis in the toun's melee,  
The muckle beeches sooch an sweesh an swee.  
Auld bodachs news aneth their reeshlin leaves;  
Littlins toss breid tae spurgies neth the eaves:  
A trystin place, a bield, a sanctuary  
Mids clash o commerce, pure tranquillity.

Pouerfu sleepers rest aneth its yird  
Professors, provosts, famed bi deed an wurd;  
Architects, sodjers, traders great an sma  
Sleep the lang sleep aside the Mither's waa,  
While, on the ivied, mossy slabs abeen,  
Luvers swap kisses like they aye hae deen.

Oor Mither Kirk, cud she the deid upgie,  
Oor toun wad be a force tae reckon wi!  
Oh, may she staun, as siccar 's Lochnagar,  
An greet the neist Millennium, nane the waur!

## SCOTS OWERSETTINS O THREE POEMS BI JON MILOS

### 34. ON EIRDE AS IT IS IN HEIVEN

Ae day, gin Science takks ower,  
Aa bairns will hae a howdiein like Jesus –  
Bi the Virgin and the Speerit, in a test tube.

Growe up at the day nursery,  
Mappit oot wi statistics,  
Wintin feelins an finnins,  
Ettin sweeties wi their toys,

Spikkin tae the video.

The loons'll luik like quines;  
The quines'll luik like loons.  
The hale jing-bang'll luik like angels,  
On Eirde, as it is in Heiven.

## ILISATION

Mithers nae langer hae time tae bi mithers,  
Doverin, trauchelt in offices,  
Typin their lives awa inno wurd processors.

Geets sook milk frae bottles,  
Keek at the warld throwe glaiss.

In schules, guid-learnin is nae langer taucht,  
Bit houghmagandie, merketin,  
Industrial pedagogy o reality;  
Moral sweirty,  
Musical snoozlin.

Ye nod yer powe? Ye agree?  
Ye shrug yer showders – nane o yer wyte.  
Ye smile bonnily – fair bumbazed.

Nae leaf's the marra o anither,  
Yet they're aa caad leaves.  
Nae langer dae ye ken  
Fit's life, fit's dwaumin.

A parrot parrots,  
This ye can dae, this ye canna..  
This ye can dae, this ye canna...

## 36. LUV

(The Linguist)

Luv is a bonnie noun  
Steid o an ugsome verb.

(The Philosopher)  
Fowk caa fur luv ootbye  
Bit luv bides inbye.

(The Sparkie)  
Luv's like the electric —  
Powk in the plug, there's licht.

(The Accountant)  
Luv is the anely loss  
That gies the notion o profit.

(The Poet)  
As lang's there's luv, there's poetry as weel.  
Fin luv's tint, criticism is kinnelt.

(The Pedagogue)  
Maist fowk canna luv,  
Athoot they're reared till't.

(The Auld Bodach)  
A chiel fa's brunt hissel bi luv  
Winna rekinnle the lowe:  
He'll rebigg his life frae the aisse.

(The Barman)  
The glaiss o luv is yonner tae sup,  
Nae tae be stappit wi cathedrals an meenlicht.

(The Lawyer)  
Fowk fa bide in luv  
Winna be cuckolded!

### 37. PRIMAL ANGST

Fin Mither wis in the faimly wey,  
She tuik tae eatin coal  
Nae doot tae satisfee  
Some mineral deficiency,  
Some dietary lack.

Doon in thon sooty wame  
Far I swam in the watters  
O ma natal pit  
She ladled spirks o fossil fuel  
Inno an umbilical lum.

Nae winner, syne fin I grew up,  
The hale bleak world's seemed black.

### 38. THE VEESITOR

I pu'ed a harebell frae yon howe,  
It daunced sae blythe, sae bonnily;  
Twa days it stude, syne drapped its powe —  
Daith ryped its scent, thon reiver slee.

I hid a faither loued me weel,  
He'd face the Deil fur my ain sake;  
As stinch wis he as Druid's tree  
Daith played the widsman, felled yon aik.

The wyver spun a pearlin wab  
That micht hae graced a Scottish queen,  
Sae fine it wis — her threid wis snappt  
Bi Daith, ae sunny efterneen.

My granminnie, sae kind, sae douce  
(Her peenie hings yet frae yon heuk)  
Her spikk gaed skippin throwe the hoose —  
Daith stilled her tongue wi his coorse cleuk.

A moosie nippin smertly hame,  
Her kytie stappt wi Wastie's corn,  
Wis snatched tae fill anither's wame —  
Hoolet alane wad see the morn.

A maist unceevil veesitor,  
He disna speir, 'Can I come in? '  
He disna wyte, nur dicht his feet,  
Nur rattle at the tirlin pin —

He wheechs ye up on cauldribe wings, —  
Yer neebors'll be quate's the grave,  
A dearth o newsin's in the yird —  
The hoodie fussles ower the lave!

### 39. THE KEY TO THE KINGDOM

I am the auld Scots leid,  
Key tae the cultural kingdom:  
I open yetts lang snibbit, fell roosty,  
Rot-screw steekit  
Since stot-baa bairnhood whyles.

The yetts creak on hubberin hinges  
The fyaachie waucht o Repression,  
The gyad-sake guff o Disuse,  
The grippin grue o Prejudice,  
The stale stank o Ridicule,  
The bools in the moo o Pretension,  
The soor plooms o Censure,  
Whyles yoam frae yon airless chaumer.

Some fowk are laith  
Tae enter the moo o the yett,  
Even fin it's ajee.  
Some chaumers are stappit wi  
Aa manner o ferlies  
Bairn rhymes skip ben a cloutie rug  
That's as the colours o the lexicon.

Wee bittocks o sangs flee roon the ceilin,  
An auld bodach dwaums in a cheer  
Croonin Harry Lauder or Willie Kemp,  
Or a mixer-maxter o Baroness Nairn an Runrig.

Oor Wullie sits on a pail, wi his punk hair  
Jobby's a Celt, or a wee Kilmarnock thrissle.

Greyfriars' Bobby's suppin a plate o kail  
While MacDiarmid poors himsel oot a  
Wee deoch-an-doruis frae a bottle o peaty malt.

A crabbit mither heists a doon-pitten haun  
Tae skelp a vernacular lug (In this particklar kingdom  
Wirds are duntit frae littlins Like stoor frae a styewy mat) .

The antrin dominie hides aneth the bed  
Like a ghaistie, wytin tae lowp oot  
An wave his tawse – a tattie bogle  
Fleggin aff the Scottish craas.

Ither weel-meanin bodies  
Jump oot frae ahin the curtains  
Wi a speenfu o English pheesic  
Tae purge the Scots spikker  
O aa orra idioms,  
Aa non-standard spikks  
An Tom Leonard winnerfu wordies.

Whyles tho, a lock's weel iled  
Wi daily converse.  
The tenant's swackened the latch  
Wi a jeelip o Grassic Gibbon,  
A swatch o Scott,  
A drappie Stevenson  
An a lick an spit o Ogston, Murray and Mackie

Fur gweed measur.  
In sic a yett, the key slides in  
Like Burns inno Heilan Mary –  
Easy an welcome.

Tither yetts hae nae veesible means  
O 're sib tae brick waas.  
Ahin sic yetts,  
A lane gowk rocks in a neuk,  
Sookin a slivvery thoomb.  
Whyles it sooks its Union Jack  
Or greets itsel tae sleep  
Tae the tune o Greensleeves.  
A bogie hings, disjaskit,  
Frae its neb.

#### 40. INTER-KITTY

I really think that it's a damnt disgrace  
Bringin a dug intae this cairriage space!  
A wifie girmed, irascible an huffy,  
The whyles her Pringle moultit in ma coffee.

I didna pye a bloody sky-high fare  
Wi some fower-fittit carnivore tae share  
Ma Steenhaven tae Dundee —  
An I will takk this farrer, wyte an see.

The hairy Afghan gruntit, as she spat,  
An it was easy seen, believe me, that  
He'd nivver traivelled wi a First Class cat!

#### 41. COMING AND GOING

A short study of socio-sexual dynamics in relation to  
single parenthood, as observed at Kelvinside's Botanical Gardens

... Reveals a familiar scenario,  
The syndrome o the come an go Lothario.  
A wiltin wallfloer draps her heid, ill-fated,  
That some Bee's one-night stand has impregnated.

Sheena Blackhall



# The Singing Butler

I've worked for the family for 30 years  
Crowns and coronets, the Charleston trot  
They pay my wages and they oil the gears  
Of labour, but I tell you they're a real rum lot

There's Miss Sybil, on her painted toes  
Waltzing in the sand, full of limes and gin  
With Sir Henry Parker where the sea breeze blows  
Pretending they are classy as the tide rolls in

In-bred, high-bred, the upper class  
Pay the piper, so they call the tune  
Me and the under maid must earn our brass  
Holding an umbrella for a rich buffoon

Sheena Blackhall

# The Six Thinking Hats

There was a man who had six hats  
His name it was De Bono  
And if you want to wear his hats  
You first must learn the game, o

The white hat gives you only facts  
The yellow hat, nice notions  
The black hat judges dangers  
The red hat brings emotions  
The Green Hat gives you new ideas  
The blue hat rules them all, o  
And if you want to wear his hats  
You first must learn the game, o

Sheena Blackhall

# The Skreich: (20 Scots Poems)

o a Matriarch

She lay in her kist like a towrist packed fur leavin  
Her single ticket stamped tae the warld o air  
Her knobby neives luiked tint wioot their worsit,  
Her threids o silk, her eident crochet-heuk  
Nae wyver iver vrocht sic bonnie moose-wabs

She wis the dragon-slayer o ma cauf-days  
Although I niver saw her weir glad-rags  
Anely blaik widda-weeds, wi a gowden smile  
She popped her wirds like sweeties in ma moo  
Tae melt, an meeve ma fledglin tongue tae Scots  
Bound fur the howe-dumb-deid o the glaury mools  
Braif sowl, wi naethin tae fear frae the Scales o Justice,  
Held bi the fearsome God o her stinch forebears

.

Last Will an Testament o the Turra Coo

Guid mornin tae ye Turra Coo,  
yer luikin unca queer...  
'I've haen a cheque screived on ma hide  
This mony a weary year.

But noo I am the sickest coo  
That iver strode a park  
And I wad makk ma testament,  
Afore I greet the derk.

Gae takk these bonnie horns o mine,  
That gart ma heid luik hard  
And gie them tae a Burns Club  
Fur toastin o the bard

Gae takk this bonnie hide o mine,  
An turn it intae sheen  
And gie it tae a comely quine  
Tae daunce in Aiberdeen

Gae takk this stoot richt leg o mine,  
Tae celebrate Aal Eel  
It will makk mince tae feed a prince  
An stap fowks' stammachs weel

An takk this ither leg o mine,  
An tie the Saltire on it  
For I'm a patriotic coo  
An wirthy o a sonnet

Gae takk thon bonnie tail o mine,  
That hings abeen ma dowp  
And gie it tae the Turra lads  
Tae gar the midgies lowp.'

Now in there cam a Turra lad  
Wi sighs an shakk o heid  
O fit care we for ither kye?  
Noo oor auld coo is deid

Bit sune there'll be a statue braw  
As bricht as mornin dew  
For myndin o the mighty deeds  
O Turra's famous coo

am Blake as a Kelpie

Blake wis a fey craitur,  
strang, wud, forcey,  
A dominie's widden-dream.  
Snub-snoot, wi a braid, heich broo,  
Newsin wi cherubim an silkies

Flichts of flim-flammerie gart him gallop aff  
On uplans o delicht...Hosanna traivels  
Short-ersed an gleg,  
A candidate fur bedlam or Utopia

Fit a kelpie! A whirlpuil drave his hooves  
His een reamin wi veesions

Muckle nostrils gaapin wi flame an grue  
Pouerfu flanks lowpin the fences o the ordnar  
Nae wheep or bridle iver held him hummle.

Fun Run: Pittodrie, Yule 2009

Santas ettin bananas.  
Santas on mobile phones  
Santas cairrying rucksacks.  
Ring-tones, ring-tones, ring-tones

Santas joggin and jiggin, wi beards an ponytails  
Santas in kilts an trainers, rigged oot for Pittodrie gales  
Santas bosyin babies..Santas wi greyhound dugs  
Santas like letter boxes..Santas like lowping frogs

Doon by the sea beach breezes,  
chiels hairy shanks turn blae  
Santas in Charity Fun Run,  
rin far the sna-waves spray!

Roaring Game: In Memorium, Angus Calder

oh here's the curlin stane  
oh it's a bobbydazzler  
as they say in the rauchle tongue  
sun sheenin ower the ice  
a richt wee beauty

fine stane this poetry in motion ken  
Bloomsbury club level nae danger

a bit o a wobbler on the rink  
gatherin a lot o interest though  
there's even a penguin watchin  
even the souls o the deid are takkin seats

orra toun keelies are sayin  
it winna keep the pace  
awa an raffle yersel sez I

thon stane plays a gey deep game

it's breengin on regairdless tremendous,  
the sun ahin the castle  
skytin on forrit tae the target

wyte though wyte though  
luikin a bit shoogly  
luikin a bit heelstergowdie  
bit here's twa sweepers wi breems

cannie cannie cannie  
ay that's it back on the straicht road again

oh nah nae anither wobblers  
bit here's the sweepers oot again  
giein it laldy  
smeethin its wye  
giein it laldy

clunk an it's ower  
the ice is peely wally noo  
ye'd think it wis greetin  
or droonin in'ts ain snot

weel grief's like that  
a mixer maxter o grief an relief

#### Traditional Doric Graces

Grace be here an grace be there  
An grace be ower the table  
Let ilkie een takk up a speen  
An sup as faist's they're able

Here's health an happiness aa yer days  
Plenty o siller an plenty o claes  
A sugar bowl an a horn speen  
An anither tattie fm that een's deen.

## 7.A Jaunt roon Scotlan

We're settin aff upon a tour  
frae John o Groats tae Papa Stour  
(Ye'll catch nae leprosy or scoor  
frae Heckelbirnie  
Here, anely midgies hae the pouer  
tae soor yer journey)

Let's takk a turn roon Galashiels,  
or Weymss, far contermascious deils  
Micht lowp like puddocks wi greased heels  
tae bagpipes skirl  
We Scots lue jigs an echtsome reels  
wi hooch an birl

Let's ett a bannock in Dunoon..  
Or tea an scone in auncient Scone  
Or dunt a gowf baa aa roon Troon..  
Ye catch ma drift?  
Wi menus prentit bi Ma Broon,  
fa'd seek tae shift?

Mebbe we'll paiddle in Loch Shin..  
Or tramp the heather roon Killin  
Sup Irn Bru ooto the tin  
at Monifieth  
Or think upon oor lives o sin,  
in kirk in Leith

Gweed friens, let's eyn at Tillicoultry,  
even tho weather's weet an splootry  
Tae veesit Tighnabraich's footery...  
The lave we'll view  
Bi warld-wab in a sit-ooterie...  
draw up a pew!

Protestant

Granfaither tuik the Bible bi the throat  
He wis precentor ilkie Sabbath mornin,

Throosh halfpins fa he caught  
the Lord's wurd scomin,

Tellin them love wis in his liftit haun  
That sufferin kept their sinfu sowels afloat,  
They maun be scourged tae reach the Promised land.

Hell's lowes he didna doot, war bigged tae burn  
The ne'er dae weels awa like ugsome rikk;  
Alang wi heathens, fowk o orra spikk  
This faithless generation he wad ban  
As frae his path their feckless feet they turn  
Tae wyes he'd neither chuse nor unnerstaun.

Doon in the yird his clorty jaw-bane sighs  
For psalm an paraphrase, a Haly soun;  
Anely the chunnerin wirm chaws at his foun  
On Judgement Day, tho, Protestants alane  
He kens, will be upgathured tae the skies  
The lave, bide in the mools, like some cowped stane.

#### the Elements

Heelstergowdie, happit wi haar  
Slidders the sea wi its rowth o dulce  
Dowie an dreich in gurly nichts  
The sooch an thrum o the ocean's pulse

The yird is yoamin wi flooer an tree  
Seeds grow thrang in Creation's stoor  
The yark o the scythe makks room for mair  
The wersh, the spicy, the sweet, the soor

See the birds in the cloudy lift  
Tossed an touselt bi lichtsomen air  
Wallop in branch an boaties' sail  
Furlin the rikk an the lassie's hair

#### King's Close



Aince Embro toun wis derk an cauld  
Stappit wi twinin, nerrra lanes  
A seventeenth century orra neuk  
Far Daith keeked oot frae windae panes

The Plague sae thrived in ae sma Close  
The city leaders steeked it up  
Bricked in alive, hale families deed  
A willie-waucht frae Murder's cup

A year gaed by. The bricks, caad doon  
Revealed sax hunner corpses there  
Sliced up bi butchers, tae remove  
Them tae ae muckle dowie lair

The ghaist o ae wee shilpit lass  
Fa haunts yon eildritch dowie den  
Touches the hairts o mortal fowk  
Fa leave wee toys tae cheer her there

Step cannie by thon street o dule  
Nae bonnie birds sae blithesome sing  
Far hoodies bigg their blichtit nests...  
The Killin Close o Mary King.

Landlord

The landlord's den wis in aneth my chaumer  
He wis the Sanky hymn on the scratty record player  
The wizened neive that haundit ower ma mail  
The leer that fusered 'Is thou frae a lad? '  
Lickin his lips like the thocht wis fine an tasty

I reested up abeen in his deid loon's flat  
His deid loon, caught bi the sea  
Fa's droonin turned the landlord's wife  
Frae a wyme tae a snibbit kist

The landlord stank o dulse an fooshty wins  
Straicht frae the herbour waa  
Creepin as near's he daur, like the win-blawn san

Naethin therein wis mine. Ma rented days an nichts  
War fulled bi sea, glowerin in throw the windae  
A peepin Tom. Soochin at nicht in ma lugs

Syne ae day, there he stude,  
The orra bodach, creaky in yalla ileskins  
Me, cookin ma breakfast on ae open ring  
His auld cleuk yarked me roon  
Tae force his slivvery moo doon on ma lips

A tuilzie settled it. Fyach, he wis strang  
Sae muckle strength in a dry auld stick like thon!  
Flang aff, he muttered  
Jist a wee bit fun  
Nae ill dane, lassie. Dinna tell the wife.  
A whine, a wheedle, priggin like a tyke

I slammed the yett in his face  
For oors, abune his sink, his tap, his drain  
Scoorin ma lips wi carbolic till they bled.

Weir

Did iver ye hear o Major Weir  
fa beddit his sister Grizel?  
He cairriet a muckle blackthorn staff  
as furly's a warlock's pizzle

He heidit the Embro auld toun guaird.  
He mockit the great Montrose  
Weir wis a Hell Fire preachin chiel,  
steered God in his brakkfaist brose

At the heicht o a sermon he cheenged his tack,  
gied praise tae the fork-tailed Deil  
Telt aabody there o his Hellish ploys  
an gnashed his teeth wi zeal

They tuik him up the gibbet stairs.  
The hangie thraved his thrapple

An eftir, a phantom coach drave up  
tae ferry him tae the Deevil

rt Security

An Aiberdeen quine weirin bling,  
gart the airport security ping  
Frae her neck tae her buits,  
even roon baith her queats  
She had hauf the gowd-plate in Beijing

Blin Lump

A chiel wi a byle on his chikk,  
wis silent fur nearhaun a wikk  
Fur fear it wid sting  
gin he happened tae sing  
Or waur, it micht burst should he spikk.

Norroway ben the Clouds

The towrist sat in the aircraft lounge  
Drinkin the bluid-reid wine  
'Oh far'll I get a bonnie plane  
Gaun tae a neuk that's fine? '

Oh up an spakk a glekit gype  
Sat on his fat bumbee  
'Oh Norroway is the rarest neuk  
That iver a chiel micht see'.

Tae Norroway, tae Norroway,  
Tae Norroway he's gaen  
Tae see if it's a bonnie neuk  
Weel wirthy o its name.

Bit fin he cam tae Norroway  
The satt tear blinnt his ee  
The cost o breid, an baps an milk

Wis dear's French lingerie.

I didna sikk tae buy a hoose,  
Jist ae wee meal, ' he cried  
Bit fin he reached the check oot till  
They skinned him, flesh an hide.

'Nae winner aa the doos.' he maned  
'Luik in a stervin state  
The towrists here maun ett the crumbs  
The knife, the fork, the plate.

A semmit ower in Norroway  
Is dear as ony car  
A pair o draaers in Norroway  
Wad fund a mini-war.

Be it hail, be it sleet, be it cauld, be it weet  
I'll flee hame ben the dark  
Hame, hame tae Scotia I maun gyang  
Afore I tyne ma sark.'

Oh aa ye towrists o the warld  
This Caution ye will thank  
It's gin ye flee tae Norroway  
Ye'll need tae rob a bank.

Skreich

In mochles an fleecy jaikets, scarves an buits  
In the neb-nippin, tae-dirlin cauld o the frozen streets,  
Fowk creep up the Pictur Gallery steps  
Like climmers ascendin an Alp  
Feart they micht skyte an tumble tae the cassies  
Like Icarus frae the Heivens.

Some, hae wytit an oor fur the yetts unsnibbin  
Cerclin roon like mappies in the snaa

Some hae crossed hauf the warld  
Tae keek at a daub as wee as a brakkfest tray.

The snibs slide in their grooves.  
The international public breenges by  
the Renoirs, Courbets, peintins  
O fjords an Bens an herds frae uplan farms  
Drawn like mochs tae the flame o Room 24.  
The Skreich. Skrirk, Munch's skirl  
The mask o grue is glued tae the chiel's face  
Fite as corp-skin stukk tae leevin flesh.

Munch has peintit the void,  
the teemness o waas  
Kennin that fyles the warld crummles aneth yer fit  
Whylst nearhaun fiers an friens  
staun claikin an lauchin  
Easy-osy, nae hearin the skreich o yer sowel.

#### Cuisine

Codfish steeped in caustic soda  
Lutefish served wi bacon grease  
Moose an mackerel, monkfish, reindeer  
Molasses poored ower broon goat's cheese

Sauerkraut, wi prunes an pears  
Hauf a yowe's heid...een as weel  
Soor cream parritch, served wi sausage  
Can yer stammach thole the sweel?

#### Littlin

Fit an ill-naturet loon!  
His roose is hotterin,  
Hett as soup on the bile.  
His hale physog's a girn.

Snoot wrunkled up  
Like a prune  
Moo fu o slivvers an skirl  
till the ragin finally stops

Disn't he gar yer lugs dir!

Eel As celebrated by the Buchan Association

The sids tae sowens hae bin made  
The room prepared, the tables laid  
Ootbye, blin drift faas saftly doon  
As winter haps the cauld rife toon.

Wi caunles flickerin, dweeble licht  
An muckle Yule log bleezin bricht  
The piper plays a rousin tune  
As fowk process aroon the room□

The Yule log's heistit, showder heicht  
Upon a stretcher, blythesome sicht  
Fower sturdy chiels the cloggie cairt  
In holly rowed, flames at its hairt  
Wi feastin, drinkin, claik an sang  
Gweed cheer an daunce amangst the thrang  
The Winter Solstice, for langsyne  
Fowk merk, wi fire, an meat, an wine.

ch

An owerset in Scots frae Munch's personal journals:

The sun gaun doon—had steepit in flames  
aneth the hynie-aff

It wis like  
a flamin sword  
o bluid cuttin ben the dome o Heiven.

The lift wis like bluid cuttit wi strips o fire  
—the Bens turned derk blue  
the fjord- cuttit in cauld blue,  
yalla an reid colours

The explodin  
bluidy reid- on

the path an haun palin

—ma friens turned skryie yalla file

-inbye me

a muckle skreich

Sheena Blackhall

# The Small Blue Tree

I am an anarchist.

I am a small blue tree

My mother Holly is a provocateur

With blood red leaves and berries like sour milk

My sister Hazel is pink with purple leaves

She has always been a malcontent

Revolutionary tendencies run in the family

Grandfather Ash is black as the soot of Satan

He is a nihilist, from root to crown

Sheena Blackhall



# The Snap Shot

'Exactly 80 years after their execution by Bolshevicks in Ipatiev house, on July 17 of 1998, the last Czar of Russia and his family were buried in the crypt of St Petersburg's St Peter and Paul Cathedral. Addressing the burial ceremony, President Boris Yeltsin described the murder of the Romanovs as one of the most shameful pages in Russian history and urged Russians to close a 'bloody century' with repentance.'

The photographer's assistants bring two chairs into the room  
These are for Alexei and Alix,  
Everyone else stands.

There are eleven in the line-up  
Not counting the family dog.

It's an official snapshot  
The photographer arranges them into a family group  
The better to capture the essence of the subjects.  
The angle is all-important in such matters

The parents, Nikki and Alix, are partially exposed  
As being the photographer's fixed focus  
He will catch their living likeness  
It is a powerful composition  
It will be tricky to develop

The frame is perfect  
The children need no ambient lighting  
The tone of their skin is one of wintry transparency  
Though the cook, the maid, the valet and the doctor  
May fade in the darkroom of history

Olga is short and blonde, snub nosed and serious  
Tatiana is tall and slim, a grey eyed pianist  
Marie is always in love with some boy or other  
Little Alexei's a piner, in his sailor suit  
Anastasia's the imp, the tomboy, the clown of the clan  
Smoking fags on the sly, clanging the balalaika

The photographer, having arranged them,

Confesses the snap shot's a ruse  
For ease of execution.

The photographer's assistants pull their weapons  
Alix crosses herself. Guns flash.  
Like Faberge eggs, the fallen princesses  
Hold hidden treasures. Jewels sewn into corsets

Across the floor of a Siberian cell,  
Still life, its negatives drying.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Soldier's Girl

In my breast pouch a picture lies  
My smiling girl with cornflower eyes  
And in my head I hear sweet sighs  
Drop from her lips of cherry

But in the moonlight, stark and chill  
When corpses hung on barbed wire thrill  
As shrapnel makes its second kill  
Dark thoughts swarm round to harry

I think of cripples, widowed men  
Farmers and shepherds of the glen  
Miners and weavers..What of them  
At home, free to make merry?

She's meek...the easier to rule  
She's trusting..Easier to fool  
And pure...how might the lecher drool  
And make of her his quarry?

The horrors of the battlefield  
I meet, because I dare not yield  
But worse, the foes at home, concealed  
And her alone, unwary.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Spik O The Lan (46 Scots Poems)

Spik o' the Lan

The clash o' the kintra claik  
Rins aff ma lug, as rain  
Teems ower the glaissy gape  
O' the windae pane.

The chap o' the preacher's wurd,  
Be it wise as Solomon,  
It fooners on iron yird  
Brakks, upon barren grun.

□

Bit the lowe o' a beast new born,  
The grieve at his wirk,  
The blyter o brierin corn,  
The bicker o birk,  
The haly hush o' the hill:  
Things kent, an at haun  
I'd harken tae that wi' a will.  
The Spik o' the Ian!

ral

Toun-fowk, wi' their cant o' couthie fairms  
O' reid-cheek't bairns, an hamely fare  
O' reemin brose bowls, sickle an the seed,  
Hinna the stab o' the ploo  
In their hairt's bluid.  
Like rattens i' the strae  
They glean the best o't.  
Niver keepit vigil in a byre  
At the bare back o' midnight,  
Bane-weary, numb-neived, cauld.  
Ruggin a new born breet  
Frae its shudderin mither's sides,  
Girth wallopin an weet,  
Intae the darksome stall.

It's then, at the chap o' the deid oors,  
Like a foreman's sweir,  
The door o' the barn tit-tits.  
Ootbye, the mune-struck hills are a stair.  
Oh, gin I cud, I'd climb them Up till the stars, that hing  
A frostit furrow, in the air.  
Back till the crack o' Time, back lang  
As the fowk that vrocht afore,  
Wha kent that naething maitters  
O' the hale jing bang,  
Bit the muckle hills, an the grun,  
Braes, beasts, an hairsts,  
An' the win's sang.

ssession

` See yon bit fairm on the brae-heid  
Stracht's a cock's caimb?  
Craw-wheeled biggins, cauld as leid,  
Reid, in the sun's flame?  
Wir fowk aince vrocht yon lan,  
Kent ilkie stick an steen,  
Dour, dub-dyked parks,  
Tod-haunted wid,  
Like the back o' their haun.'

Blawn strae, the bairns' heids  
Face the fairm, sae near, sae far.  
Thinkin't a gey queer mither-spik  
That delves in princeless fairy-tales:  
Swaps glamourie fur glaur.  
Last link, o' the harness, brukken.

A chiel bedd there, fierce in his faith,  
Fecht in a losin fecht, wi the Reaper, daith.  
A stinch man, steeped in Holy writ,  
Wha thrashed his loon,  
For mockin the Lord's script.  
Cried, ` Doon the road, ye orra jaad! '  
Fin he caught a servin' lass wi a pleuman lad  
Coorse, for a man like yon, in his heicht o' prime

Tae be gart leave, turn ower his wife, an wife  
Tae a halfin loon, an a graceless grieve.  
Cut doon, afore his time.

It's ill, tae think deep o' the deid.  
Ghaist claes are hungry thochts  
That wid devour ye whyles,  
Comin unseen, unsocht.

Lang, in the corbie wid, I daurna staun',  
The win' plays tricks wi wirts,  
Risin chill frae the grun...

`Aa ma tyauve, an care  
Gaen ower, till a stranger's haun.  
Ye thankless, thankless, stock:  
Gin I kent then, fit I ken noo —  
It wis as fur nocht.'

## Hunger

A dreep on the trough faas doon,  
The gate o' the cattle- coort wallops ajee,  
The herdsman's hishin the latchy kye till the byre,  
Sottar an tyauve, are the terms o' a fairmer's fee.

The plyter tit-tittin his steps,  
Haudin him back, is biddin him bide.  
There's mony's the dreel wints turned  
Or he wins till his ain fireside.

Oh lan — ye hae bled the reid frae his cheeks,  
Ye've rypit his pooches o' siller,  
Ye've bladded his bride,  
Ye've made him yer servant,  
Ye've strappit him hard, till yer side  
Gart him think yer his ain.  
Ye've gaen him fur pyement  
The scoor o' the sun,  
An the wearisome wheep o' the rain;  
This — ye canna gainsay.

Oh tell me — fit mair'll ye hae?

Oh I'll hae his youth, an his manhood,  
The swyte o' his broo,  
I'll hae me the strength o' his airm,  
Cleekit ontill the ploo,  
An syne, at the hinner-en,  
Fin the wirk grows mair nur a body can thole,  
An he's happit wi yird,  
As deep as a doon-lyin mole,  
I'll hae me his seed, an his soul.

### Funeral

Jock an Sandy rigged fur kirk —  
They vowed, they wadna missed it.  
Twa chiels tae bid a third adieu,  
The dear departit, kistit.

Quo Sandy — 'He's awa frae't aa,  
His gear is easy pairtit,  
Fur sic a spen'thrift chiel wis Tam,  
A thummel-heid wid cairt it.'

Bit Jock said — 'Man, an open haun  
Is better nor a grippy.  
Tho Tam wis bare o' aa bit friens,  
I wyte, ye hidna ony.'

Said Sandy, (wha'd nae luck wi quines  
Through lack o' luiks, an fooshian) —  
'Gin I'd a preen, fur ilkie deem

Tam wooed — they'd stap a cushion.'  
Jock tholed the accusation derk, Bit keepit unca quate,  
(For roon the nick he'd tirmed his sark,  
Ae nicht, wi cripple Kate)  
Ay, Jock an Tam hid aa the luck,  
Weel-ben in houghmagandie,  
A curled snoot, wi' oot a doot,  
Wis aa the jaads gaed Sandy.

An ben the hymns, the sundry sins,  
Agin Tam's name wis listit,  
As Sandy spak, Jock sat an grat,  
At thocht o' Tammie kistit.

`Afore ye set anither steen, upon the cairn o's name  
Quo Jock, 'We're nane o's perfect —  
Ye'd dae weel redd up yer ain.'

I hope, fin Daith comes chappin,  
An I'm boxed, afore the fowk,  
God disna think like Sandy,  
Bit he taks the side o' Jock!

's No Dodo... For Cuthbert Graham

Fowk spik about Scots  
Ay, wir ain Doric leid  
As if 'twis a dodo  
Wha'd drappit doon deid!

As mad tae conserve an preserve the auld wirds,  
As a gleg taxidermist, wi putrifeed birds,  
They wrangle ower spellin, gash gulls wi their gab,  
Ower a muckle weet haddie streekt oot on a slab.

I've news fur them —Scots disna bide in a buik!  
It's alive, an it's kickin,  
Gin they wid bit look.  
Tak a keek frae the waas  
O their ivory tower,  
Tak a traivel ben Buchan,  
Inbye, an' oot-ower,  
They'd ken it wis livin,  
A weel-haunelt shelt,  
Fowk spik it wi niver  
A thocht foo it's spelt!

A buik fur a tongue?  
It's a boon fur the few!



We ken it b'hairt  
We've a tongue, in wir mou!

Hurl: for Andrew Watt, Farmer, New Deer

`Ye'd sic a hurl on him, as far's the gate?  
Ah weel, he's foonert noo, an quate.'  
A hard-vrocht haun, scrat-fu o girse an strae  
Heistit me hine ower whin an dyke,  
Ontil the braid back o' couthie Pegasus.

Horse-heich, the warld wis sma,  
Masel the smaaest thing ava,  
Thon fearsome feet, like muckle ashets,  
Skitterin skirps o' dubs at ilkie stride.  
Wids, parks, an clouds,  
At ilkie dirdin doon,  
Gaed showdin, side b'side.  
The strang, warm, horse's smell  
Brocht heezin midgies  
Dancin roon his tail.

Syne, knottin baith neives  
Ticht, intil his mane,  
For jist ae span o' Time,  
He wis a prince's stallion,  
Neth a warrior Celt;  
A dreamin bairnie,  
On a brukken shell

8.A Mither Tint: Isobel Booth, Hillhead of Cairnie, Skene

The mistress o' Tipperton, couthie and kind,  
She winted fur naething that siller cud gie,  
Wi only her chuckens, an calfies till tend,  
There's nane hid as raft a doonsittin as she.

She'd a boddomless ladle, fur tinks on the scraun,  
(Tho the nickums, she kent, waurna safe near a hen)

Faur ithers wid show them the back o' a haun  
She'd smooth doon her peenie, cry, 'Come awa ben.'

Ilkie snocherin geet fand her door wis ajee,  
For bannocks, or bosies, or buits gainst the wither,  
An mony's the sharger, fin term-time fell tee,  
Thocht, 'Lord, 'twid be gran tae hae yon fur a mither.'

Bit fyles, in the dark o' the strae in the laft,  
In the bield o' the byre, oot o' sicht o' the fowk,  
As the kye licked their littlins, tender an aft,  
The Mistress o' Tipperton grat like a gowk.

Her briest niver suckled, her care niver missed,  
She thocht on a cradle, o' squallichin teem,  
O' hope, lang laid by, like the shawl in the kist,  
An the wecht o' the thocht, wis the wecht o' a steen.

Buskit wi garlands, an happit wi yird,  
'Fit sorra?' fowk said, 'for she niver kent wint.'  
Bit the auld clockin hen, though it spak ne'r a wurd,  
Kent the richt an the wrang o't — a guid mither, tint.

### Spae Wife

Hidden awa, in a neuk o' the fair,  
Slicht, an sleekit, an sly,  
The spae wife sits, in the spae wife's tent,  
Watchin the fowk gaun by.  
Hidden awa, in her lang-luggit lair,  
Her skill, the gift o' the gab,  
The spae wife sits, in the spae wife's tent,  
A wyver, wyvin her wab.

Her een's twa lichtit spunks o' fire,  
Her hair's a corbie's wing,  
She's steep't till the core, in the Black, black airt  
Her truth's a birlin ring.

Fur Misery's a mairket place,  
That's trade fur as the sizzens,

The spae wife kens, the fly auld jaad,  
That Hope sells mair nur besoms.

Her Ace o' Trumps is promises,  
She's skilled at the hinneyed lee,  
Thoombin the cairds o' Fortune  
Tae ken fit weird ye'll dree.

Fur fit's afore, ye'll nae win by,  
Bit a nod's as guid as a wink,  
An some wid sup wi' the Deil himsel,  
The Ace o' Spaads tae jink.

As iron boos i' the blacksmith's haun,  
As meal mells wi the miller,  
The lassie's thochts on a pyock o' dreams  
The spae wife's thochts on siller.

r from a Distressed Auntie

Dear Brither —  
Jist a note tae say,  
He's settled doon rale fine...  
Forbye's a twa, three thingies —  
He's a maist inquirin mind!  
He's fichered wi the knobbies,  
Till the tractor winna start,  
He tint the monthly milk yield  
Fin we took him tae the mart.  
The bull is fair ferfochen,  
Since he lat the beastie free,  
It's served fully fifty heifers  
O' the Charlie pedigree:  
Nae coontin 19 Herefords,  
It wisna meant tae cover,  
14 Friesians, 16 Ayrshires,  
20 Guernseys, an wir mither!

The binder twine is raivelled;  
Aa the cats hiv run awa;  
He drapt them frae the stable reef

(Tae see foo far they'd fa.)

The inferno wis a peety,  
Noo, we hinna ony strae,  
Bit we've taen awa his matches,  
The insurance comes the day.

The wee sowel fed the calfies,  
Bit he gaed them as the scoor,  
He fulled their pails wi kirnfus  
O' turpentine an floor!

He's fair increased the egg returns,  
The hens jist hear him come,  
An they fire oot double yokers,  
Like the pellets frae a gun...

The killin hoose collecktit them,  
The sheep, frae aff the road,  
An foo wis he tae ken,  
They'd niver learned the Highway code?  
For his neist years Simmer holidays,  
Please — sen' him tae the Boers:  
He's mair nur flesh an bluid can staun;  
Dear Brither,  
Ever yours!

Gowk and the Star  
His kyte's weel happit,  
Fed an wattered reg'lar;  
His sheen are blaiked,  
His galluses are buttoned.  
He kens tae pairt his hair,  
If there be wint, that wint,  
Is nae fur claes.  
It's Reason, that he's tint.

Teem lauch, in timmer heid,  
Far wits are scarce,  
As hyacinths in heather.  
He sweeps the sna,

An reels aff sangs he's heard  
At some fireside,  
Lang smored in aisse,  
O' parks, straucht ploood  
B' horse, an clinkin braise.

His brukken logic's queer,  
A clock that disna tick,  
(It niver wis wun up) .  
Time only chimes for fowk  
Like me, wha canna swick  
The wheep o' winter's storm,  
It's whyles a thocht, for me,  
Tae face the morn.  
Bit ilkie day till him  
(The favour in the flaw)  
'S a bairn new born.

Is it some Bethlehem star  
That mak's his wye seem easy,  
Mine, seem waur?

He tak's life as it cams,  
A dreel tae howk;  
Sae tell me  
Fa is wise,  
An fa's the gowk?

Country Doctor... For Dr. n

He's a merriege guidance cooncillor,  
A dominie, a priest.  
It's like Jehovah's judgement  
Yon forbiddin cry o'Neist! '

Wee Jimmy's got the bellyache?  
D'ye tak me fur a feel?  
Wi half an ee, it's plain tae see,  
He disna like the skweel.'

`Noo.. Mistress Millar. Come on ben,  
Yer braithless, like tae pech?

An sae wid onybody be,  
That's five steen overwecht!

Yer man's bin poorly?  
Yon's a shame...  
He's hoastin, like a stirk?  
Weel — stop his baccy ration,  
Gie the siller tae the kirk!

An ye've bin melancholic?  
Faith, ye've surely mair adee...  
Gae hame an scrub the kitchie, lass,  
An nae waste time wi me.'

`Sen' in the neist.  
Nae ye again —  
Forsweir the demon drink!  
Ye'll niver be a granfaither,  
It's later nur ye think.'

Nae pills dispensed, bit muckle sense  
A wurd, a news, a powk;  
Auld-farrant, country doctor,  
Half his skill  
Is kennin fowk.

e's Van

Aladdin's cave, the fishie's van,  
Lions hug the seerip tin,  
Jars, wi pearly clouds o' bubble  
Pickelt ingins, soor as sin.

The fishie's fuskered like a walrus,  
Hauns as steeny-cauld's a hake,  
Een like fog-lichts, hair o' dulse  
An elver's tongue, a lug fur claik

A face as lang's a weet wikken,  
That anely brichtens, gin ye spen  
The price o' fillet, fry, or eggs,

Shrimps like birrsled divils' legs

Gawpin mous, an ringel een,  
Scales o' herrin, saxpence roon  
Labsters, reid, wi nesty nippers  
Sun-tanned kippers, Asia broon  
Netted, gutted, battered, dried  
A sitter shoal wirth ilkie poon,  
Heidless, so's ye'd niver ken,  
Fit wrathfu' fishies think o' men.

ggin

Dalriggin wis sleekit — he'd teeth like a meer's,  
A snicher tae match them — a tongue like a shears,  
That'd clip ye tae size — he'd the braidth o' yer claith,  
Ye'd be thrimmles an thrummles afore ye drew braith.

He'd the cut o' yer character — doon tae the mark,  
Frae the tip o' yer coat, till the tail o' yer Sark,  
Far ither's ramgumption stops short at their neive,  
(Or the soles o' their buits, like the sype frae a seive) ,  
His hoose, like his heid, wis an ill rowin pirn,  
Ye'd ging in wi a grin an cam oot wi a girn.

His stories wis legion — ill thochted forby,  
Fa bladded the cattleman's wife, an the wye  
That yon tink o' a tractorman swickit the grieve,  
(Fin dirt's in the diggin, fowk's quick tae believe)

The pot an the kettle, bein' baith o' them black,  
He'd claith fur the cuttin frae abody's back.

The neater the needle, the sairer the stob,  
The wyver's bin wippit as ticht as a wob,  
Noo there's nae clippit cloots for Dalriggin tae heed,  
Daith's winnerfu skeely at snippin the threid.

nnie's Nell

She'd a lip wi' a mower,  
Balmennie's wife Nell,  
Wi' a tongue that gaed clack,  
Like the haimmers o' Hell.  
A pirn-taed, obstreperous deem,  
Wi' her dander sae easy caad up,  
Like the stoor frae a breem,  
An her grumphin an girm  
As sherp as the stob o' a preen.  
She wisna a belle,  
Far frae it, a clort o' a quine,  
Wi jist the ae suitor, Balmennie himsel,  
Bit she suited him fine.

` For certes, ' quo he, 'beauty bides bit a day  
Afore that ye ken it, ye'r auld, an ye'r gray  
Nell rises wi' me, taks her turn i' the byre  
Syne redds up the kitchie, an kinnles the fire  
Na — Venus is bonnie, bit fickle an fykey,  
She'd niver consent tae be filin her nightie  
B' herdin the nowt i' the park.'  
An here, he aye paused, wi' a lauch, an a lear  
(Bit whispered it softly, lest Nellie cud hear)  
'Ye'll ken the auld spik? ' (An afore ye cud speir)

` It's as sure as the birk tree is biggit wi bark  
It's bin true sin' the day they walked ooto the ark  
Be they plain as a spurgie, or lissom's a 1ark  
There's nae muckle odds, fm they're happit bi dark

The Lord looked doon on Noah,  
Said 'Turn ilkie stick an stane,  
An capture ivery kind o' beast  
Afore it sterts tae rain.'

They nippit up the gang plank,  
Strippit, spottit, black, an broon,  
Syne Noah hystit anchor,  
Till the water dwinilt doon.



The Human race diversifeed —  
Nae wan o' them's the same,  
They're a niver endin story  
That ye've aye tae learn again.

Ye think ye ken them?  
Deil the bit!  
Ye've anely scratched the tap,  
There's aye the ither layer  
Aneth the currant on the bap.

Neist time the Lord grows wrathfu, Noah,  
Dinna be a gowk,  
Tak ae boatie fur the animals,  
Anither fur the fowk.

Dan

Stringin the wirds thegither,  
Like a blin man threidin beads,  
Fu's a puggie, hyterin happily  
Breeks bumshayvelt, spayver lowsed  
Ae fit forrit, three steps back:  
Deef, tae peety or blame.

Abody's pal, his happiness chaiply bocht  
Corked, in a bottle o' hooch.  
A pint o' oblivion,  
Stappt in his waistcoat pooch,  
Nae quite co-ordinatin,  
Half-hung-tee,  
A leaky craft, in a stormy sea.  
Nae giein' a hoot,  
The stars skweejee,  
An him wi a drooth  
That wid drain the bree  
Frae sharny clot.

Sky tapsalteerie,  
Grun nae level,

A coracle, facin a force ten gale  
Jist Dan gaun hame, puir divil.

ween

A chap at the door — a lichtit neep  
Rikken o' cannel-flame.  
The pitterin-patt o' feery feet;  
Guisers, thrangin the lane.

The fleggit myowt o' a lanely bairn,  
Wha kens that aa's nae richt,  
Wis yon a cat — or a midnight hag  
Wi her black, black back arched ticht?

Nocht bit a whigmaleerie?  
Fowk say, that tombs are teem,  
That the deid are walkin eerie  
Wi rypit stars for een.

A chap at the door — or wis't the win  
Scrattin the windae pane?  
The pitterin-patt o' fairy feet  
In ghaistly claes; or rain?

Four Bairn Sangs

Bat

The Bat's a midnight falderal,  
An upside doon asleep,  
Umbrella at a funeral,  
Hung in the kirk, tae dreep.

Oh blin-eed, blearie, fleein moo  
We canna as be bonnie,  
Bit fin the Lord dispensed guid  
He didna gie ye ony!

The rain's a busy washer wife,  
Her clouts, the clouds sae high,  
She wrings them oot in thunnerstorms  
Syne hings them up tae dry.

pillar

Caterpillar, in the strae,  
Fit a lot o' feet ye hae!  
It maun tak frae dawn till dark,  
Jist tae walk across the park.

Hootie Owl

The wee Hootie Owl  
Has a neb like a scurl,  
Een like fog lichts,  
Heid on the furl.

His taes turn in  
An his lugs cock oot,  
Like a wee choochin ingine,  
He gings, 'Hoot, hoot.'

s of a Compass

A village voyeur,  
Blearie beldame,  
Lifts the screen on scandal.  
She's maistered the drapped suggestion,  
The sleekit question.  
Sookin up sklaik,  
Auld slorrach,  
Horny-gollachin her wye  
Ben creepy-crawly chinks  
O' disrespectability.  
(Gie Satan an inch,

An whaur'll it as end?)

Ae snifterin, rain-duntin Setterday  
She backslid intil the mools.  
Hard ben  
Frae a lassie, notably  
Saft wi' men.

The auld yew haps them baith,  
Jawer an jaad:  
Twa pints o' the compass,  
Baith facin North.

ing: For the folk of Muick, Gairn and Tullich  
In the queer half-licht o' gloamin,  
The dreich win hauds its braith,  
It's then that fowk walk wary,  
An the birk stauns still as daith.

In the queer half-licht o' gloamin  
I watched, frae the open door,  
A bairn at play, b' a ruck foun,  
In the weety, wintry smore.

An roon an roon the rugged rucks  
As iver a rascal ran,  
Played 'teet-bo-Geordie, ' as her  
An 'catch-me-gin-ye-can.'

'Dis naebody cam, tae cry ye in,  
That ye keep ootby sae late?  
Chasin the win, like a tinkler's quine  
Sae queerly, an sae quate? '

'My hame's as far as Paradise,  
An there, the sna faas free,  
The hills an howes are fite's a rose  
The burns rin ebony.  
An coorse the day, an curst the  
I left yon high country.'

In the queer half-licht o' gloamin  
The nicht wis a wattery meen,  
Naething alow, bit the bare, braid parks  
Masel: the bairn I'd seen.

### Fears

Fin dweeble dwines the day awa,  
The meen's a yalla, rikkin ring,  
Steerin the cauldron o' the gloam,  
The howlet's horror, on the wing.

Sherp-clookit futteret leaves the dyke,  
The bat's sma screich's a widow's wail,  
The snocherin brock pads ben the path,  
An slivvery slips the snail.

The murderin tod stravaigs the ditch,  
Twa sprigs o madness are its een,  
A soople, sleekit, stalkin wraith,  
The Daith amangst the breem.

Nicht lays her clammy haun ower aa,  
The fears, that wi' the daylight hide,  
Creep frae the hidey-holes o' dark,

Crawl frae the mind, an wanner wide.  
A craven moosie, coorin doon,  
I've chittered on the ferny floor,  
Nae kennin fit may staun ahin,  
Fit lies in wait afore.

Tea Pairty...For Robbie and Esma Shepherd.

English bedd in the wireless.  
We let it oot, whyles,  
Turnin a knob, fur a bit diversion.  
Min', we hidna a doonricht aversion til't  
It jist didna belang;  
Keepit fur Sunday best,

Like an auld psalm.

Cam the day o' the pairty.  
'Ye'll enjoy't, ' quo mither,  
Hale an hairty.  
'Say please an thanks.  
Dinna be quanter,  
Ye canna gae wrang.'

The genii wis oot o' the wireless...  
Somebody'd clapped a bin-lid  
Ower the Scots.

There wis a rowth o' fancy pieces, I mind that,  
An a wummin, dragon-dreidfu, in a green frock  
Speenin broon saps, intil a dish.  
'Fit'll ye hae?' she speired,  
(The genii did some sma translation  
Takkin peety on a stranded fish) `  
'I'm easy. I'll tak onything.'  
An did the dragon nae blaw rikk?  
Reid's a labster, near ower ill-natured tae spikk?

`A conscious decision, ' quo she, is little tae ask  
Efter aa my scutter.'

'I'll takk the mochie mousse, ' I managed tae hubber.  
`Wis't a nice pairty?' Speired ma mither.  
`Fit wye are ye kickin the wireless? '

Twa Bairn Days

27.Ile on Troubled Watter

Five years auld.  
He caa'd me 'Wee pudden'

I caa'd him ower,  
Neived his wirds intil a ticht knot,  
Knuckled wi' Biblical accuracy,  
Richt intil his left ee.

It moved, a jeely knob  
Aneth ma fist.

He grat like a burst main.  
Efter, it wis blue, green — a stain  
The colour o' scaled ile,  
Sliddery as butter,  
Spreadin ower his face.  
Ile, on troubled watter.

Last at the dell's a wee roguie,  
Goodies gang tae heaven,  
Baddies tae Hell.  
The dice is loaded.  
The game's a bogie.  
Sic lang ledders!  
Look oot fur the snakes!  
Heids or tales,  
Hogarth's Rake,  
Or Pilgrim's Progress,  
Strictly aff the cuff,  
Cairds on the table  
We're as pawns:  
Fortune's Blind Man's buff.  
Eetle ottle, I'm oot.

Crusty, compact as a crab  
The thorn o' wir hale confab,  
We canna lay hauns on't easy  
Niver say dab.

Ruggin compliments frae us  
Is nae mean feat —  
Pairtin a sookin bairn  
Frae its mither's teat.

Awkward as new sheen,  
Libbit labsters, Teuch tae crack.  
We loe in sma letters,  
Aathing in thummelfus,  
Ay haudin something back

ia

Watter ay jives, leaves nae untidy seam.  
A salmon loup's bit a haun's clap,  
The neives knit ticht thegither,  
Haudin sic thochts! Derk, as Excalibur.

Cast in a random steen,  
A muckle, gapin wound, instantly healin.  
So saw Ophelia, as she slipped her sorra doon,  
Her raivelt wits washed clean awa,  
As clear's the meen,  
A mirror, softly sweemin.

Reiver

Gin I cud haud the peesie in her flicht  
An catch the sang that hovers in her throat  
Gin I cud track the leverick ben the nicht  
An reive the liltin limmer o' her note  
I'd hae a sang wirth singin.

Gin I cud sclim the lift, an nae be cowed  
An swick the Lord o' derkness o his meen  
Gin I cud hairry simmer o' her gowd  
Or cowp misfortune's creel till til it war teem  
I'd hae a ploy wirth playin.

Gin I cud spik wi eventide an speir.  
The wye she peints the glimm on the glaur  
Gin I cud rype the lochan o' her lear  
Tae draw the wispin haavers o' the haar  
I'd hae a darg wirth daein.



Gin Daith cud be the reistin o' a crow  
A faldin wing, on tyauve, an wurdly care  
As saft's the doonwird drappin o he snaa  
The lowsins o' an arra on the air  
'Twid be a peace wirth haein.□

an Oot

A doon-an-oot. A wino.  
Her face wis minkit.  
Lord, she stank tae High Heaven  
Tart's nails, beetroot reid,  
Braith, sickly sweet,  
Fit scaffie's bin  
Forgot tae pit the tin Lid on her?

I tell ye  
I hid tae move ma seat.  
The state o' yon,  
Sittin in an Art Gallery!  
Some fowk's nae sense o decency.

She's nae alane.  
Van Gogh gaed doon the drain  
Abody liked him...posthumously,  
Fame's a funny thing.

Me? Fit wis I there fur?  
Tae see the picturs, naturally  
Hogarth wisna on view.  
His 'Gin Lane's' maist affecting,  
An yon chiel, Degas, hard tae beat,  
Peintit an absinthe drinker  
Sae real, ye'd nearly greet.

Fit happened tae the wino?  
Yer surely nae in doot?  
Realism's best ahin a glaiss,  
Nae face tae face.  
They pit her oot.

mned Building  
Peint wirks winners,  
Happen a crack here,  
A death-watch beetle there...  
The 'For Sale' sign's doon,  
Naebody'd buy. Structurally spikkin,  
It's nae in a guid wye.

It niver wis soun, i' the first place.  
Aa granite,  
Nae grace.  
A moose his chittered the books.  
Up in the laft,  
There's a slate loose.

Body o' mine, nae hope o' a shift,  
Hivin bedd in ye noo  
Langer than thocht'll permit,  
Ower coordy fur quittin,  
We'll grit it oot,  
Till the bitter en'.  
Daith'll arrange the flittin.

#### Thwarted Suitor

That ony quine sud bring me doon,  
I' faith — it's maist provokin,  
I'm saft's a bap fin Belle's aroon,  
She disna gie a docken!

I'd like tae fauld her tae ma breist,  
(An muckle mair beside)  
Bit dour's a rock — a crawlless cock,  
Ma hauns an tongue are tied.

I'm aff ma meat — I canna sleep,  
It's coorse tae be sae thwarted,  
Sin Belle got on fur dairy-deem,  
I wish she'd niver started!

I caimb the toozles frae the tyke,  
Its coat's the colour o' her hair,  
I hap the calvie ower wi' strae,  
An wish hersel wis lyin there.

I waited fur her, b' the kirk,  
A rowth o' bonnie wirds I'd gaithered,  
She stopped — bit I wis dry as dirt,  
An, like a halflin, hummed an haivered.

She's speired the grieve gin I be ill?  
(For hide nur hair o' me she's seen)  
I'll fork the bales, I'll kepp the bull,  
Bit canna face the dairy deem!

r's Sang

The tinker sang aneth the meen,  
O' Love gaen wrang, the auld lament,  
O' aathing tint, an aathing taen,  
As if its sorra he hid kent.

As birdies wheeple roon the gean,  
An pree the cherries frae the tree,  
Nor winna shift till as be daen,  
Then list ye, sae it wis wi' me.

Serpent's Sang For A. Maker.

Gin I wis ivy I wid twine  
Yon lang, lean limbs, unyieldin's stare,  
Sear laggard thocht — a kinnelt vine,  
Wi' leaves o' langin fill his een.

He'd learn tae loe me, quick eneuch,  
Gin he war bane, an I war bluid  
A flytin tide, I'd draw awa,  
Leavin him pale, as I am reid.  
I am the serpent in the stoor,

Tho lower than the dust I lie,  
I haud the knowledge o' delicht,  
Oh wha daur pass me by?  
A thoosan-fauld they crush my heid  
I hissin rise an multiply.

McBrodie

Hard on the meenit-heid  
She snibs her buik.  
Her schule-marm suit,  
Sterched stiff, in Bible black,  
Nae fripperies o' stertlin fite  
For the bairns' distraction.

Perjink — 'Ye'll write yon oot again! '  
Skeely at the frozen wurd:  
Repression's proselyte.

Dreams ding doon the paragon  
At nicht, agin her single-sarkit barrenness.  
A black bull snorts foriver at the gate,  
An cloven-hooved, rampages  
Ben the byewyes o' her laneliness.

Neist morn, pink-chikkit,  
Pittin on her Sabbath face,  
Miss McBrodie, spinster o' the parish,  
Primly doupin doon within the pew,  
Adds her collection meekly till the plate,  
Prays fervent for a minor miracle.  
Nae burnin bush or movin mountain,  
Anely, a blythe bed, an a sturdy mate.

38. Breem Beddit

The wids are wide, the heather's thick,  
It wraps her roon, a bonnie plaidie,  
The bracken winna clype nor cheep,  
The lea-lang nicht, he held her steady.

An fin auld age creeps in twa-fauld,  
Maks o' a maid a dottled deem,  
She'll hug it tae her, like a shawl,  
Yon nichts she beddit, i' the breem.

Buik learnin's gran — a puckle lear  
Pits pith an pouer in yer powe,  
The lips were vrocht for kittler cheer,  
Set on anither's cracks a lowe,  
Caa's caution, rikkin ower the whin,  
The bluid gangs soondin like a drum,  
Braith braks on braith, a boundin linn,  
An searin hett's the brand's owercome.

Love sunders lad an lass in turn,  
Can ne'er be brukk, nor broukit,  
Aince pree the wave, yer doon the burn,  
Yer ower the heid, an drookit.

ssus

Gin Narcissus hid bin human,  
(Insteid o' a wee powder puff o' whimsy)  
He'd nae been mesmerised b' mirrors.  
Mebbe the chiel wis real eneuch,  
Findin Reality a thochtie teuch,  
Forgot tae dicht his glaisses  
Or tint them, aathegither.

Him an me,  
Birds o' the same feather.  
Eros teets ower ma showder, scunnert.  
He wid hae bidden aince, the breet.  
Fit's waur, if the degeneration wis complete,  
I'd be the better able tae pit up wi't.  
The spirit's nae sae sweir,  
Still ettles tae walk barfit ower a muir,  
Bide oot o' nichts, an watch the horned meen,  
Staun, star-struck, in a wid i' the win's steer,  
Kick aff the bridled years like a colt —

If body aged wi' mind,  
Then I cud thol't!

's Wife

Luikin back, she saw her maiden-sel;  
Her sma breist, warm  
In the palm o' his langin,  
The sliddery girse, the broon yird  
Movin aneth them.  
Twa in ain,  
A Beltane jinin,  
Makkin a wummin  
Oot o' a trimmlin quine,  
An wee an far abeen  
The branchin wid,  
Booin its airms in blessin.

The waddin ring held constant,  
Time didna twist the circle,  
Naething cud grind it doon,  
Wechtit gowd.  
Lord, it wis sweir tae shift.  
Ye wid hae thocht twa fowk,  
Wi the early pech o' passion spent,  
Cud still luik at the road afore,  
An nae tak scunner.  
She swithered, luikit back.  
Aathing she did, gaun forrit,  
Wid be a fa't.  
Sae wis't a winner,  
The first, steen tear,  
Frae her hardenin hairt,  
He wid neither heed, nur need,  
Hid the taste o' satt?

r Woin

Smoorichin softly throw the fir  
A wooer in a silken veil

Is the sleety smirr,  
The doon-scud, i' the burnie's dreel,  
Dird-dirlin roon frae tap till tail,  
Is the fiddler's reel.

The birks staun ootlinned, chitterin cauld  
Quines, clad in cassen claes,  
At a Ne'erday Ball.

The blinterin, blichtit sun's a faithless lad,  
Whas fickle favour blears ower hoose an ha,  
Bracken's a glekit, feckless, tummelt lass,  
Cowpt ower, roch-wooded, amang the secret sna.

O Love's a bigsie burn that's naething blate,  
Wormin its viper's wye till the brae's breist,  
Or wild an wanton, terrible in spate,  
Wad wed, withoot the blessin o' a priest.

As ice crack tinkles sherp afore the thaw,  
So, cauld rife Winter brakks the Simmer's lyre,  
The clook within the eagle's sweengin claw,  
Love's bit a yowie, sneck't on barbit wire.

## Holocaust

The futterat an the cooshie doo  
Looked doon frae Bennachie,  
An saw a skyrie mushroom,  
Growin hine up frae the sea.

'Gweed sakes an Lord b' here, ' they cried,  
'Fit queer-like ferlie's thon?  
I'd sweir that I saw Aiberdeen  
Bit fin I blinked, she'd gone.'

'A contermashious lot, are men, '  
(Said futterat tae the doo)  
'We winna miss them muckle here,  
We'll bigg the world anew.'

She heezed her wings, an dippit doon,  
Tae seek her cosy nest,  
Bit as the wids hid turned tae dust  
An ashes wi' the rest.

### Roundabout

Each man's an embryo-cell,  
Each mither cairries,  
A livin waa o' bluid,  
Limits wir scope,  
Sneckit within,  
The derkness o' heredity.

Bairnhood swaps ae confine  
For anither.  
Tethered ahin  
The apron strings o' hame,  
Genetics haud us,  
Ticht as ony wame.

Schule fences aff wir culture,  
Rooms us roon wi' edicts,  
Displaced refugees  
We learn tae unlearn,  
Wirds, an faimly patterns,  
Desperate tae please,  
Wir latest jylers.

Brick b' brick the kirk,  
Boxed in its Sabbath grey,  
Immures us, preachin  
Adam's gairden's sin,  
An as the fruits o' Paradise therein.

Pacin wir sma perimeter o' time,  
Wirk biggs anither gate.  
We mairry, clappin fetters on a mate.

The roundabout gaes on, foriver furlin,  
An orbit set, an we the starnies birlin,



Till lanely, nyaakit,  
Coffined, cribbed, an trimmlin,  
Immortal spirit caged in bane an flesh,  
The trap is sprung,  
The spirit freed in Daith.

## Scale

Gin the clouds war teemin graves,  
Scalin the horde o' humanity,  
Back, till the hinmaist generation,  
Aa their pith an pooer,  
Doon in a steep rain,  
'Twid be a short shower, tummlin.

Ye may rin tae the fower airts,  
The hale o' a puny grit in a strainin sinew,  
Peched, b' the sweir endeavour.  
There's aye a new horizon, foriver  
A new begeck, a second hummlin.

New growth comes faist ahin a burnin heath,  
The cruel years ootrin ye,  
A weary stag, gralloched  
B' snappin teeth.  
In the braidth o' Creation  
Anely the hills staun siccar,  
Sure o' their station.  
The yetts o' wurdly ambition's  
A prood castle, a circlin craw,  
The heicht o' a nettle,  
Wavin its firey banner  
Ben a forgotten ha'.  
The past, the future's  
Watter,  
Screived on a crummlin waa.

Hinnered b' dark,

I gaed unsteady fittit.  
The steadin's bulk, moose-squeakin  
In the cat's paw, o' the torch.  
It fixed a hingin towe,  
A scaled sack,  
In its selective clook.  
The kent road wrang,  
Stanes risin as impediment,  
I saw, bit dauma look.

The black, byre muck, cradlin  
Ilkie step.  
Swallowed, Like ony Jonah,  
I kent anither dark,  
An panic rose, sharn-weet,  
As cauld's a halter,  
A ticht band  
Grippin Reason b' the sark.

He felt ma step intruder  
Viewed me,  
Fand me wintin,  
In the scales o' his beast's measure,  
His chine rattled,  
Hate in ilkie tether,  
The meenlicht, queerly glintin.

Slow, hefty, murd'rous,  
In yon crass, creashie fatness,  
He kent I feared him,  
Spat contempt an spittle,  
A midden-Minotaur.  
The matchstick legs o' me,  
Rampagin tae be aff,  
His maleness, sinister.

r

Towser — got on a wirkin bikk,  
The Lord kens whaur,  
B' a sire that wis three quarts wolf,

Touch, gin ye daur.

He'd seek yer haun, sud the humour suit,  
A roch, weet tongue, an a powkin snoot,  
At a stranger's fit, his birsse wid rise,  
Bare his teeth, at their unkent wyes.  
Mell like a wraith, wi the oorrie nicht,  
Teem his plate, wi a thankless dicht.

Towser missin — a yowe miscairriet.  
Brunt o' the blame — wis't him that hairriet?  
Back o' the byre — will he cam this gait?  
A gun on the airm..a lang, lang, wait.  
Back o' the byre,  
A tail wags blate,  
A shot i' the dark,  
And a wild thing, quate.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Stag, Cernunnos

His coming was so quiet,  
Lightly, lightly,  
Stepping between two firs.  
I thought he had grown from the air  
A cloud-beast,  
Sailing between two regions,  
Child of the toad-brown bog,  
The cauldron, mist,  
Whose vipers' tails  
Curled slithery down the hill.

He stood, a living quest,  
In the dying sun.  
He was brideless, brideless,  
I could have kissed  
The ground that held him;  
The riven veins of his antlers  
Ran with fire. Like amethyst  
His eyes. No Nature's plaything -  
That much compelled my reverence.

His crown, an out-stretched tree  
Bark-branching, horned in gold,  
Embraced the sky.

He was a king, certainly.  
After his silent going, I  
Was leaderless, leaderless.  
The space where he had been  
Was empty. A lake of loss  
No footprint marked his passing,  
He took his shadow with him  
Like a cross.

It was as if a sage  
Carried his knowledge,  
Peerless, peerless,  
Into another age.



# The Storm Nursery

Two siblings, we enter the cable car  
Not sitting close together

The car is a blown egg shell  
Rising up from the car park  
A thin screech

The great Alp yawns below  
We are wingless birds  
In a troubled glass pod,  
A frail and tilting cradle  
We hang from a slim thread

Ignoring the warning  
'Do not rock the car'  
My brother does so

This is the storm nursery  
For the heirs of Icarus

Sheena Blackhall

# The Storm Nursery (27 Scots Poems)

s I didna Bring tae a Simmer' Day

I didna bring the queen o Sheba's girdle  
I didna bring Harpo's Marx's funny hat  
I didna bring the mummy o a bog-chiel  
I didna bring a wee tinnie o waes  
I didna bring a maypole ringed wi skulls  
I didna bring a Zulu's sprootin neb- hair  
I didna bring a reid pot quaetly plottin  
I didna bring an orchard breirin hairts  
I didna bring a thong studdit wi comets  
I didna bring a merle wi alopecia  
I didna bring a greetin droonin whale  
I didna bring Yuletide in a pink tea cosy  
I didna bring ten widwasps an a clarsach.

2, Tint Ferlies

Alang the wye I tint ma faither's watch  
Alang the wye I tint a dother's hairt  
Alang the wye I tint the Crack o Dawn  
That rises in the glen far langins stert  
Alang the wye I tint a glimmrin loch  
A mavis wheeplin in an eildritch den  
Alang the wye I tint the thochtless joy  
That gangrel tods, smaa birds an fishies ken

Pen

The pen can cut ben laneliness  
The dirgefu rigs o nicht  
The pen can bigg a crucible  
Tae haud the hairt's delicht

A listenin lug, an open mind  
Aa these the pen can be  
A balm, a bield, a coonseller

Fur aa infirmity

red Quine

Her breists are nyakkit tae the win  
On a rose buss back o slum, a birdie  
Is clearin its mornin thrapple

East o the railwye line  
The lipsticked glaiss in her flat  
Is twa days stale

Her blin een offer their juice  
Tae a droothy craa

Her luck run oot fin a punter  
Lowsed her black shift  
Wi a sherp blade  
An a lang intakk o hate

Sune her edges will blur  
Her ootraxed shanks will wummle inno the girse  
Her wyme will reinvent itsel as fogg  
Her rigbane be fite chukkies in the rain

Abandoned Monster

I'm an abandoned monster, naebody wints tae ken  
A silicon snoot an a heid o tin, I'm heavily intae Zen

I'm an abandoned monster. Tho I stamp, leak ile an skirl  
Or clank ma teeth, the quines in Leith, they dinna lowp nor skirl

I'm an abandoned monster, recycled frae a skip  
I canna rin nur flee nor sweem...bit watch yer dowp. I nip.

mann Maths

Takk twa wee swifties



Divide bi seeven gloamins  
Add ae glede.

Foo mony feathers  
Flichter doon tae Loch Voile?

Sumph

In Scotlan, heid bangers an numpties  
May darken yer day wi a grumph  
Bit save us frae gypes o first order  
Thon maist Scottish o gomerils, the sumph

At wirk, ye'll be deaved wi heid-bummers  
Fa'll load ye wi pyoke-fus o bumph  
Bit the stang o the trump is the scunner  
The warst o them aa, that's the sumph

Fate biggs up yer cairds tae the ceilin  
Syne caas them aa doon wi a whumph  
An ye girn an deave aa till their murnin  
Gweed-sakes...ye've turned inno a sumph!

tion on a Wird

Suck. Suck suck. Suck suck. Suck suck.  
Thon's whit I think o ye, ye suckers  
Suckin succubus. Sucker  
Suck suck.. Suck suck.. Suck suck.  
Suck. There.  
Is thon succinct eneuch for ye?  
Conseeder. Am I a poem?

ts on a Swing

Gowd's the breem unner the unripe gear  
The hingin luggit harebell's tashed an wae  
Her leaves are turnin doon, her oor is dane  
Daith an life in the mids o a simmer's day

Rasps are hard green beads bi the mappie's hole  
In the dyke wi the mossy face an the ferny shawl  
A teem swing hings frae a bough far the linties flit  
As the ghaists o ma bairns' bairnhood come tae sit

I watch ilk ane as niver I watched afore  
Bit the past's ower late tae mend, a snibbit door  
Breem, harebells, linties, swing, bairns an masel  
A hunner years frae noo, will be the stoor itsel

Reengin Speerit

Ma speeit has nae hoose nor hame, nae place o habitation  
It lues the lilt o loch an tarn the treisurs o oor nation

Ochon ochre the Bens are sweet in fair or stormy weather  
It's tae the glens I set ma fit, Balquidder's pearls o heather

Ma speerit has nae hoose nor hame nor place o habitation  
It's sib tae fur an wing an fin a nippick o creation

Three Scots Owersetts o Poems frae the Inglis

Francis an the Grumphie (Saint Francis and the Sow: Galway Kinnell)

The bud  
Stauns fur aathin,  
Even thon ferlies that dinna flooer,  
For aathin flooers frae inbye, o self-blissin  
Tho whyles it's necessar  
Tae larn the thing again its bonnieness  
Tae pit a haun on the broo  
O the flooer  
An retell't in wirds an touch  
It is bonnie  
Till it flooers again frae inbye o self blissin  
As Saint Francis  
Pit his haun on the wrunkled broo  
O the soo, an telt her in wirds an touch

Blissins o yird on the soo, an the soo  
Stertit myndin aa doon her creashie streech  
Frae the dubby snoot aa the wye  
Throw the maet an saps tae the speeirtual curl o the tail  
Frae the hard jobbiness stobbin oot frae the rigbane  
Doon throw the muckle brukken hairt  
Tae the braw blue milky dwaumieness spirkin an judderin  
Frae the fowerteen teats inno the fowerteen moos sookin an  
Blawin aneth them  
The lang, perfeck bonnieness o the soo

Kind (Her Kind: Anne Sexton)

I hae gane oot, a possessed witch  
Hauntin the blaik air, braver at nicht  
Dreamin coorseness, I hae dane ma turn  
Ower the ordnar hooses, licht bi licht  
Lanely ferlie, twal-fingeret, ooto mind  
A wumman like thon isna a richt wumman  
I hae bin her kind.

I hae fand the hett caves in the wids  
Stapt them wi skillets, carvins, trays,  
Presses, silks, umpteen goods  
Cooked the suppers for wirms an feys  
Girnin, rearrangin the ooto line  
A wumman like thon's mis-unnerstude  
I hae bin her kind

I hae hurled in yer cairt, driver  
Wyved ma nyaakit airms at clachans, hudderie  
Larnin the last bricht wyes, survivor  
Far yer lowes yet bite ma hurdies  
An ma ribs crack far yer wheels wynd  
A wumman like thon isna affrontit tae dee  
I hae bin her kind

Beeriet Burn (The Buried Stream: James K. Baxter)

The nicht oor cat, Tahi, fa lately tint

Ae eebroo, skirls in the buss wi anither cat

Oor glaiss Tibetan ghaist-trap has caught nae ghaist  
Yet, bit tinkles hung in the alcove abeen that

We varnished an gart grow. Daftly, I hae read  
Sartre on imagination- unca dry, unca French

An auld tyke wi souns in his heid  
Fa dreams the hunt is stertit, yet fears the stench  
O action- he larns us that human chyce  
Is gey rare true, or kind. My bairns are asleep

Somethin dirls in the kitchie. I hear the vyce  
O the beeriet burn that treetles deep, deep

Ben caves I canna enter, fas watery rope  
Rugs ma divinin rod wi the habit some caa hope.

14. I hinna supped the wine that Auncients made  
Owerset o 'I had not tried the Wine the Ancients Made.' By Osip Emilevich  
Mandelstam

I hinna supped the wine that ancients made,  
An hidna heard the tune Ossian did keen;  
Sae foo, on Eirde, dae I hauf see the glen,  
An, in the lift - the bluid-reid Scottish meen?

An the ower-caa o corbie an clarsach  
I faintly hear, ben seelence, fu o fricht,  
An, spreid bi wins, the yuletide worsit plaids  
O knights are glimmin in the reid moonlicht!

I hae received the blissin tae inherit  
Anither singer's iver reengin thocht;  
For kin's an neebor's speeritual merits  
We're free tae like or tae regaird as nocht

Nae jist ae lanely treisur, I jealouse,  
Gyangs doon tae granbairns an the wider clan,

Again a bard will auncient sangs compose,  
An, as his ain, he'll spread them ower the lan

15. The Fiddler's Son: For Roderick Anderson, born April 2010

Oh April's bonnie bit cauld,  
The Spring has fairly begun  
An Morven hill has mist on tap,  
An sae Cromar is in for a drap  
An the fiddler's gotten a son

The hares hae taen tae their heels,  
The poacher's oot wi his gun  
An aa he wints is ane for the pot,  
Tae pye the price o a poochfu o shot  
An the fiddler's gotten a son

The buds they brier on the tree,  
The daffies brakk throw the grun  
The parks aa hae a skiffin o green,  
The lammies lowp frae morn till een  
An the fiddler's gotten a son

The birdies nest in the wids,  
Their mates they've coortit an won  
Bit still they hae their eggies tae hatch,  
Wi twigs tae gaither an snailies tae catch  
An the fiddler's gotten a son

The swalla's hame frae afar,  
Nae mair oor shores she'll shun  
The bluebells nod ower burnies an braes,  
The aipple blossom sweetens the days  
An the fiddler's gotten a son

16. American in Embro For Dana Linnet

It's in the Sunday Times, it's official, historic  
The American consul in Scotlan is learnin Doric

Already, she spikks Italian, Estonian, Swedish  
German, Norwegian, Danish, French and Spanish

Bit noo, she's taen tae hairt the lingua franca  
The ochs an achs an ayes o Caledonia  
George Washington on her waa luiks doon on her dug  
Her Westie, Jake, dowed doon on the consul's rug

Sivven hunner American firms in Scotlan pye the wage  
O ten per cent o Scots o wirkin age  
Sae aren't ye gled an American's grown euphoric  
About gowf, an Westies, the Scottish fowk, an Doric!

on a Sunny Day

The traffic stops tae the dunt o the piper's drum  
A quine wi her jaa gaun sidewise chawin gum  
Watches. Her tattooed beau at the bagpipes skirl  
Rattles his i-pod, drooned oot bi the dirl  
Bit yet they staun wi the lave on Union Street  
Fan the sodjers merch, an commerce an courage meet

Fin a war brakks oot, fitiver the richts an wrangs o't  
There's aywis a body somewye kens the stang o't  
Sae be't frae a cripple's wheelchair or the mools  
The anes fa canna merch are the city's jewels

18. The Turra Coo: Tune: The Ball o Kirriemuir

In the Boggieshalloch studio, a bovine star wis born  
It is bronze frae hoof tae udders, sae it's easy on the corn

Chorus: In the byre, on the plinth, in the jungle or the zoo  
There's nae a finer beastie than the famous Turra Coo

Awa in ancient Egypt, the Pharaohs biggt a Sphinx  
Wi limesteen an a chisel an a hairdo fu o kinks etc

The Bible tells the story o a gowden bull caad Baal  
He wis meltit doon fur bracelets afore he wis ten days aul etc

Gin the Turra coo should staun in an election as MP  
She nicht win a place in parliament an niver tell a lee etc

Oh ye'll fin her on the internet frae Tarves tae Peru  
Or on Facebuik swappin stories wi a yeti or gnu etc

Her fame has spread like wildfire aroon ilkie park an barn  
Fur she niver takks mastitis nor draps a pick o sharn etc

er's Welcome Fiddle tune: I'll ay caa in by Yon Toon

Yer welcome aa tae oor toon  
Frae roon the North Atlantic oh  
If fiddlin is yer fancy  
An sets yer fit a-tappin oh

There's Delta Blues, there's cloggin steps  
Flat fittin, jig an hornpipe oh  
Strathspeys an reels an learnèd schpeils  
Will set yer hairt a racin-oh

Far roots an routes cross ower  
It's guid tae tryst wi friens again  
Wi a favourite dram foregaiter  
Wi a Scot or Appalachian

If capercaillie's yer delicht  
Or gin it's Norway cuddy oh  
We've ceilidhs, ploys baith day an nicht  
Will gar ye aa feel frisky oh

## 20. Three Minstrels

There were three minstrels in the North fa chased the star o fame  
They aa set aff tae tour the touns an bring the siller hame

They hired a cuddy strang an dour. Its hooves war strippit blue  
Wi orange spots along his flanks, an mane o mired hue

Tae bring the siller hame, the first, cross legged, declaimed a sonnet

He strummed a mandolin and wore a yalla luggit bonnet

The secunt minstrel wore a hat Napoleon nicht hae donned  
He played a flute an traivelled licht the quicker tae abscond  
Should some puir glekit groupie o himsel grow ower fond

The third sat on the cuddy's dowp. A coolie's hat o strae  
Gaed him an oriental luik o Bangkok or Cathay.  
A brow rosette abeen his briest, green bows upon his sheen  
An skyrie brows an fey gee-gaws made him as gay's a Queen.

A muckle larry flegged the shelt, wi tootin horn an stoor  
An aff alang the motorwey at saxty mile an oor  
The cuddy raced. The minstrels three fell aff intae a sheuch  
A ratten, keekin frae a drain cried 'Showbiz can be teuch.'  
Neist day they aa agreed tae pairt, cryin 'eneuch's eneuch.'

Simla Teapot

The auld wife, hirplin an hippit,  
Will hyter up tae the table  
Hyocherin an pyocherin  
A rochlin hoast in her kist

Man flees tae the meen  
Clones yowes, breeds rams in tubes  
Dichts oot hale touns wi ae bomb  
Bit canna recycle auld age  
Its sairs, its craikin jynts  
Its rinnin doon  
Tae the mools o crockanation  
Like a connached clock

Maybe she'll reincarnate  
As an English rose

Aa that's left o her youth's  
Her Indian teapot  
A giftie frae her da  
Hyne back, in British Simla



## 22. Doggie Heaven

There wis a wee dug frae Dundee  
Had tae fecht fur a tree-tunk, tae pee  
It sat doon on an adder  
Which pysoned its bladder  
Noo its pishes are quite Heivenly

### c Connections

A wife frae the Welsh Eisteddfod  
Wis invited tae sing at the Mod  
She left oot her washin. A fisher said 'Smashin  
I'll takk doon her drawers tae catch cod!

### Broonie frae Banff

A Broonie frae Banff tuik the jitters  
Fin glowered at bi touristy critters  
If they cam frae Auld Rayne, he wad seldom complain  
Bit fowk frae the Broch gaed him skitters

### Glower-owerum

Auld Glower-owerum sits in a neuk  
His thochts are clarty as sharn  
His neb's preened teetle the windae pane  
For sklaik is his hale consarn

His lug is keepit hard tae the grun  
There's nae ill-tricks gyang by him  
Pit houghmagandie ooto yer heid  
Ony pairs close by he'll spy them  
His jaiket's chittered, his collar's blaik  
His breeks are stiff wi yird  
His sheen are bauchled, his shanks are bood  
Like a brig, or an ill-rowed gird

Auld Glower-owerum's foonert an auld  
As the Hills o Birse itsel  
Ye speir gin his life's bin gweed or ill  
There's his ane name-plate in Hell  
The quines he bladdit an left tae greet  
He niver gaed love nor fee  
He wis quick tae birz an quicker tae leave  
Fur spunk's gey chaip tae gie

A swick an a randy aa his days  
The Deil takks care o his ain  
Auld Glower-owerum's laith tae dee  
Tho he hisna a sowel tae sain!

es

I wannert oot, I wannert in...a midgie bit me on the chin  
I wannert up, I wannert doon...a midgie bit me on the croon  
I clartit potions tae bumbaze the midgies...sae they bit ma taes  
They gar ye daunce the midgie polka...unless ye wauk oot in a burqa

27.A Ferm has a Bow an Arra as its Merk    Owersett in Scots o a poem bi Olav  
H. Hauge

I hae daith in ma pynt  
Ahin gutsy barbs  
Sings the arra

I sen the arra  
Frae the string  
Chitters the bow

Fa pus the bow  
If nae masel,  
The strang airm?

Fa fand the bird,  
Aimed the arra?  
Speirs the ee

I raxx the airms  
I guide the ee  
Quo the will

Takk aim, lat lowse!  
It's ma pyson that kills  
Fuspers hunter's virr

Thon bird's mine  
I see it aften  
Remynds the dwaum

An the bird vanishes  
On blate wings  
In the derk wid

Sheena Blackhall

# The Story In The Corner

There's a story in the corner of my family  
It's a real sob story, a beaut, with all the trimmings.  
Get out your hankies. There's going to be boo-hooing  
It's wooing your pity.

Sympathy makes it purr.  
Now, it repeats like onions, like a stuck record.

It's dead of course, dead as a tailor's dummy  
But I love to take it for outings...It does so love its outings....  
Wearing its best coat.  
Though its glass eye frightens the relatives to fits.

If it went too long unsaid, I'd have to admit it was dead  
And so, though the spider is building a nest in its grizzled hair  
I'm letting it stay in the corner.

Did you notice the albatross wings I wear round my neck?  
It flew in from an ancient rhyme.  
What's this story, you're wondering,  
And what's it got to do with a mouldy albatross?  
Didn't I tell you? Once upon a time ...

Sheena Blackhall

# The Story Of Ossi

Ossi, youngest of six, all Catholic gypsies,  
Travelled around in the family caravan  
Spent winters in Vienna, round the campfires

And then, the Germans came. An end to travelling.  
The family forced to register, 'Different race.'

When he was five, they took away his father.  
Next, his sister Kathi. Ossi too  
Was sent away, to Birkenau for gypsies.  
A different type of camp...no tales, no music  
Hardly a scrap to eat, apart from turnips.

Then he fell ill with typhus.  
Was carted off to the camp infirmary  
The antechamber of the crematoria.  
At seven he died of disease and malnutrition

Children get in the way of war, which trundles  
Over the backs of little people  
Armies fight for various causes  
The poor and weak must die for.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Strange One

They led the strange one into the woods  
To the tree that stands like a twisted snake  
And the hawthorn bush it tore his skin  
But never a sound did the strange one make

Like a semiquaver from a flute  
Only a blackbird piped his passing  
For he was a puzzle, a question mark  
As they led him on where the dark was massing

The shy musk rose, she hung her head  
As he danced and jerked on the dule tree's arm  
And they left him alone in the quiet night  
Hanging there, like a wish-tree's charm

Nobody came to mourn his loss  
No keening mother to close his eyes  
With a coin, a prayer and a shrill lament  
The strange one, under the forest skies

Sheena Blackhall

# The Street Where An Ambulance Came

On the hill, conkers had split  
Small, failed Caesarians

Rags of mist hung on the trees like dishcloths  
Dried leaves were pressed on the pavement  
Like cataracts, imprinted on sheets of frost

A plane crossed the wintry sun  
Like an insect crossing an eyeball

In the invalid's house  
A goldfish circled a bowl of its own pee

The ambulance arrived like a large white whale  
Parked in a paddle pool

Everyone over 60 was on death watch  
Eyes steeled to the windows

Mrs Renton in nightie and slippers  
Was worried a funeral  
Would mean a change of neighbours

Death, meanwhile, went quietly on with his weeding

Sheena Blackhall

# The Suicide Imp

You're a kid in sandals sitting in a car  
Whooshing high speed past heath  
'Say BOO!' says the suicide imp  
'And you'll all go spinning'

But you sit on your hands  
You clamp your tongue in your teeth

You're swinging alone in the park  
The height of the stained glass pane  
'Slip off' says the suicide imp  
You tighten your hold on the chain

You're cycling a hair-pin bend  
Freckles speckling your face  
'Edge to the left,' he says  
'Woo empty space'

It's the sunniest day in summer  
You're walking over a bridge  
A hundred trees below are gently sighing  
'Jump,' says the suicide imp  
'And go out flying.'

The suicide imp is dark, he lives in a crack  
The cards fall down for the joker in the pack

Sheena Blackhall



# The Summer Hedonist

I am the smallest cricket in the grass  
High summer: soft the golden moments pass  
I watch the dust-mites dancing in the hay  
I leap for joy and click and whirr all day  
The village bells chime out. The swallow trills  
The villagers awake to work and bills  
Planning ahead, they sharpen knife and plough  
I am a hedonist. I live for now

Sheena Blackhall

# The Tears Of Childhood

If you cut a melon, it cries.  
Squeeze it, it cries even more.  
Who holds the key to unlock childhood's door?

Like coal that's hard and black. The pain is trapped.  
Hard tears can wait a long time to be tapped.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Telling Poem

I would like to tell this poem why I write,  
This paper I drag my pen along,  
Like a thin shadow.  
The paper listens deeply.  
It has opened its face,  
It has emptied its heart,  
It is waiting for me to start.

So, I begin.  
I ring the bell to call the slow thoughts in.  
They come like monks,  
Their alms hidden in pouches.  
I tell the story  
Short and sharp's a sigh.

I may make the paper wait.  
I may torment it.  
There is a time for food,  
A time for fasting.  
I am a wine-maker  
Today the grapes are young  
The wine is not for tasting.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Tenants Of Barton's End Farmhouse

Warm straw invites the squirrel and the rat  
The opportunist lodgers choose the thatch  
Sparrow and magpie plunder it for nests  
Wood beetle gives the rafters quick dispatch

Noctule bats and pipistrelle roost there  
Up in the musty loft, lured by the dark  
Under the eaves the puffball squirrel chirps  
House martin nests there in her muddy ark

Small field and dormice scuttle out and in  
The cold-tail rat will forage for a meal  
The cellar houses the squat parping toad  
Who fast unfolds to gulp a spider meal

Downstairs with crane fly, moth and pharaoh's ant  
Live earthworm, woodlouse, snail and centipede  
Earwig greenfly the furry moth and cat  
Share tenancy with slug and millipede

Sub-letters are bookworm and silverfish  
Cockroach and firebrat love this rural Hilton  
Along with mealworm, flour worm, steam fly, weevil  
Eelworm in vinegar cheese mite in stilton

Bluebottle, ladybird, dart-poisoned wasp  
All join their human landlords in the house  
And last comes stepping in the tiny flea  
And bed bug, each accom'nied by his spouse

Sheena Blackhall

# The Tiger

There once was a tiger who purred  
When his brothers, more dastardly, gurred.  
Now he's only a mat,  
As proof positive that  
A nice-mannered tiger's absurd.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Tiger O Trincomalee (30 Scots Poems)

Tiger o Trincomalee

The tiger o Trincomalee  
Took a day trip tae bonnie Dundee  
There wis naethin bit cakes  
An a plate o hame bakes  
Sae he ett up the Broons fur his tea.

n Glaiss

I am a keekin glaiss.  
A queen aince fulled me  
Pearls on her broo,  
her warm braith saft on ma face  
A rich grey haar

I keep her memory bricht  
Nae ither face transformed me like thon quine  
I niver saw her at the hinner-eyn  
The flame turned aisse  
The luv-bow o the mou  
In a deid-line.

The Bruce's hairt focht on, its maister deid.  
I think hers beats in France,  
That bred her in the wyes o sang an daunce.  
Her tummlit hair, a flame, wi French perfume

Gorilla fae Rwanda

I'm a gorilla fae Rwanda  
My closest frien is a Chinese Panda  
We sit at the fire an toast oor fronts  
The Panda gurrs, bit I jist grunts

Oot

Twis rainin leaves on Friday

The puddles on the grun  
War reid an bronze an gowden  
An yalla cadmium

A lake o orange ochre  
Wis lyin in the park  
The beech tree stood an chattered  
In his torn an holey sark

Childe of Hale

The Childe of Hale, John Middleton, (1578-1623) was nine feet three inches in height. His portrait hangs in Spekehall in Lancashire. It was said that when he slept in his tiny cottage his feet protruded from the window.

The Childe o Hale cud niver luik  
his neebors in the ee  
An that's because, as big's a whale,  
the Childe wis nine fit three

Sae his description o them aa  
wad differ, far, frae yours  
His view o fowk wis similar  
tae bees amang the flooers..

Sae Mr Smith wis Yalla-Thatch,  
an Mrs Smith wis Curly  
While Maister Smith wis Hurcheon-Prods  
an Baby Smith wis Hudderie.

Auld Baldy-Croon wis Mr Broon,  
his wife wis Lowpin-Bugs,  
Their dother Nell wis Carrot-Tap,  
their loon wis Muckle-Lugs.

Sir Wilkie Tosh wis Wyndy-Stripes.  
His cook wis Touzlie-Tyke,  
Her ringlets luiked as if she'd slept  
aa nicht ahin the dyke.

Ye'd ken richt aff fa hid a hoast...  
their neb micht hae a drap  
Bit aa John iver saw o fowk

wis ae wee bit on tap.

He hid the cleanest pair o feet,  
weel-washed bi storm an gale  
Fin he lay doon they left the hoose,  
lang shanks o Childe o Hale

Puddock

Puddock oot wi Minnie Moose  
Ye've cowped aa yer orange juice  
Ower her scarlet satin gown

Percy, lowpin up an doon  
Ye should sook ooto a straa  
Percy Puddock... Oo la la.  
Dis the can-can, canna stop  
See him dae the Puddock Bop!

matanzie

Merrymatanzie an her cat Jean  
Makk the magic fur Halloween  
They blaiken the shaddas an feed the dugs  
A hotter o puddocks an hotchin bugs  
Syne like a supersonic bat  
Aince roon Saturn an twice roon Mars  
Aa nicht lang flee the witch an cat  
Back they come wi a pooch o stars  
Merrymatanzie, faist's can be  
Merrymatanzie...wyte fur me!

ebogle on the Brae

Tattiebogle on the brae  
Fleggin aa the craas awa  
Tattiebogle wag yer airms  
Fin the breengin breezes blaw



Tattiebogle dinna fash  
Daytime will turn intae nicht  
Ye can steek yer een an rest  
In aneth the caul meenlicht

□

East Toun

Stars skinkle ower a parkin lot  
Hubcaps an bonnets shine wi frost  
Like mowdies, weariet shoppers skail  
Oot frae the mall, bood doon bi cost  
O stappin stammaches, heatin hames...  
Twa bats gae flichterin fae the trees  
Raggety cloots o hungered wames

Ice surfs the waves.  
Black spires luik doon  
Icicle kirks in this cauld toun  
An hoasts hack deeper in the briest  
O fowk fa thole the cauld the least...  
Slipt somehou frae the shelterin gown  
O him fa wore the thorny croun. □

I Crisis.

There are nae pooches in yer shroud,  
sae leave yer wealth, or spend it.  
Nae corp can borra, beg, nor buy,  
can gie ye gowd or lend it.

Noo John McTavish wis a chiel weel noted fur his thrift  
Sae fin his doctor sat him doon an said he sune wad shift  
Frae this auld warld an as its cares, he sortit oot his gear,  
His siller, plenishin an hoose, afore the eyn drew near.

He left his shares tae his son Dod, his car, tae dother Jean,  
His TV tae his cousin Jock. His fridge tae neebor Dean,  
Syne lat him doon tae wyte the chap o the Grim Reaper Daith...`  
'Takk oot yer teeth, the nurse cajoled, 'I think t'wid ease yer braith.'

Noo John hid pyed a twa months' wage wi gowd tae cap his mou  
A set o shinin molars bricht's the starnies in the Ploo  
' My faimly's bin accoontit fur...bit fa can I bequeath  
My brand new gowden grinder-doons...ma echten carat teeth? '  
He speired, as Daith steppt up tae wheech awa tae Kingdome-Come  
The finest bit o dentistry tae iver grace a gum!

cht

Midnight. The bedroom.  
Fit's that soun?  
Ootbye the trees are sweeshlin  
Ower in a neuk a shadda meeves  
Throw auld bin papers reeshlin

Far dis it come frae?  
Far's it gaun,  
Ghaist-like through the derkenin hoose?  
It lowps!  
It's here!  
It's on the rug  
It's Benjy Baxter's moose!

Its heid aneth its oxter,  
The dyeukie's faist asleep  
Bobbin on the mill puil  
Far seggs gyang dreepy dleep

Fit dae dyeukies dream o  
Showdin on the breeze?  
Dae they think they're galleons  
Sailin ower the seas?  
Dae they think they're shelties  
On a Carousel?  
Dyeukies keep the secret  
Dyeukies dinna tell.

## Fiddle Wisna a Success

The cat hid fiddlit the buiks  
Nae cloud hid a siller linin  
The show wis a pantomime  
Aa the coorse pennies turned up  
The dish ran awa wi the speen  
The dug ett King Cole's music

teel

Taedsteel in the gairden  
Spottit reid an neat  
Keepin snailies' hoosies  
Frae gettin sypin weet  
Fit a braw umbrella  
Jist the perfect size  
Fur a horny gollach  
Tae shelter till she dries

## 's Anatomy Lesson

Inside ma heid there's a mushroom  
A doctor wad caa it a brain  
It's poorin oot thochts bi the meenit  
An maist o them gyang doon the drain

At the back o ma neb twa tomataes  
Sook air oot an in frae the vine  
O ma air pipe. A sonsie reid straaberry  
O a hairt pumps oot bluid aa the time

Ma stammache's a kirn o spaghetti  
Ma bladder's a melon half-teem  
Ma wyme is a gourd past its sell-by  
The anatomy lesson is dane  
Except tae say aathin's organic  
Nae an implant... ma body is pure  
Apairt frae a cap an twa dentures  
I'm free reenge as a daud o manure

Kings Cam Frae Their Native Lan  
Tune: Ye Banks an Braes o Bonnie Doon

Three kings cam frae their native lan  
Ower ocean, desert, steen an san  
Rare gifts tae bring on Xmas day  
Tae Jesus happit in the strae

Chorus:  
A starnie lets its licht doonfaa  
Stood guaird abeen yon stirkie's staa  
Sae sodjer, fairmer, aa micht ken  
That God's ain bairn wis born tae men.

Three shepherds tae the byre stepped in  
Tae boo afore the New Littlin  
As breets an birdies gathared roon  
An by yon cradle cooried doon,

Chorus: A starnie etc

Noo ilkie year at Xmas time  
We jyne oor hauns tae pray an myne  
On Jesus born sae pure, sae smaa  
Cam doon tae save an lue us aa.

Chorus: A starnie

ial Ks

Ma steel bracelet's a Kara  
Ma steel sword's a Kirpan  
Ma wid caimb is a Kangha  
I'm brave as Desperate Dan  
My unnerpants are kent as Kacch  
Ma uncut hair is Kesh  
I takk ma baby sister  
Each morning tae the creche  
An rin tae stert ma lessons

Sae I'll get on in life  
I am a Sikh fae Angus  
My granda comes fae Fife  
Great granny's fae the Punjab  
Singh is oor name. We brag  
Translatit it means lion  
Jist like the Scottish flag!

tmas

Chap the tatties, bree the neeps,  
Gie the broth a steer.  
Dicht the bairnie's faces,  
Christmas denner's here!

Cloutie dumpling in the pan,  
Hotterin up an doon,  
Fairy lights ging plunk again,  
Haun the tangies roon.

Birssled bubbly jock fur wikks,  
Halfins scalin beer,  
Balloons that winna bide up  
Tatties on the fleer

Faither squar-eed watchin sport,  
Littlins wint cartoons.  
They've riven oot the aerial  
Fa inventit loons!

Santa left a heeze o gifts  
Frae his muckle sack.  
Karen disna like her toys  
He can hae them back.

Hindu Quine

Some worship the Lord Krishna  
Some worship Hanuman  
Some offer praise tae Ganesh,

Hauf elephant, hauf man  
The world caas us Hindus  
Oor faith's fae Hindustan

An fin I'm tae be merriet  
I'll weir a sari bricht  
Wi henna peintit hauns an feet  
Aa fur ma bridal nicht  
There nicht be sitars strummin  
There nicht be bass guitars  
Fur I belang tae Glesga  
Nae elephants bit cars  
Will hurl us tae the hinneymeen  
A wikkeyn up the Clyde  
The proodest bride in Sauchiehaa  
Wi Sanjay bi ma side.

ie Jesus Tune: Ally Bally

Bairnie Jesus born fur me  
Hear this sang in praise o ye  
Jist like the fowk o Galilee  
I praise ye in yer glory.

Daunlit on yer mammy's knee  
Bairnie Jesus pure an wee  
On Xmas day this sang I gie  
Tae tell o the auld, auld, story.

Luv cam tae the world yon night  
The starns shone oot wi aa their nicht  
That fowk aroon could see the sight  
O the bairn in the Xmas story

We canna gie ye gifties gran  
Myrrh or gowd frae a furreign lan  
Bit we hae a sang, sae weel we can  
Sing oot tae spread yer glory.

on the Warld Ye Lue

Tune: I see the moon, the moon sees me

I see the starnie, the starnie wee  
It shone langsyne on the Christ bairnie  
Oh, micht the starns that shone on ye  
Shine on the warld ye lue.

Chorus:

Shine on the puir fowk  
Shine on the sair  
Shine on the hurtit  
Gie them yer care  
Takk tent o us forivermair  
Here, in the warld ye lue.

I see the robin's breast sae reid  
Ye fin a place fur his gangrel heid  
Smaa tho he be, ye ken his need  
Here, in the warld ye lue.

Chorus: Shine etc

I see the sna, sae caul, caul, caul,  
Rowed roon the toon like a big fate shawl  
I ken yer warmth cheers young an aul,  
Here in the warld ye lue

Chorus: Shine etc

mad

Whyle minarets an muezzins in the sky  
Caa fowk tae pray tae Allah in Dubai  
My mosque is at the Spital, Aiberdeen  
The anely cries are seagulls ower cauld steen

Here as a Muslim I learn the Qu'ran  
An keep the haly fast o Ramadan  
Ma sister haps her heid in the Hijaab  
A modest custom. Aa meat on a slab  
Trysts predators like flees aroon a plate

An vanity's a trait we dinna rate.

's comin doon the Lum

Tune: Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush

□

Santa's climmin doon the lum x3

On a caal an frosty mornin□

Sna is birlin roon an roon x3

Dunt her feet tae warm yer taes x3

Clap yer hans tae keep them hett x3

Shakk the snaaflakes frae yer heid x3□

□

etoe

Dinna staun bi the mistletoe

Wi Dean MacPhail or Watty

Dean's got plooks an a scabby mou.

An a mowser broon an scratty

Fa'd kiss Watty? Aabody kens

He's a neb like a bubbly jock

Ye cud grow ten tatties in each lug

He's a face like a skelpit dock

Robin Sang□

Tune: Chick-chick-chicken

Rob-rob-rob-rob-robin

Stottin up n' doon sae reid Rob-rob-rob-rob-robin

Wid ye like a daud o breid?

Fur ye michtna get a crumb till Xmas

Nae even a shakk o seed

Sae rob-rob-rob-rob-robin

Wid ye like a daud o breid?



Rob-rob-rob-robin,  
Wid ye like a drap tae drink?  
Rob-rob-rob-rob-robin  
Cause the pond's like a skatin rink  
An the icicles are jigglin  
An it's caaler than ye think  
Oh, rob-rob, rob-rob, robin  
Wid ye like a drap tae drink?

Rob-rob-rob-rob-robin,  
Wid ye like a crust or twa?  
Rob-rob-rob-rob-robin  
Wi yer feathers broon an braw?  
Fur the sky is caal an wintry  
An I think it's gaun tae snaw  
Oh rob-rob-rob-rob-robin  
Wid ye like a crust or twa? ☐

☐  
ns

Dragons lowp, dragons daunce  
Daniel Chong is ma name  
Dragons lowp, dragons daunce  
My New Year is nae the same  
As ither Scots fowk doon oor street  
Different rhythm, different beat

Dragons lowp, dragons daunce  
Daniel Chong is ma name  
Dragons lowp, dragons daunce  
Embroun is ma hame

nt ASBOs (Anti-Social Behaviour Orders)

Ye mauna steal.  
Ye mauna kill  
Bide faithfu tae the spouse ye tuik  
Ye mauna lee,  
Nur yer heid fill  
Wi jealousy

Keep wrang thochts in their neuk  
Respeck yer fowk...an in thon six  
Commandments frae oor Auncient Buik  
Are aa the laws ye need tae fix  
The world, frae Cairo tae Carluke

These I hae learned. I am a Jew  
At thirteen I'll become a man  
At ma Bar Mitzvah, tho I bide  
Hyne aff frae Israel's Haly Lan.  
At Hannukkah, I'll licht the lamps  
Tae myne past warssles in the san

An I play fitba in the lane  
Whyle hingin oot wi Neil an Shane  
We stot the baa roon Kelvinside  
We are a team. There's nae divide

They dinna care fit faith I hae  
Nor foo, nor far, nor fan I pray  
They like me fur masel, ye see  
An gie nae place tae bigotry.

ity

The angel secunt frae the left has piddlit on the fleer  
The shepherd's chitterin...nae wi cauld, The hale schule faimly's here.

Fin ye hae got a starrin role in the Nativity  
It's winnerfu...till yer on stage  
An ye are anely three.

Quaet Kind

Whyles we chant, whyles we dinna  
Whyles we'll pray. Whyles we winna  
We are Scottish Buddhists.  
At hame we meditate

Wi caunle, incense, flooer

We'll sit a quaet oor  
We are Scottish Buddhists

Aa life we venerate  
The Buddha's birth in May  
We class a happy day  
We are Scottish Buddhists  
An Wesak celebrate.

e Yule  
Tune: The Cock o the North/Auntie Mary

The holly green hings in the haa  
The robin reidbreist sings  
Roon aabody's waa baith great an sma  
Wag Xmas cairds on strings

Chorus:  
Gweed cheer gweed cheer  
Fur Yule is here  
May naebody's plate be teem  
Makk aathin braw in hoose an haa  
Pit on yer dauncin sheen.

There's caunles bricht tae gie us Licht  
The fire is hett in the lum  
There's Xmas pies, an aabody buys  
A pudden that's made o plum

Chorus: Gweed cheer etc

Pit on yer claes an shoogle yer taes  
An caimb yer touzlie hair  
Fur noo's the day we skreich Hooray  
The rarest day o the Year!

Chorus: Gweed cheer etc

There's pantomimes, there's Xmas chimes  
There's crackers o gowd tae pu  
An if yer giftie we've forgot

Here's Seasons' Greetins noo!

Sheena Blackhall

# The Toad On The Rock's Opinion (21 Scots Poems)

Singer

Hard-duntit nails bigg best ava  
A bonnie haa, a bonnie haa;  
Smeddum an virr will bigg it braw,  
Nae scrattins sma, nae scrattins sma.

Sae is't wi sang. Ma faither skailt  
His marra, banes an sowel intil't  
An in some auld Scots waefu. lilt  
Wi hertbrak, note an swat he'd fill't.

Syne, fin fowk say,  
'Ye sang yon weel, It gart me greet',  
like tyke tae heel I ain ma faither's guidin plan,  
That early gart me unnerstaun,  
The singer's bit the barley's beard -  
The sang's the pith, the sap, the weird.

In sang, ye maun brakk doon the boun  
Atween the listener an the tune,  
Till luv or grievin, like sma rain,  
Wauchts throw their consciousness like pain.

It's nae the singer, bit the thocht  
That draas fowk roon, like gowd unsocht,  
Sae fin ye sing, yer bit the stem  
The sang's the floer, the croon, the gem  
That boos an shudders in the win,  
An fin ye feenish, they sud fin  
The fitprints o the wirds alang  
Their rig-banes o some auld Scots sang.

Deid faither, fin I steek ma ee  
The singer that I hear is ye  
Oh gie me pouer, tae touch the hairt  
As ye did wi yer airtless airt.

## la o the Sizzens

First a bud on a tree's lang cleuk,  
cud makk a besom tae swype a neuk.  
Secunt, a tap like a pixie's toorie,  
blossom breenges in weather, shooerie.  
Third, a wallop o sonsie green,  
fullin the wids neth Simmer's meen.

Heestergowdie, last ava,  
tapsalteerie, awa they blaa  
Wheerily, eerily, ower they gyang,  
the wee, the muckle, the weak, the strang,  
Sooked like a dram bi a man blin foo,  
intae Winter's gluggerin moo.

□

mmer

Oh I can see the shaddas shift, an I can smell the hey,  
Fresh cuttit in the simmer park, new- rochled up tae dry.

Noo, ilkie leaf on ilkie bough, showds in the simmer win,  
An I can hear the teuchit's sang ayont the yalla whin.

In yon blue sky abeen the lea, nae pick o cloud nor rain  
Time hauds its braith. The lift abeen is clear's a windae pane.

The moosie creeps, the birdie cheeps, an as the world is weel,  
Midsimmer, fan the sizzen's cairt turns easy on its wheel.

er o Mar

The broon-blaik bluid fae the Bens  
has swallt the burns  
Mist wyves throw the wids,  
an aيدر that winna shift.

The win is snell as it sets the aik leaves dauncin,  
Aff in the Daunce o Daith that nocht can stop.  
It sets the copper clouds o larick prancin,

It gars the waves lowp by like lang tint years.

Rin Dee rin, like a watter shelt richt brawly  
Ben the banks that are close tae ye's a wife!  
Ye are the gene that crosses the generations  
Cairryin pouer an virr, the Sire o Life.

Tho I maun staun, a puil wi deid leaves fillin  
My watter is the muir's communion wine.  
My Covenant, the Braes o Mar, aroon me  
Stinch an strang fae the first Crack o Time.

ber: Coastal Journey

The peetiless snaw drifts doon like grains o san,  
The train rins ram-stam on ben iron tracks.  
Wauchts o Winter wheech frae the jeelin sea,  
The tinny voice on the tannoy tells we're late.

The train rins ram-stam on ben iron tracks,  
A passin train is a bawd wi flanks raked reid.  
The tinny voice on the tannoy tells we' re late,  
The scaldin tea sea-saws in its plastic cup.

A passin train is a bawd wi flanks raked reid,  
Steadins are harled wi snaw like fleecy oo,  
The scaldin tea sea-saws in its plastic cup,  
The tide is weety as dolphins, grey an skyty.

Steadins are harled wi snaw like fleecy oo  
The peetiless snaw drifts doon like grains o san.  
The tide is weety wi dolphins, grey an skyty,  
Wauchts o Winter wheech frae the jeelin sea.

fur the Bus

This mornin, as I wyted fur the bus,  
I watched a wyver crunchin up a flee.

Nae serviette

Nae floers on the table.  
Nae saft lichts, backgrun music,  
Nae waiters, fuss,  
Nae skinklin cutlery  
A mediaeval banquet o a brakkfast

It munched awa the flee's mortality.  
Echt chopstick airms  
Drew the morsel in  
It chawed the gollach,  
Left the wings ahin.  
Like rinds o bacon,  
Or roast chukken skin.

Syne, kyte weel stappt  
Sank back, in its web-hank.  
And frae its mou,  
There danglit□  
Ae□  
Lane  
Shank.

Senorita, or Senora,  
Mademoiselle, or la fillette  
Puella, Caileag, Cailleach, wad be even better yet

Bit in Scots ye are a Soo, a Doo,  
A Hen, Aul Goat or Coo  
As a mither o the nation,  
My response tae this is MOO!

eyS

Wee peesies jink ben lichtsome clouds,  
their journey's heich an quick  
I envy them thon element,  
the lan o win an rikk



Blythe treetlin trooties sweem the burn  
as swack as lowpin glegs  
Bit here I'm anchored on the lan,  
a steen among the seggs

There's puckles traivel aa the world  
yet niver move ava  
While ithers reenge frae Pole tae Pole  
chyned tae a stirkie's staa

There's mony a steen is made o fire,  
an ithers, made o ice  
The sickle meen brings sleep an dream.  
Kent circles shakk an splice  
Syne we may walk a Netherworld,  
throwe stories dwined an deid  
An gaither up their stoor an aisse  
tae gie them flesh an bluid

rt Ambience

Lichts, flichts, fathoms o heichts,  
towrists hopin tae see the sights  
Far's the aeroplane. Fit's the cost?  
Fa's the loon lookin feart an lost?  
Fit like presents in duty free?  
Somethin flashy, or keech, or twee?

Fit'll the weather be like in Spain?  
Birsslin beaches or drookt wi rain?  
Fit if yer hyne abeen the seas  
fin the engine suddenly ups an deer?  
Fit if a terrorist jynes the crew?  
Think o the fleg an the hullabaloo!

It's ifs an mebbes that are tae blame  
fur keepin the Cautious safe at hame!

Whale in the Boatie

A gale blew up in the Firth o Forth  
An aa the waves grew gurlly  
As a roller coaster carnival ride  
Or a washin machine sae furly

The watter walloped the waves aboot  
Till the fish war fairly wabbit  
Fin the gale deed doon, the whale looked roon  
An a passin boat he grabbit.

` Oh will ye gie me a hurl? quo he  
Tae the skipper o the boatie,  
`Tae a quaeter sea in a far countrie  
That winna rend ma coatie? '

` Climm in, ' said the skipper cheerfully,  
I'm gaun that wye masel,  
An fit's mair fine, than tae spen the time  
In the company o a whale? '

es

The silence o the muckle trees  
The lazy bizzin o the bees  
The burnie far it takks its ease  
They tell the finest story

Like oo that's snagged on barbit wire  
I'm tethered noo, bit sweet's the hire  
That brings me tae this seely shire  
That tells the mountains' story

The sooty craa flees heich an black  
I hitch a lift upon his back  
Tae share the muckle erne's crack  
Winged seannachie o glory

e Red Riding Hood's lovely furry suit

Faither's back wis hairy as a wolf.

The fur aneth his sark  
Blaik fuzz, wad gar him scrat, an flech betimes.  
'Tae ma anely dother, I bequeath ma pelt'

Hirsute Celtic weemin,  
Little Red Riding Hood's wolvine legacy.  
This tide o bonnie fur  
Shrunk tae the isles o oxters,  
Peninsulas o dowp

Hoose

I wad hae me an eird hoose, an eird hoose,  
wi shaddas fur ma bed  
A cailleach - lair, wi its reets fur hair,  
this bield tae the Derkness wed

Here, Winter wadnae enter,  
nur ae ae heich wird be heard  
Like a mowdie-skin, the pitmerk, blin,  
wad ring me like a gird

Ooto the wye o the aيدر,  
the erne an the peckin craa  
Nae storm will iver fin me.  
Nae breengin breezes blaa

I'll turn ma jaa tae the moosewabs,  
like the stoor an the blawn caff  
Fae the world's merrimatazie,  
sae lichtsome I'll step aff

the Anatomist didn't say

Hairt dunts like a drum,  
a pulsed rhythm, tapped on a stretched skin.  
A reid bellows wirked in a derk smiddy,

Spitfire Veg

Aipples gie me the pip.  
I'd raither be an ingin, culturally spikkin  
Nae some wee berry ony craa can shakk  
An ingin is the the spitfire o the veg  
Ye think it's gaen...  
It ay comes roarin back.

bal Lecter's Alternative Christmas Denner

The precedent is Sawney Bean, the Scottish cannibal fa'd clean,  
The puddens ooto Jock or Jean, wi potted heid, fur snacks atween.

His neb cud gyang on Monday's plate...a treat, fit fur a potentate  
A culinery tour de force, atween the broth an trifle course,  
Wi's tossell sookit like a sweetie, he'd brichten up the cock-a-leekie

Insteid o bubblyjock's gee-gaws,  
Lecter wad feast, wi slivverin jaws  
On Santa, roasted wi paw-paws.  
Feed fur a wikk on Mister Claus!

Of course, the reindeer wad be free tae makk a documentary  
About their lives as postie-beasts, afore they left their chimney-reests!

Inspired by Sir Edwin Landseer's painting, 'Flood in the Highlands'

The derkenin cloud. The spit o burnie bigger growes.  
The lichtenin teirs the lift in twa. The larick boos an soughs.

The Heivens teem. The lochans cooerin yowies bleat  
A broken gate's a burn in spate..a warlock, wud an weet.

The spring that treetled doon the braes is noo a roarin linn  
Wi ragin kelpies gaun afore, the horned Deil ahin.

Flood in the Heilans! See the craft wi watter at its croon!  
A Heicher Haun than mortal man dings ae wee faimly doon.

An bits o gear that they haud dear, claes, gee-gaws o the best  
The risin tide casts aa aside like ploo-share throwe a nest.

The worsit plaid wi'ts tartan braid, the greetin littlin's cradle  
Are heelstergowdie on the reef wi chitterin tyke, an table

The riven blanket in the wins is torn tae threids an thrums  
Like a bodhran in warrior's haun the thunnerin doonpish drums

Aa draigit in the dubby glaur, a precious christenin gown  
A mither's snawy petticoats, bumshayvelt, heid tae foun.

Buik, buit an pan, the hale jing bang, gyang furlin ben the wave  
In smithereens fine crystal speens sink tae a stormy grave.

The heichest lum, the stootest waa, rich herds o milkin kye  
Are bit as nocht, fin aa unsocht, Misfortune cries inbye.

thesia

Screivin's anaesthesia fur livin.  
Whyles I screive like a Maori war canoe.

Efter the screivin  
Fin the mind is teem o thocht  
Peace showds like a wicker coracle,  
Lapped by a quaet loch.

an Alive

Bawd, killt on the road's  
An ugsome frozen cloud o bluidy fur  
Ahin its glaiss een  
Maggots meeve an heeze

A bonnie butterie's furlieorum tongue  
Rypit gowd fae poppy bi a zebra crossin  
Micht reest a meenit on the bawd's stiff lug  
Brakkin its journey, winnin back its pech

## 20.Intimate

Grippin anither's haun (a skeleton's glove o skin)  
Is nae great shakes.  
Is merely pumpin win.  
Hochmagandie's a cocktail mix  
O juices. A quick fix.  
Twa meenit pick-me-up fur ennui.

Bit thocht, dear bocht, that bares the sel itsel,  
Yon's intimate, fin harns thegither mell,  
Thochts sweeled thegither sharin the same shell.

## Skull

Twinned horns reeted in ae white cave,  
Coral-smeeth, the colour o bleached linen.  
Keenin wins abseil doon corries o been,  
Glissade like fite birds cairriet on wings o snaa  
The shocks an whorls o teem ee sockets glent  
Far glances quick an blate aince berthed an blinkit.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Tower O Babel: Many Scots Owersetts From World Poets

Twa owersettins o Friedrich Holderlin (1770-1843) fae English Translations bi Denise Riley

Mids o Life (Halfte des Lebens)  
Wi yalla pears  
An rowth o wud fite rose,  
Lan hings ower the loch.  
Luv-kinnlit swans steep heids  
In deep cweel watter.  
Far noo, fin Yule wins roon  
Will flooers be fand?  
Will sun an shiftin shadda clad the yird?  
Waas staun, clean tint o wird,  
Soonless an caal.  
The win gars weathercocks  
Gyang rick-ma-tick.

Ilkie Day (Wohl geh' ich taglich)  
Ilkie day, a different path I takk,  
Up tae the tinklin burnie or the wid.  
Whyles tae the steens far steerie roses growe  
I sclimm the weary knowe...bit aye ye're hid.

Far I keek oot upon the blinnin licht,  
Ma bonnie bird, ma wirds takk sudden flicht  
Inno teem air...I ken oor claik wis richt.

Yer hyne awa. Sair, o yer couthie face  
An soons o steerin life, I feel the wint.  
Far are the liltin sangs that brocht me peace?  
I hae grown auld, an aa lan's grace is tint.

Farweel, fur ilkie day ma gangrel thocht  
Gyangs oot tae ye, grows wae, is turned awa.  
My een luik langin efter aa that's gaen,  
Straicht throw intae yer nerra shilpit staa.

Owersettins o contemporary poetry frae the Laigh Kintras, frae English translations bi Hugo Brems an Ad Zuiderent.

Gloamin (Anton Van Wilderode: Evenin)

The rikk o tattie-shaws hings wersh roon ferms  
That lie ayont the twinin maze, lang lanes  
Tint in the meenlicht an the mochy haar.  
The teams o horse an herdsmen sikk their hames,

A hint o milk an iron's in the staas,  
Even the kitchie yoams o hey an curds,  
A noisy ritual that's tint o wirds,  
Is celebrated as the gloamin faas.

Throw bleary smirr o tears, the windaes leam.  
Ahin them, kitchie wummles, tho still seen  
Aa sup, till ilkie ashet's fairly clean.  
Cockerels an shelt makk haste tae sleep an dream

Screivins (Remco Campert: Letters)

I should screive tae this ane an thon that I'm hale an hairy,  
That I wis fu last night in a Greek howf,  
A Turkish howf...a Norwegian howf...  
That I'm grittin ma teeth fur a byordnar heich gas bill  
An ither ferlies tae ithers- Dauchlin in a warld that growes mair fey  
Far somebody said: 'Ye Dutch, yer aa the same.'  
Even tho I'd pyed the cheque, an wis weirin a pair o French glaisses,  
An fit's mair hid a buik o German poetry in ma pooch,  
An at hame on the table wis Anne Sexton's grand poem 'Wytin tae dee'...  
An takk tent o foo I pit in new fuses!  
O a suddenty the licht gaed on again,  
An she wis sprauchled, sleepin on the sofa, aneth the blue blanket.  
I should screive tae this ane an thon ane:  
That I winna dee't. That I refuse. That I'm takkin it tae coort...  
That the days here weir awa like rain. That the warld is niver bigger than ae  
toon...That the warld's the size o masel in thon ae toon,  
Ma feet on the cassies, an fit I see fin I blink ma een.  
An I should speir foo things are gaun. Whether or no the hoose is biggit. Whether  
or no the play's weel translatit.  
If the bairns are thrivin, an the wives nae ower doon-haired!



Twal early Japanee Haiku (Gochiku et al) translated inno English in 'The Way of Zen' bi- Alan Watts

In the derk wids□ Weety sna doondra  
A berry draps□ Faddomless. Limitless  
The soon o watter Laneliness  
□

The reiver left it ahin□ A timmer yett  
The meen at the windae an fur a sneck  
Yon snail

Dreichness o Winter□  
In the rain watter tub□ The soun o the scoorin  
Spurgies are lowpin□ O the saucepan  
Mells wi the puddocks' skreichs

Leaves drappin□ The mist hides itsel  
Happin een anither□ In the girse  
The rain dreeps on the rain□ O depairtin Autumn

The lang nicht□ A drappit flooer  
The soon o watter□ Gyaun back tae bough  
Spikks ma thocht□ Twis a butterflee!

The starnies on the puil□ Wi the gloamin win  
The winter shooeries□ The watter laps  
Rochle the watter□ Agin the heron's shanks

Three owersettins o Zen Poems bi Ryokan, frae English translations bi John Stevens

1. Dyewdrap

Life is a dyewdrap

Transient, teem.

Foo faist aa things maun crine!  
My years are gane  
Trimmlin an dweeble  
Noo, I tae maun dwine.

ts

Siller fite, the snaa enfaulds the Bens.  
Far frae the clachan, my yett's smored in thick weeds  
Midnicht. A daud o timmer's spittin on the fire  
I am an auld bodach, fite an taigit is my beard  
My thochts are ay-returnin tae ma bairnhood.

mair

Eencemair, mony greedy fowk are thrang,  
Nae different frae silkwirms wippit in cocoons  
Gear an siller are aa they lue.  
Their hauns an bodies dinna devaul ae meenit,  
Ilkie year their natur's blichtit waur  
Their bigsie notions growe.  
Ae foreneen daith comes chappin  
They've spent bit hauf their siller.  
Ithers win the hinneypot.  
The deid man's name is tint  
Fur sic as thon, there can be anely peety,  
The wae o waste ahint.

A Scots owersettin o a poem bi the Polish poet, Laura Pawlikowska, translatit  
inno English bi Tom Pearce.

A Byordnar Bonnie Dream

Yestreen I hid, fur a cheenge, the bonniest dream ye iver cud imagine! There's  
niver been its marra. Aboot sweemin in the air as if in watter.  
The fowk inside the dream ken naethin about its ongauns,  
They're vauntie about their progress, their wyceness,  
Their haud o the laws o gravity.  
I'm dowpit doon amang them, suppin blaik coffee.  
We news about scunnerin ferlies,  
Praise tae the Heivens some God-awfa wummin...

O a suddenty, I caa ower ma platie an piece.  
 I lowp ontae the table-heid,  
 Pit baith hauns thegither as if I'm prayin  
 An skyte clean ooto the open windae.  
 In the lift that's pure as a dolphin's dookers, or a diamond  
 I hear a grue raxxin up tae greet me frae aneth,  
 Somebody skirlin, the deil has catched me awa, inno the air.  
 A dowie boorich o fowk meeve ben the cassies.  
 They're burnin incense, lichtin caunles.  
 I see their physogs...as Fite as paper sheets,  
 Sae farrer, farrer, farrer, aff I sail.  
 I haive aside great drumlie dauds o win, like it wis waves,  
 I lauch ma heid aff at the glekit pairish.  
 They hae hard hairts, are beeried tae the neb in bigsieness  
 Naebody's maistered this airt except masel. Aabody's takkin tent.  
 Aabody's luikin up at me, bit nane o them can flee!  
 I reist on the tree taps.  
 I makk-on I'm a cherub in the lift,  
 Tho a polisman cries tae me frae aneth.  
 I sweem, I float, in the maist modern o wyes.  
 I sigh wi ma young breistie fu o virr  
 I dicht awa the birdies frae my broo.  
 At gloamin time, I traivel hame on fit,  
 I sit at hame aneth a gowden licht bulb  
 Makkin on that naethin fey or unca'd iver happened.  
 Aabody's sittin, maist doon-pitten  
 In an ill-teen. Nae ane will spikk tae me.  
 They anely dicht their glaisses,  
 Hodge, an hoast.

Owersetts frae English translations' bi Stanislaw Baranczak & Clark Cavanagh, o modern Polish poetry

Speirin fur Faith: Bi Jan Twadowski  
 I'm chappin at Heiven.I'm speirin fur Faith.  
 Bit nae yon hauf-hung tee believin  
 That coonts the starnies, disna see the chukkens.  
 Nae yon flee-bi-nicht variety,  
 Thon speirtual category that bides a day an a denner.  
 Yon's nae the faith fur me.  
 The Faith I wint is fresh as peint,  
 Nae killt bi priests an seannachies.

The Faith I wint'll follae its ma like a lammie,  
A Faith tae fox the harns, that ye'll intuit.  
That pykes the wee-est wurd, . Nae lang langamachies.  
I wint a Faith that canna answer aa,  
That disna come adrift wi Daith's doonfaa  
Thon's the Faith I wint. A Faith nae easy tint.

The War o Nerves: Bi Artur Miedzyrzecki  
Nerves quanter nerves. A natural ferlie.  
Tykes wurr at kittlins. Broon bears gurr at bees.  
The pine moch frichts the widsman.  
Buikwirms deave buiksellers.  
Boa an skunk chase mappies ben the trees.  
Saft spikk is less than eeseless.  
Dwaums aboot gyaun on leave are gran bit pyntless.  
(Dis the muckle erne swallae a fly cup  
Fin hunsmen frae copters sheet his airwyes up?)  
The nichtingale sings on, throw cataclysms.  
The erne rules the lift. Come ilkie spring,  
Widpecker, skyrie drummer, raps his mornin rhythms,  
The swippert swalla flees, swifts flaff their wings.  
In the war o nerves, the winner's mind, in Zen's,  
The ane fa disna luik fur skaith. Fa kens  
A skunk is ay a skunk. Unshakkable truth  
Keeps ay a straucht furr. A calm sooch.

An owersett o a poem bi Zbigniew Herbert translatit inno English frae the Polish  
bi John an Bogdana Carpenter.

Tae Tryst Ferlies Ooto their Queenly Quateness  
Tae tryst ferlies ooto their queenly quateness,  
Ye maun be sleekit or coorse.  
The jeeled lochan o a door  
Is brukken bi the knell o a boozer.  
A quaich draped on the timmer fleer,  
Gies a sherp skreich like a glaiss bird.  
A hoose that's bin set in a lowe  
Gibbers wi the lowpin leid o flame,  
Wi the leid o a braithless Celtic bard  
Aboot fit the bed, the kist, the curtains,  
Said feint the wurd.

An owersettin o a poem bi Chief Seathl, an Indian o New Mexico, land in English in 'Yellowstone Country' bi Richard Phillips.

Ilkie Pikk o this Yird  
Ilkie pikk o this yird is hallowed bi ma fowk.  
Ilkie brae, ilkie glen, ilkie howe, an wid  
His bin sained bi some ferlie  
Blythe or dowie, in the deidlangsyne.  
The verra stoor ye staun on  
Gies mair luv tae oor fitsteps nor yers,  
Fur it reams wi the bluid o oor kin.  
Barfit, we feel thon sibness.  
Even littlins fa bedd an rejoiced here  
A shortsome whylie,  
Still lue these derk lanely airts  
An at gloamin they tryst wi  
The shaddowy shades o the deid.  
Fin the Reid Man's worn awa,  
An the memory o ma tribe  
Is anely a Fite Man's myth,  
These shores will heeze  
Wi the speerits o as my clan!  
An fin yer bairns' bairnies think thirsels alane,  
In the park, the store, the shop, alang the road,  
Or in the quaet o the pathless wids,  
They winna be thir lane.  
At nicht, fin the streets o yer toons  
An clachans are quaet, an ye think them teem  
They will steer wi returnin ghaists  
That langsyne filled an lue this bonnie lan.

An owersettin o 'Our Fathers Had Powerful Songs' bi Natalia Belting, New Mexican Indian.

Oor faithers hid pouerfu sangs  
Oor faithers hid pouerfu sangs.  
At the Crack o Time, fin they scattered tae merk oot hames,  
They sang, an the lan they stood on wis theirs.  
Nae ither body ained it, the sang made it theirs.

They sang fur watter. Oot it poored in springs.  
It flowed doon burns, gaithered in lochs an puils.  
They sang, an their sang vrocht the months, the years, the Sizzens.  
They sang, an their sangs made Daunce.  
Oor faithers hid pouerfu sangs.  
We hear them yet, their fitfas an their drumbeats  
Fin we lie doon, lugs lippenin tae the yird.

An Owersettin in Scots o 'The Delight Song of Tsoai-Talee' frae 'The Gourd  
Dancer' bi N. Scott Momaday, Kiowa.

### The Delight Song of Tsoai-Talee

I am a feather in the bricht lift,  
I am the blue shelt rinnin alang the parks,  
I am the fish, rows glimmerin in the watter,  
I am the shadda steekt tae a bairnie's fit,  
I am the gloamin, skinklin in the lea,  
I am an erne, playin alang the win,  
I'm a bricht boorich o beads  
I am the star that is hynest awa ava.  
I am the cauld o dawn, I am the roar o rain,  
I am the gleam in the tapmaist sheen o sna,  
I am the tracks meen lays alang the loch,  
I am a fower-colouret flame,  
I am a blate deer, stude in the deein day,  
I am a park o flouer an aipple,  
I am a V o geese in the Winter lift  
I am a young wolf's hunger,  
I am the dream and the sum o aa these ferlies.  
Ye see, I am leevin, am leevin,  
I am sib tae the Yird, I am sib tae the Gods,  
I am sib tae aa that's bonnie,  
I am sib tae the dother o Tsen-tainte.  
Ye see, I am leevin, am leevin!

Three owersettins frae 'Native American Songs & Poems' translatit inno English bi  
Brian Swann

Aybydan Braith

(bi John Smelcer (Cherokee/ Ahtna)  
Ootbye ma shielin windae  
I hear the corbie's hauf-smored skreich rise frae the burn.

A licht burns laich on ma tableheid  
The air in the quaet o the chaumer disna steer

I think aft times o thon nicht  
In yer caravan at Nikiski  
O the tales ye telt langsyne

Dena' Ma Suk' dua  
'Thon that's screived on the tongues o fowk.'

As a bairn ye war skelped wi a stick  
Fur spikkin yer ain leid.  
Ma faither, born at Indian River  
Disna ken his ain mither's leid.

The nicht, Kenaitze Indians foregaiter  
At a Russian orthodox kirk

Tae murn in cheenged wirds  
Mangst fite-washed crosses  
An roosty siller ikons.

As I raxx inno the derk  
It is yer voice that lifts  
Corbies' wings abeen the burnie's banks

His auncient wirds  
Rise like a yalla tide.

Skins as Auld Testament  
bi Carter Revard (Osage)

I winner fa first slippit in  
Tae makk eese o anither craitur's skin  
Tae bide hett  
Like a bluidy rape, a heresy near  
Tae crawl inno the deer's

Still-stounin presence yonner  
Tae takk their lives o fit hid meeved inbye  
Tae ett its tasty intimmers  
Syne spreid its likeness ower  
Thon sleepin an pechin body  
Musk-happit inbye the win, the rain, the on-ding  
Tae coorie doon in a seal-skin sel aneth a walrus Heiven  
The sna wid dunt an chap at..  
Tae feel baith feet growe hett even on ice or sna.

Sic a body maun hae thocht the lowe frae a caunle  
Wis like thon warmth frae fur an hide  
It maun hae bin some kinno bumbazement  
Fin the life stouned back inno jeeled haun or fit  
Efter the fur happit its nyakitness  
Even mair fin the human bodies  
Birzin in the bear's derk fur  
Fan the Winter's warmth  
An syne its bairn inbye the wummin  
Sprang alive.

Ptarmigan  
(An owersett o an Inuit Poem)

A wee ptarmigan dowpit doon  
In the mids o a muir  
On the tap o a snaadrift.

Its eelids war reid,  
Its back wis strakit broon.

An richt aneth tail feathers braw an fine  
Wis dowpit doon the bonniest bihoochie!

Sang o the Open Road  
Owersett frae the poem bi Ogden Nash: 'Song of the Open Road.'

I'm thinkin that I winna see  
A billboard, bonnie as a tree.



Mebbe, unless the billboards faa  
I winna see a tree ava

I like ma body (fin it's neist tae yers)  
Owersett frae the poem bi ngs,  
I like my body when it is with yours

I like my body fin it's  
Neist tae yers. It's near new-biggie  
Muscles swacker an harns mair stinch.  
I like yer body. I like fit it dis  
I like foo it hings thegither.  
I like tae fin its rig-bane  
An the trimmlin smeeth snodness that I will  
Ower an ower an ower  
Kiss. I like kissin thon an this o ye  
I like slawly straikin the bumbazement o yer pelt  
Yer birze-the finger fuzz, an fit-dye' caat cams  
Ower yieldin flesh..an een, like muckle love-crumbs  
An mebbe jist like the fey begeck  
O unner me yersel, unca new-farrant

Dauchlin i Wids on a Snawy Gloamin  
owersettin o Robert Frost's 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening'

Fa ains the wids I think I ken  
The clachan hauds his but an ben  
He winna spy me dauchlin here  
Watchin the snaaflakes stap his glen

My shelt maun think it unca queer  
Tae staun wiout a fermtoun near  
Tween icy loch an widlans black  
The derkest gloamin o the year

The sheltie gies his reyns a shakk  
Tae speir gin there's bin some mistakk  
The anely ither soun's the wheep  
O drappin sna an win sae swack

Deep are the wids an derk their sheen  
Bit there are pledges I hae gien  
An miles afore I steek ma een  
An miles afore I steek ma een.

The Road I didna takk  
owersettin from The Road not taken' bi Robert Frost

Twa roads forkt aff fae a yalla wid  
Sair I sikkit tae traivel baith  
A gyangin fit yet bide I did  
Glowert doon ane as far as I cwid  
Tae far it boosed in the girsy swathe

Syne tuik the tither as jist as braa  
An likely haein the better claim  
As it wis girssy, nae worn ava  
Tho as for thon, feet braid an sma  
Hid trod the baith o them near the same

An baith thon foreneen equally lay  
In leaves nae step hid trampit black  
I keepit the first fur anither day  
Yet kennin foo wyes gang aft agley  
Dooted that ever I wad cam back

I shall be tellin o this wi a sigh  
Ages syne as an auld grey beard  
Twa roads forkt in a wid an I  
I tuik the ane that less gyang by  
Yon wis the choice that cheenged ma weird.

Owersettins o Slovene lyrics translatit bi Janko Lavrin & Anton Slodnjak et al

The Sang o a Boozin Cronie: Janez Menart  
Because o her reid lips, we twa  
Supped reid liqueur till like tae faa.  
Because o her een, broon an bricht,  
We supped broon rum frae morn till nicht.  
Because o her derk, curly powe,

The derk wine set us baith alowe,  
An fin my frien began tae dauchle,  
I slawly raise up, like tae sprauchle.  
Because o her feet, sweet an sma,  
I brakk twa bottles on the waa.  
Gweed kens foo much, I drank till fu,  
The dawn raise up an brocht tae view  
Twa drukken hoolets feelin fine,  
Skimpit o siller, stappt wi wine.  
An fin anither day wis deen,  
We gaed on boozin like yestreen.  
Drambuies drooned fur three midnichts,  
Fur three hale days, fur three hale nichts,  
Oh, sair we tried tae lair thon quine  
Bit failed tae droon her wi the wine.

A Sang: Josip Murn-Aleksandrov  
Hyne in the misty heicht,  
The evenin starnie's licht,  
The evenin starnie's licht,  
Wi tints o yallas, bricht.

Alang the quaet lea,  
The siller burnie rowes,  
The siller burnie rowes,  
Inno the nicht's derk boughs.

Inbye the hairt o man,  
Sae monie wishes dawe,  
Like starnies, bricht oweraa.  
Like burnies-slipt awa.

Myndin on Granda: Tone Payeek  
The stoor, noo, differs cam back cheenged,  
Turn up like towrist bodies,  
An watch the barley swey throw careless een.  
Tell me, auld bodach, Granfaither, heich as Truth,  
Far are yer shelts? An far's yer youth?  
Yer marts, yer loon, yer neebors an yer wife,  
Fecund's the yird sae broon?

Langsyne, langsyne, the clock let faa its wechts,  
An bood its heid.  
Weirin yer fairmer's beets, yer muckle bunnet,  
Ye sclimm the knowe aleen,  
Quittin the kirkyaird, sclim the braes o hame,  
Teet at the sun, luik langsome ower the glen.  
The barley's ripe. Ye watch, an ye are blythe.  
Aroon ye on the knowe, yer friens resume their lives,  
Claik, noo the craps are ripe  
O prices, taxes, wives,  
O hairsts an wine,  
An whyles, o yer deid laddie.  
Yer bluid revives. The barn trimmles wi pleisur,  
Soun o the daunce. This meisur  
Gars the verra corn daunce tae the beat,  
O yer deid feet,  
O yer deid feet,  
O yer deid feet.

The Tumbler: Kajetan Kovic  
The nicht's the hinmaist show  
O the great tumbler. Roon the arena,  
Fowks' throats brakk inno cheers.  
He differs frae the lave,  
The grey automata.  
He stauns, a skyrie lowe.  
A skitter o steely applause,  
Shooers ower his powe.  
The ban strikks up.  
An frae ahin the scenes,  
A wattergaw lowps heelstergowdie oot.  
Green jooglers,  
Pinkie dalls,  
Bobbies in blue,  
Fite jumbos breengin forrit,  
Fey world far fancies sproot.  
Teem echoes dirl wi  
The dowie merch o Destiny.  
The tumbler boos an boos,  
Staunin, lane an heich,  
Deid centre o fowks' een.

Fowk clap-clap in their ranks,  
Wytin the gran finale,  
The hinmaist birl  
O his skyrie-clooted shanks.  
The nicht's his hinmaist oor.  
Drink in his colours,  
Drink in his bluid,  
Strippit an deid,  
He'll faa doon in the stoor.  
□

The Lochan. Oton Zupancic  
The daily oors that slip along the lift,  
Show in the watter's keekin glaiss, syne shift.  
Aa dawns drap in the waves their gowden trail.  
Aa starnies on the lochan screive their tale.  
Like mony truths, they're pictured ane an aa,  
The Ben, the knowe, the steeple, island sma,  
Birdie an cloud that wanner Heiven's wyes.  
Frae oot the deep aa ferlies doubled rise.  
The loch brings coontless glories tae oor een,  
Shaws licht an shade, the mighty sun an meen,  
An as we watch these picturs, they step in  
Inbye oorsels, syne vanish like the win.

Forge me on yer Anvil: Oton Zupancic  
Forge me on yer anvil, life,  
Gin I'm flint, a spirk I'll makk.  
Gin I'm steel, syne I shall sing.  
Gin I'm glaiss, syne I shall brakk.

The Fairmer Spikks tae the ScholaroAlojz Gradnik  
Aneth, I finn the solid grun,  
An coontless starnies see owerheid.  
Foo dae ye show tae me instead  
Abysses anely...derk, profun?  
Far div ye staun? I've aften thocht,  
Yer bit a spider in a neuk.  
Ae breeze...ae roch win's reivin cleuk,  
An as yer spinnin's gaen fur nocht.

I lue the yird, the starns that flame  
An glimmer ben the skinklin nicht,  
An haein faith, I ken nae fricht,  
Fin on the road that takks me hame.  
I'm weel acquaint wi Yule, wi Spring,  
I ken that Time will on me turn,  
Bit fin I cross the dowie burn  
Daith will uplift me, on his wing.

Owersettin o a poem bi Mihai Ursachi. Translatit inno English frae the Rumanian  
bi Don Eulert & Cornelia Hincu

Narcissus Nabbit

Bit the watter didna bide still.  
Its waves cam in aboot  
Fin cried on, sae it seemed,  
Frae nichts withoot tap nor boddom,  
Foun nor faddomin.  
Frae caves, tae be  
A keekin glaiss tae his physog.  
Foregaitered, the watter  
Wis, fur a meenit, his marra,  
Loaded tae the gunnels wi Narcissus  
In ilkie drap.  
Bit the watter didna bide still.  
It drappit doon, ilkie skirp  
Weirin a smatterin o his luiks.  
The hale puil wis Narcissus.  
Syne, drappin, iver drappin,  
It swalled inno a burn.  
It swalled inno a mighty river.  
Till in the muckle ocean  
His icon's swallaed like satt.  
In yon glen, aside the puil,  
A flock o floeries grew  
Because the watter didna bide still.

Owersettins o poems bi y, translatit inno English bi John Mavrogordato

Pictur

Ma darg is in ma hairt an in ma harns,  
Bit latchy composition dings me doon.  
This day's bin a sair trauchle...it's soor face  
Is iver derkenin, rain an win blaa roon.

My wish is jist tae luik an makk nae soon.  
Yonner's the draain that I spy eenoo,  
Here bi the spring, I see a bonnie loon  
A weel-faured chiel, gowd sunlicht on his broo.

He's sprauchled oot. Nae doot he his bin rinnin.  
Noon haps him roon, in sleep an joy he's sunnin.  
Dowped doon I luik fur lang. An in sic wyes,  
Efter ma darg, Art rests me, an repyes.

#### Nicht

The back wynd cud be watched ower frae the windae.  
Nerra, in clart an sottar it wis lairt.  
Hidden abeen it, in an ill-famed howf,  
The chaumer wis a puir, doon-merket airt,  
While in the boozer doon ablow, some chiels  
Played cairds, blythe-like, an newsed awa weel-sairt.

Upon the chaumer's hummil, orra bed,  
I preed the flesh o luv, I preed the moo,  
The roosed an randy rosy lips o wine,  
Reidened wi sic a vine that even noo,  
Tho mony years hae passed, as I screive here  
Inbye ma lanesome hame, again I'm foo.

#### Langins

Like bonnie kistit corpses ne'er grown auld,  
Rose at their heids, an jasmin at their feet,  
Decked oot wi floories, nailed doon wi a greet,  
Langins are like thon...langins that bide cauld,  
An niver satisfeed, swicked o ae nicht  
O pleisur sweet, ae glimpse o mornin bricht.

#### Caunles

Days o the Future rax afore oor een,  
Like raws o lichtit caunles, gowden, stoot,  
While streaked ahin, the deid days o yestreen,  
Are dowie stumps o caunles snibbit oot.

The nearer caunle reets are rikkin yet,  
Cauld, meltit, booed, each waxen makk is marred,  
I dinna daur teet roon, sae I'll forget  
That I, wi their infirmities, am tarred.

I dinna wint tae turn aroon an see  
The horror o the line that grows sae quick.  
Foo seen the derkenin caunles multiplee  
Bricht lowes pit oot, each een a blaikened wick!

### The Toun

Quo ye, 'I'll traivel tae the Muckle Furth,  
Ben furreign seawyes, ower the fremmit Earth. S  
ome better toon I'll fand awa frae here,  
Far guilt bladds aa ma ploys. It's turned me sweir  
Tae bide far my hairt's fooshionless an sterk,  
My harns are hinnert, aa my thochts are derk.  
Fariver I step oot an heist ma een,  
Blaik larachs o ma life rise up abeen.  
This toun that's spyled mair years nor I cud name,  
I aim tae quit, tae sikk a better hame.'

'Ye'll fin nae better airt in fremmit toun.  
This toon will dog yer trailin fit, ma loon.  
Ye'll reenge aboot in streets the same as these,  
Grow jist a fite aneth the selfsame trees.  
Anither toun wad bring as little cheer,  
Untae a chiel sae cankered an sae sweir.  
Tae leave yersel ahin, nae road's bin bigged,  
Nor ony ship, nae maitter fu weel-rigged.  
Naebody spyled yer future bit yersel,  
Nae bonnie tune, faas frae a crackit bell.

Twa owersettins o Greek poems frae English itia, islations bi Elena Fourtini



Krinio

Bi Rita Boumi Pappas. The poems tells o the daith o a 19 year auld Greek resistance fechter in word war 2, foundit on fit she telt the poet's man, Nikos Pappas, fa wis the quine's defence arttorney afore she wis shot.

Aim straicht at ma hairt.  
It's served me weel this lang.  
I've even shood a corbie-colored clood  
Atween ma briests, deid centre.  
I've niver heard afore, a gunshot bang.

Peer young sodjers, waukened wi the dawn  
Fur this derk duty.  
I've niver held a gun masel, ye see.  
An sae this execution at daybrakk  
Will be a new experience fur me.  
I see yer een gap wide...  
It's nae yer wyte  
Ye itch tae finn ma femininity  
Afore ye fire the shot. I unnerstaun  
I winner fit bynames fowk gie tae ye?

Fa kens, we micht hae played  
Street games as bairns.  
Quick, dee yer wark,  
Spare me the foreneen's frost I'm nearly nyakkit,  
Dress me wi yer fire. Smile,  
Let yer luiks enfauld it at the last,  
This body niver happit bi a luvver  
Nae even in the riggin o a dream  
Quine that a young bride's joy  
Will ne'er discover  
This Present pits  
The Future in the Past

Pairtin:

Eleni Fourtini, Sparta, Greece

I rowed ma een  
In a saft clood.  
I faulded them awa.

They winna luik on ye again  
Nane o the twa.

Ma twa reid lips  
I beeriet in the mire  
An noo it's anely  
Watter they desire

Ma feet sae swift  
Noo amangst moosewabs lie  
Yer yett's a thoosan mile  
An mair, ootbye.

My airms, I happit  
Deep inno the sna  
They winna haud ye back  
My luv, ava.

Bit oh, I sud hae sterted wi ma hairt  
Fur wersh, wersh war its wounds  
The beatin hairt  
That stouns and stouns an stouns.

Owersettins o three extracts frae 'Fruit Gathering' bi Rabindranath Tagore, India

Far roads are vrocht I lose ma wye  
In the wide watter, the blue sky  
There is nae line o a track  
The pathwye's happit bi birdies' wings  
Bi the starfires. Bi the flooers o the gyaunabout Sizzens  
An I speir my hairt gin its bluid cairries the wyceness  
O the unseen wye.

I waukened an fand his letter in the mornin  
I dinna ken fit it's about, fur I canna read  
I'll leave the clivver chiel alane wi his buiks  
I winna tribble him  
Fur fa kens gin he can read fit the letter says?  
Let me haud it tae ma broo, an fauld it tae ma hairt  
Fin the nicht growes quaet an the starnies ane bi ane skinkle

I'll spreid it on ma lap an bide quaet  
The reeshlin leaves will read it oot tae me  
The sweeshin burn will chant it  
An the seeven wyce starnies  
Will sing it tae me frae the lift

I feel that as the starnies glimmer inbye me  
The world brakks inno ma life like a flood  
The flooers brier in ma wyme  
Aa that's bairn-like o lan an watter  
Rikks like incense in ma briest  
An the braith o aathin  
Plays on ma thochts  
Like a flute

Short Puja: owerset frae the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order Buik o  
Buddhist Devotional Texts, English translations a auncient Pali an Sanskrit

Sertin Reverence  
We venerate the Buddha,  
The Ane o Perfect Enlichtenment,  
The Guide tae the Wye.  
We venerate the Dhartita,  
The Lear o the Buddha,  
That leads frae pit-mirk tae licht.  
We venerate the Sangha,  
The Buddha-sib,  
That shaws the wye  
An fills wi admiration.

Reverence tae the three jewels  
We venerate the Buddha,  
An wad sikk tae follae him.  
The Buddha wis born as we war born.  
Fit the Buddha dinged doon  
Oor ainsels can ding doon  
We venerate the Dharma,  
An wad seek tae follae it,  
Wi body, spikk an thocht, until the eyn.  
The Truth in aa its aspects,

The path wi aa its roadies,  
We sikk tae larn, practise, syne tae ken.  
We venerate the Sangha,  
An wad sikk tae follae it.  
The sib-ness o the fowk fa wauk the wye  
As ain bi ain we makk oor ain committment  
An iver-raxxin ring, the Sangha growes.

Gifties tae the Buddha  
Reverencin the Buddha we gie flooers,  
Flooers at brak o day, caller an sweet brierin  
Flooers that the morn are dwined an deen  
Oor bodies tae, like flooers will weir awa.

Reverencin the Buddha we gie caunles  
Tae him fa is the Licht, the gift o licht  
His muckle Lowe lights a sma lowe inbye us  
The lamp o Bodhi gliminrin in oor hairts.

Reverencin the Buddha  
We gie incense  
Incense fa's sweet perfume wauchts throwe the air  
Sweeter than incense, is the perfect life  
Spreidin in ilkie airt throwe-oot the world.

Dedication Ceremony  
We dedicate this airt tae the Three Jewels,  
Tae Buddha, the Marra o Enlichtenment  
Whit we aa sikk tae gain  
Tae the Dharma, the pathwye o the Lear  
Whit we aa sikk tae follae  
Tae the Sangha, the growin Buddha-clan  
That we can aa enjoy.

Here, may nae menseless wird be spukken  
Here may nae unquate thocht steer up oor harns.  
Takkin tent o the Five Precepts  
We dedicate this airt  
Tae the darg o meditation  
We dedicate this airt

Tae the growth o wyceness, we dedicate this airt  
Tae the winnin o Enlichtenment, we dedicate this airt.  
Tho in the world ootbye there's collieshangie,  
Inbye may there be peace  
Tho in the world ootbye there's great ill-will  
Inbye may there be luv.  
Tho in the world ootbye, there's dule an wae,  
Inbye may there be blythness.  
Nae bi the chantin o the halie Screivins  
Nae bi the spirkin o halie watter  
Bit bi oor ain smeddum wirkin tae Enlichtenment  
We dedicate this airt.  
Aroon this Mandala, this halie circle  
May the lotus-petals o purity brier  
Aroon this mandala, this halie cercle  
May the vajra-waa o virr raxx far an farrer  
Aroon this Mandala, this halie cercle  
May the lowe tae cheenge Samsara tae Nirvana  
Kinnle an rise.  
Dowpit doon, here practisin  
May oor thocht becam Buddha  
May oor thocht becam Dharma  
May oor spikk amangst aa fowk  
Be Buddha-sib.  
Fur the blytheness o aa craiturs  
Fur the guid o aa craiturs  
Wi body, spikk an thocht  
We dedicate this airt.

Blissins

May aa blissins be yours  
May aa the gods takk tent o ye  
Bi the pouer o aa the Buddhas  
May aa blytheness be yer ain.  
May aa blissins be yours  
May aa the gods protect ye  
Bi the pouer o aa the Dharmas  
May aa blytheness be yours  
May aa blissins be yours  
May aa the gods takk tent o ye  
Bi the pouer o aa the Sangha.

May aa blytheness be yer ain

Verses tae Proteck the Truith  
Nae tae dae ill,  
Tae ettle tae dae guid  
Tae puriffee the thocht  
Thon is the lear o the Buddhas.  
Lead a richteous life  
Nae ain that is orra  
The richteous live blythely  
Baith in this warld an the neist.  
He isna acquaint wi Dhamma  
Fa gibbers like a gowk.  
He fa hears a nippick o the lear  
Bit kens the Truith, an acts on't  
Is truly caad a chiel weel versed in Dhamma  
Nae ither bield bit Buddha  
Bield abeen aa, will dae me.  
Ay, bi the venue o this truith  
May grace growe grait, an victory  
Nae ither bield bit Truith  
Bield abeen aa, will dae me.  
Ay, bi the vertue o this truith  
May grace growe grait, an victory.  
Nae ither bield bit Sangha  
Bield abeen aa, will dae me.  
Ay, bi the vertue o this truith  
May grace growe grait, an victory.  
Aa praise tae the Buddha  
Aa praise tae the Dhamma  
Aa praise tae the Sangha  
Sadhu Sadhu Sadhu

The Hairt Sutra

Bodhisattva o Compassion, whaun his thochts sank deep inbye  
Kent the teemness o aa five skandhas  
An caad tae Crockanation the chynes o skaith.  
Takk tent, syne, form is nocht bit teemness, teemness nocht bit form. Feelin,  
thocht an wylin, Kennin itsel, are the same as thon.  
Aa ferlies are primal teemness that isna born or killt

Nur is it spylt nur pure, nur dis it growe nur crine.  
Sae in teemness, nae form. Nae feelin, thocht or wylin,  
Nur is there ony ee, lug, neb, core, harns  
Nae hue, soun, guff, taste, touch,  
Or whit the harns takk baud o, nur even act o sensin.  
Nae ignorance nur eyn tilt, nur aa that briers frae ignorance  
Nae dwinin an nae Daith. Nae eyn o them.  
Nur is there pain, or cause o pain, or stoppit pain, or Noble Wye  
Tae win frae pain. nae even wyceness tae attain.  
Attainment tae, is teemness.  
Sae ken that the Bodhisattva, haudin tae naethin ava  
Bit bidin in Prajna wyceness, is lowsed frae delusive snorls  
Lowsed frae the fear they breed, an wins tae pure Nirvana.  
Aa Buddhas Noo an Afore,  
Buddhas o Times tae cam,  
Makkin eese o this Prajna wyceness, cam tae a full clear veesion  
Takk tent o the great dharani, the Mantra o aa Mantras  
The Prajnaparamita wha's wirds takk the stoon frae pain.  
Takk tent an ken its Truth!  
Gate gate paragate.  
Parasamgate bodhi svaha

Sheena Blackhall

# The Trouble With War

Tit for tat  
Pat versus Brit  
The trouble with trouble  
Is all get hit

It strikes the infant in its cot  
When Orange meets Green  
And shot meets shot

From the Berlin Wall to the grey Shankhill  
War laughs when the graves begin to fill

When the ash from Auschwitz reached the sky  
War cheered as the millions marched to die

The leaders of war. They light death's flame  
Kill unarmed folk in religion's name

Who in their right mind dislikes peace?  
When will the bombs and the murder cease?

Sheena Blackhall



# The Tv Washes Away The Day

New bag, strange clothes, so far away  
From home and all that's safe and known  
The TV washes away the Day

The school bell rang the time to play  
One out of thirty, he's alone  
The TV washes away the Day

Little and worried. He must stay  
Till night, when he sits still as stone  
The TV washes away the Day

School gates are locked. No getaway  
Rules, rules. Big boys don't cry or moan  
The TV washes away the Day

Don't carry tales, the bullies say  
His safety props are overthrown  
The TV washes away the Day

Nothing about him will betray  
The terrors of that first school zone  
The TV washes away the Day  
He's home, and all is safe and known

Sheena Blackhall

# The Underwear Poem

I'm a poem in its underwear  
A haiku in a thong  
I'm a poem in its underwear  
My brassière's a song

Sheena Blackhall

# The Unknown Warrior

He came at first to a chapel in France near Arras,  
Next day, to a guarded castle at Boulogne.  
And lay in this chapelle ardente overnight,  
Soldiers awarded the Légion d'Honneur stood vigil

The following morning undertakers came  
Placing the coffin into an oaken casket  
Felled in the Royal Palace of Hampton Court

This was banded with iron,  
An ancient crusader's sword, selected by the King  
Was fixed on top, surmounted by an heavy iron shield

Six black horses pulled him through Bolougne  
Where church bells tolled to mark the mournful passing  
Prior to the mile-long journey to the harbour  
He was piped onto ship with an admiral's call

The vessel, joined by an escort of six battleships.  
Came home to the crash of a nineteen gun salute  
Then on by train to London, heart of the Empire

Eleventh of November, year of nineteen twenty  
His horse-drawn coffin passed through silent crowds.

The British Emperor-King unveiled the Cenotaph  
The cortège slowly wending to Westminster  
The West Nave of the Abbey flanked  
By a guard of honour, a hundred VC heroes

One hundred women stood as guests of honour,  
All their menfolk had been killed in war

Tens of thousands filed silent past

In the west end of the Nave the casket lay  
In earth brought from the blood-soaked battlefields,

And there he stays, for those who died unmarked,  
The nameless multitudes who left their jobs and homes  
To walk into the hell of Flanders mud

And whether he died by bayonet, mud or shell  
Grief needs it dues, the soldier serves It well

Sheena Blackhall

# The Untouchable

I am a visitor, a Mumbaikar  
A humble devotee of Lord Ganesh  
Fresh off the plane, the cabbie said to me  
'You'll be another one from Bangladesh'.

The day the bombs exploded in Mumbai  
Like paper, train and carriages were torn  
Across the line. I saw my family die,  
An empty sandal dropp from my first-born

As if untouchable, I lived...although  
My sleep's disturbed. Now, peace is hard to find  
My father paid this holiday you know:  
'Travel' he said, 'will educate the mind'

Where else but Britain would I choose to go?  
Cricket's my passion. English, my degree.  
My cousin is an engineer in Slough  
'Paki go home! ' two children yelled at me.

Last week, I took the tube to Hampstead Heath  
My rucksack and my camera by my side  
A woman passenger shook like a leaf  
At me...the man who lived, when others died.

I am a visitor, a Mumbaikar  
A humble devotee of Lord Ganesh  
I am no threat, no militant, no shark,  
I, too, have been a fish in terror's net.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Vampire Nocturne

Under a sickle moon  
Life, like a vampire, sucked the hope from you

No-one is taught how to come to terms with death  
When you turned your face from the world  
A part of me followed you into a half-way necropolis

Your absence persists like a void  
I walk familiar streets, hoping someone will stop me  
Someone will say your name, acknowledge that you existed  
Short change of memories I find,  
Doesn't suffice. The well of pain's too deep

My mind quickens with needs  
Like eels, wriggling on hooks  
I need just once to hug your human bones  
My soldier son, whose whole life was a battle

Thoughtless words and deeds repeat like rifle shots  
You, who sang with the sweetness of a siren  
Sing to me  
Sing to me

Sheena Blackhall

# The Veggies Response To The Vegan

'What manner of person, ' implored the Tahini,  
'Made me from the wreck of another's bambini?  
They cried 'Open Sesame', shattered her head  
In my jar there's a trillion young Sesames, dead.'

'As for me, ' cried the fiery, outrageous Pimento,  
How rude to wrench me from the land of flamenco,  
To sit like a lemon, my soul on the block  
Awaiting the guillotine crash of the chop! '

The turnip, the broccoli, onion and leek,  
Arose in a body, gave vent to a shriek,  
The cabbage said, 'Plainly, you haven't a heart,  
Oh the gallons of scallions you've torn apart! '

The aubergine paled neth her Persian élan,  
When the cook poured the salt in the foot of the pan.  
The mushrooms grew maudlin.  
The spring onions wept,  
The parsnips grew angry and punched the courgette.

The potato made eyes at a Golden Delicious,  
The chilli turned red and incredibly vicious.  
But the carrot was silent, for once through the grate  
He'd entered Nirvana, the non-veggie state.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Vietnam War: The Pacification Of My Lai, 16th March 1968

(based on soldiers' testimony)

Some of the huts were torched  
Some of the younger soldiers were killing kids  
It was hard to tell men from women  
Both wore black pyjamas and conical hats

I saw a ditch filled with dead and dying  
I saw a GI kill a wounded boy

Everyone had a mind to kill  
It was a VC stronghold  
I shot a woman and a little child

We herded them into the middle of the village  
Just like a little island

'How come you ain't killed them yet?' Lieutenant Calley asked  
'I want them dead,' he ordered.

We put seven or eight in a hut  
Dropped a hand grenade right there amongst them

We gathered seventy-five by a ravine  
Pushed them off. Shot them with automatics

A pile of bodies lay outside the village  
A little toddler wearing only a shirt  
Came across to hold the hands of the dead  
A GI killed him with a single shot

I watched a troop assault a shivering girl  
Thirteen, she was. They started stripping her

'Let's see what she's made of' said one soldier  
'VC boom boom,' a second soldier laughed  
'I'm horny,' said a third. She looked bewildered.



All around were bodies, burning huts  
The mother scratched and clawed the girl's attackers

One of us kicked the woman  
Another slapped her around a little bit  
Haeberle the photographer snapped it

The photo shows the girl behind her mother  
Trying to button up her top pyjama  
We saw that Ron had photographed the scene

'What'll we do with them now?' a GI asked  
'Kill them,' a soldier answered

A light machine gun fired  
The group fell dead

Sheena Blackhall

# The Village Of Eyam

The village of Eyam in Middleton Dale  
Looks over the Derwent down in the vale  
Along Hope Valley, that grassy glade  
Where Viccars, the tailor plied his trade

A box of cloth from London came  
A grim death sentence in all but name  
The lid was lifted, the fleas flew out  
And signs and portents were seen about

That year, loose cattle had fouled the nave  
Gabriel Hounds howled oer each grave  
White crickets chirruped, of life bereft  
And those who could, locked up and left

Some fled to the moors, to caves or rocks  
Threatened with hanging by neighbour folks  
If they should attempt to travel afar  
With the pestilence, fouler than fire or war

The vicar's wife was young and frail  
But she stayed to work in that fated Dale  
While all around, fields, orchards filled  
With the blossom of youth by the Black Death killed

Dragged by a rope round ankle or arm  
To a pit where the dead can do no harm  
The stricken. The Earl of Devonshire's food  
Was left by a stone, for the Common Good

Pipe or herb, sweet smelling flower  
No charm or spell could delay the hour  
When Death with his scythe from his horrid lair  
Scattered the seeds of poison there

In Eyam the tale of lost love's told  
By the moss-grown graves of the young and old  
Where quarantined, men, their bairns and wives  
Paid the price of courage with human lives.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Waiter

Tonight I am going to be a waiter  
From yesterday's empty streets  
Mysterious dinner guests will arrive  
At a time of their own choosing

First to appear, my father  
Ever early. His cutlery placed  
Four centimetres apart,  
And not a smidgeon more

He will sit above the salt  
The patriarch, head of the house  
We will drink to death and grief  
In the blood of our joined history

My mother will come in a trail of perfume  
She will require a rack of empty hangers  
To accommodate her clothes and costume jewellery  
Her furs will growl softly in a corner

My grandmother shall sit in the seat nearest the fire  
I shall light candles around her  
Offer flowers to kindness, charity, love

Grandfather's clock has been struck dumb  
Invisible hands polish its frozen face

In the corner, the piano aches  
For the touch of my absent brother

When he comes in, the strings  
Under its lid will quiver  
Like a barren woman seated by a cradle  
Silenced music is a refinement of torture

Sheena Blackhall

# The Wake

In the wake of the funeral  
Comes the disposal of goods

In a scale of one to ten  
Which items did he cherish?  
In a scale of one to ten  
Who is going to cherish them now?

In the absence of will  
To make a clean sweep of the past  
An image, not wanted, lingers  
A thistle curled over  
Clenched in a black fist  
A ringing phone  
Calls in the night unanswered

Sheena Blackhall

# The Walk Of The Temple Tooth Elephant

Ten days in August's sweltering heat  
Ponderously I stately swing  
White linen laid before my feet

Where dancers whirl to rhythmic beat  
Of drum, I walk the tooth to bring  
Forth to the crowds on cushioned seat

The monks and devotees I meet.  
Petals of scented flowers they fling  
The relic of the shrine to greet

The air is filled with incense sweet  
Pearls to my gold umbrella cling  
Thousands applaud me in the street

The scarlet banners furl and pleat  
Orchids, like birds go fluttering  
And every bowl with alms replete

I am the chosen. A short leet  
Reduced to one. My neck bells ring  
With pride at conch shells' welcome bleat

Night of the full moon! Torches leap  
Saddu they cry. Small fireflies wing  
My glory over, task complete

The curtains part, the Heavens weep  
The short walk of a brief godling  
Back to my stall. The dark is deep

Sheena Blackhall

# The Wandering Womb

The Ancient Egyptians and Greeks  
Thought that wandering wombs were non fiction  
Causing sore throat, anxiety, asthma  
And Hysteria-a bogus condition

Now we know that it's anchored inside  
The size and the shape of a pear  
All those terrible cramps every month  
And the menopause...woman's despair

Three inches that rule womens' lives  
Childbearing is not for the soft  
And now mine's dropped down from its perch  
A surgeon must hoist it aloft

Sheena Blackhall

# The Watcher In The Grass

Some say that Death is old,  
With hollow cheeks, and grey,  
And that his touch so cold  
Can wither in a day.

But I say Death is young,  
He's lithe and full of grace  
He turns Him round and laughs  
To see Time in my face

In frailties I increase  
So strong and tall grows He  
The watcher in the grass  
Of my mortality.

Sheena Blackhall



# The Weaver Of Grass (Angus Mc Phee,1916-1997)

He grew up weaving harness from the muirineach  
Singing and tending horses on South Uist

War plucked him, like a berry from the Gaeltachd  
It crushed, and spat him out at \*Craig Dunain

Silence became his shadow, Grass, his healer  
With it he knitted jackets, pouches, hats  
Hid them by tree and bush well out of sight

Sheep wool, beech leaves, all assumed new mysteries  
Shaped by his gnarled hands, his crippled mind  
Impenetrable as the haar  
That hugs the drizzling coastal Hebrides

Now, his ruined croft at Eochar  
Bares the ribs of its roof to the wild skies  
The skies that range beyond all normal boundaries

\*psychiatric hospital

Sheena Blackhall

# The Wedding Of Prince William & Kate Middleton

The wedding is happening, the invites all sent  
Alfonso is having a knees-up in Kent  
Dozens are strutting their stuff in the park  
Vergers are cartwheeling. Oh what a lark!  
St. Andrews is hosting a picnic with tea  
There are Union Jack cup cakes from York to Dundee

Folk are ooing and ah-ing at Wills and Kate kissing  
Grannies are dabbing their eyes at the blessing  
Everyone gawks at the bride's wedding dress  
And laughs at the guests who've tried hard to impress  
Wearing hats with goat horns, so exalted they soar  
Hats so wide it's a wonder they fit in the door

Some teeter on heels, on the tips of their toes  
The flowergirls, all flounces in buttons and bows,  
Look bored and bewildered. The family black sheep  
Is there in the fold. Jessie's all of a heap  
When the anthem rings out and she spies Elton John  
Sitting there in the abbey with princess and don

The wedding is happening, and folk are hell bent  
On a hoolie in Orkney, Balmoral and Kent  
In elegant chignons and royal blue wraps  
Or topped and tailed like Etonian chaps

In deep plunging necklines and red fascinators  
In pubs, the well wishers from punters to waiters  
Set i-pods and cameras clicking and ticking  
While cavalry horses start manes and tails flicking

There's munching of canapés, bubble and squeak  
Smoked salmon, asparagus, langoustines, leek  
The bunting is flapping the party's full swing  
In gazebos and semis they're flashing the bling

In this virtual world in technology's scene  
All the world can join in with the home plasma screen



# The White House

43 Presidents lived here  
With the ghost of Abraham Lincoln  
And all the Presidents' men

President Richard Nixon  
Installed a bowling alley

President Bill Clinton  
Installed Monica Lewinsky

President Woodrow Wilson  
Kept 83 sheep on the lawn

President John F. Kennedy  
Kept his secrets

President Herbert Hoover  
Housed two alligators

President Warren Harding  
Hosted poker parties

President Reagan  
Stored a jar of jellybeans

President Johnson  
Called his genitals 'Jumbo'

President Roosevelt's  
Family walked on stilts

President Quincy  
Skinny-dipped in the Potomac

President Carter  
Saw a UFO

President Taft  
Got stuck in the White House bath

In the President's House there are:

Panic buttons  
Bullet proof windows  
A nuclear bunker  
35 bathrooms  
412 doors  
147 windows  
28 fireplaces  
8 staircases  
3 lifts  
A florist  
A tennis court  
A cinema  
A putting green

Which makes me think  
In a house that vast  
You could easily get lost

You wouldn't feel safe  
If you looked at the fate  
Of Presidents to date

Abraham Lincoln. William McKinley  
James A. Garfield. John F. Kennedy  
Killed in office, every one

Attempted assassinations?  
The shiver-list runs on:

William Taft. Andrew Jackson  
Theodore Roosevelt. Richard Nixon  
Herbert Hoover. Harry Truman  
Franklin Roosevelt Ronald Reagan  
Ford, Bush, Carter, Obama, Clinton

So what's this piece of real estate summed up?  
The White House is the finest gaol in the world\*  
The place where every global problem's hurled.

\*'The White House is the finest prison in the world'.

Harry S Truman

Sheena Blackhall

# The Win & The Rain (10 Scots Poems)

eton

She trauchles tae the shop an hame  
Shovin the bairn he left ahin  
A heavy wecht. Her hairt is stane  
Nae skirp o solace can she fin

Fur aathin noo is secunt-haun  
Her days are soor. Her bed is cauld  
Welcome tae single parent lan!  
He's gane an aa she dis is scauld

Foo pleased she'd bin tae gie him this  
The livin pruif her luve wis true!  
He's gane. Noo, sorra kythes frae bliss  
Rose gairdens wither intae rue  
His een luik frae the bairn's face  
The littlin in the faither's place

□

Lads

Margot, a washed oot lily at fifteen  
Publicly coorted in the spot-lit street  
Dutch bulb, turned bleedin tulip at sixteen□

□

Annabell's lads were niver nine tae fivers  
She cam hame late, in sporty, phallic cars  
Her beaux wore Rolex cuff-links, wir high-fliers

Lana wis blate an couthie, unca plain  
Her da's pipes nott a stream o merriet plumbers  
Wi ane o them she ran aff doon the drain

Nae winner yer still single, ' I wis telt.  
'Ye've got tae wink an ee, an grind yer hips  
Ye've got tae smile, tae pout, tae strut yer stuff  
Hitch up yer breists. Smear sex along yer lips.'□

□

□

I trapped a lad at last, at an Arts Ball  
Half-canned, he socht me hame at the last daunce  
I stood, a tattie-bogle in a park  
Pykit bi craw-pecks. Ah la belle romaunce!

n Christie Spikks tae the Social

The first luvie that ma hid wis Steve  
A seaman. Oh the tales he'd wyve!  
He tuik me tae the watter front  
Thegither we wad cockle-hunt  
He vowed he'd niver leave.  
He kissed Janine. Ma hid tae heave  
Him oot. Nae cam-back, nae reprieve.  
My secunt da wad booze an grunt...  
I wish I wis a Spanish ship,  
a -sailin the high seas

Skweel says I bully an I thieve  
That I'm ower hyper tae achieve  
Da nummer three says I'm a runt  
That I maun takk the things I wint  
That happiness is makk-believe  
I wish I wis a Spanish ship  
a-sailin the high seas

them wi nane, be gien.

The barfit fishers on the beach,  
their fyew possessions teen  
Greet that the sea has netted men.  
Tae them wi nane, be gien.

The western pleisur sikkin fowk  
lived throw thon widdendreme  
Bairns, hames an aa wheeched aff like straa.  
The ocean wyves abeen.

The lauchin bairn, the wirkin cheil, thegither or alane



Dauchled tae watch an Act o God, an in thon dwaum war taen  
The sea that washes Thailan's sides, bathes India's backbeen  
Sweetens Sri Lanka wi its tides, turned traitor this foreneen  
Stole frae the puirest o the puir afore ocht cud be daen  
Even the bairns frae oot their airms.  
Tae them wi nocht, be gien

O far's the Wise Men in the East that cudnae hae foreseen  
The sea rise up like a grey wolf wi murder in its een?  
The nations roon the Indian Sea, they hae nae siller speen  
May loaves an fishes multiplee...tae them wi nocht, be gien.

r McGraw

He's dunted the shepherds and skelped the kings  
Cowped sweet Jesus ooto his staa  
Connor McGraw. Fa'll clip his wings,  
The angel fa irritates ane an aa?

The Bethlehem scene's gaen rick-ma-tick  
Foo is the cuddie weirin a croon?  
Fa's thou turnin the ither chikk?  
Moonin about wi his troosers doon?

He's echt years auld bit acts nineteen  
His ma is staned fin he gyangs tae bed  
He watches the bang-bang TV screen  
Till three a.m. wi his wide-eed Ted

`What's St Nicholas bringing you, '  
The teacher speirs, 'from his great big sack? '  
Connor McGraw thinks hard and says  
'He's bringin ma bluidy game boy back.'

Echt a.m. an Santie's been  
Aathin Connor McGraw could need  
Aathin's awa bi twelve fifteen  
Selt fur fags an a fix o speed.

Connor McGraw he's haived a brick  
Throwe the shop wi its Xmas show

Sen fur the social worker quick  
It's nae even rowed wi a festive bow!

Reindeer sleigh's here, presents galore  
A time fur blitheness, a Disney show  
Connor's minder's the chiel neist door  
Bring on the punch an the ho- ho- ho

Xmas star dae ye shine sae fair  
Jist for the sake o the lucky fyew?  
Is there anither star oot there,  
Fur Connor McGraw? Is it gowd or blue?

r

In the mochy dreichness o winter,  
Girse weirs a frost straichtjaiket  
In an oot-o-sicht sheuch,

Reeds chitter, like a strang electric shock's  
Bin sizzled throwe their verra banes an marra  
Barbit wire grips in weird parks o wae

Blin-drift boos trees wi grue,  
The harbinger o sufferin an sorra.  
Braes rikk wi cranreuch cauld.

A hawk gaes flichter flachterin ower the wids  
His name is Daith.  
Wallopin hungered wings  
His wyme aye gaps fur maet

Clouds stappit wi Yule  
Writhe like a wud wife in a jizzen  
This is the coorse sizzen

The jinniprous spruce is sherp's a jaggy glaiss  
Dule swypes in wi the derk, in mugger's claes  
Ettlin tae rype the warmth o the braes  
Coffm fodder, hirplin rubbits squeak

Snadrops heidbang eyndless, at the grun  
Tryin tae leave afore the funeral's by.

#### 7.It's Cauld, oot/ Blue Toon Hipsters

The hardest hairy in Peterheid is young Tallulah Bruce  
She's a bairn in a pram like Desperate Dan  
That she feeds on jungle juice.

Insteid o a dummy it sooks a nail. It's got its mither's luiks  
The hair on its heid is post box reid. A mountain reenge o plooks  
Rise ower its chicks like the Grampians,  
It's niver bin heard tae greet  
I's sweir its da wis a batterin ram,  
It disna spik it bleats.

Tallulah's aff tae fetch the tea  
Some chips an Bacardi rum  
Tae keep the frost o the North East Coast  
Fae nippin her builder's bum

ties

Creepin up the Ship's Raw, bi crooked wynd an lane,  
Nigh sax hunner ghaisties they takk the low road hame  
Nigh sax hunner ghaisties... their kistit banes lie cauld  
Atlantic waves sair pairtin the New World frae the Auld

They seek their blythesome bairnhood, afore they war waylayed  
Near herbour or bi schooner... the sleekit slavers' trade  
Bit oh, the hames that murned them are nocht bit stoor an win  
Nigh sax hunner ghaisties an nane tae lat them in

Auld Alliance

` Bonjour, ' says Jean, 'Fit like? ' says Jack,  
The Xmas tree stauns green an swack  
Bairns birl aroon the skatin rink  
Electric angels sway an blink

Ower Union Street this Northern Yule  
Richt hairtily fowk banish dule  
Wi Santy hats an reindeers lugs  
They buy hot dogs an woolly rugs  
Dutch tulips sell far revellers dance  
Roon staas an olives frae Provence.

Aiberdeen rowies, French baguettes  
Are bocht, wi flooers an glaiss chess sets  
Rich pastry an sweet clementines  
Weel hanselled by the festive chimes  
As Mither Kirk bells ring the cheer  
The last wikks o the deein year

`It's gran, ' says Jim. 'C'est bon, ' says Jacques  
'The Auld Alliance hist ye back!

Wagtail and the Nightingale Tune: The Buchan Bobby

A wagtail an a nightingale met in the Music Haa  
The nightingle, a native o the toun o Aiberdeen  
Stept oot an shook her plumage, the audience wis braw  
Sae quaet ye cud hae hearkened tae the drappin o a preen

Rossini an Puccini soared, their lyric tunes took flicht  
The velvet o the curtains like the Heivens up abeen  
The jewels on the soprano glittered like a winter's nicht  
Fin the wagtail an the nightingale appeared in Aiberdeen

The wagtail wis a fiddler, yarkin up an doon the bow  
His music telt the stories o Grantully an Cromar  
Fae the shakkins o the pyockie tae the hertbrakk o Neil Gow  
As frisky as the whisky at the dowp o Lochnagar

There wis Tosca an McCrimmon an the beddin o the bride  
The watch-chyne at his westcoat keepin time tae ilkie tune  
Buenos Aires an Connecticut, Loch Earn an Bogieside  
An a magpie at the concert pianie playin Clair de Lune

Music is the sweetest medicine fae the cradle tae the kist  
Wi the pouer tae cheer in hospice, an tae kittle up a ward

Wi the wagtail an the nightingale the peel wis double blessed  
In a nicht o stars an music, in the toon o Bon Accord!

Sheena Blackhall

# The Wind's Nest: (24 Scots Poems)

## Cod Quartet

We o the tinned an sequinned ee  
Fin, fjord, fishickie, daith tae the net  
Doon in faddoms o foam, sweem free  
Swye in time tae the cod quartet  
Halibut, whitin, sole an hake  
Fin, fjord, fishickie, daith tae the net  
Roon the corals an reefs we raik  
Foo we jink tae the cod quartet!  
Wee line dauncers, sea-fowk aa  
Fin, fjord, fishickie, daith tae the net  
Shimmy an shakk frae the shark's blaik mawe  
See us flee in the cod quartet!

Far the Atlantic brakks its waves  
Fin, fjord, fishickie, daith tae the net  
We rype moofus frae seamens' graves  
Turn in time frae the cod quartet!

## e wi Dug an Gull

Dyod ay! Tae see the washin steer  
In Crovie's backies by the pier  
Tae sniff the buckets fu o rotten  
Orrals, the dulse-stank, unforgotten  
Guff o the sea, an hear the win  
Howlin aroon each wheelie bin.

Dae blobs o jeely-fish ay lan  
Like snot, alang this fishy stran?  
Dae fishers still pyke fooshtie scales  
Aff o their sarks wi briny nails?

Dis morning still bring wheechs o cauld  
Tae jeel the young an skelp the auld?  
Dis gloamin time bring mair soor bree  
Ower Crovie's stanes, frae Crovie's sea?

An eftir, fin the stars come oot  
Dis ae dug powk wi snochrin snoot  
Hopin fur ferlies he micht chaw  
Or his the gull clean rypit aa?  
Dae shags still shauchle ower the sea?  
An are there buckies, still fur tea?

ed Goods

The urban trees staun sterk, alane,  
Up till their queats in gowden smush  
An ilkie blatterin, bowfin win  
Gars mair leaves birl in the doonrush

The Xmas lichts bleeze in the air  
The greasy cassies skyte wi rain  
The bus is thrang wi oot-gaun fowk  
Grey tears blear ilkie windae-pane

Dowped in ma seat I'm settin oot:  
A ceilidh, friens, a festive oor  
I'm diddlin a gleg strathspey  
An takk nae tent o Winter's clour

A hoodie dichts its vampire beak  
Doon its funereal flappin duds  
A bairn in wellies stauns ootby  
Wytes fur the bus in puils o dubs

I think on orchards as a bairn  
I stood aneth, the sweet fruit caught  
An on the windfaas in the wid  
That rummled bruised, an didna stot  
Ae meenit, wheeplin a tune,  
The neist, I'm laired, heid on the grun  
Somelike the rowin o a pirn  
It stitches steeked, its threid ootrun.

culum for Excellence

I'm a real top-teen in the day's Academy  
A confident individual, that's me. See on a bus?  
I hae tae be seen tae be believed.

I can clear the deck in meenits,  
Spittin doon semmits...  
Takk Sleepin Beauty yonner  
Mebbe she's deid.  
Divn't auld fowk gie ye the scunner?  
She'd wauken if I skelp her on the heid  
I happy-slap a pensioner a day.  
Nae my wyte, Missus Social Wirker Thinggy  
See, naebody iver showed me foo tae play.  
(This is the cue fur as ye bams tae greet)  
Bit I'm a successful learner  
An effective contributor tae mayhem, communal keech.

I am tomorrow's citizen, by the way  
Interactin in fitbaa stooshies  
Touchin up barmaids' titties  
Problem solvin foo tae brakk ma ASBO  
Spikkin ma wye roon panels  
Coontin ma chored gear  
Sharin ma stash o hash  
Wi the second year  
Explorin wyes tae scariffee the warld  
(It's social enterprise) . Ay, Turner Gallery,  
My graffiti's art.  
I ken ma richts..ye canna touch me pal  
I'm nae feart o some auld mingin fart  
Hit back, I'll say that yer a paedophile  
Here...let me kick yer coupon  
Takk it wi a smile.

Ratten

Some old fireplaces in Aberdeenshire weren't furnished with a 'swey' but a cross, called a 'runtle tree' inside the chimney. A chain hung from it with hooks for the cooking pot handles. The following rhyme is from the fragment of a verse (in italics) told to me by Catriona Low of Severin Publishing.

A ratten ran up the runtle-tree



Wi a reid bit liver in his throat,  
Cryin harras, barras, traps an trams  
This auld wife's clogs hae brunt ma coat! '

It's a puir-like thing fin there's meat laid oot  
Tae gar the teeth o a ratten watter  
An aa tae kindle ma nyaakit tail  
A curse on her piz, her pot, her platter!

May her steys be ticht an her dug takk skitter  
Her coo rin dry an her bairns hae plooks  
Her stovies birssle, her meat be girssle  
May rattens fatten in aa her neuks! '  
Comin o the Flamingos

Hae ye heard the news?  
Flamingos hae settled in Banchory  
They've taen ower the local heronry  
Pinchin the troot ooto the herons' moos  
Fit's waur, reports confirm these birds are skyrie pink  
Fa fiver heard o a native Scottish bird that wis skyrie pink?  
Anely a freak has a beak like a flamingo  
Like it's daen ten roons in a fitba supporter stooshie

`They should aa flee back tae their kintra o origin'  
The hoodie craas complained.  
`We canna' replied the flamingos.  
'We're official asylum seekers,  
Noo that yer humans hae turned oor wids  
Intae lottery tickets,  
Daily Stars, bog roll an pairty hats'

The pheasants held their wheesht, as weel they micht  
Haein sneakit in at the dowp o the Roman legions  
Mind, they niver stray frae the ghetto o the trees  
They bide under sufferance, fodder fur towrist bullets

A twa three peacocks gaed a dweeble skirl  
Syne ran awa afore the hoolets clooked them  
The gulls were mair hospitable  
Welcomed the strangers in wi open wings.

` Welcome, brither flamingos' quo the gulls  
` We feel yer pain. We'll gie ye the guided tour  
0 faist food options...playgruns, rubbish tips  
An public parks. Naebody likes us either.  
An Oo la la, yer feathers luik real French.  
Mebbe we cud ceilidh in the glomain? '

Eirde is wide Tune: The Banks of the Ohio

The Eirde is wide, yet the Eirde is sma  
It needs the rain an the wattergaw  
For ilkie man, ilkie brierin tree  
Shares the sun an meen, wi the shiftin sea

I am the stoor on a Roman street  
I am the tear on a hameless geet  
I am the win in a Bronx Subway  
I am the tree on a Heilan brae

The wids that faa in a distant lan  
Teem the world's glaiss o its precious san  
An the knife that turns in the tiger's side  
Adds a wave o bluid tae the traivellin tide

The farrest bird heard the twin touers faa  
As the oceans rise in the meltin snaa  
A warld that's hurt is a warld in pain  
An the leaves turn black in the acid rain

I am the sang o the humpback whale  
I am the wheech o the birlin gale  
I am the wing o the hoodie craa  
For the world's pulse, beats in us as

ble Ailments

The measles are spreidin roon Glesga  
There's swatches o plooks aboot Troon  
There's a North/Sooth divide o the shingles  
There are spells o the pox in Dunoon

There's a warnin o asthma in Alva  
A wheen cauld's comin in frae the west  
Bit the flu in Birkhaa it is dwinin awa  
(Tho Camilla, clart Vic on her chest)  
□

tterels

In ilkie family  
Ane's the stang o the trump  
Masel an ma brither  
War anely the panjotterels

Dinosaur

A dinosaur! A dinosaur!  
We niver saw the like afore!  
The beastie makks the bairnies roar  
fae Sumburgh tae Singapore!

A dinosaur! His muckle moo  
has teeth as lang as knives  
An fin he roars, the tabby  
losses as its seven lives!

A dinosaur! His ilkie snore  
caas continents ajee.  
An fin he piddles, lochs arise  
as braid's the Irish sea.

A dinosaur! Fit dis he ett?  
A herd o coos for tea!  
He sweels it doon wi a lagoon  
o vats o barley bree

A dinosaur! His heid's amang  
the aeroplanes an stars  
His legs are pylons, tail's as lang's  
a traffic jam o cars.

A dinosaur's a fearsome breet  
fin it lies doon tae claw,  
Bit fin it daunces, hae a care  
skyscrapers stert tae faa!

### Skiffie's Rant

Ye students are aa the same.  
Playin at wirk...nae like yer earnin a livin.  
Dinna ken yer alive. Ye dinna pit breid on the table  
Fur a family. Na, aa fur yersel, tae get blooterred  
Doon the union.

I'd show ye. Oot on yer lug if ye were mine.  
Twenty years I've mopped these bluidy fleers  
Dae I complain? Hot flushes, piles, bad veins I jist get on.

See yer hauns? Saft as fooshtie dough  
Widna ken a hard day's graft if it stood up  
An skelped ye on the neb. Shitehooses the lot o ye.  
Cairryin on like ye war still in hippens.

Students? Mair wirk than they're wirth  
Bleedin waste o space.  
Gap year? Gap year? I'm lucky if I get a wikk awa  
Ower in Majorca, or awa at Nairn.  
Far wid ye be if naebody cleaned yer fleers?  
E-coli city, that's far ye'd be.  
Ay, that dichtit the grin frae aff yer face.

### sson in Bedlam

Lichtlie this gin ye daur:  
Here Robert Burns knelt and kissed the mools: Robert Garioch

Twa trees grew reets in Tarlan.  
Their seed in Embro briered  
Doon in the Cap an Feather  
Close a new Scots poet steered.

Rab suckled at Kildrummy's briest,

Forbes' bluid ran through his veins  
Thon littlin, schuled at Niddry's Wynd,  
bigged cairns frae chukkie stanes

Frae bursery, tae student-chiel, tae clerk....  
a scunnerin dule  
In club an howf he raised the reef,  
a blithesome, uncut jewel

He'd thrive on porter, haddock, gin.  
Daft days o luv an sang  
A caunle-lowe quick smored o licht,  
wud waes cam thick an strang

Auld Reekie wis his subjeck,  
as gutter bares a cod  
He laid her open, wame on hoch,  
on poetry's feastin brod

There wis nae line bi Fergusson  
rang onythin bit true  
Nae listenin critic happed his lugs  
an skelloched Gardez-Loo

A dram, a faa, a raivellin,  
cracked cup o fragile harns,  
The wit that jibbled like a spring  
wis fyled bi fey consarns

Lang Sandy Wid the surgeon,  
stepped in tae see him syne  
Oh far 's the bonnie laddie,  
could cheer us wi a rhyme?

He sat, the King o Bedlam,  
weirin a croon o strae  
Grey rattens fur his courtiers,  
a patch-breek monarchy

The fowk in his tint kintra,  
that ootlined pit o Hell  
Skirled frae the foun o misery,

each in his cauldrie cell

The world wis Rabbie's oyster,  
and he, the pearl inbye  
At twenty-fower the play wis ower.  
Daith's knell, his lullaby.

ister for Boris the Shelt Tune: The Barnyards o Delgaty  
Boris the shelt raised £100,000.00 for children's cancer charity. He was voted  
Aberdeen's Champion of Charity in 2002, and appeared in Mel Gibson's  
Braveheart. He died aged 24.

In Aiberdeen there wirked a shelt, a muckle Clydesdale lued bi aa  
The Gentle Giant o the North, fa bedd in Geordie Walker's staa

Chorus:

Clydesdales come an Clydesdale's gyang. This ane gaen tae Hollywood  
The stallion famed in buik an film, the shelt cad Boris aabody lued

Sivven hunner shows an waddin days, Wi George his maister at the reyns,  
There's mony's the merriege album hauds Braw Boris hurlin loons an quines.

He'd wauk-on roles in Emmerdale. In Hamlet, aince, he tuik a pairt  
Bit at the littlins' hospital, twis there he won the bairnies' hairts

A hunner thoosan pun he raised, this champion o charity  
This hero o a heeze o buiks, the shelt fa shunned celebrity

Sae fare ye weel ye kindly breet, there's nae anther hauf yer wirth  
Fa ploood a dreel tae help mankind, the Gentle Giant o the North

14.If It Wisna for the wirk o the Builders

Tune: If it Wisna for the Wirk o the Weavers

Chorus

If it wisna for the builders, far wid we be?  
Far wid we keep oor cars, computers an TV?  
Far wid we stash oor cookers, beds an lingerie  
If it wisnae for the wirk o the builders?

Davie has a bungalow, wi cairriage lichts sae braw  
Tae licht up ilkie veesitor that enters in the haa  
Tae bigg his wee bit Shangri-la a forest hid tae faa  
Bit that wisnae ony tcyauve tae the builders  
Mary's in a skyscraper aside the sanny dunes  
Wi a budgie an a bidie-in an sivven teenage loons  
Bit the ocean level's risin, we hae read it in the runes  
She'll be sennin fur the flitters nae the builders  
Jimmy had a but-n ben upon a heather brae  
It wis skelp amids the pathie o the planner's motorway  
Bit progress is a steamroller ye canna keep at bay  
Sae his hoosie will be flattened bi the builders  
Aince we hid a kintraside aroon oor bonnie toon  
Wi fermes an breemy hill-taps each a jewel in oor croon  
Noo we've miles an miles o hooses for they're caain widdies doon  
In the urban keech that's biggit bi the builders

Aince towrists cam tae Scotland tae see its bonnie views  
Noo buses dae the highlight tour o cul de sac an mews  
Wi music o pneumatic drills tae jog ye fin ye snooze  
For it's taa taa tae the kintra say the builders

Aa ye tods an bawds on mavisies that settle on the Ben  
The peesie an the ptarmigan in ilkie snawy glen  
Ye'd better sign up for a zoo or find yersel a pen  
Afore ye maun skedaddle fur the builders

## Gairdens

Butterflees flap ower lids o wheelie bins  
Sypin sheets an breeks o bidie-ins  
Wallop an skelp on ilkie washin line  
Graffiti peels on boord an traffic sign

A lassie raxxes up, pegs stapped in moo  
Feet splayed in bauchles, sun upon her broo  
Her littlin stots upon a trampoline  
Heid shaved like heroes frae the TV screen

Her airms are blue tattooes o barbed wire

She boozed as nicht an noo her throat's on fire  
A spurgie tries his mate fur a wing trimmler  
A wasp droons in a halflin's cider tumbler

The Simmer backies hotter in the heat  
Costa Del Aiberdeen. Gallus, bit sweet.

Ootin

Iona, Shona, Rhona, wi Angus, Fergus, Neil  
Gaed up tae tour the Heilans wi a labster in a creel  
Ben MacDuih's yeti, ett Fergus fur a snack.  
The Carlin-Wife o Morven, threw Angus doon a crack.  
Iona, syne, an Rhona, war cowpit in a gale  
An the monster kent as Nesy swallaed Neil an Shona hale

Sae dinna book yer holidays far ghaists an monsters heeze  
Yer safer in the Congo than in the Hebrides.

e Bairn's Blues

My mither is my granny, cause my ma is on her back  
Wi a needle in her airm an her body fu o smack  
I dinna get tae see her. She's wastit ilkie day  
An because o pervs an muggers, I bide inside tae play  
I think I hae a faither. It micht be Joe, or Sam  
Or Abdul or Mohammed. Whyles, I winner fa I am

Bit still, I keep on growin. I'm granny's special bairn  
Altho she's auld an crabbit. I'm fed an safe frae herm

An fin I'm big an wirkin, I think I'll emigrate  
Tae find a better world than this they caa the Welfare State.

Faa o the Warsaw Ghetto

An Owersett in Scots o swatches frae a 7-day anonymous diary screived in Polish  
bi a Jewess, fand in the ruins o the Ghetto eftir the 1943 uprisin



We're inbye a bunker. The soun o fitfaas  
A chap at the yett, jeels oor claik.  
The bunker's thrang wi fowk  
Ithers, chap, chap, sikkin a bield  
The air inbye sae fyaachie, ye'd gey near smore.  
Sae close, ye canna sleep.

O a suddenty, ootby, aathin's cad tae crocanation  
Quaet fills the chaumer. Sodjers cercle the hoose  
Sikkin tae catch us. The anely weapon we hae  
Is oor deid seelence.

This is oor tenth day hidden in this bunker  
Ettlin tae live, sikkin the richt tae live  
The air is wersh, oor bodies lowp wi flechs.  
Germans are sheetin ilkie Jew they fin.

Cut aff frae the warld, we dinna spikk o rescue  
Ootby in the cassies, aa's in a lowe.  
Factories, shops, hale hooses...  
The ghetto's a sea o flames ayont salvation  
Daith's the King-pin here. Nae incam and nae ootgaun  
Mony smore on the rikk, skreichin tae God `Hae mercy on us'  
God's as quaet's a sphinx, makks nae repon.  
An ye, the nations, foo are ye sae mute?  
Dinna ye ken the eyn o the warld has come?  
Dante's Inferno...Hell is here on the Eirde  
We live eenoo by the day, the oor, the meenit.

Terrorist, he watches An owersett in Scots o a poem bi Wislawa Szymborska

The bomb'll caa aa tae smush in the howf at twenty past ane.  
Noo, it's anely saxteen meenits by.  
Some'll hae time tae cam in,  
Ithers tae gyang.

The terrorist's already on the tither side  
Hyne eneuch awa tae protect him frae herm  
An, weel, it's like the picters:  
A wummin in a yalla jaiket, she enters  
A chiel in derk glesses gyangs oot

Loons in jeans are newsin.  
Sixteen meenits by, an fower secunts.

The wee'er ane, he's lucky, mounts his scooter  
But the heicher lad wauks in.  
Seeventeen meenits an forty secunts.

A quine, she wauks by, a green ribbon in her hair.  
Bit a bus o a suddenty, hides her.  
Echteen meenits past. The quine's vanished.

Wis she gyte eneuch tae gyang in or wis she nae?  
We'll ken fin they bring oot the bodies.  
Nineteen meenits by.

Naebody else ettles tae gyang in  
On tither haun, a creashie bald chiel leaves  
Bit seems tae raik his pooches  
At ten secunts tae twenty, he's back tae luik fur his tint gloves.  
It's twenty by ane.

Time, foo it dauchles. Surely it's noo.  
Nae, nae yet  
Ay, noo.  
The bomb caas aa tae stoor.

## 20. In Praise o ma Sister An owersett in Scots a poem bi Wislawa Szymborska

Ma sister disnae screive poems  
An I dinna think, o a suddenty, she'll stert screivin poems.  
She's the marra o her mither fa didna screive poems  
An like her faither fa didna screive poems either.  
Aneth ma sister's reef I feel safe:  
Ma sister's man wad rather dee than screive poems  
An- this is beginnin tae soun like a fand poem—  
Nane o ma kin screive poems either.  
There's nae auld poems in ma sister's files  
An there arenae ony new anes in her haunbag.  
An fin ma sister sikks me tae denner  
I ken she disnae ettle tae read me her poems.

Her soups are byordnar weel vrocht  
There's nae coffee skailt ower her manuscripts.

There are mony faimlies fur naebody screives poems  
Bit far they dae- it's rarely jist ae body  
Whyles, barderie splooters doon in linns o generations  
Makkin frichtenin birlin puils in mutual feelins.

Ma sister screives a rale gweed spukken prose  
An her screivin's keepit for holiday postcairds  
The wirds promisin the same ilkie year  
That fin she's hame  
She'll tell us  
Aa  
Aa  
Aa  
About it.

s An owersett in Scots o a poem bi Tadeusz Rozewicz

Daith winna correct  
A single line o verse.  
She's nae a pruif-reader  
She's nae an easy-osy  
Wifie editor.

A puir metaphor's aybydaun  
A nyaff bard fa's deid  
Is a nyaff deid bard.  
A scunner scunners eftir daith  
A gype keeps up his glekit claik  
Frae ayont the mools

o Miracles An owersett in Scots o a poem bi Nina Cassian

Since ye wauked oot on me  
I'm growin bonnier bi the oor.  
I glimmer like a corp in the derk.  
Naebody sees foo roon an sherp  
Ma een hae gotten,

Foo ma body luiks like a gless urn  
Foo I haud up ferlies  
In the threidbare cloots o ma hauns  
The wye I can staun, though criplit bi lust.  
Na, there's jist thon coorseness cerclin  
Ma heid like a bricht, soorin halo.

legeAn owersett in Scots o a poem bi Nina Cassian

I ett the tongue o the stag  
The thick stag-tongue that eesed  
Tae lick the leaves, the burn;  
On it I chawed, joco.

I ett the maet o the stag  
The virr-like meat at his thrapple  
I ett his hairt an syne  
On his antlers, hung ma mac.  
Betimes, the huives, neb, skin  
Aathin un-etttable  
Lay skittered on the grun  
Ay bleedin on the grun.

ner sur I'herbe An owersett in Scots o a poem bi Tu Fu

It's a pleisur tae boord the ferry in the sunlicht  
As the late licht mells inno gloamin;  
The saft win toozles the river, rimmed wi faem.

We meeve throw the aisles o bamboo  
Forrit tae the cweelin watter-lilies.  
The young lads drap ice inno drinks  
While the quines slice a sonsie lotus reet.

Abeen us, a swatch o cloud spreids, derkenin  
Like a watter-merk on silk.  
Jot this doon quick afore the rain!

Dinna dowp doon yonner! The cushions war syped wi the shooer.  
Already the lassies hae drooked their crammosie skirts.

The dearies murn their bonnie peintit faces, mascara straiokit pooder.

The win blatters oor boatie, the moorin-line  
Has rubbit a sair in the bark o the dowie sauch tree  
The foun o the curtains are patternet wi river faem.  
Like a knife in a melon, Autumn havvers Simmer.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Witnesses

My ex-husband, serving in the RAF  
Was ordered, once, in Aden, to appear  
To witness judgement passed on local neds  
Shackled, upon the whim of some emir

In black bulled boots his squad stood, straight's a latte  
A blade chopped off five heads and that was that.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Witnessing; Scots Poems

## The Druid Stane

A scutter it wis tae ploo the grun  
Roon rock wi its granite grain  
Far better, he thocht, tae howk it up  
Sae he liftit the Druid Stane

He flittit it tae a nearhaun wid  
Fowk queriet fit he'd dane  
He lauched at thon fur the styte it wis  
Thocht nocht o the pouer o stane

The cheil fa chaunced his life an luck  
Bi shiftin the Druid Stane  
E'er three short years had passed an fled  
His fortunes gaed on the wane

E'er five derk years gaed ower the lan  
His banes they lay alane  
A warnin tae aa fa'd raise the wrath  
O the ghaists o the Druid Stane

Spree Book Offer, Evening Express: Half Leg Waxing for £10.00

I wauked the streets o Aiberdeen  
(Ae hairy leg, ane bauld)  
A chiel cried 'Quine are ye fur real-  
Dis ae leg feel the cauld? '

I sat doon by the Mither Kirk  
(Ae bauld leg, an ane hairey)  
'It's alolpoecia, ' some said,  
'It's hermless, tho it's scary.'

A bizzim in McDonald's, quo  
'Thon bauld leg wi ane hairy  
It makks ye luik, I hae tae say  
Like some hauf-shaved canary.

An noo I'm savin up tae buy  
A wig, fur my puir bauldy leg  
An nere again will I be seen  
Wi ae bare-nyaakit peg.

### Winter Beach

Win-cairdit clouds blaa ben the cauld rife lift  
Syne quaeten. Hog-reek hunkers in san-dunes  
Grey mirled watter-lumps o jeelin waves  
Splooter tae smush like Norseman's drappit runes

Bedrizzled scurries skreich abeen the tide  
A glaisterie foreneen, , snaa draps weety doon  
The stran is teem o aa bit fish an birds  
As ane bi ane, the meenits pass, an droon

### Scots Owersetts of Vietnamese Poems

To Love: Ngô Xuân Di?u

#### Tae Lue

Tae luv is tae dee a thochtie in the hairt,  
for fin ye lue, can ye be sure yer lued?  
Ye gie sae muckle, sae little ye get back -  
the ither lets ye doon or luiks awa.  
Thegither or apairt, it's aye the same

The meen turns fite, flooers dwine, the soul's forehooied,  
for fan ye lue, can ye be sure yer lued?  
To lue is tae dee a thochtie in the hairt.

They'll be tint inbye a derk dowie lan,  
thon passionate sowels fa gang in search o luv.  
An life will be a desert teemed o blytheness,  
an luv will tie the knot that hauds tae sorra.  
Tae luv is tae dee a thochtie in the hairt.



The Dress Of Ha Dong Silk: Nguyen Sa, (1932 - 1998)

The Dress o Ha Dong Silk

In Saigon heat o a suddenty I feel cweel  
because ye weir a dress o Ha Dong silk  
I've aywis lued thon colour in a dress -  
ma poems are still vrocht o raw fite silk.

I still can mynd ye dowpit thonner, short-haired,  
whyle aa aroon me autumn seemed sae lang.  
In ma heid I drew yer portrait there an then,  
unsteekin yetts, I displayed it in ma sowel.

Trystin wi ye aince, I fand it perfeck blytheness  
trystin wi ye twice was heiven for ma sowel.  
Ma student poems, like a knowe, grew up- -  
yer een becam the wine tae makk me foo.

Ye spakk nae wird: I heard a tune.  
Ye gied nae a glisk: I saw a braid blue lift.  
Upwird I luikit tae ye, wi prayerfu een,  
an in pure barderie raxxed for yer fite sleeve.

Ye cam, ye gaed - nae warnin. Aye, I ken  
that it will rain or sheen wi nae excuse.  
Bit foo takk aff wioot a wird? I'm left  
tae caa ye in waefu poems, echoed souns.

I'm left tae bann ma een that didna spikk,  
tae misca ma poems that said eeseless wirds.  
Yer gaen- -regret noo fuspers on ma lips,  
an on ma shouders days wye wechtier yet.

Far are ye noo, ma autumn wi short hair?  
For me please keep the dress o Ha Dong silk.  
I've aywis lued that colour in a dress -  
please keep it, ma luv poem o fite silk

Oh Stone: Nguyen Do (1959-)

Ochone, Stane

I staun in meditation afore the smush o Ankor,  
Gin stane can be blootered like thon, shattered, fit aboot human life?  
Ochone, stane,  
let me etch a plea for peace.

In the eyn, in ilkie war,  
faiver wins, the fowk aywis lose.

Tree Colours Throwe Rikk: H? Dz?nh (1916-1991)

The Tree Colours Throwe Rikk

Wechty wi memories on ma wye hame  
I saw the gloamin slawly smore oot the sun.  
A waefu maen echoed amangst the clouds.  
An the birdies still devauled in the wids  
While blin-foo wins were stapped wi blythesome luve.

Is this the age-auld stang o grue  
That drives ma sowel deep doon the nicht?

Jist as a gangrel I am  
I fin nae comfort in the derkenin hues.  
Takkin ma hairt tae be the wids,  
Thinkin ma sowel maun be the lift.

Hamedrauchtit, syne, I kinnle a smoke  
Lattin blae plufferts rise tae the trees.

Scots Owersetts of Four Yiddish poems

.Where Do The Words Disappear?  
By Reyzi Zhikhlinski,

Far dae the wirts gae  
O the fowk fa spikk tae thirsels  
On the streets o New York?

Dae they jist drap on the cassies  
As nochtie stoor?  
Or mebbe they stravaig about  
Aywis forehooied amang the planets  
As fite, lanely starnies?

Far dae the wirds gae  
O aa the lanely fowk fa spikk tae thirsels  
In the muckle toons o the warld?

□

Snow  
By Reyzi Zhikhliniski,

It's snaain  
Draps o bluid grow feinter  
On the butcher's fite peenie  
Letters leave fite signs  
Leave ma thochts  
A fite, teem park

The Violin Clock  
By Rivke Kope.

I hae a wag at the waa  
In the makk o a fiddle  
Wi a haun like a bow.  
The oorn gangs by wi a sang  
Times rowes intae music

It his its ain orchestra o screws  
Steekit bi a gowden yett  
Aathin is redd up wycely  
Fur the bandmaister o the warld

Play wag at the aa  
Wi the wheel o time  
I'll ower gie ma langins tae ye  
An bliss the haun that sows  
The bliss o souns

On the Tip of the Knife  
By Rivke Kope.

Ma sangs raxx oot on a pilla o shadda  
Like auld vergins.  
Whyles, I takk them ooto their hidie-hole  
An I read.  
Bit I canna thole that they should gae tae naebody!

A sang maun depairt frae its makkar  
Like a bairn frae its parents' cercle  
Nae lie hunkered in a shadda  
Wytin fur a wee birdie  
Tae cam oot an catch the notes  
Inbye its reenge

An the Dee cam roarin wildly

Twa yowes stude claikin ahin the waa,  
'Fan'll this onding weir awa?  
Gin we arena droont, we'll be smored in snaa! '  
An the Dee cam roarin wildly.

A pucklie coos, clean sypit wi rain  
Watched a caravan wintin a windae pane,  
Gyang sailin alang the dreepin glen  
An the Dee cam roarin wildly

The waves they chappit at hoose an ha,  
Gaed lowpin in ower yet an waa  
An aye the win wis wallop in aa  
An the Dee cam roarin wildly.  
The kirkyaird, thrang wi the local deid,  
Swalled up as the watter reached each heid  
Auld beens gaed rattlin, gey near freed  
An the Dee cam roarin wildly

The auld wife lookit on wi a girn  
'I played an swam in this bonnie burn  
Yet faist as a blink can Natur turn

An the Dee cam roarin wildly

Claude Monet: The Magpie

The pyot cocks on a cauldrieffe yett  
Aa its lane in the mids o Yule  
A bunnet o snaa's on ilkie stane  
Sae cauld it cud freeze the hairt o Dule  
The branches craik wi their wecht o fite  
The shaddas raxx ower the happit grun  
The pyot rochles its feathers aince  
Ae wattery ee on the snaa-blin sun

Aa its lane on a cauldrieffe yett  
A single pyot... Daith is near  
A drap o the Deil's bluid on his tongue  
Fit is he craikin? Dinna speir!

Ode Tae A Haggis

Here's tae oor Scottish haggis bag  
We lue tae reese ye oot an brag  
Aboot yer pouer; as guid as parritch  
Fa'd think, ye wir a Grecian sausage  
Explodin in The Clouds ae day  
In Aristophanes auld play!

The Lion Rampant

We Scots are a free reenge breed  
See the diaspora? Like thrissle seeds in a gale  
We're aawye, ony wee crack or neuk'll dae  
Fur us tae saddle, trailin oor reets  
Like navel towes, tied tae Mither Caledonia

Stirling, Bannockburn, Falkirk,  
Otterburn, Flodden, Culloden  
The bluid o a warrior tribe rins ben oor veins  
Bratach rìoghail na h-Alba's

The sail that steers oor boatie.

Hector MacKay in Quebec weirs  
The Lion rampant on his t-shirt,  
Proodly on Hogmanay

Elroy Zanzibar-Farquharson in Jamaicay  
Has stukken a lion magnet on his fridge  
'Och ay the noo' he says  
As he cracks open anither tinnie

Felicity Menzies jogs aroon New York  
Wi a lion rampant frontin the peak o her cap  
She ains twa cds o the Glesga polis pipe band

In Majorca, Rab C. Buchan  
Dichts the san frae his taes  
Wi a Lion rampant tool

Thon lion gaes aawye  
Pencils, shortbreid tinnies, car stickers  
It's aa tae dae wi attitude  
Nemo me impune lacessit  
Mess wi me an I'll batter ye.

The Leck, Lancashire

Gaun reeshlin bi the schule o Cowan Brig  
Wee burn wi muckle stanes set in its foun  
Alang its banks bairns eesed tae wanner lowse,  
Tuik aff their sheen an hose, dooked up an doon

An airt tae dream, tae dwaum, tae takk the air  
Far the wee burn teems ower intae the plain  
Boortree & saughs, an hazel busses growe  
Grippin their secrets, sylvan an arcane

Sheena Blackhall

# The Wizard O The North (40 Scots Poems)

WIZARD O THE NORTH.

There is a wizard in the North  
He makks a magic brew  
That changes as the wirdies  
That are bidin in yer moo!

In English, fowk say What and Who  
And When and Why and Where  
In Glesga toun, it's Whit an Wha  
An Whaur that they say there.

Bit ower the Doric loons an quines  
The wizard shakks his wand  
Fur it's Fit, Fa, Fan an Far we say  
Aa roon the Nor' East Land!

Should ye faa upon an English stone,  
In Glesga it's a stane  
They'll tell ye ower the telephone  
They've hurt their funny-bane  
In Aiberdeen, it's steen an been  
The wizard's wark again!

A crow's an English birdie  
He's a crow in Glesga toun  
Bit the crow becomes a craa  
Fin he flees oot the wizard's gown!

On England shines the silver moon  
A muin ower Glesga's seen  
Bit the wizard casts his spell on us  
Up here, we see a meen!

In Scotland, they may tell ye tae  
'Awa an bile yer heid.'  
In England, boiling heads would be  
An odd pastime indeed  
Bit fur eence, the wizard's sleepin

Fur he disna bat an ee...  
It's the same biled heid in Glesga,  
Embros, Fitty, an Dundee!

I think I ken the secret  
o the wizard's magic laws...  
It's about far bairns come frae  
an the wye ye wirk yer jaas!

Windae Cleaner's Guide tae Tenement Block Eicht; A Concrete Poem Totally  
dependent on whether fowk hae cleaned their Windaes or no....

A LASSIE PITTEN LIPSTICK ON  
A LETTER IN A LUVER'S HAUN

A GEISHA FLUTTERIN A FAN  
TWA NURSES ON A REID DIVAN

A PLOOKY SALESMANSHAVES HIS FACE  
A BRIDESMAID PREENS HER WADDIN LACE

A BUDGIE FLECHIN IN A CAGE  
A BOOZY FAITHER IN A RAGE

A STUDENT BEERIET IN HIS BEUKS  
A POWSER REDDIN UP HER CLEUKS

THREE PLAITIES ON A TABLE TAP  
A BATHROOM WI A DREEPIN TAP

A PRESS WI ANELY AE CRACKED UP  
THE HINMAIST WINDAE'S BOORDED UP!

WEATHER FORECAST

A hurricane's blootered Dunoon!  
Ilkie reeftap blew aff o the toon!  
They flew past Big Ben at a quarter tae ten,  
Wi a wife in an auld flannel goon!



A moonsoon's brocht chaos tae Ayr.  
A doonpish at a fitbaa match there,  
Washed the goalie, the baa, and the players anna  
Like wee boaties, awa tae Turlair.

A blizzard as coorse as a vice,  
His turned hauf o Lumphanan tae ice.  
Ye can skyte throw the shire, like a penguin on fire,  
An reach Russia, withoot blinkin twice.

An earthquake his shook Aiberdeen.  
Marischal College is noo in the Green.  
Three quarters o Torry fell doon Rubislaw Quarry,  
And Northfield his flitted tae Skene.

A heatwave his frizzled Braemar.  
Aa the towrists hae meltit like tar.  
The troot in the burn, hae bin fried tae a turn,  
There's fish suppers frae Dess tae Cromar.

The weather cock jettted tae Spain.  
Says he'll nae be returnin again.  
This terrible weather has broken each feather  
And frozen the frills o his caimb.

Snaa, smirr, on-dings mochy an oorie  
We thole, forbyes drucht hett an stoorie  
Sae, gin ye ging oot, takk yer waukin buits stoot  
Yer wellies, bikini, an toorie.

#### R FAE A DISTRESSED HEIDIE

Dear Mrs McRae,  
About yer Sam,  
I doot we've expelled the little lamb.  
He birssled Miss Bruce wi bunsen burner,  
Drew fuskers ower a print bi Turner,  
Aa throw Science he played his trannie,  
Gied a Glesga kiss tae the jannie,  
Pit the gerbil up May Webster's Kilt,  
Kennin fine she's allegric tilt.

Smashed ilkie windae in the study,  
Said 'Fresh air is guid fur a body'.

The library books we canna read,  
He drapped them aa on the cleaner's heid.  
Last time the globe o the world wis seen,  
He wis stottin't aroon the bowlin green.

The Grampian region bus we hired  
Tae ging tae Skye, his bin retired  
Since your wee Sam clogged up its plugs,  
Wi a jar o glue an a pooch o bugs.  
Its the anely handwirk he's dane aa year,  
Apairt frae wreckin the art room floor  
Wi his bovver buits. He jist gid daft  
Fin telt that tattooin wisna craft.

The computor left fur repair last wikk.  
He gid it a tap wi a hockey stick.  
The public baths say they'd like tae batter  
Fa pit the crocodile inno the watter.  
I cud rin on, bit ma pen's run dry.  
Naebody can say we didna try!

The meenister prayed fur his soul's redemption  
Bit the Lord cried doon 'There's nae exemption  
Fur Sam McRae, as nae tae be vague,  
Yon vratch o a loon is a walkin plague.  
Enclosed is his schule wirk, R.I.P.  
Tae Mrs McRae,  
Yours faithfully

apers

Sklaik, claik,  
It's aa in the press,  
Waddins an daiths  
Frae Nigg tae Dess,  
Boxies o crosswirds  
Far ye've tae guess,  
The answers. And recipes,

Sales o cars,  
Fit yer future is in the stars,  
Fa's been born  
And fa's bin jyled,  
Fa hid their simmer holiday spyled  
Ads fur jyners,  
Ads fur sparkies,  
Ads fur videos, Boots and Markies,  
Features on fitbaa,  
Fashion and Pets,  
Stories on fairmers,  
Skiffies an vets,  
Politics, photies  
O icy weather  
Provost an pensioners  
Snapped thegither  
Sklaik, claik,  
It's aa in the press  
Aa the blether  
Frae Nigg tae Dess.

## 6.VICTORIA AN ALBERT

Victoria an. Albert had skiffies galore  
An Empire that raxxed frae Sudan tae Lahore

In the toons o their time  
There war thoosans o slums  
An wee shargeret bairnies  
War made tae clean lums.

There wis cholera, typhoid,  
Diphtheria as weel  
An a muckle black tawse  
Fin ye gaed tae the skweel

They hung fowk, they wheeped fowk  
Syne prayed fur their sowels  
An fed fowk in Peer Hooses  
Parritch in bowls.

Victoria an Albert  
They baith liked tae bide  
Hyne ootower frae Lunnon  
On bonnie Deeside  
An here in the toon,  
Thon braw twa ye'll still meet  
Fur the cooncil's named efter them  
Park, dock, an street!

## WAR 2

Is thon the bombers comin?  
Is thon the siren's wail?  
Wi the black oot, aathin's hidden  
Bit they will drap a shell  
On Pittodrie, Torry, Seaton,  
If the slichtest licht they see  
I maun hurry tae the shelter  
They nicht drap a bomb on me!

Is thon the wikkly shoppin?  
Carrot cake an breid an jam?  
Oh it's queues, mair queues, an rationin  
An tins an tins o spam

Uncle Alex oot at Udney's  
Nearly oot the door wi fleas  
Since a trainie frae the Gorbals  
Brocht him ten evacuees.

Is thon the evenin paper?  
Is there ony word o da?  
He's fechtin Hitler's Nazis  
In a country hyne awa

Mr Churchill said he hid tae,  
Sae the warld nicht be free.  
I winner fit oor bombers dae  
Tae bairns in Germany?

## 8.HINGIN OOT THE WASHIN

Wallop! Wallop! Fite as skurries,  
Hippens rug on winny days,  
Nummer 12 his got a babby,  
See her peggin oot his claes!

Dreepin! Dreepin! Mr Baxter's  
Straikit dungareees doon hing,  
He's a peinter ower the Winter,  
Dells the gairdens in the Spring.

Mrs Thamson's draaers are lacy,  
See them dauncin on the line!  
Jiggin there, wi skirt that Tracy  
Bocht this wikk, the same as mine!

Jiggle wiggle! Sally Biggle's  
Breeks are lowpin up an doon,  
Bricht's a lark wi her man's sark  
An her wee dother Jenny's goon!

Flichter flachter! Granny's duvet  
Wags its airms like a ghaist  
Thamson's dug his stole ma T-shirt  
Mammy! Daddy! Catch it faist!

## IC FOOD RAP

Birssle, birssle sing the twa broon kippers,  
Caught fur the grill bi the North East skippers.  
Oatcakes, cornflakes, da likes haddies,  
Weetabix fur us! cry growin laddies.

Granda's suppin up pease meal brose.  
Gyad, yon's scunnerin. Haud yer nose.  
Granda's teeth's in a wee fite mug,  
Doon gaes the pease meal glug glug glug.

Mollie the collie chaws an auld coo's been.  
The catty gnaws a ratty wi its milk an cream.

Skweel denne's trendy, mine's a pyoke  
0 chips wi a burger an a can o coke.

Kali frae Bali in classroom three,  
Swallaes her chippataes wi a cup o tea.  
Dod Jean an Donna sit doon tae dine,  
On a parten an a labster frae the ocean brine.

Hame tae teas- snuff the smells as roon,  
Hairy tatties wyte fur Willie Broon,  
Pizza fur Peter brocht frae Italy,  
Omelette fur Jessie bocht in gay Paree,  
Stir fry chukken jist fur Mary Anne,  
Paella fur Bella, an chilli fur Sam.

Mary Buchan's waukin back tae stovies,  
Mrs Giuseppi's dishin up anchovies,  
Jimmy May'll hae a plate o skirlie,  
Cullen Skink is on the plate fur Shirley,  
An I can tell bi the sea fish bree,  
There's buckies bylin on the hob fur me.

On wi the jammies, suppertime noo  
Shortbreid cocoa, my kyte's foo! ☐

#### CHECK OOT QUINE'S LAMENT

Tatties, neeps, an ingin,  
Poother fur the wash,  
Wullie's needin new sheen,  
Grip, skyte, flash.

Sweeties, ale, some flooer,  
A tinnie wi a bash.  
I'm wirkin like robot,  
Grip, skyte, flash.

Safties, glaisses, bacon,  
Intment fur a rash,  
Ma hoose is like a midden,  
Grip, skyte, flash.

Mealie jimmies, ganzie,  
Cheque, or card, or cash,  
Ma dowp is dottled sittin,  
Grip, skyte, flash.

Aathin's in a hurry,  
Fowk in sic a hash,  
Customers, anonymous.  
Grip, skyte, flash.

A trolly like Ben Nevis!  
Michty fit a fash!  
I'm scunnert an I'm foonert.  
Grip, skyte, flash.

Noo ma shift is endin.  
Beans an orange squash.  
Hame tae dee the hoosewirk  
Up, oot dash!

#### 11.S.O.S.

S.O.S. S.O.S. I am a phone box in distress!  
Jeannie Murphy's quine wis greetin,  
Said she caught her boyfriend cheatin.

Big Joe Christie's giro's tint,  
Phoned the Broo tae sae he's skint.

Auld Ma Sangster's neebor telt her,  
Vandals smashed the new bus shelter.

Jocky Todd is stottin fu.  
Baxter's laddie's sniffin glue.  
S.O.S S.O.S. I am a phone box in distress!  
If the news I gie is bad,  
Ten tae wan the fowk get mad,  
An they catch me by the lug,  
Gie ma wires an heid a rug.

Takk me Lord, frae cooncil scheme  
Tae be a phone box on the meen!

#### RAPER FAIMLY

Skyscraper faimly it maun be a chore,  
Bidin twenty storeys frae yer ain front door.  
Bi day, ye've gulls fur neebors, syne ye've stars aa nicht.  
Save on the electric wi the meen fur licht.

Skyscraper faimily, it's aff heich yer hoose.  
Div ye keep a bat there, far we nicht hae a moose?  
Fit a tapsalteerie wunner o a street  
Families at yer heid, ay an ithers at yer feet!

Skyscraper faimiy, dis yer washin dry?  
Dis yer mither peg it onno rainbows in the sky?  
Div ye get a hurl on a passin aeroplane?  
Veesit Spain an Italy, syne hame fur tea again?

Skyscraper fainilly, ye've affa far tae faa  
Naewye tae play wi a bycycle or baa  
Fin the bairn greets, div ye hing her on a cloud?  
My, it maun be lanely, hyne abeen the crowd.

#### UNFEENISHED SYMPHONY

The unfeenished symphony...Far did it ging?  
Did it skip tae the coort o the Tsars?  
Did it hide in the tents o the traivellin fowk,  
A gypsy lament tae the stars?

Did it sail fur the deserts o Istanbul?  
Did it daunce in a Bedouin's drum?  
Did it flee on the wings o a passin bird  
Tae the mosques o Byzantium?

Did it thoom a hurl on a Simmer's cloud  
Tae be piped in Katmandu?  
Oh far did the unfeenished symphony gyang?



And far is it playin noo?

### IS IS THE HOOSE JACK BIGGIT

This is the hoose Jack biggit.  
This is the chiel  
That bedd in the hoose Jack biggit.

This is the chiel that merriet a wife  
That bore a bairn that bedd in the hoose Jack biggit.

This is the hoose Jack biggit.  
This the chiel  
That gaed tae wark tae keep the wife  
That bore him a bairn that bedd in the hoose Jack biggit.

This is the hoose Jack biggit.  
This is the chiel that needit a dram  
Tae thole his life wi his lovin wife  
That bore him a bairn that bedd in the hoose Jack biggit.

This is the hoose Jack biggit.  
This is the chiel  
That thrashed the bairn  
(The innocent bairn, fa did nae hairm)  
That bedd in the hoose Jack biggit.

This is the hoose Jack biggit.  
This is the bairn  
That grew tae a man,  
That took him a wife  
Tae share his life  
That bore him a bairn (an innocent bairn  
That did nae hairm)  
That he'll thrash an thraw  
Jist like his da  
That bedd in the hoose Jack biggit.  
This is the hoose Jack biggit□

### TRAFFIC LICHT'S SANG

I am a traffic licht. King o the road,  
Fin I flash my crimson ee,  
The Highway Code says larry an load  
Maun stop an takk tent o me.

I am a traffic licht. I see aa,  
The Fiesta, the Ford, the Fiat.  
I carena a hoot tho they cry 'Toot toot'  
Fin I say STOP, they dee it!

I am a traffic licht, happit in stoor,  
A skinnymalinkie craitur.  
It's certain sure I'm crabbit an soor  
Pollution's ma nearest neebor!

I am a traffic licht. I'm a limb  
O the law. A robot-sage, I canna abide road rage!  
I am a traffic licht. Oh, the sights  
Frae ma emerant een I spy!  
Back seat girners. Stott-bang learners,  
Saabs, as sossy's a sty!

I am a traffic licht. Cars an vans  
Are the life bluid flowin ben  
The lanes o ma veesion.  
Traffic stramash  
An hash is the world I ken!

## 16.HINNA GOTTA

Hinna gotta bairnie,  
Hinna gotta lass,  
Hinna gotta hope n' hell o  
Gettin ony brass.

Nae wirk fur young fowk,  
Wytin in the queue,  
Staunin wi the lay affs,  
Hingin roon the Broo.

Sez tae the cooncil  
'Hae ye a hoose fur me? '  
'Come back fin yer ninety,  
Yell get priority.  
If ye'd a timmer leg or a babby in a pram,  
Ye nicht staun a chaunce, son.  
Ging hame tae yer mam.'

Mam disna wint me.  
It's fecht, fecht, fecht.  
Mebbe she wis young hersel,  
In eichteen eichty eicht.

Dog pish, hashish,  
Aa I wint's a hame,  
Jist grant me ae wish;  
A place tae caa ma ain.  
Ony kinno cubbyhole,  
A place tae coorie doon,  
Then ye widna hae tae thole  
Me dossin roon the toon.

Birds hae their nesties,  
Biggit in a tree.  
Gerron Mister Cooncil man  
Bigg a hoose fur me!

## 17. Raggie Maggie

Raggie Maggie doon oor street's  
Got twa gley een, an pirn taed feet,  
Got sheen that wallop wide as flippers,  
Tide merks broon as toastit kippers.

Her shanks are thin as drinkin straas,  
Her shins are barked wi cloors an faas,  
Her skirt dock's verra cat's  
Like somethin the dug's bin chawin at.

Her ma weirs furry anklet beets,  
Knickers big as King Kong's sheets.

She keeps twa littlins in a pram,  
An the hale jing bang etts breid an jam.

Raggie Maggie doon oor streets  
Got lugs as broon as Irish peats,  
Teeth like traicle poored ower shail,  
Hair as ruggy's a collie's tail.  
Shot frae the gun o her twin bore snoot,  
Twa bogies flee, baith in an oot.

Raggie Maggie guffs o pee.  
Her da's run aff tae the Queen's Navee.  
Raggie Maggie! the bairnies cry  
Skirlin roon about her 'Penny fur the Guy! '

Maggie lauchs like she disna care,  
An cannily, cannily, climms the stair.  
Bit fin she sleeps in her cauld, hard, room,  
A prince steps forrit ooto the gloom,  
Aa nicht throw they bob an birl,  
Room the lums, far the Tom cats skirl.

Dearie

Gien her aathin,  
Best years o ma life.  
Cooker, fridge, TV.  
Indoor lavvy.

Niver bashed her aince,  
Wi siller, or skint.  
Fit mair  
Cud a wumman wint?

Doon the boozer,  
I'm Action Man  
Wi a ring pull can.  
She's at hame  
Aa her lane.  
Hoose like a midden!  
Is she affrontit?

Deil the grain!  
Armageddon!

Doon the boozer,  
I'm dynamite.  
Come hame fleein,  
Heich as a kite,  
That cheerie.  
Luiks at me  
Like, she'd like tae bite  
Ma dearie.

## 19. GHAISTS AN BOGLES

Incantations, seance claik,  
Occult charms an Tarot pack.  
Fin the meen is peely wally,  
Warlocks rule ower coven black.

Broonies, kelpies, ghaists an bogies,  
Poltergeists frae graveyaird glaur,  
Silkies, skeletons an banshees,  
Cross the kirkyaird gin ye daur!

Zombie, alien, broomstick rider,  
Fearie fleg o tickin clock.  
In a room o wab an spider...  
Fit wid happen, should it stop?

Voodoo, cock craa, cat an corbie,  
Gar ye grue at Halloween.  
Nichtmares come gin ye've bin watchin  
Frichtsome films on TV screen!

## ISIE C.

A halflin quine caad Maisie Cotter,  
Ay left her ferlies in a sotter.  
Her fooshty socks, her orra duddies,  
The verra drawers frae aff her hurdies

In ilkie airt, frae room tae stair,  
Played laldy wi the ozone layer.

Her wallpaper wis clartit stoot,  
Wi bibblins frae her bubbly snoot.  
The gerbil, fad bin bynamed Ned,  
Hid biggit nests in Maisie! s bed.  
It chawed the fleer, an on a sudden  
It ett the duvet doon fur pudden.

Scunnert o reddin up her soss,  
, An seein Maisie, as a cross  
They'd tholed ower lang, her ma an pa  
Rose up ae day an ran awa.

They hired a cooncil rubbish skip  
Tae hurl Maisie tae the tip  
Fa widna dae as she wis bidden  
Miss Maisie C...Address, The Midden.

BROON

Elly bides far the toon's kirk steeples soar  
Her neebors? The Northern lights, an a pirn taed doo.  
Skyscrapers rise like gravesteens aside her door,  
Mair tidemerks roon her bath than the QE2.

Gaps in her teeth, as mony's a bandstand's railins  
The gas in her flat is aff. There's a Polar breeze.  
Elly bides wi her gran far the planes gyang sailin  
Alane wi her sookin clot an a kink hoast wheeze.

The leein box in the neuk shows hames wi plenty,  
A da, a ma, twa bairns an a gairden neat,  
Wi a catty, roon's a barrel, fite an deintie.  
In Elly's kitchie the moosies sit an greet.

Monday mornin. Brakkfast's a brukken bikky.  
Doon in the lift that's peintit like Sioux,  
Scaunin the bins fur pieces, back o the chippy  
Billy McGinty's da stots, rot -gut foo.

Aff tae the skweel far Miss McBain wis wytin,  
(Miss McBain wi her nails aa buffed an reid)  
Elly..yer late! Nae hamewirk deen! Yer writin  
Luiks like raw o spiders lyin deid!

Aa through lessons, Elly's heid is noddin,  
Hard bi the radiator's cosy guff,  
Dreams o a TV cat in its furry claethin,  
Its bowlie foo..a spylt baa o fluff.

Twinty hoasts an the bell, brakk through her dwaumin  
Hiv ye nae hame tae ging till Elly Broom!  
Ootbye, a doonpish sets the litter sweemin.  
The skweel is scalin the classies ben the toun.

Mebbe granny'll win the pot at bingo!  
Mebbe the junkie's moved, ootside her hame!  
Elly opens the door, excitement risin.  
Tea's on the table. Breid n' jam again.

## 22.GIMME-TIME BLUES

Gotta hae a TV  
Gotta hae a phone  
Gotta hae a holiday  
In Greece or Rome.

Gotta hae a motor,  
Gotta hae a shooer,  
Gotta hae a ghettoblaster  
On full pooer

Gimme a jauzzi  
Da, if ye can  
Fur it's buy, buy, buy  
In the consumer clan.

Ye winna? Och, yer eeseless,  
A scunner o a da.  
I'd kill fur a computer

Gonna get ain, ma?

## SODJER

Heatherin eerin orin aye,  
The drums are dirilin lood ootbye

Hiddledum diddledum deitherin deist,  
The pipes are willin the lads tae list.

Too roo rantin ree,  
Hine awa an ower the sea,

Hudderin heiderin hodderin hey,  
Cannon rick is cauld an gray.

Eenertie feenertie fichertie feg,  
The sodjer's gotten a widden leg.

Pirlie wirlie winkle woan,  
Far's the cheer in winnin yon?

□

## BOMBIN

'Faither, fit kinno birdie's yon? '  
Speired a loon at the door.  
Anely a seagull hashin on  
Fur the cauld sea shore.'

'Faither fit kinno soun is yon  
I hear aroon? '  
Anely the birr o traffic, bairn  
Gaun through the toon'.□

'Faither, fit kinno ferlie's yon  
That faas frae high? '  
A deidly floer as reid's a rose.  
Come back inbye.'

'Twelve hooses stood alang the road



An noo there's nine.'

'Gie thanks that war has passed us ower

This time.'□

□

### FISH GUTTER'S SANG

Haud the fishie bi the gills,  
Rug the knife alang its belly.  
Banes are staunin up like quills,  
Haud yer neb, it's affa smelly!  
Dauds o fite, o green, o yalla,  
Yon's the guts the scurries swalla.

Slivvery blobs like dauds o jeely,  
Aa come oot the fishie's belly,  
Hack its heid aff an its tail,  
Guttin on throw snaw an hail,  
Cuts an cracks makk fingers reid,  
Satty cloties sype wi bluid,  
Fa wad be a fisher quine,  
Guttin herrin frae the brine?

### ENSTEIN'S LULLABY

I pu ma duvet roon ma neb,  
Ma chin, kyte, hurdies, happin,  
In case the croc aneth the bed,  
Sud slidder oot, 'cause it's nae fed□  
Wi nesty teeth snip aff ma taes,  
(I'm sure he hisna ett fur days)  
I hear his gnashers snappin!

I draa ma duvet ower ma snoot,  
Fur at the windae, glowerin,  
A bogle stauns in ghaistie cloots,  
As frae a tree a hoolet hoots.  
Coont Dracula wi dreepin fangs,  
Flees by, wi bats an vampire gangs  
Whylst in ma bed I'm cooerin.

I pu ma pilla ower ma lug,  
Fur doon the stairs I'm hearin,  
The knap an knell, the chooch an chug,  
As Frankestein gaes ower the rug,  
Wi chynes that makk an eildrich din,  
He's waltzin wi a skeleton  
Tae frichten me frae sleepin!

#### WEEN (1)

Fin nichts draw in an fires burn high,  
An antrin bogies glower inbye,  
An leaves gang tapsalteerie ower  
Cannie! Yon's the witchin hour.

Lift the neeps frae yont the dyke,  
Howk them oot wi muckle fyke,  
Candles teet tween eerie een,  
Fairies flit at Halloween.

Pare the aipple's rosy cheek  
Gin yer true love's name ye'd seek,  
Or, in darkened mirror watch,  
Wheesht! His likeness ye may catch.

I've heard tell, but say it low,  
O warlocks steerin lang ago,  
Risin, grim frae graveyard steen,  
Wid fleg the breeks frae ony wean.

Sae gin it's as the same tae you  
I'll hug the cheery ingle-side;  
Lest wi the ferlies in the dew  
I nicht collide.

#### WEEN (ii)

A chap at the door...a lichtit neep,  
Rikkin o cannel-flame.  
The pitterin-patt o feery feet;

Guisers, thrangin the lane.

The fleggit myowt o a lanely bairn,  
Wha kens that aa's nae richt.  
Wis yon a cat...or a midnicht hag,  
Wi her black, black, back arched ticht?

Nocht bit a whigmaleerie?  
Fowk say that tombs are teem.  
That the deid are walkin eerie  
Wi rypit stars for een.

A chap at the door...or wis't the win  
Scrattin the windae-pane?  
The pitterin-patt o fairy feet  
In ghaistly claes...or rain?

#### TATTIEBOGLE

The tattiebogle wags his heid,  
Derk shadda ower the yird,  
He's hingin, sterk an crucifeed,  
The dreid o ilkie bird.

His jaiket pooch, a moosie hauds.  
His kyte, a kirn o strae,  
An ben the air his fooshty duds  
Gyang wallop nicht an day.

The sentry o the dubby park,  
Preened tae a timmer post,  
Ye mind, fin Winter made its merk,  
I sweir I heard him hoast!

#### WORRY

A Worry the size o a midgie or flee,  
Creepit inno the bosie o Teenie McGee.  
It grew through the nicht big's a were- wolf sae furry,  
Nae twa winks o sleep could she get for the Worry.

Neist mornin, at brakkfaist she drew up a cheer,  
An saw, tae her horror, the Worry sat there.  
It treetled ahin her fin she wauked tae class,  
Sae big noo, the teacher could hardly win past.

Fariver she gaed it wid lowp like a troot,  
Frae bus stop tae hame blottin as the warld oot!  
She'd staun in the street  
'I've a Worry! ' she'd yell.  
'Be quate' fowk roared back  
'We've got Worries wirsel! '

Sae she gaed tae her granny, an grat on her lap.  
(The Worry cam tae, big's an elephant's bap) .  
Granny tuik oot her glaisses, the Worry tae see,  
Bit noo Teenie'd shared it, the Worry grew wee.

It shrank an it shrank till it dwinnlit awa  
A Worry, eence shared's nae a Worry ava!

#### DREAM

A dream cam teetin roon ma door,  
'Can I come? ' said he,  
I fixed him wi a glaissy ee,  
An speired him questions three.

'Oh dae ye bring a happy dream  
O bonnie simmer days?  
Or dae ye bring a widden-dream  
O bogies, ghaists, an waes?

Or dae ye bring a prophecy  
Tae tell o roads I'll rin?  
Oh tell me truly, chappin dream  
Afore I let ye in! '

#### EAN SCOTS

Pict, Celt an nesty Norseman,  
My, fitiver wid fowk say,  
If they kent that they're still bidin  
Here in Aiberdeen the day!

Aber's Pict fur river mooth  
Roman Deva's Dee,  
The Frenchmen gied us Bon Accord  
Corbie an pertrick tee!

Should ye gae up tae Hazleheid  
O golf tae play a roon  
As ye hunker in a bunker  
Yer a Flemish kinno loon.

Takk a daunder up Deeside awhile  
Tae loch an glen an Ben  
Admirin strath an burnie  
Thon's some Celtic wirds ye ken!

At the skweel ye meet the dominie  
A Latin kind o mannie  
An if yer gweed an tidy,  
Yell be likit bi the jannie.

Watch oot fur the Scandinavians,  
Vikings at the Brig o Dee!  
They'll burn yer kirk aroon yer lugs  
Withoot ae wird o lee.

European Aiberdonians  
Skinnie dippin on the san  
At nicht pairty wi the Germans  
We're a mixed linguistic lan!

Bairns (after a Joan Eardley painting)

Doon oor bit there's mair graffiti  
Than the tomb o Nefertiti  
Multistoreys are oor streets

Windaes fu o dryin sheets  
Socks that wins'll wheep an wheech  
Cassies splattered wi dug-keech

Ice cream mannie plays a tune  
Brings wee bairns an mithers roon  
Chippie on the corner stauns  
Plunkin pyokes in hungeret hauns

Oor dug Tiger's got a moo  
That cud gnash the QE2  
Guairds the littlins in the hoose  
Fin there's muggers on the loose

Oor da Terry's got tattooes  
He's quick tae fecht an quick tae roose  
A TV king, the anely een  
Can cheenge the channels on the screen

Doon oor bit we dinna tell  
We keep oor business tae oorsel  
If yer a frien well haud yer haun  
Twa bairns agin the warld we staun.

#### 34.BIG ISSUE

Tinkie tinkie tarry brikks  
Hear the toonsfowk cry,  
Dinna staun in oor street  
Beggin on the sly.

Brukken teeth an ragnails,  
Hauns as thin's a cleuk,  
Like a tattiebogle,  
Creepit frae a neuk.

Hooded een an flechy sark,  
Jaiket, walloped wide,  
Fa wid let yon coorie  
Roon `their clean fireside?

Styterin on spinnle shanks,  
Twa spurtles weirin sheen,  
Sookin frae a bottle,  
Oblivion's his frien.

Tinkie tinkie tarry brikks  
Seen in ilkie toon  
Some ither body's dother  
Some ither body's loon.

### 35.DIET

Bird, quo the powser,  
Dichtin his mower,  
Delichts a carouser

Een, quo the craw  
Frae a corp in the snaa  
Tastes best ava.

Wirm, quo the merle,  
Rowed in slivvers o pearl,  
Is meat fur an Earl.

Glegs quo the taed  
Frae his thrapple o jade,  
Fur naething, I'd trade.

Bens quo the mist  
I sweel doon at ae tryst  
Like a lid on a kist

Beens, quo the mools,  
Ma derk desire fuels,  
Like a pyockfu o jewels

Dinosaur

A dinosaur! A dinosaur!  
We niver saw the like afore!

The beastie malcks the bairnies roar  
Frae Sumburgh tae Singapore!

A dinosaur! His muckle moo  
Has teeth as lang as knives,  
An fin he roars, the tabby  
Losses as its seeven lives!

A dinosaur! His ilkie snore  
Caas continents ajee.  
An fin he piddles lochs arise,  
As braid's the Irish sea.

A dinosaur! Fit dis he ett?  
A herd o coos fur tea!  
He sweels it doon wi a lagoon  
O vats o barley bree.

A dinosaur! His heid's amang  
The aeroplanes an stars.  
His legs are pylons, tail's as lang's  
A traffic jam o cars.

A dinosaur's a fearsome breet  
Fin it lies doon tae claw,  
Bit fin it daunces, hae a care  
Skyscrapers stert tae faa!

s

See them deein! Colosseum  
Thon's the place tae watch a kill  
Jupiter, Apollo, Neptune  
Gods fur gweed an Gods fur ill

Tasty ostriche byled wi brains  
Baths, mosaics, modern drains  
Legions, Caesars, sodjer' roads  
Wine an olives, Latin odes.  
Wad ye wanner in the gloamin  
Wi a muckle ancient Roman?



Eat a doremoose for yer tea?  
Washed doon wi flamingo bree?

Vulcan, Venus, Ceres, Mars  
Romans...famed fur Gods an Wars  
In the language litter-bin  
They've left lots o wirds ahin!

The Nile rins deep, the Nile rins wide  
Doon its watters the crocodiles glide  
The meen shines white, the meen shines cool  
Ower dunes that the Pharoahs eesed tae rule

The san lies hett, the san lies gowd  
The palms roon the green oasis showd  
The sun has the sting o a scorpion  
It'll burn ye black as a current bun  
Egypt: far Moses slept in the seggs.  
An the mummies sleep wi their rowed-up legs.

gs: Tune: The Keel Rowe

We will takk the whale road  
The gale road, the sail road  
Ower the seas the hale road  
Wi Odin at the prow.

Chorus

Forrit will oor keels rowe  
Oor keels rowe  
Oor keels rowe  
Forrit will oor keels rowe  
The Vikings fae the North

We will cam as traders  
Invaders an raiders  
We will cam as settlers  
Weel may oor boaties rowe

We will kill the kirk fowk  
We will flegg an dirk fowk  
We will capture slave fowk  
In ilkie knowe an howe.

Turn the peat,  
Mask the tea.  
Dicht the greet  
Frae a bairnie's ee.

Kepp the kye,  
Shear the sheep.  
Sell an buy,  
Sow an reap.

Hack the coal  
Frae the pit heid waa.  
Lay the strae  
In the stirkie's staa.

Preen an darn,  
Spin an weave.  
Fecht or pray,  
Clap or grieve.

Twa quid friens,  
Twa servants baith,  
Rock the cradle,  
Dig the grave.

Sheena Blackhall

# The Wood Has Many Doors

The wood has many doors  
Walk in. Bring your empty day and fill it with trees

Bend down on your two stiff knees  
Stuff chanterelles or cones into a dusty bag

The owl has drawn the blinds on his wide eyes  
His window of air will open again in moonlight

Firs are talking in riddles, dropping their needles  
Onto the orange and tawny trampled path beneath

By the loch, a heron meditates on fish  
In his grey Zen cloak, one leg frozen in zazen

Nothing is happening, nothing that you can see□  
Ants reshuffle a pack of leaves  
On the edge of your eyes' periphery

Are you surprised how old and fat you have become?  
Are you surprised how life has leaked away unnoticed?

Stay. Leave. Linger. It's all one to the stone  
By the badgers' trail. The clouds dissolve  
And reassemble, ever the same but different

Sheena Blackhall

# The Wound Man: In Memoriam, Dr J.D. Gomersall

No fires, no bedding  
Chains and rotting straw, their en suite frills  
Lunatics were padlocked to the walls  
Purged, whipped and beaten  
To release their demons  
Taunting by gaping vapours and cat calls

Manacles bit their flesh  
Opening sewers that ripened into gangrene  
Leeches sucked their blood  
Their minds unhinged by mercury,  
Syphilis, melancholy  
Basket cases, raped, abused, misused  
Lying in piss and pain, in their own crud

Step forth the Wound Man  
Healing hidden hurts: the talking cure  
Receiving secrets, like the host on the tongue

Some issues stick in the craw  
He'd prize out shards of slanders  
From under the skin  
Restraining the broken beads from reality's rosary

The Wound Man followed his creatures  
Into their mind's wilderness  
Laying down crumbs of insight  
To lead them to wellness

Now his memory flaps  
Like a prayer flag in the wind  
Still releasing his wisdom to the air

Sheena Blackhall

# The Yellow Time

After a week's conspiracy of whispers,  
They sent me into the country to convalesce.

My uncle shuffled his feet and looked away  
As if his sister had sent him a Trojan horse.

My aunt opened the window over the cornfield  
I was to sleep in the room they kept for strangers.

She brought my breakfast, awkward, on a tray.  
No knife...the toast pre-spread, the egg beheaded.  
The yolk was a jaundiced eye. Her smile was brittle:  
'A change of scene. You'll soon be right as rain.'

In the mushroom woods, small worms  
Poked in and out. Sap froze like spittle  
Last year's spotted oak leaves, sick with the pest,  
Finally gave up the ghost, the death rattle

A cold spring, the buds in the trees bound tight  
In their own small pain like the feet of Chinese girls.

It wasn't until I entered the sun-chinked byre  
A bolt clicked open in my iron mask

There in their stalls the separate cattle stood  
Like months in order, spars in the farm's cartwheel,  
Joy began to rise like their milky breath.

Sheena Blackhall

# There Is Another Xmas

There is another Xmas  
Where broken home and street  
Are piled in cairns of rubble  
Where death and horror meet

There is another Xmas  
No bells ring in the cheer  
Where vultures perch on cradles  
And every town's a bier

There is another Xmas  
Where war, disease or flood  
Ravage the population  
Stain earth with children's blood

There is no Xmas Angel  
To feed the dispossessed  
To pour out milk and honey  
To share the turkey breast

No Wise Men to bring comfort  
With blessings all around  
Just aid that comes belated  
To corpses on the ground

Sheena Blackhall

# There Is Only One Human Story: It Ends In Leaving (For Manjusvara)

That summer I cupped my hands  
To catch the mellifluous wisdom of bees

An eagle soared over Loch Voile  
But no-one noticed

It set you in its sight  
Coming, ready or not it croaked,  
In the playtime speech of childhood

The day was perfect in that hilly, happy land  
Glimmering with petals and birds  
The dappled grass, bright with jade green beetles

You couldn't have picked a better day to die

Sheena Blackhall

# Theresienstadt Burial Scene

I am Karel, aged 9  
See! I have drawn a skull and crossbones

This isn't a pirate picture  
The bones are real  
Nothing here is pretend

Where I live  
Coffins are common as doors  
No happy songs,  
Only the chants for the dead

Fear, filth, grief  
Are my close companions

It's hard, being a child  
Where hunger gnaws you lean

Sheena Blackhall



# Theresienstadt Village Fair

I'm Ruth, I'm seven years old  
This place is not where I live!  
My real home's a pretty dream

Some strokes of my pencil  
Will bring it alive for you

The merry go round's such fun  
My ears fill up with laughter, music, joy  
The rise and fall of hooves on painted horses

If I close my eyes together and squeeze them tight  
I can taste the ice cream, sweet and white, from a stall

If I close my eyes and wrap my arms around me  
Very tight, Terezin melts like a lump of dirty snow

Whoosh! I'm up on a swing  
Almost touching the clouds

Sheena Blackhall

# Theresienstadt, Magdeburg Barracks

I am Eva aged 10  
Please look at my drawing  
It's all that's left of me  
The rest went up in smoke

My little life was lived  
In crowded barracks  
Afraid of guards, of sickness  
Afraid of my own shadow

I didn't play hangman's noose  
Gibbets made my parents shake like leaves

Arrests, locked doors and whispers  
The silence of ghosts  
Peek-a-boo! Here today, then gone!

People vanished like scribbles  
Rubbed out from a dirty page

Sheena Blackhall

# Theresienstadt: The Land Of Plenty

I am Ilona. I am 9 years old  
My neighbours harvest weeds and grass to boil  
It tastes like spinach. Mother says  
If horses eat it, I can eat it too

Valie stole three potatoes, and was thrashed  
The SS guard gave orders:  
'Beat her to death, to teach the rest a lesson, '

But Valie didn't die. Now, she's a hunchback  
Crippled and twisted. Did the food taste good?

I am drawing The Land of Plenty, entrance fee one crown  
I am drawing myself on a bench, with a bird on a fork  
Mmmmmm...I can smell the roast-flesh in my nose

There are bottles of rum and punch to keep the cold out  
And a hedgehog....every spine's impaled with fruit!

And look! Here comes a little child-angel  
Carrying a basket of hard boiled eggs!

Sheena Blackhall

# Thirteen Ways Of Looking At A Mother

I

Among thirty newborns crying, the perfect mother's ear  
Heard only the squeaky voice of her own child

II

Mothers can be borrowed or adopted  
It is not obligatory to be of their womb

III

A mother kissed her child. It was only pretend  
A mother hit her child. It was out of love.

IV

A man and woman together make a mother  
Whether the baby lives or the baby dies

V

Fat mothers may be cuddly, but die early  
Size is irrelevant either way, in the matter

VI

A perfect mother accepts the child she has borne  
Whether it's nice or one of the other sort

VII

Don't you see how men adore and worship their mothers?  
Mothers and virgins, both are suited to pedestals

VIII

I knew a mother who raised her kids on sweets  
It had no teeth, but Lordy, it could party!

IX

Mothers are not allowed to make mistakes  
Nobody gives three cheers when they get it right

X

Once a mother ran off and became a crow  
Once sectioned, they removed her beak and claws

XI

Mothers feed cod liver oil and orange juice  
To lubricate the wishbones of their offspring

XII

A violin is playing. Somewhere, a mother is dying

XIII

A mother sat in a corner, making pies  
Flour was snowing around her very gently  
No one had used her name in 20 years

Sheena Blackhall

# Thorgunna's Curse (8 Scots Poems)

Sang o Traivellin Angus: Owersett in Scots, frae the poem by

I gaed oot tae the hazel wid  
Because a lowe wis in ma heid  
An cut an peeled a hazel wan  
An tied a berry tae a threid

An fin fite mochs war on the wing  
An moch-like starnies flichtered oot  
I drapped a berry in a burn  
An caught a teenie siller troot  
Fin I hid laid it on the fleer  
I gaed tae blaw the lowe aflame  
A ferlie reeshled on the fleer  
Somebody cried me bi ma name

It hid becam a glimmin quine  
Wi aipple blossom in her hair  
Fa cried me bi ma name an ran  
An dwined inno the brichtenin air

Tho I am auld wi traivellin  
Ben humphy lan an howie lans  
I will fin oot far she has gaen  
An kiss her mou, an takk her hauns  
An wauk amang lang dyewy girse  
An pu till time an tides are run  
The siller aipples o the meen  
The gowden aipples o the sun

## 2. Thorgunna's Curse

Thorgunna's Curse is based on an oorie tale o the daith o a Hebridean wumman in Iceland.

Ae spring a Hebridean boat  
Tae Iceland ben the mist  
Set sail. A muckle tradin ship  
Stapped like a treisur kist

A chieftain, Finnward Keelfarer  
Fa bedd at Froddis watter  
Stepped doon tae greet the Scottis crew  
Wi his wife Aud, an dochter

Upon the deck stude Thorgunna  
Heich, sonsie, prood o race  
Wi lang reid hair. Her saxty years  
Lay lichtly on her face

Noo Finnward's wife, bi greed enthralled  
Socht rich Thorgunna's gear  
The stranger wadna pairt wi it  
Tho sair the wife did speir

Ae nicht intae Thorgunna's room  
She crept an reived the brooch  
The Heilan wumman glowert, bit lay  
An uttered nae reproach.

Neist day Finnward wis telt her ghaist  
Wis ailin...like tae dee  
An her last will an testament  
Tae nane bit him she'd gie

'Oh beery me at Skalaholt  
Cause caunles tae be lit  
An burn ma beddin on the beach  
Sae nane nicht lie on it.

An tae yer dother, gie ma gear  
For she has naethin speired  
Tae Aud, yer wife, haun ower the brooch  
Tho bitter be its weird.'

Thorgunna deed. Storm crossed the meen  
As Finnward torched the wid  
His wife slippt doon, tramped oot the lowe  
An saved the sheets, an hid.

They tuik the corp tae Skalaholt

An stopped at Netherness

'Ye'll hae a bield, ' quo the mean host  
'Nae meat, for teem's ma press.'

Dumfounert, aa the mourners sat  
Thorgunna's corp did wauk  
Atween them, servin meat tae aa  
An magic wirds she spakk.

The kistin by, Aud an her man  
Lay on Thorgunna's sheets  
A deidly curse raise throwe the threids  
Frae croon, tae briest, tae cweets  
Their dother socht them in their room  
The faithless pair wir deid  
Thorgunna's corp, in mortal makk  
Sat hunkered at their heid.

Doon tae the sea the lassie ran  
Auld for her years, an wise  
An brunt Thorgunna's sheets an gear  
An watched the black rikk rise

Oh Iceland's floes are cauld an fite  
The curse wis caulder yet  
That envy, greed, an pride bring on  
An this, may nane forget.

rs

Kennin that the last body fa saw this  
did so a thoosan year syne  
gies me a grave-robber's archaeological thrill

Someyin o heich status, a wealthy heid bummer  
Pouerfu, a mighty warrior  
Fa'd hae skailed ma bluid like watter gin we'd met

Nae sae bigsy noo, tho  
An here's me ruggin the teeth fae his mou



The stoor frae his banes

Like ony spey-wife, I can tell frae these smaa orrals  
O runes, fit he ett, far he cam fae  
Even the smitts that he catched,  
The verra dunts he'd gotten

Twa hunner rivets held thegither his daith-boat  
This Viking, this widely traivalled reiver

I'll relieve him o  
a whetstane frae Norrowa,  
a ring preen frae Ireland  
pottery frae the Hebrides  
an aixe, a sword wi a braw hilt,  
a spear an a shield boss

The British Museum in Lunnon  
Wad like a swatch o the plunder  
The raid o a Vikin grave inbye Lochaber  
A treisur trove reived frae the deid  
An the feared Norse gangsters

chal Fae Prayer tae Lear

In fowerteen saxty ane in Aiberdeen  
There raise up frae the grun a friary  
Franciscans biggit ooto local steen

Wi brither John Strang's skeelie maisterie  
Licht floodit in throw ilkie windae pane  
Kirk, cloister, kitchie, thrang refectory

A library, orchard loud wi bee's refrain  
A peacefu place o learnin an delicht  
Far friars tendit sairs an doctored pain

A hunner years. Syne, bringin dule an micht  
Reformers cam, dinged doon for ivermair  
The friary, pit the grey brithers tae flicht

George Keith, the fourth Earl Marischal, tuik in haun  
The grun, (a favourite o King James the Saxth)  
In Haly airt he gart a College staun

Sae Marischal grew in lear. Its pouer raxxed  
Archibald Simpson, eident, redesigned  
The biggins far the friars' faith wis axed

An obelisk fae Blue Toun granite mined  
Wis raised tae merk Sir James McGrigor's fame  
Until it flitted tae a leafy bouer  
The Duthie Park, a settin less confined

In Queen Victoria's reign, the Mitchell Touer  
An haa, as weel's a braw fite granite face  
War hewn tae thole roch Winter's stormy scour

The twentieth century, brocht Crown an Mace  
Tae a gran openin o thon glorious spires  
Triumphal garlands, flags, met Royal grace

Wi sacrists, scholars, sodjers, banquets, choirs  
Five hunner waiters servin deinties sweet  
An turtle soup, that Mandarins nicht desire

In its Museum, auncient mummies meet  
Inuit gear an Oriental brows  
The Past is gaithered in fae lan an street

An noo the biggin hooses Cooncil haas  
Guairded ootby by Guid King Robert Bruce  
The pulse o Aiberdeen beats in its waas  
Lang may it staun, oor jewel, stinch an douce

er: Drumnadrochit

The parks are flat's a fermhoose weel-fired bannock  
Freisians rug the cweed frae dubby banks  
Sun, rain, weet, sleet are strings tae autumn's bow  
A saamill's timmer wytes in coontit planks

An ambulance's lichts gae furlin roon  
A body's streetchered frae a driver's door  
The scrapyaird biggs a hairst o bladdit cars  
The win that blaws the birks hauds boats ashore

The roaders patch the holes frae last year's frost  
It's steidy wark, the winters noo are roch  
A dowie shelt blaws rikk intae the air  
Syne glowers at her ain face in roosty troch

In Drumnadrochit, Keith, or Inverness  
Some biker, driver, takks a brae ower faist  
On weety bend. A story in the Press  
A bunch o flooers. A memory laid tae rest

in Oot, Fort William

We're nae the anes tae girn. Bit see the lichts?  
The lavvie bulb wis brukken, an the plug, was hingin  
Oot the socket. Mean tae say  
We're that pit oot. We dinna wint tae pye

Ma wife an I'd tae shooer (The bath wis cracked.)  
There's stains aa ower the rug  
Forbye, the drain stank like an auld deid dug  
Yer bide-in staff aa raise at 6am  
Hoastin an howkin up a dose o phlegm  
The pipes gaed clunk. We'll nae be back again  
(Altho we canna blame ye fur the rain.)  
Nae kippers on the menu, Parritch, knotty  
I think we'll gie anither inn a shottie.

in Oot, Glesga

The windaes are stukken (fresh air at nae cost)  
The lobby's that derk ye could easy get lost  
In this wee pied a terre, on a Glesga wikken  
If yer intae decorum, wi nae much tae spen  
Its mainners are braw, bit it's doon at the heel

Ye get fit ye pye fur. It's shoddy genteel

Harry Potter Train

Takk yer feet aff the table, pet. That's it. Jist lowp on the seat  
Dinna sook yer bogies, or dicht them on the windae

Excuse me missus. The wean's spikkin tae you  
She wints tae ken fit yer writin.

Wirds? Wirds is it? Pardon me fur askin!  
Yer nae very talkative, are ye!

Dinna dunt the wifie's haun wi yer toy  
She looks like she micht bite  
Some fowk's born miserable. A richt soor dook.  
Her loss. Jist leave her mumphin wi her buik.

Sheena Blackhall

# Thought Police Of Art

At the Shrine of the Prima Donna of the self  
Top Dog is the worship of dollars  
Here, Tracy Emin's the high priestess  
Of the cult of me me me  
Cup Cake Tracy,  
Whose gaze of Narcissism  
Has turned the heads of the critics

Reviling the credo of Banality,  
The Rebirth of Venus  
Showcases Barbie, platinum wigged  
Modern Woman in embryo

Critics echo the praise of celebrity  
Like empty vessels in the rarefied air of a gallery

In the Shrine of a Prima Donna  
Hangs a tampon, stamped with a Union Jack  
A dead sheep stares from a tank of formaldehyde

In one man's piercing vision  
Of the Fake's Progress through 20th century Art  
Are these works of worth or wallpaper?  
The Emperor's New Clothes?  
Discuss. Consider. Decide

Sheena Blackhall

# Thoughts On A Medicine Walk

Midges, like a scatter of pepper pain  
Darken the windowsill with their unmourned deaths

Every leaf, every flower, every cloud will go that way  
I too, as my days shorten  
Grow more and more like the thin flanked temple cat  
Who walks on stiffening paws

The owl that hoots by night outside my room  
Her sound will cease to echo round the wood  
Like a mellow flute, stoppered, rendered dumb

Forget-me-not is the last plea of the fading petal  
And indeed what is death but a widening ripple  
In the pool of the minds of friends, till other ripples arise?

I found a litter of corpses once on a Highland road  
Dead hawk, dead hare, dead flies  
Like drops of ink writing their own obituaries  
Poison had entered the food chain, laid by a cunning man

For we are skilled in the arts of death  
Who kill by war and murder  
Our kind and other creatures

I do not fear to step out of my footsteps  
I only fear the means of that last departure  
Would float like Shallot's cold lady  
Off on a river of flowers if Fate allowed

Sheena Blackhall

## Three Cats Flying 20 Poems In Scots

Two Scots owersetts from American Negro Poetry  
tae ma Yalla Leaves (William Stanley Braithwaite b.1878)

Turn tae me ma yalla leaves I am better satisfied  
Something dings me tae ma knees  
That wis niver born, nor deid

Let me be a reid-hett flame  
On a winny Autumn morn  
I, fa niver had a name  
Nor frae breathin picture born

Frae the margin let me faa  
Far the hynest stars drap doon  
An the Void ingaithers aa  
Inbye Naethiness tae droon

Let me dream ma dream entire  
Wizzent as an Autumn leaf  
Let me hae ma vain desire  
Vain as it is brief

Harlem Dauncer: Claude McKay: born Jamaica 1889  
Young laddies lauched an clapped wi soople jaads  
An watched her rare, hauf-nyaakit body swey  
Her voice wis douce as flutes that fowk applaud  
Flutes played bi Negroes on a picnic day

She sang an daunced sae graceful-like an calm  
The licht gauze hingin lowse aboot her skin  
Tae me she seemed a proudly-sweyin palm  
Grow bonnier, storm-tossed by music's win

Upon her darksome nape, blaik curls twined  
Dropped on her briest. On her their gowd fowk spent  
The boozy bigsy loons, an even the quines  
Fixed on her wi their een in bumbazement  
Bit luikin on her fausely-face I kent

Her hairt wis hyne frae thon fey place

Teddy (Overheard on the bus)

I'm no a violent person. Bit see if she'd done thou  
Tae my son, hingin up the phone,  
Wastin his credit...I'd hae kicked her doon the stairs

How many das buy their bairn a teddy?  
How many das bother nooadays?  
An a teddy's better than naethin, so it is.  
Mean tae say, it shows the laddie cares....

Three Broon Teeth

Like a wersh lemon  
Februar sun sits soor on granite was  
Hauns are berriet in pooches  
Mithers weir mochles  
Pushing their buggies  
By cut-price shoppie windaes  
Mega sales an boordit up store fronts.

Tae the Green Man's Beep

Fowk stride ower the cassies  
Like shears snippin throw clait

The timmer door o a howf

Is scarifeed bi the Sizzens  
Bi dug pish an pyocherin punters

Throwe crancreuch cauld

The chitterin snaadraps shakk  
A chiel wi a neb like a straaberry  
Steps smilin onno the bus  
Face like a lantern  
Barin three broon teeth

5. Sarcophagus (for Bishop William Elphinstone: 1431-1514)

A Glesga baimie, (son o a prelate  
Fa brukk the vow o bidin celibate)



This lad wis schuled an raised wi quaet care  
Fa's weird it wis tae sclimm up pouer's stair

Tae Glesga, Paris, Orleans he gaed  
Fur lear, an syne a Bishop he wis made  
In Scotland's parliament his wirth an sense  
Wis kent bi aa...his influence, immense

A diplomat, fa naethin left tae chaunce  
He wis despatched wi secrecy tae France  
As Lord Heich Chancellor, this clivver chiel  
Wi Maximilian sat doon tae deal

Made Keeper o the Scottish Privy seal  
A Papal bull rewardit William's zeal  
King's College wis begun. King James agreed  
That funds should drive the projeck on wi speed

Fin Flodden cut the floer o Scotlan doon  
(a bluid lettin o Commons Lords an Croun)  
In William's care the infant King wis left  
An elder statesman, wi a bairn bereft

Centuries passed. A sculptor wis employed  
A great sarcophagus, baith heich an wide  
Tae bigg, in honour o this Elphinstane  
Tae show King's College valued his great name

The wirk began in Venice. War drum beats  
Fleggit the world. Brocht daith tae Europe's streets  
The sculptor's wark wis hidden in the cool  
O a canal, till peace returned tae rule

Syne hame it cam frae Venice tae the toun  
Far auncient Kings sits dwaumin neth its croun  
This great sarcophagus, aneth the sky  
Tholes win an rain far strangers daunder by

6. Myndin Day Fur The War Deid: Scots owersett o a Poem bi Yehuda Amichai

Myndin day fur the war deid. Add noo

the wae o aa yer losses tae their grue, even o a wumman fa's left ye.  
Mell sorra wi sorrow, like time-savin history,  
that biggs holiday an sacrificee an murnin  
on ae day fur easy, handy myndin.

Ach, sweet warld steeped, like breid,  
in sweet milk fur the feariesome toothless God.  
'Ahin aa thon some great blythness is happit.'  
Nae eese tae greet inbye an tae skirl ootbye.  
Ahin aa thon a muckle blytheness is happit.

Myndin day. Wersh satt is tricked oot  
as a wee quine wi flooers.  
The streets are tethered aff wi towes,  
fur the merchin thegither o the leevin an the deid  
Bairns wi a wae that's nae their ain merch slawly,  
like steppin ower brukken glaiss.

The flautist's moo will bide like thon fur mony days.  
A deid sodjer sweems abeen wee heids  
wi the sweemin meevements o the deid,  
wi the auncient mistakk the deid hae  
about the airt o the livin watter.

A flag losses contact wi reality an flees aff.  
A shoppie windae is decked oot wi  
dresses o bonnie weemen, in blue an fite.  
An aathin in three leids:  
Hebrew, Arabic, an Daith.  
A mighty an royal breet is deein  
aa throwe the nicht aneth the jasmine  
tree wi an ongaun glower at the warld.  
A chiel faas laddie deed in the war wauks in the street  
like a wumman wi a deid bairn in her wame.  
'Ahin aa thon a muckle blytheness is happit.'

Thon is yer Glamourie: Scots owersett o a Poem bi Yehuda Amichai

I've yokit thegither ma braid seelence an ma wee ootspikk  
Like a coo an a cuddy. I've bin throwe laigh an heich  
I've bin in Jerusalem, in Rome, an mayhap in Mecca anon

Bit noo God's hidin, an Man greets, 'Far hae ye gaen? '  
An thon is yer Glamourie

Aneth the warld, God raxxes stretched on his back  
Aywis repairin, aywis ferlies turn blaik  
I wintit tae see him aa, bit I see nae mair  
Than the soles o his feet an I'm dowier than afore  
An than is his Glamourie

Even the trees gaed oot aince tae chuse a king  
A thoosan-fauld I've gaen ma life ae mair fling  
At the eyn o the street, some chiel wyles wi a hiss:  
This ane, an this ane, an this ane, an this ane, an this  
An thon is yer Glamourie

Mebbe like an auncient statue that's tint its airms  
Oor life, wioot deeds an heroes hauds greater chermes  
Rug aff ma t-shirt, luv, this wis ma hinmaist fecht  
I focht wi the knights, the electric ran ooto pech  
An thon is ma Glamourie

Rest yer hains, it ran wi me aa the wye  
It's trauchelt noo, it needs tae be lowsed fur the day  
I see ye staun bi the open fridge-door licht  
Frae heid tae tae, frae anither warld, than sicht  
An thon is ma Glamourie  
An than is his Glamourie  
An than is yer Glamourie

8. An Owerset o The Laxdaela Saga, The Death o Kjartan  
Noo Kjartan rode sooth doon the glen aside anither twa  
Thorarin stoot wi An the Black, three fiers baith brave an braw

Thorkell, a chiel at Goat-peak's tap, in Swinedale, frae its heicht  
Luiked wi his herd ower shelts an yowes on twa groups like tae fecht

Kjartan an his friens rade on, unseen, the hidden foe  
The men o Laugar lay in wyte tae gie them their daith-blow  
On Goat-peak's tap the herd spakk oot  
'Gweed maister, we should steer  
An warn Kjartan an his friens that danger's draain near'

Thorkell he gart the herd be quate quo ' Aa man dree their weird  
Set oot bi fate...forbye, ' quo he, 'There's nocht tae he afeard

Jist watch Kjartan, skeely, fierce show aff his warrior's skill  
Agin the men that wyte for him unseen, ahin Goat-gill'

Kjartan he lowped aff his steed tae Osvif' s sons he's gaen  
'Oh staun ye by thon muckle stane. Wyte there, till aa be dane.'

He flang his spear at Thorolf's shield. It flew as faist's the win  
An pierced the airm that held it heich richt throwe the flesh an skin

Syne Thorolf drapped the shield an turned aside frae battle's rage  
The sons o Thorhalla focht on Thorarin tac engage.

Noo Osvif's sons an Gudluag raise, Kjartan for tae fecht  
Bit An steppt up tae guaird his fier an strove wi virr an micht

Bolli an Fitbiter stude back. Kjartan focht sae weel  
Time an again, his sword he bent an strauchtened neth his heel

Osvif's an An's twa sons war hurt. Kjartan bore nae woun  
Fin Osvif' s sons they turned on An. Gralloched, he drappit doon

Kjartan cuttit Gudluag' s shank clean aff, abune tbe knee  
An sent him on the laigh road hame, a corp upon the lea

Aa fower sons o Osvif fell on Kjartan, bit sae brave  
A hero, he held aa at bay tho unca near the grave

Kjartan tae his kinsman spakk, 'Bolli, ye left yer hame  
Yet staun ye quaet an takk nae side, chuse noo, in honour's name.'

Bolli made on he didna hear. Ospak he priggitt sair  
'Oh ye hae vowed tae help oor fecht steer noo, oor lot tae share

Kjartan's haun has held us doon even on maitters slicht'  
Quo Ospak, 'Gin ye turn yer back, ye tae, maun ken his micht.'

Sae Bolli jyned wi Fitbiter. His foster-brither, faced.  
Kjartan quo 'Ye've chosen ill. I wadna be disgraced

Bi slayin ye. I'd rather dee masel. I'll nae jink daith.'  
Kjartan flang his weapons doon tae face his mortal skaith

Syne Bolli cuttit Kjartan low an held him as he deed  
An rued straicht aff the bitter blow that skaled Kjartan 's bluid

The sons o Osvif, Bolli sent intae the kintraside  
Bit wi Thorarin an the slain he chose tae watch an bide

Tae Laugar, Osvif's sons rade aff tae noise the victory tale  
Gudrun delichtit in the news, like sun, ahint a gale

They bun up Thorolf' s hurtit airm. It healed, bit tint its virr  
Kjartan's corp cam hame tae Tongue, an Bolli, tae Laugaur

Gudrun rade oot tae meet Balli, an speirt fit wis the time  
On hearin it wis nearhaun noon, she cried, the fickle quine

'This foreneen's wark for baith o us in different wyes wis gweed  
I've vrocht twal ells o hamespun oo. Ye've skaled Kjartan's bluid.'

Aneth the grun war Osvif' s sons hid in a lair o yird  
Thorhalla's lads rade tae the West tae bring the Priest the wurd.

At Herdholt, a hale wikk in state, Kjartan's body lay  
Syne Thorstein Egilson bore him aff, tae his last hame o clay

At Burg the kirk wis hung in white, new consecrated grun  
Kjartan's grave lies ower there, his mortal days ootrun

9. Fareweel Scots owerset o a swatch frae Girselowper Music, bi Szabo Lorine

Fit's adee? Ma dearie, dinna greet. Fit  
I felt wis: moultin. There's bin a meltin

o the threids in ma weird, an noo I'm wuvven  
bi a hunner spaces an times (in the auld days ane) ,  
dingin-doon-an-biggin. Cooshie-doos curmur up yonner,  
hae sung fower days abeen me; bit I'd tak grue  
o tellin ye fearie wars hae raged here as weel.

Even tae masel it's hard tae believe this is true,  
although ma senses raxx oot ilkie meenit.  
Yer pain is new, luiks throwe me, speirs far I bide.  
In a million airts ilkie inch o me!

Fit is it syne? Luv, electricity?  
I'm in the derk yet. Mebbe gowd-gas-atom,  
mebbe hett-ray-nucleus. Licht on Saturn, space-livin licht.  
It's unca fey. Bit that  
the Aybydan is anely a Poet's harns I's warrant seems true. –  
Are ye gaun? I feel nicht's touch.

10. Blue Jotter: Scots owerset o poems bi Danyill Kharms  
Aince there lived a reid-heidit cheil wioot een an lugs  
He'd nae hair either, sae he wis caad reid-heidit  
bi wye o generalization He couldna spikk, as he'd nae mou.  
The same wi his snoot.  
Even airms an shanks, he jist didna hae ony.  
Nor wyme, nor dowp, nor rig-bane  
An nae intimmers.. He didna hae onythin!  
Sae it's nae clear ava fa is bein spukken about  
In fack, let's nae spikk about him onymair.

11. A Romance: Scots owerset o poems bi Danyill Kharms  
He luiks at me wi the een o a gyte chiel  
It's yer hoose an yett I ken sae wee! .  
He gies me a kiss wi his crammosie mou  
Oor forebears gaed tae war in scales o steel.

He brocht me a boorich o crammosie carnations –  
It's yer stinch face I ken sae weel.  
He socht in return fur ae lane kiss -  
Oor forebears gaed tae war in scales o steel

He touched me wi his fmger weirin a derk ring –  
It is yer dark ring I ken sae weel.  
Thegither we rummelt doon on a Turkish divan –  
Oor forebears gaed tae war in scales o steel.

He luiks at me wi the een o a gyte chiel  
Dwine awa, ye starnies, an dwine, ye meen!  
He gies me a kiss wi his crammosie mou –  
Oor forebears gaed tae war in scales o steel.

#### 12. The Halfin Herd

The halfin herd maun tramp the braes  
Watchin the yowes wi cannie een  
Whilst richer loons can play an laze  
Wi cattypult an weel-airned steen  
Niver a myowt or gim he'll gie  
He traivels wi a staff in haun  
His knicky tams aneth his knee  
He is the backbeen o the lan

The wealthy lads micht growe tae ken  
Great enterprise an sic like ploys  
The herd, a princelin amang men  
He has the pick o richer joys

The starns at nicht are his tae see  
Nae general or emperor he  
The hardy, hummle halfin herd  
The wirthy son o girse an yird.

#### 13. Groundswell

Mull o Kintyre. A boatie rows  
Bairnies fishin on mackerel days  
A hotterel o waves. Wee chikks on fire  
Wi satt-sea watter an ocean sprays

#### 14. Twa Wirkers

Foo'd ye like tae be a maid  
Nurse the bairn frae morn tae nicht  
Dicht its dowp an weet its mou  
Keep it happit, snod an ticht?

Foo' d ye like tae glean the park

Boo yer back for ithers' leavins  
Tackle coarse an thankless wirk  
Trauchlin twa-fauld ower the gleanins?

15. Rottenrow: Bairn Play, Glesga  
Fitbaa on the pavement.  
Peint upon the waa  
Dinna cowp the buggie or the bairn'll faa

Chrisopher an Kayleigh, Alexander, Kate  
Playin dirty doctors roon the auld schule gate

The schule, the schule, it means hee-haw  
I'm gonna be a pop star an show youse aa

Fa let the denner spyle? Fa's pa's in the jyle?  
Fa's pottie's aff the byle? Bonnie Mary Baxter  
Fa's ma's left the hoose? Aa the bailiffs find's a moose  
Double gin an orange juice, Bonnie Mary Baxter

16. November Wid, Finzean  
The cauld creepit inno the wid  
Wi the chunnerin cauld in its shawl  
An the aik an the chitterin birk  
Watched the ghaist o the year grown auld  
Turn the hairt o the burn tae ice  
An the moss on the brae tae steen  
An the corbie faa like a hound o Hell  
Tae dine on the yowie' s een

17. The Glesga Sparkie  
I wirk in a wee electrical shop, in the hairt o Glesga toun  
Wi wires an batteries, nuts an screws, repairs, aa clamourin roon

Fin I steek ma een I ettle tae hear the doos in a kintra wid  
Far the caller breeze it reeshles the trees as the flooers raxx up, unbid

I wirk in a wee electrical shop mangst a soss an a stoory kirn  
An the wecht o the wirk it grinds me doon as steen grinds corn in the quern



18. The Bosie

The bairn is faain asleep in her airms  
There's naewye tae set her doon  
The sister's nocht bit a bairn herself  
Singin a pop star croon  
In a fair jurmummle o heids an hair  
Rowed up in a touselt bosie  
The eldest' s trailin the youngest up  
Her breist warmth keeps her cosie

An ma's awa fur a gad-aboot  
Tae blether or shop or booze  
Or tae tell the warld about her man Dan  
An the tale o her latest bruise

19. Andra wi a Comic

Cauld sausage roll that's three days auld fur denner  
Milk in the bottle weirin a fooshty luik  
Andra's readin a comic. (Desperate Dan wi a plook)  
The bairn's in a washin basket. A teet in its mou tae sook

20. Audun and the White Bear: from the Morkinsinna

A thoosan years ago there lived  
A man caad Audun wi his ma  
In Iceland, by the Western fjords  
The jewelled world o frost an snaa

Frae Norway ae late summer cam  
The captain o a tradin ship  
Aa winter Audun wirked for him  
Sae he could jyne the hamewird trip

In spring, the ice began tae crack  
Tae his auld mither Audun gied  
His savins, sae she wadna sterve  
Tae keep her clad an safe frae need

The days grow lang, I maun awa  
Three years tae traivel an explore

Quo Audun, as he kissed his ma  
An steppit lichtsome tae the shore

Noo Audun wi the captain sailed  
Tae Greenlan far he met a bear  
An sic a bonnie beast it wis  
He bargained for it then an there

Sae fine a bear as this, he thocht  
Is wastit in this Greenlan den  
Twid mak a wondrous giftie for  
The King o Denmark, Guid King Sven

His fur was fite as ony pearl  
His een war green's the Polar sea  
He wis fu strang in pouer an micht  
The beariest bear in history.

An fin he roared, the walrus shook  
The whales aneth the bergs tuik flicht  
The Northern Lichts grew fite wi fear  
The verra meen switched aff her licht

The bear wis settled on the ship  
An aff they sailed, an unca crew  
He caught them fish frae ower the deck  
His muckle paw struck faist an true

The captain drappit anchor syne  
On Norway's coast, near Norway's king  
Harald, the great Norwegian lord  
As fierce as erne on the wing

Fin Harald heard o this great bear  
Hopin tae saften Audun' s hairt  
He brocht the Icelander tae court  
Tae see if frae the bear he'd pairt.

The bear is bound for Denmark's shore  
Yer enemies, as weel I ken  
Bit I hae taen a sacred vow  
Tae gie the bear tae Guid King Sven

King Harald smiled, waved Audun aff  
Slackent his haud upon his sword  
Promise me on her hamewird trip  
Ye'll tell me o the Dane's reward

The bear an Audun trauchelt on  
Near like tae sterve through lack o meat  
Until a rich man, Auki, met  
Them puir an beggin on the street

Fin Audun telt his sorry tale  
Ae hauf o thon bear Auki bocht  
Bit made him promise on his life  
He'd share hauf the reward he socht

They reached the castle o the King  
Fit brings ye hear, Auki ma frien?  
Oh I hae cam tae claim ma share  
O any treisur here owergien.

King Sven turned Auki aff unthantk  
For greed an guile can win nae grace  
Bit upon Audun an the bear  
He showed a smilin kindly face

Ye'll be my courtly cup-bearer  
The bear will be my greatest prize  
An sae the months passed merrily  
Frae even-tide tae reid sumise

Bit fan three years war ower an gaen  
Syne Audun raise tae sail awa  
Tae Iceland an his mither's hame  
The lan o jewelled frost an snaa

King Sven wis laith tae see him leave  
Bit tae the herbour steppit doon  
An as a thanks for Audun' s bear  
He gied the Icelander a boon

A ship stap fu wi rowth o gear  
A siller pyoke. A gowden ring  
Tae gie as a reward for guid  
Taen frae the finger o the king

Tae Norway Audun sailed wi speed  
Tae Harald's haa throw storm an floe  
An on the great Norwegian lord  
Thon precious ring he did bestow

For Harald micht hae killt Audun  
An taen the bonnie bear for nocht  
He weel deserved the Danish ring  
Honour is won, can ne'er be bocht

An as did Sven, King Harald heaped  
On Audun, treisurs rare an gran  
As he set aff for Iceland's fjords  
An aulder an a richer man

Oh Iceland's fjords are deep an green  
Audun has aa he wants an mair  
Bit fin the starnies full the sky  
Aa nicht, he's dreamin o his bear.

Sheena Blackhall

# Three Faces Of Eve

Eve is downsizing  
After a busy day at the office  
Peeling off her glamour puss golden wig  
She lights a fag, dragging a comb along  
The stumps of her thinning hair  
Smearing the make up off her weary face

Beneath the paint, the face is gaunt and grey  
The eyes emerge from their cosmetic chrysalis  
Bleary and red-rimmed, crackly at the edge  
The breasts, de-bagged from the brassiere  
Sag, small and sad above the dropping slip

Humming, she lights a candle at her shrine  
Of fashion models, twenty years her junior

Who does she see in the mirror?  
Why, who does anyone see?  
Selves are like layers of clothes,  
In the rag-bag of life

But she has grace, still,  
Sliding through the door  
Towards the hidden bedroom  
Like a thoroughbred, like an old swan  
In sleep, she'll be a siren with wet flanks

Sheena Blackhall

# Three Famous Guests En Plein Air

I'd like to see us sitting around,  
Chewing the cud, shooting the breeze  
Marcus Aurelius out of the vaulted space of aeons  
Adjusting his toga, under a buttery sun in the Trossachs

Time would creak on its axle,  
Hit reverse. 'We're over here'  
I'd shout, as Charles Dickens  
Picked his meticulous way  
Through bee-heavy honeysuckle

Thomas the Rhymer would ride in  
On the back of the wind's song  
His feet dusting over the heads of pines  
Making a pig's ear of a landing.  
He would criticize everything, truthful to a fault.

Marcus Aurelius' head would throb like an engine,  
Pouring out thoughts rare and profound

Dickens would open the sluice gates of London corruption, ghosts  
Pressing their pinched faces against the panes of his speech.

'Because we don't exist on a physical plane  
Doesn't lesson our power to influence generations'Aurelius stated

'Ah, but how many hits do you have on Twitter  
Or Facebook?' Dickens countered,  
Ever the man with his hand  
On the pulse beat of popularity

The superstitious rowan shivered as  
Thomas the Rhymer sat down.  
That madcap man who'd gone away with the fairies

I was hanging onto the day like grim death  
Wishing that every second would stretch like a comet's trail



# Three Poems For A Newborn

Newborn (1)

In the scanning room  
The gell leaked over your mother's drum-skin belly  
Domed like St Paul's Basilica

You were in the frame, screen goddess  
You turned your head  
And seemed to look right at me

The nurse's voice was clipped  
The head is now engaged  
As she tidied up her implements

I nodded to your mother, smiling  
Lacking the words in her language  
To bring her clarity  
My Scots like a ploughshare  
Heavy and shorn of frills  
A voice full of glut and peat  
Dreich with glaur and snowscapes

In the ark of her womb  
You listened to the Yin and Yang of her vowels  
The guttural growl of mine

You float like rice in a paddy field  
Between two worlds  
A black and white silent movie  
A person with the ribcage of a bird

Newborn (2)

Out of your birth wrappers.  
Little Yultide gift, you're in danger of being  
Loved to death, your mouse-soft hands  
Full of creases like rumpled linen  
Your unused feet are pupae  
Hatching wings in glorious technicolour  
Your parents stand like quicksand



Sucking you in, their newest  
Perfect creation, come alive  
You open your tiny jaws,  
Root in the breast for the nipple  
Before you are washed  
As if you were eggshell porcelain

I look for my son's bones in the turn of your back  
Your mother's grace in the arch of your tiny wrist

New Born (3)

Outside the snow hangs on the trees  
pointing spears at the earth

Low on the hill, under the toppled tree  
A dead fox lies, the pink seal of its mouth  
fixed in a grim smile

two rooks like undertakers' hats  
sit tall and enigmatic staring at the road

into this winter, this locked down season of frost  
the old year rests cold on its bier

a pulse of life, like a wren's song through silence  
has added another name to the family tree

her selfhood is yet to unwrap,  
with the wax and the wane  
of many milk white moons

She is one of the certainties of spring  
When all the world is ankle deep in snow

Sheena Blackhall

# Three Poems From Erin's Isle

## 1. Swans

Four swans transform into people,  
Aodh, Fionnula Fiachra and Conn  
Like molten rubber, stretching and writhing,  
They droop like stalactites over the silent garden

Kissing swans touch beaks to form a heart  
But these are struggling, swans, war weary. splintering  
Reborn in a hard birthing of pain and troubles.

When a vision becomes real  
It must bend its wings to the cage of mortal concerns  
Hobble its feet to the ground  
As Ireland has, with half an eye on myth  
Still half in love with the mist  
That bred its heroes.

## 2 The Harp Declines to Comment

The harp bears the coat of arms of the O'Neills  
It is the national symbol of Ireland,  
Depicted on national heraldry,  
Euro coins and Irish currency.  
Its right-facing image is registered  
As a trade mark for Guinness  
The other Irish Icon

This marvel was made in Scotland  
Circa the fourteenth century  
Of willow and oak  
Its strings are brass  
It has a silver neck mount  
Embedded with crystal  
When played, it has the sound  
Of bell and harpsichord, wedded to a guitar

It was coveted for cash by Joseph Brady  
Ex-British soldier, one-time IRA  
Who burgled it from its home in Trinity College

Wrenched it out of its case to trade in ransom

11 Garda cars, watched in the stake out  
Money was dropped in a dustbin by Bull Wall  
Refuse, the ransom note warned  
And Ireland's national treasure would be destroyed

One of the thieves was chased, drew a gun,  
Thought better, threw it away. A man from Drimnagh  
Pleaded guilty to hiding the goods

Two miles from Blessington,  
The harp lay in a sand pit  
Wrapped in black plastic, this wonder of wonders  
Like some old piece of driftwood

The IRA chased Brady, shot him twice  
Two years in prison, he spent  
In fear of his life, a grass, an informer, a rogue

The harp itself, was restored to its virginal splendour  
It made no comment to press on its ordeal  
Despite being silver tongued  
And having spoken to the hearts of kings

an Behan  
Through a sharp squall of rain  
I spy the seated statue of Brendan Behan  
Trees, grass, even the bronze tip of his nose  
Drip water by the Royal Canal

A woman in town to buy her daughter's trousseau  
Ignores him, too intent  
On hoisting aloft a broolly to keep her spoils dry

He has only a blackbird to brag to  
It's as deaf as is mute  
That turbulent, roistering, witty, ebullient man  
The auld triangle no longer jangles his day



# Three Wise Sheep

Three wise sheep came to my door last night  
From the far side of the field  
'Have you heard', said one  
'They are breeding flocks in test tubes  
An immaculate conception right enough.  
One ram may father millions, without ever stirring a hoof.'  
'And do you know, ' said the next,  
'Though I can hardly bring myself to say it,  
That cows with their seven bellies  
Have been eating mutton chops  
And have turned into a grassless generation? '  
'Have you seen, ' said the third,  
'The grain of wheat they paired with a mountain hare  
So that its ears will fatten on the stalk?  
Ochone ochone, but what can you expect  
When all our newborn lambs are bleating English?  
Hark! The mechanical collie's revvin on the brae.'

Sheena Blackhall

# Through The Glistening Eyes Of Flowers

Through the glistening eyes of flowers  
Glint of tears- they cannot stay  
All their beauty's transient  
Lives that vanish in a day  
As with flowers that bloom we must  
Follow them into the dust

Sheena Blackhall

# Thursdays

Thursdays

No more Thursday meetings  
No more fleeting catch-ups  
No more sticking plasters  
Stuck on our fractured family

This Thursday, every Thursday now  
You will not twist your hair till it bleeds  
Or tear the yellow craters of your sores  
As I play mother in our restaurant  
Putting food on your plate  
In your belly  
Our snatched, pretend normality

Always, pizza and pasta  
Tea with 6 twists of sugar  
Your crumpled sachets strewn across the table  
A blizzard of white

Why didn't I notice how thin you'd grown  
My handsome bundle of bones?  
Your pupils, two black moons  
Eyes, underlined with blue.

Unstoppable, fate roared down like a torrent  
Of fire and ice, like a thunderbolt  
As if you were the branch and I the tree  
When Thor the thunder god  
Hacked you off from my heart

Sheena Blackhall

# Tick Tock: (17 Scots Poems)

## 1. Puckle Hoolets

### Tawny Hoolet

Physog like a sliced aipple.  
Twa teenie pips o een  
Beak like a buckie-winkler.  
A bowlie o feathers  
Wi a shakkin o ginger spice

### Barn Hoolet

A pierrot's physog, wi dowie, waesome een  
A braid fite muff somelike Sir Walter Raleigh  
Mirl-cloaked an ghaistie-some on eilritch nichts

### Wee Hoolet

Wee hoolet is a fleg in birdie-cloots  
His face is a fite bogle, een gap-wide as grue  
Ae fit hodgin ettlin tae flee awa

### Lang-Legged Hoolet

Heilan laird at the games, his bunnet feathers cocked  
His plaid is tweedy-broon...Hinney-clear een  
His feathers, a reeshlin burn

### Short Lugged Hoolet

Hauf a hoot frae the hairt o a cream meringue  
He's licht's a moufu o air, like a French croissant.



## Skatin Meenister

Inspired by 'The Reverend Robert Walker (1755-1808)

Skating on Duddingston Loch' by Sir Henry Raebum

I've heard o Russian puggies floatin in a space balloon  
I've heard o bearded wifies in the bakkies o Dunoon  
Bit I've niver seen anither thing mair feariesome or seenister  
Than wheechin ower an Embro loch, a Scottish skatin meenister!

Skatin should be dane bi sonsie, swack, reid-chikkit ordnar fowk  
Nae a velvet-hattit stumpie wi twa prune-stanes fur a dowp  
Send the craitur tae the Urals, or the Diocese o Chichester  
Or hire him as a doorman for the pan-loafs at the Dorchester

I ken that preachers rattle tins fur hameless ower the world  
I ken they prattle sermons, an tae halesome deeds are thirled  
Bit thon cleric withe penguin's snoot I'd sheet doon wi a Winchester  
Thon furlieorum cock-a-breekie vauntie skatin meenister

I'd raither watch peint dryin on the Forth Brig ony day  
Than view thon theological stuffed dodo skyte at play  
I wad hae him smored in Axminster, or banished tae Cape Finisterre  
Thon spinnle-shankit nerra-dowpit Scottish skatin meenister!

## Paidlin Wife an the Birdie

A birdie sat on a telegraph tree  
I luikit at him an he luikit at me  
An baith o's thocht 'Fit a queer ferlie! '  
A phone line bird, an a wife in the sea.

ber: A Scots owesett o a Poem bi John Clare

The kintra sleeps in haar frae mom till nicht;  
An, gin the sun keeks throwe, 'tis wi a face  
Blae, peely-wally roon, as tho meenlicht,  
Her traivels feenished o her nichtly race,

Had fand him sleepin, an taen ower his place.

For days the shepherds in the parks might be,  
 Fusslin alood, tae flocks they canna see.  
 Nae spirk o sky- blinfauld their steps they trace,  
 Ower howes, that seem wioot a buss or tree,  
 The feartie bawd syne hauf its flegs will tyne,  
 Cooryin doon aneth its girssy bower,  
 An barely meeves altho the shepherd gyangs  
 Nearhaun its hame, as tykes bowf in the stoor;  
 The wud shelt anely turns aroon tae glower  
 At fowk gaun by, syne knaps his hide again;  
 An dowie craws aside the road ower dour  
 Tae flee, tho' pelted bi the bygaun cheil;  
 Sae day seems turn'd tae nicht, an waukens ill.  
 The hoolet leaves her hidin-hole midday,  
 An flaps her grey wings in the tribblin licht;  
 The hoarse jay skreichs tae times aa run agley,  
 An smaa birds chirp an chitter wi affricht;  
 Sic ferlies fleg the superstitious vricht,  
 Fa dreams o ill-luck, cantrips, sair dismay;  
 Whylst coo-herds think the day a dream o nicht,  
 An aft grow fearfu on their lanely wye,  
 Fancyin that ghaisties wauken frae the mools o day.  
 Betimes the dwaumin weather will shakk aff  
 Its mochie prison roun - syne wins wauk lood;  
 Wi sudden steer the stertled widlan sings  
 Winter's returnin sang - cloud races cloud,  
 An hyne awa the world coosts doon its shroud,  
 Swypin a stretchin circle frae the ee;  
 Storm upon storm in quick succession flee,  
 An o'er the sameness of the purple lift  
 Heiven's haun peints skyrie colours far clouds shift  
 Syne on it cams along the widlan aiks  
 Wi sabbin ebbs, an stooshie gaitherin heicht;  
 The feart, hairse corbie in its cradle craiks,  
 An cushie doos in grip o fleg takk flicht,  
 Whyle the blue hawk hings o'er them up abune  
 The hedger hashes frae the storm begun,  
 Tae sikk a bield that's like tae keep him dry;  
 An foresters boo ower, the win tae shun,  
 Scarce hear amid the clash the poacher's gun.

The plooman hears its birrin roose begin,

An sikks an airt awa frae winter's dird;  
 Buttonin his jaiket closer tae his chin,  
 He boos an hashes ower the peltit yird,  
 Whyle clouds abune him in wud fury byle,  
 An wins drive heavy on the beatin rain;  
 He turns his back tae catch his braith awhyle,  
 Syne gaithers speed an faces it again,  
 Tae sikk aside the seggs his shepherd's harne  
 The loon that fleggith frae the shilpit wheat  
 The dowie craw - in ootgaun hurry wyves,  
 Aneth an ivied tree, his shelterin seat,  
 O seggy flags an sedges bun in sheaves,  
 Or frae the park a teir o stibble thieves.  
 There he rnicht switherin sit, an entertain  
 His een wi merkin the storm-driven leaves;  
 Aft spyin nests far he spring eggs had ta'en,  
 An wishin simmer-time wis back again.  
 Sae rows the month in mixter-maxter moods,  
 Sunsheen an shaddas, doonpish lood, an calms;  
 Ae oor & lees seelent ower the dwaumy wids,  
 The neist wakks lood wi a begeck o storms;  
 A trauchelt nyaketness the park deforms -  
 Yet mony a kintra soun, an kintra sicht,  
 Bides in the clachan still aboot the fermes,  
 Far wark's roch stooshie hums frae mom till nicht  
 Knells that the lugs o Industry delicht.  
 At hinnereyn the steer o darg is still,  
 An Industry her care awhile lats faa;  
 Fin Wmter cams fu forcey tae fulfil  
 His yearly weird, November's thrall ower aa  
 An stops the ploo, an haps the park in sna;  
 Fin cranreuch cauld steeks rikk in slaw delay,  
 An mellows on the buss the berries sma,  
 For teenie birds - syne Wark makks time for play,  
 Nocht but the threshers' flails wauk dowie day.

Gloamin

Doon at the fishin clachan, there's nae quines sheilin mussels  
 Or baitin lines wi mackerel. Nae loons wi ticht neives nettin,  
 Nae fishies, split an gutted, washed, satted and dried

Naebody's birsslin oatcakes ower the griddle  
The kitchie fleers are spreid wi rugs, nae san  
Nae Fitty fishers fecht hame throw the tide

The shacks an sheddies, oothouses, sit-ooteries  
Haud secunt-haun TVs an roosty bikes,  
A puckle gairden gnomes wi beilin peint  
The antrin cat or bowfin gurly tyke  
Washin still skelps ootbye, ships dowp in bottles  
On stoory windae sills. Glaiss fishin wechts  
Are door-stops, nudgin drift-wid ben the step

This is the kirkyaird o the fishin trade.  
The cottages like ceemetery merkers  
Hunker, backs tae the sea like auncient crones

Aybydan, iver cheengin, the sea's dreich sooch  
Is Fitty's nearest neibour, an its auldest.  
Inbye a playpark, a fishin boatie's turned tae a toy,  
Tae cairry a catch o bairns.  
The herbour an the docks, the stank o dulse  
Is strang on the neb

Throw this warm gloamin, doonthe Fitty shore  
A barfit quine, lang-shanked, for verra glee  
Kicks up the san that happit mony's a wreck  
The smachrie an the spindrift o the sea

rBan

Anon Irish 8th Century Here, owersett inno Scots

Pangur Ban ma cat an me  
Tis a sim'lar darg we dee  
Huntin moosies, his delicht  
Huntin wirts I sit aa nicht

Better than men's praise tae pree  
Tis tae screive wi buik on knee  
Pangur, likewise, nae upstert,  
Lives tae cairry oot his airt

Tis richt blythe oor lives tae see  
About oor darg, fu eidently  
Fin we hae, in generous meisur  
Ploys that gie us oors o pleisur

Whiles a moosie frae a neuk  
Rins near Pangur's raxxin cleuk  
Whiles, ma hams will grup an get  
A hale new meanin in its net

Agin the waa he sets his ee  
Fierce an faist an sherp an slee  
Agin the waa o wyceness, I  
Aa ma pouers o kennin, try

Fin the moose lowps intae sicht  
Fu is Pangur o delicht!  
Aa the warld can gyang tae wrack  
Fan a puzzle I can crack!

Sae thegither, we agree  
Pangur Ban, ma cat an me  
In oor hairts we finn oor bliss  
I hae mine an he has his

Practice makketh cat an man  
The perfect hunter, Pangur Ban  
I win wyceness day an nicht  
Turnin derkness inno licht

erin Lane Amangst the Futterats  
Inspired by the sight of six ferrets taking the air with their owners, near  
Wordsworth's Dove Cottage

I traivelled lane amang the crowd  
O towrists far the ice-creams breed  
Fin syne I saw, aa waukin prood  
Sax futterats tethered on a lead  
Aside the road, aneth the trees

Lowpin an snappin in the breeze.

Nae heedin larries' thunnerin roar  
Drivin alang wi wechty load  
Thon futterats socht jist tae explore  
Alang the sheuch aside the road  
Sax futterats, cam upon bi chance  
Tossin their heids in sprichtly daunce

The fowk aside them glowered, bit they  
Gaed breengin by wi futterat glee  
A body cudna bit be gay  
In sic a blythesome company

I luikit lang, bit little thocht  
Fit joy thon sax tae me hid brocht.

Noo whyles, fin on ma duvet I  
Lie doon in an unca ill-teen  
I myne thon futterats dauncin by  
They flash upon ma memory screen  
An syne ma hairt near skips a beat  
An lowps like thon sax futterats' feet

10..Bi the road Basho  
In a hedgeraw, a rose  
Ma shelt ett it

11.A Scots Owersett o a poem bi Han Shan,

Ina taigle o cliffs I wyled a neuk  
Bird-wyes, bit nae pathies fur men.  
Fit's ayont the yaird?  
Fite clouds hingin on misty crags  
Noo I've bidden here- foo mony years?

Ower an ower, Spring an Yule gyang by  
Gae tell the families wi fantoosh gear an cars  
Fit's the eese o aa than soun an siller?

y Toon

Owersett from Shanty Town, by Orphan Veli Kanilc, Turkish, 1914-1950

She sees a man in her dwaum  
A toff wi a pye o a hunner liras  
She merries, an meeves tae the toun  
Letters cam tae their hoose  
'The Blythe Reest Flats' in the sunks  
They bide in a chaumer trig's a box  
Nae mair washin claes. Nae mair washin windaes.  
Gin she dichts a dish, it's her ain.

She has bairns like angels, like draps o licht.  
She buys a secunt-haun pram  
Foreneens she gyangs tae the Reid Crescent Gairdens,  
Sae that wee Yilmaz nicht play in the san  
Like the bairns o toffs.

The keech-wirker's best dwaum  
Is o the Turkish bath.  
He stretches oot on a merble platform  
A raw o masseurs raxx oot at his heid.  
Ane poors watter  
Ane soaps him  
Anither wytes his shottie wi a loofah

As new customers cam inbye  
The snaw-fite keech wirker quits the bath.

Strang Notion

'The Distinct Impression', by B. Kennelly,  
Irish, b 1936, from 'The Book of Judas'

I wis deliverin a bairn  
In a midden o a chaumer in Keogh Square  
The wumman warssled an maned in the bed  
Swyte weetin her hair

Sax littlins gaithered an glowered at me  
As I wirked at the howdiein

Aside her lay her man  
Face tae the waa, whyles snoring

'Is it oot yet? ' he speared o a suddenty  
Gin I'd a pail o bylin watter syne  
I'd hae teemed it ower his skin.

I hid the strang notion  
That the meenit the bairn wis ooto the wumman  
Thon bastart wad be back in!

owersett o poems bi Basho.

Flechs, flees  
Ma shelt piddles richt  
Aside ma bowster.

deen Rap

Aabody come listen tae the Aiberdeen Rap  
We've got golf, ile, excitement, on the global city map  
Oor exhibition centre hauds twa thousand delegates  
We'll pit commerce on the menu; we'll pit salmon on your plates  
Aiberdeen's the city that the towrists like tae gyang  
Wi leisur, fun an netwirkin, oor streets are unca thrang  
We're the Dallas o the North, for oor ile expertise  
Keeps the gas an ile flowin aa aroon the Seeven Seas  
We hae bens an glens an mystery, we hae castles bi the score  
We hae cherm, tradition, history; we hae restaurants bi the shore  
Students flock frae mony kintras tae oor universities  
We are famed the world ower for oor cuttin-edge degrees  
For a warld conference venue there is naethin that we lack  
If yer lukin for a winner, Aiberdeen's the ane tae back!

the Mou o the Moots: For John Law 25/10/1951- 13/2/2010

At the mou o the mools, gin ye'd speir  
Fit mainer o chiel wis John?



Ay at the pynt o the pick like his faither afore him  
A radical arch-organisier, wi electronic flair  
Streetchin his warld frae Silicon Glen  
Tae the Heichts o Macchu Pucchu,  
On the wings o Chapman an barderie  
Wi scarce a meenit tae spare  
Ram-stam forrit, a chiel o causes an virr  
Herdin the Scots leid on tae future paths wi the hairt o a Bruce  
Wi a tongue as gleg as Garioch  
Wi the hams o a lamed don Nae mony chiels like thon.

At the mou o the mools, gin ye'd speir  
Fit consams lay close tae his briest?  
Luv o his faimly, neebors, the wider clan  
O Virgil, Neruda an Soutar  
Luv o the airts far his hyne-affkin tuik reest  
Sooth Africa, Lanark, Mull,  
The years gaen by in a glisk...  
Niver ane tae coor frae a storm,  
This skeely skipper o boats  
Launched noo on his hinmaist voyage  
Can bide content, haein steered a course fur Lallans  
An aa Scots maitters politick an national  
Ay wi a steidfaist haun tae eident herbours  
Wirk an the screivers' darg, his keenest pleisurs  
Sae wis't a winner, syne,  
At the verra heicht o his pouers, he upped an flitted?  
Auld age's bauchled sheen wad ne 'er hae fittit.

#### Alien's Shoppin List

The Queen weirs gloves tae ett her tea  
Sae I weir socks tae sweem  
For as the queen maun hide her hauns  
My taes should nae be seen.

A passin shark nicht takk them fur  
A tasty cheesy dish  
Bit in ma skyrie strippit socks  
He'll think they're jeely fish

Sheena Blackhall

# Ticking Clock

The evening paper's by the chair,  
Grey rain runs down the window's face,  
A single plate drips in the sink,  
The clock is ticking in its case.

The turgid sea turns to the land,  
The breathless breakers shoreward race,  
Sated, it ebbs and spurns the strand,  
The clock is ticking in its case.

The moon's wax seal in every pool  
Lights candles in the forest's space,  
Life's flickering film reels from its spool  
The clock is ticking in its case.

The train rocks in its iron groove,  
The spider pleats its noose of lace,  
Sandpaper handshakes move, remove,  
The clock is ticking in its case.

A falcon climbs, a falcon falls,  
Bird-claw, mouse-fur, the ancient chase,  
Low in the earth the grave-worm calls,  
The clock is ticking in its case.

Through stands of wheat, winds sheer and shift.  
The scythe-man keeps a steady pace,  
Tall grain and straw are slashed apart,  
The clock is ticking in its case.

Sheena Blackhall

# Tick-Tock

Childhood is a tree of gold  
Of fantasy and silver cone  
With all its legends to unfold

The toddling self soon fits the mould  
For infant skills are quick to hone  
And simple steps grow firm and bold

Peers tempt, stairs beckon. Parents scold  
Paste idols chant- their fans intone  
Their every word, to have, to hold

Parenthood comes. Now life's patrolled  
Rooted to house...the hearthside zone  
Watching new destinies unfold

Mid life, the Future's shrunk and sold  
Piecemeal. One plate. You're home alone  
The golden tree's been lopped and polled

Old Age. Shrunk withers. Prospects, cold  
Wrecked beauty. Failing flesh and bone  
How like a tumbleweed that's rolled  
From meadow sweet to desert stone  
Where on thorn trees, life's rags are blown

Sheena Blackhall

# Time Warp: 1897-2017

Time Warp: 1897-2017

Great-grandsire ran his empire frae this shop  
Tradin the milk hurled in frae his dairy farms

Now it's the Corner Tree Café  
Fake Edwardian/ Victoriana theme

Hurricane lamps with bulbs instead of wicks  
Hang from the windows, relicts of some where's past  
Washed up like trendy driftwood

A railway clock ticks over boxes from Whitstable  
Fishmarket cockles and winkles stamped on its sides

Great grandsire's brakkfast wis brose  
Fresh frae the udders o his milkin kye  
A daud o breid fur denner, hotchpotch soup  
Needs an tatties an ingins grown in his ain kailyaird

Now café clientele chat in the rooms  
Scones perch in a birdcage. Vintage wooden boxes  
Hold chintzy knickknacks. (Elizabeth Draper- silks and threads  
Of Paradise Row in London's Bethnal Green)  
Menus are screwed on slabs of smooth planed wood

The dairy cairts aince clunkit ower the cobbles  
Muckle cans clink-clinkin as the shelts'  
Sheen struck the grun, the cans war reamin fu  
O cream tae full toun faimlies cuppies, tins an joogs

Today the menu's firmly cosmopolitan  
Café latte, café mocha, espresso  
Green tea, Cappuccino, Americano,  
The sandwiches are stuffed with voodoo mango  
Pesto, hummus, olives, and pastrami  
Brie, chorizo, dill crème fraiche et al

Tea-total, ma fermin kin fa ained this airt  
Micht hae approved o the liquid refreshments here

The café serves up smoothies, mango, papaya  
Peach, sweet potato, wild English elderflower  
Bollywood dreams chai and E teaket teas  
Milk o soya, almond, coconut

Nae waucht o sharn an strae  
Nae swyte o wark sypes frae the ghaists  
Fa aince vrocht in this neuk  
The claik aroon is global an genteel

Sheena Blackhall

# Titanic Sinks: Aberdeen Man Is Drowned

Every two-bit shyster wanting to take pot-shots at my city

Quotes this headline:

Titanic Sinks. Aberdeen Man is Drowned

Never mind your duchess in furs

Your Irish emigrant chasing impossible love

Your coat-tailed orchestra playing its way to Davy Jones's locker

This is the REAL show-stopper

Titanic sinks. Aberdeen man is drowned.

Provincialism. The tribal need to care

About your own and to hell with the rest out there.

When you open the door and he's standing in the hall,

Death, with his scythe and hearse that's just for you,

Your very own coffin plaque and funeral pall

Wouldn't you like someone to be coming too

From a shared community to the quiet ground?

Titanic sinks. Aberdeen man is drowned.

Sheena Blackhall

# Titanic: Strange Cargo

No expense was spared  
For the passengers of the world's greatest liner

40 embalmers  
Embalming supplies  
Tons of ice  
100 coffins for first class passage  
Canvas body bags for third class passage

The death boat sailed from Halifax  
To haul 306 from the freezing waters

116 were far too badly damaged  
To decipher identity  
And those had a sea burial

Returned to the waves which snatched them  
The strange, unearthly cargo  
Journeyed on through the spectral gloom of the tides  
Mothers, musicians, waiters  
No more roughing it in third class squalor  
2 bath tubs between 700  
In death, the abrasive tides  
Would rub and drub away all social distinctions  
Filling both well-heeled and downtrodden boots  
With equal speed, after the terrible  
Tipping terror that was Titanic

Sheena Blackhall



# Tittle-Tattle

You should have seen your man at the bar on Friday!  
Over Daniel's wife he was like rash  
Didn't you wonder where he was till Sunday?  
Daniel's wife is the village bike, white trash.

Then, at the fair, he danced with Mary Purdy  
And you in childbed too, in June last year!  
Men can be beasts, and you are too forgiving  
How understanding...a saint you are my dear!

Mrs McAndrew saw him a week last Monday  
Take Nancy behind the bushes, randy sod  
It's not for gossip I'm telling you...no, truly  
If he was mine I'd neuter him by God!

What did you say? She's welcome to your leavings?  
Surely you're vexed he's got a roving eye!  
A dog puts its nose in any old plate of porridge  
My, you're the cool one girl. I thought you'd cry.

How can he leave your bed to sport with others?  
Don't you despise him? Doesn't your heart break?  
The first time, yes, but it mends like a scab that hardens  
Duty's the key. I stay for the childrens' sake.

Sheena Blackhall

# To Christmas: The Unsendable Letter

Dear Christmas:

Joy is officially cancelled

For now, I have a holly wreath for a heart

Thorns have pierced my mind

The Past drips blood

The Present has wrung itself dry

Since Death stole my one lost lamb

I hang in the silent night

Like a bauble,

Filled with an endless, evil blizzard

No Kings, no shepherds

No heavenly choirs of angels

Knelt by my son,

Not at his coming nor going

Grief howls like a wolf

Over a stone-cold cub

2000 thousand miles of ice on every side

And not a fire in sight.

Sheena Blackhall

# To Make Love Without Love

To make love without love is easy  
Physical jerks and spasms  
Cracking a match to flame  
Like a puppet propelled by lust

Even in the act of closest union  
(The clue's in the sentence)  
You remain alone  
With the stars, the moon  
The surmountable constellations

The lover, the bed, the night  
As necessary in their time  
As food to the starved stomach

The lover enters the womb  
As a visitor soon to depart  
Crossing the border of selves  
On a temporary visa

Now my breasts are ruined  
My face a slab  
No-one will come to lay themselves  
On the altar of my body

Only the undertaker  
Attentive as a magpie  
Will brush my hair and touch me  
At the last.

Sheena Blackhall

# Toads In March

The pond is hotching with toads  
Rearing their hippo heads  
Their periscope eyes form rings of slimey bubbles  
Their throats are blown-thin gum  
A G.I. Get-together

The pool is hotching with toads  
Kneading the mulch like dough with khaki legs  
Rasping like blunt ratchets  
Their commas hatch from tapioca eggs.

Sheena Blackhall

# Today

Today you might meet a small Scots lion  
Begging to be your pet:

Or a herd of cattle munching packets of smarties  
Or a pianist playing Chopin in MacDonalds  
Or a red hot poker pointing to the moon  
Or a badger using satnav to locate Venus  
Or a frogman posting a letter to Mongolia  
Or a thrush's beak impaling a kebab  
Or a raw heart thumping like an Iriah drum  
Or a little girl with pigtails in a box  
Or a crab abseiling over Lochnagar  
Or a colander dancing on a mountain daisy  
Or the delicate bones of a wren picked clean by rot  
Or a heron holding a spotty parasol  
Or a man without a head who smiles broadly  
Or squirrels swimming in air towards a rainbow

Sheena Blackhall

# Today Marks The Battle Of Arras (April 9th-May 15th 1917)

Today marks the battle of Arras  
Let us remember the dead  
What would they think of the future  
From the mud, where they fought and bled?

The best of a generation  
Unripe, or scythed in their prime  
What would they think of tomorrow  
How we've used their stolen Time?

Today marks the battle of Arras  
Let us remember the dead  
What would they think of the future  
From the mud, where they fought and bled?

Sheena Blackhall

# Tourist Like The Termite Queen

I need cool. I need temperature control  
Thermoregulation is a must  
I manufacture my climate  
Like a spaceman.  
The fan whirrs round and round  
It mesmerizes. I lie spread-eagled  
On the cotton sheets shielded from flies, mosquitoes  
The teeming world outside  
Swarming and strident

I have pills to calm me down, to sooth my aches  
I have pills to help me sleep, to keep me happy.

I am sampling another culture  
Through pharmaceutical armor  
I dare not drink the water  
Eat the food

I make small sallies out, not far from base  
Snatching tiny snapshots to digest  
Later, they'll regurgitate as poems

The fan whirrs round and round. It mesmerizes.

Sheena Blackhall

# Traffic Incident, Sri Lanka

Madame, these three wheeled tuk-tuks  
Should be banned!  
Always in such a flurry!  
Last trip, no kidding, one pulled out in front to overtake  
Too late to brake (Family of five from the airport crammed inside)  
Straight under a lorry's wheels! Flat as an old tin lid!  
Body parts everywhere. Road a river of blood  
Everywhere, too much hurry!

There's a fire ahead, we'll drive around.  
A motorbike in flames...a Honda pyre  
Is that a boot I see? Don't look! Don't look!  
Where are the ambulances and the police?  
Not your concern, Madame, why spoil your holiday?  
See...shop boys come with pails,  
It's not our worry

Sheena Blackhall



# Traffic Jam/Manana

10 minutes counting the leaves on a beech tree

So many! The beech tree is young

She is flighty, but cold to flattery

5 minutes performing the Rorschach test on clouds

Identifying an ephemeral Pekinese dog

A nimbus of Bangkok lady boys

A circus tiger leaps from a pearly cirrus

A fairy fox skedaddles down a chute of white

3 minutes counting the deadheads

In a hanging basket of flowers

2 minutes counting the birds,

Crossing the sky-screen (3 seagulls, 1 buzzard, 10 crows)

The beech stares at me woodenly

We have much to learn from trees

The ultimate maestros in the Spanish art of mañana

Sheena Blackhall

# Train Journey

Grey clouds crawl slowly over racing trees  
Back yards blur shrieking over streaks of miles  
Train slits the evening like a knife through silk.  
A swaggering brace of schoolboys toe-dip puberty

Back yards blur shrieking over streaks of miles  
A fleshy palm taps out a laptop tune  
A swaggering brace of schoolboys toe-dip puberty  
Teasing horizons never keep their meeting

A fleshy palm taps out a laptop tune  
Four housewives slip their leash, away - day gigglers  
Teasing horizons never keep their meeting  
A black bag flutters like a mourning band

Four housewives slip their leash, away - day gigglers  
Grey clouds crawl slowly over racing trees  
A black bag flutters like a mourning band  
Train slits the evening like a knife through silk.

Seen from the train,  
A flying cow,  
A stone white horse,  
Tall fields of wheat.

Seen from the train,  
A rain lashed bough,  
Low lines of trees,  
Where two farms meet.

Drizzle and blizzard and hail and sleet,  
Splittering splattering on the pane,  
Whoosh of steel and the flash of wheel,  
Thundering forward roars the train.

Sheena Blackhall

# Tree

TREE as a name  
Doesn't grow as a tree does.  
It does not sprout letters in Spring  
Nor lose them in Winter

Birds do not sing In the branches of TREE  
Nor do they nest  
In the white spaces of a page.

Clouds do not rest  
On the tops of  
The printed word.

The stars do not shine  
Through the print

Nor does the snow  
Steal up the stems of ink  
Soft, like a dove breathing.

Sheena Blackhall

# Trout

I walked between two oaks  
To the hollow of the wind's nest  
Where the loch lies lightly.  
And there, I plucked a trout from a silver wave

In the coffin of the air it changed to a lead leaf.  
It lay in its grassy shroud, a river godling,  
Neither fish nor wonder,  
A between-thing, a dream becoming sleep.

Sheena Blackhall

## Turkey (2 Poems)

Sandalwood, myrtle, cypresses,  
Sweet gum, laurel & olive groves  
Oleander & dates and pines  
Cross winged falcons & turtle doves

Wild bee honey & cliff top goats  
Lynx and jackal & snuffling bear  
Bougainvillea in perfumed drifts  
Red tiled roofs in the azure air

Shrimp & swordfish & quick sea bream  
Zebra stripes in a twisting shoal  
Coral, amphorae stud the reef  
Crayfish, octopus, sponge and sole

Ottoman, pirate, Roman, Greek  
Temples massing on nearby Rhodes  
Trojan princess who launched a fleet  
Amazon warriors, Homer's odes

Minaret, mosque and muezzin's call  
Baths were the scented tulips bloom  
Hot bazaar where the venders trade  
Jostle and haggle for elbow room

Marmaris  
All day drum beats pound and pulse  
Western bellies blob in bikini girdles  
This is Butlin's with a Turkish twist  
Date palms soar like birds  
In a heat that could strip paint  
The ambrosia's chips and beans,  
The nectar's Turkish beer

Hans, Ivan, Gunter baste like turning kebabs  
Water is kingfisher blue. Showers of diamonds  
Splash from swimmer's heels

A rainbow has melted and welded with lie-lows and lean-backs

George from Crewe's on a Crusade to get laid

A phalanx of bathing belles shield their eyes with shades  
Bronze Hector goes striding past, seeking a British Helen

A chalk-faced man sips from an amber glass  
Flat buttocks, withered thighs,  
Wearing a goat's beard on his sunken chest

Boys like filleted fish, dart like barracuda in the shallows  
Their vertebrae's skin tight.  
A honeycomb of lustrous light and shade, ripple the pool

A bulging Danish bum floats like a large brown pastry  
Rising up in the tourniquet of its trunks

Acres of balconies teeter up to the sky  
Pill boxes on stilettos

A traumatized boy tells of a knifing, high in the Turkish mountains  
Over and over, to anyone who will listen.

Ten heat stroke victims comatose, pass out

Sheena Blackhall

# Tutankhamun

Am I a disappointment?  
I would hate to short-change my public.

Nonentity, nobody, groupie –  
Are you hoping that my celebrity  
Will transform you?

I am a single corridor away  
Only a few steps down from the blazing light  
Not too taxing, I hope?  
I am the ultimate peep-show  
The great un-dead  
A cheap thrill.

Pagh! The stench of your sweat  
The fungus of your breath  
Lies heavy on me.

I am wearing my golden mask  
But where is my black resin scarab?  
My gold hands holding painted crook and flail?  
My golden ba-bird? Serpent amulet?  
My falcon collar?  
Where is my dagger? My beadwork?  
My finger rings? My bracelet with the rich cornelian swallow?  
Where are my woven sandals? My linen headdress?

Before my door was forced  
My dreams were fragrant.  
Carriages I had  
And the love of queens.

Now they have peeled and cracked my fragile world  
Like rotten fruit.  
Once slaves bowed down like wheat.  
Men rose and fell like dust, at my command.  
Now, I am the dust.  
The sands of time, lap lapping at my feet





# Twenty Eight Bairn Rhymes (Mr Pavolva)

Mr. Pavlova's Comb-Over

Whirlwin

A whirlwin struck Ben Nevis. It sooked up 15 yowes  
A hurcheon an a piece box fae aff its cauldri  
knowes  
Along wi twa backpackers, a meenister fae Troon  
Twa Hydro-pylon sparkies an a reid hett air balloon  
It wheeched abune the Trossachs liftit Rob Roy (an his beard)  
A Heilan coo, a cooshie doo, an syne it disappeared!

ish

The dyeuks are weirin wellies  
The hen is in a mac  
The hurcheon's hoosie's floodit  
The lift is inky black  
The rain is pure hale watter  
It's poorin cats an dugs  
An it's washed awa the tatties  
Frae the grumphies' yirdy lugs

less

Cuddies can sleep staunin up  
Dolphins wi ae ee opened  
Snails can sleep three year or mair  
Bit ants are aywis waukened

e Beardie

Pirate Beardie's widden leg  
Gaed the bairns a nesty fleg  
A widpecker chapped throwe his peg  
Cowp Pirate Beardie

Yird

Fin aabody kent the Yird wis flat  
As a Japanee Chinee plate  
Ye cud gyang frae snaw in an Arctic floe  
Tae a desert bi roller skate  
Bit near the edge far Space began  
Wis fu o haar an dim  
Sae gin ye traivelled frae here tae there  
Ye tae slow doon near the rim

### Spurgie

I am a low-fleein spurgie frae Cheam  
Sorry! I just crashed inno yer dream.

### Duchess of Rothesay's Visit

A dug an a duchess cam tae see  
The Aiberdeen Readin Bus  
The duchess pettit the spotty dug  
It fairly enjoyed the fuss  
She cam tae study the pots an buiks  
An films that the bairnies made  
The dug's tail wagged an the duchess smiled  
And we wish they had langer bed

### Boy

Far hae ye bin aa the day  
Billy Boy, Billy Boy  
Far hae ye bin aa the day,  
Ma chermin Billy?  
I've bin Hooverin the flees  
Frae ma granny's hairy knees  
Fur ma grunny is a puggie  
An she Rumbas ben the trees

### Mary (Traditional)

Auntie Mary had a canary  
Up the leg o her draaers  
She pued a string tae gar it sing  
An doon cam Santie Claus

## 10. Ma Sister Belle

Ma sister Belle is a hairdresser  
She washes hair  
She's twenty-two wi a blue tattoo  
She disnae care  
She gaed herself a perm ae nicht  
She pit the curlers in ower ticht  
The lavvie brush is a bonnier sicht  
She disnae care

## 11. Prawns in Princes Street

This is the weather forecast  
It's dingin doon at Troon  
An Ark has sailed by Culter  
There's dolphins in Dunoon  
A whale's lowped ower Ben Nevis  
There's prawns on Princes Street  
King Neptune's plunked his trident  
At the heid o Arthur's seat

## 12. Death o a Hamster(traditional)

Slowly an sadly we laid him doon  
We rubbit his nose in butter  
We pit him in a sardine tin  
An floatit him doon the gutter.

## 13. Jessica

Jessica greets fin ye pit her doon  
She's bonnie an she's bran-new  
Bit fin ye lift her up tae daunce  
The milk flees oot her mou

babies

Super babies rax their airms  
Their een are braw an fluttery  
Bit fin they skirl an shakk their neives

Ye ken their dowp is skitter

#### 15. The Puggies

Thirteen chikky puggies in a big Safari Park  
They lowp on drivers' cars an gie the wing mirrors a yark

#### 16. The Asda Bears

At Asda last Monday I met three broon bears  
Fillin their trolleys wi parritch an pears  
They queued at the check oots, their mainners were rare  
Three broon bears at Asda wi siller tae spare

#### 17. Story Buik Fowk

Fin I am in ma bed at nicht, as sune's I faa asleep  
The fowk fa's in ma story buik fae oot the pages creep  
They play aroon the kitchie, fleg the budgie in her cage  
Bit fin Davie Daylicht's waukent, they rin back tae their page

#### Turtles

A hunner wee turtles hatched oot on the beach  
Rinnin tae paiddle an dook in the sea  
Bit turtle is tasty an easy tae reach  
An maist o them endit as somebody's tea!

#### 19. Bunfecht in the Bakery

There's a bunfecht in the bakery  
Wi neives instead o guns  
Dinna try an calm the stooshie  
Mangst the hett cross buns!  
They threw tatties, neeps an ingins  
An a pair o Spanish plums  
In the bunfecht in the bakery  
Atween hett cross buns

#### 20. Tinnies

Sardines, sardines, squashed in a tin  
Nae a heid atween them,

Haudin bellies in  
Sailors sailors in a submarine  
Mine an clean yer socks, lads,  
An keep yer oxters clean!

r

Far wis the watter cam frae,  
The watter that dreeps frae the tap?  
Mebbe a dinosaur peed it  
Or it fell frae a puddock's lap!

## 22. Tune: Ba Ba Black Sheep

Fit like, quinie hae ye ony plooks?  
That I hae in aa my neuks  
Plooks on ma foreheid, plooks aneth ma claes  
Plooks on ma oxters, plooks atween ma taes

## 23. Gin ye gang by Bramblebrae

Gin ye gang by Bramblebrae  
There's nae fruit tae see  
Bit wheelie bins an cola tins  
An miles o masonry

Gin ye gang by Heatheryburn  
Aa ye'll see's a street  
Nae a pikk o heather bells  
Tae gar the air smell sweet

Gin ye gang by Fernielea  
Ye michtna even myne  
Aince this wis a floery park  
In Auld Lang Syne

## 24. Fit Like Kittlin?

Fit like kittlin,  
Hae ye got a flech?

Watch me scrat min  
Till I pech  
Flechs on ma tailie,  
Flechs on ma dowp  
Flechs along ma fuskers  
That gar me lowp!

## 25. Percy the Parrot

Percy wis a parrot  
Naethin wid he say  
Bit 'Go an gie's a candy  
An dinna be a day!

## 26. Five Wee Riveries

Five wee riveries ran doon a leafy bouer  
'Pouer' cried the Hydro Boord  
Syne there war fower

Fower wee riveries rinnin cantily  
'Beer' cried the brewery  
Syne there war three

Three wee riveries rinnin cauld an braw  
'Pipeline' cried the Watter Boord  
Syne there war twa

Twa wee riveries rinnin short o rain  
'Hose Pipe' cried the gairdeners  
Syne there wis ane.

Ae wee riverie  
Rinnin sweet an clear  
'Drain it' cried the architect  
'There's hooses planned fur here.'

Nae wee riveries fur fishies tae hae fun  
Aa the watter caught an trapped  
In pipes aneth the grun

## 27. The Chuddy

I'm a daud o chuddy stukken on a mat  
Colleekin bits o caddis, like fluff fae aff the cat  
I'm a daud o chuddy, I aince wis saft anroon  
Ow! Here's a muckle buit, cam tae tramp me doon

#### 28. Auld Meldrum's Moose

Auld Meldrum had a metal moose  
Upon a railin steekit  
It boltit- sic a tirroravee  
Fit thievin vratch did wheech it?  
Gin ye should spy a metal cat  
Atap a wheelie bin  
Ye'll ken thon moose wis etten bi  
A cattie made o tin

Sheena Blackhall

# Twin In A Cyst

After they'd cut this almost-twin from my brother's back  
A pitiful pouch of teeth, hair nails  
He'd carried under his skin for 30 years  
I dreamt of this Golem,  
This partial jumbled sibling homed in a cyst

No lowers or cute blue cards marked its arrival  
It was sluiced down a hospital drain like a pail of piss

The outcome was this...

One brother face down healing  
The other, tossed aside like a turnip peeling

Sheena Blackhall



# Twin Oaks

Twin oaks are leaning over the loch  
Murmuring of this and that  
Click-whump clickle-whump they complain

The fork of one is harbouring tiny ferns  
Like maidenhair, an emerald blush of fronds

The other carries acorns in his lap,  
A squirrel's treasure chest

Wind lifts their leaves in unison  
A tribal creak, restless as the eaves  
Of a moving vardo

Their roots tap into the blood  
Of a little traveller

At night they dream of leaving their grassy berth  
Of rising like the humming flies of the loch  
Of dancing over the waves beneath the moon

Sheena Blackhall

## Two Hookers: Siobhan & Courtney (Inspired By A Watercolour)

Siobhan and Courtney, on the game, in the woods  
Foxy and female, always on the prowl

Siobhan sports maroon-dark nails,  
A fag droops from her hand,  
Languid as the smoke that curls upwards  
Thin as an old man's beard

Her lips are slightly apart, but not inviting  
Her teeth are small and uneven like those of a sheep  
A metal stud pierces the narrow arch of her eyebrow  
Her greasy hair's pulled up in a velvet scrunch  
Her stockings are black. Her knees are blue with cold

She is wearing a black Goth basque with pearl sequins  
Under a suede coat, festooned with grassy smears  
From outdoor couplings.  
Black platform shoes sink into the spidery grass  
She is leaning against the bark of an old tree  
Its roots all toadstool and mushroomy  
Its bark is alive with parasites rippling under its skin  
They hunt in pairs, these girls

Courtney is sprouting satanic horns on her head  
Her eyes are empty as clouds on a misty day  
She is holding a doll in her fingerless white lace gloves

Her skirt is childlike, very short and flouncy,  
Suggestive of innocence, with a soupcon of De Sade.  
In knee high socks, pure white, with little girl sandals  
She is every inch the faked up stainless virgin

Siobhan and Courtney, on the game, in the woods  
Foxy and female, always on the prowl

Sheena Blackhall

# Two Tankas

## Tanka (i)

Pipe's leaked on the mat.  
Out in the garden  
Lark wings shake off dew.

Guttering rusts in the sun  
The old cat's walking stiffly,

Birds fly from a meow  
Over the hush-a-by loch  
That fills the valley.

How kind the greeting of waves  
Folding their black shawls round me.

## Tanka (ii)

Ice, like weak green tea  
Is putting the lid on the reeds  
The fish's scales are leaden

Earth is a nest of frost eggs  
A slow melting, a late spring.

Lamb time in the field  
Rough-tongued and tender mothers,  
Ewes nudge birth-bags off

The farmer's bride is washing,  
The day steals warmth from the sheets.

Sheena Blackhall

# Two Trips To Auschwitz

## 1. The flight

No frills

No meals

The suitcase, commodious and bright

Filing out from the carriage

Into the probing light

Of a Polish summer

A shower,

A sleep

A walk

And then, the trip

But first, a smoke

An interval of ease

## 2. The flight

No frills

No meals

The suitcase, small and tight

Filing out from the carriage

Into the probing light

Of a Polish summer

A walk

A shower

A sleep

And then, a trip

And last, the smoke

Rising above the trees

Sheena Blackhall

# Under The Mango Tree: Uttar Pradesh

The Taj Mahal's love tale is eternal  
Built by a prince to mark lost bridal joys  
White marble sculpted in a vast farewell  
Fashioned with all the grandeur wealth employs

Two Dalit girls, each shy as a gazelle  
Walked from their village with a maiden's poise  
Towards the toilet field as evening fell  
The youngest, barely past the age of toys

Into the dark of gang rape's special hell  
No one to hear their screams, their anguished noise  
No policeman's word those rapists to repel  
No god to quell the beast-lust that destroys

The mango tree bore sorrow, the bombshell  
Of two hanged girls, (such fruit brute man enjoys)  
The funeral pyre cracked with its bitter smell  
But as the statesman said, 'Boys will be boys'

Sheena Blackhall

# Underpass

Crouching beggars stud the underpass  
Like sprouting fungii

Their teeth clack in their gums  
Spaced out with smack  
Pus streaks the colourful palette  
Of their sores

Hurry Hurry your frantic heart's  
A bird, dashing its wings against  
The cage of darkness

The round eye of the sun  
Leads you out to safety  
Your fortunate life

Sheena Blackhall

# Union Street Reflections

No 492: William Low, Supermarket  
1964. A schoolgirl eats her tea  
Cold salad, 2 slices of typhoid  
A present from Argentina.  
A city in quarantine  
Global Headlines Shriek  
'People dropping like flies'

Sim the Furrier: 1860-1970s  
1966 within the swish portals of George Sim & co.  
Mrs Pamela Irvine-Gillespie  
Tries on her mink full length coat  
With its brown silk lining, set off by her  
Musquash stole with satin trim.  
Her wifely reward for years of husband tholing  
Oh the luxury, a la mode, oh the feel  
Of the fur, rippling along her thighs!

No 363: Bruce Miller  
1980. A musician's wonderland  
All those grand pianos  
With their crocodile mouths of ivories flashing white  
Like a toothpaste advert.

Here, staff are Jekylls and Hydes  
Salesmen by day, transvestite guitarists by dark  
Suited at noon, in Basque and suspenders at midnight

Langstane Kirk  
1970s. Willie McTavish, builder,  
Is exhibiting his shortbread tin variety  
Of Scottish Art in the annual Forecourt Art Group Exhibition.

Winds buffet the paintings on their hooks  
In the forecourt of the sturdy granite church

Today, the Soul Bar caters for matches  
As city twosomes eye each up as partners

Andrew Collie & co Ltd  
1962. High class grocer. West end catering  
Fancy tongs for handling tasty bakes  
Perched like delicate birds on a bird table  
To lure in passers-by

The shop front window groans  
With balanced tins, rising like circus acrobats  
To a pyramid one puff could topple over

Below stairs, the staffroom's cramped,  
The seats mismatched and dusty  
The one-cake-allowance for tea break  
Is stale, rock hard, unlike the  
Simpering savouries above,  
Oozing with cherries and cream

Union Terrace Toilets  
The gentlemen's convenience  
Is dominated by glazed green wall tiles  
23 stall urinals by Doulton of Lambeth and Paisley,  
The ladies, is pink and brown tiled

Only those who have peed in these porcelain pots,  
Can compare and lament the coming of vinyl and plastic

Minimalism versus Victoriana  
With nothing now to look at but graffiti

No 140: Victoria Restaurant  
1966: The bride is hosting her wedding reception  
She is stroking her bulbous belly like a meringue  
As if afraid it might crumble beneath the touch

In place of the band, a gramophone, blares out Beatles  
Disc spins to allow the guests to dance  
Like sprinkles on a jelly, wobbling slightly

Her smile is as sunny as a custard slice



The groom's shirt collar strangles him  
Like a clotie dumpling restricting circulation  
Another couple wed. True love, no dough.

No130: Bedsit above I

2005. A man could hang himself in here  
The walls are orange and treacle, a smackhead's choice  
The door rings constantly, a tinny torturer  
'Hey pal...Could I jist doss here the night? '  
'I've missed the last bus hame. Ony chance o a kip? '

Cheap rent, a glorious view of city clubbers  
The BOOM BOOM BOOM of music, forever pounding  
And with the dawn, the seagulls give it welly.

Mither Kirk

Ding dong, the Catholic bell,  
Fare you well, my mother,  
Bury me in the old churchyard  
Beside my oldest brother.

My coffin shall be black,  
Six little angels at my back,  
Two to preach an two to pray  
And two to carry my soul away. (Traditional)

I love this kirkyard. Here, the dead lie still  
Out of the traffic stir. Only the trees  
Rustle above and wave cool fans of leaves  
With golden motes the dancing sunbeams fill  
The weathered stones, where sleepers take their ease

This is my city's heart, you'll feel it beat  
Where green lung, peace and calm together meet

21st Century: Town House Aberdeen  
The great and the good come here. A treat,  
Of wine and nibbles... to chat and eat

Tiramisu with Kahlua filling  
Amaretto with raspberry jam  
Sacher Torte with chocolate coating  
Coconut Lime with Malibu Rum  
Peanut jelly in Chambord soaking  
An appetizer of lemon goat cheese  
Frittatas and a nice caprese

Gourmet morsels. Less is more.  
Haute Cuisine, at a sky high price  
Wave goodbye, on the way back home  
Nip into the chipper, is my advice

2016: Archibald Simpsons  
Archie's far the toonsfowk gaither  
Fur a pint, a dram, a blether,  
Boozers sup wi blue tattoos  
Couthie, radgy, airin views  
On aathin frae the Dons tae weather  
Students, hooswives aathegither  
Scaffie, skiffie, toff, big-shot  
It's a civic meltin pot!

Lament for the Past  
Glory days to pawnbrokers  
MacDonalds, beggars' misery  
Betting outlets, charity shops  
Granite mile.... a pot-pourri  
Of change... uncertain foreign markets  
Kirks- turned- pubs and poverty.

Sheena Blackhall

# Upper Class At Bay: Grayson Perry's Rakewells

The upper classes sit in their costly piles  
Decaying into poverty  
Like teeth, gradually falling from shrinking gums

Russian oligarchs and Arab racehorse owners  
Fill the gaps, transplanting the gold bling  
Of swimming pools, electric gates and astroturf  
Into the repossessed acres of baronets, earls and dukes

Other potential buyers of noble homes are the Nouveau Riche  
Who buy organic veg, à la Prince Charles  
Recycle their woollens  
Ration their child's dose of television.

Tim Rakewell and his wife are middle aged □  
Their brood has grown and flown the family nest.  
Like Gainsborough's landed gentry,  
They stroll through their stately grounds  
Reproduction lord and lady of the manor

In the twilight years of British nobility  
A stag totters at bay, its threadbare tweedy clothing  
Sniffed out by the ravenous hounds of  
The tax man, death duties, property upkeep and heating

The Rakewells too, have their own ferocious hounds  
Protesters camping out on their grounds, waving placards  
Squatters who know their rights, won't be gentled along  
Like the gypsies. Who'd envy wealth, the weary struggle to keep it?

Sheena Blackhall

# Views From A Window

Please don't disturb the crane fly on the window  
She is watching a leaf dance solo in autumn's ballet

Bitten by the cold, a grey dog soft as wormwood  
Limps along to the house with the green shutters

A car stickered with saltires,  
Offers its own declaration of independence

Rain is writing apologies in drops  
Sorry sorry sorry down the window

A procession of people in hats, shuffle along the pavement  
A student swipes her i-pad, security blanket  
Her lover trots beside her, a dutiful dachshund

Tail-enders trickle to school  
Each child a footnote in somebody's family story  
Each mother dispenses sweets like an usherette

A spider twirls down from her dream-food catcher  
A dying fly hokey-cokey's in gossamer threads

Sheena Blackhall

# Villanelle Of The Hare

Your frame was like a hare, lissom in tone  
And women courted you, sweet tongued and fair  
Death crept up slyly, stole you for his own

Now you have vanished to the shadow zone  
On the horizon dark clouds of despair  
Nothing to do but suffer and bemoan

The saw of grief has cut me to the bone  
Nothing avails, what use of psalm and prayer?  
Why take the son and leave the mother crone?

Such troubled times and sorrow you had known  
Living a fugitive in a sad lair  
Within a spider's web the Fates had sewn

Life is a gift we occupy on loan  
Each one must ascend Jacob's mystic stair  
How hard when blossoms are too early blown

The world's a shattered lyre since you have flown  
Future's a sundered oak its branches bare  
Living emotion has been turned to stone

So much I'd change, too late now to atone  
Now you have entered the ethereal air  
Beyond the reach of card or telephone  
May we meet soon, my disembodied heir

Oh I am hungry for your face  
And for your filial embrace  
Could I rewind life to the start  
I'd take more care of you, dear heart

Sheena Blackhall

## Vincent's Bedroom In Arles, Painted 1888

The window's a clue: It opens onto paint.  
I like that. A bare cry.  
You didn't care  
For your limited landscape;  
Nor for mine, did I.  
Your brush was a living thing,  
An eerie inward peeper.  
That bed, it's solid, unruffled  
There isn't a sleeper.  
You — did you ever sleep?  
Was every night nightmare  
Of bottomless deep?  
Pictures tilt ominous,  
Slanting a spare wall,  
They're barely defying gravity;  
Shouldn't they fall,  
Up-ended tightrope walkers?  
You never painted a telephone box  
High on black rocks  
Of no-talkers,  
Alight on a troubled sea—  
But that is the very image,  
Precise as a tick,  
Close as a handshake,  
Cold as comfort,  
Wet as a tear,  
Explosive's a sunflower,  
Perfectly sharp and clear,  
You carve, Van Gogh,  
In me.

Sheena Blackhall

# Vision Of Hitler On Sauchiehall Street

He appeared, a short-arsed man in a uniform,  
Walking funny, strutting like a goose  
As if his legs wore callipers

He only spoke one word we understood  
Exterminate like a demented Dalek

The children danced around him  
Whooped and laughed, then let him be  
He was no fun at all, Herr ink moustache  
He stank of something horrible like Death

Sheena Blackhall

# Visit To A Colliery: Pit Village, Beamish

Visit to a Colliery: Pit Village, Beamish

A landscape in the shadow of a pit,  
Coal dust has settled everywhere like sand  
Even the cobbled streets are smeared with it

Underground is seamed like arteries  
Of Saturn, Satan, long funereal bands  
The ghosts of miners dead two centuries

Fourteen years old, coal pickers became men  
Son followed father, dismal lives pre-planned  
Into the foetid depths of that black wen

Even their snot, their tears, were streaked with coal  
Their lungs were silted up, sweat, treacle-tanned  
Ran down their backs. Mines claimed them, flesh and soul

They toiled like moles, wriggled like graveyard grubs  
Some blotted out the dark in a steel band  
Or turned to Masons, Methodists or pubs

Some dreamt of gas explosions, Poor Relief  
When comrade's death would mark them like a brand  
No tin-bath scrub could wash away that grief

Sheena Blackhall



# Visiting The Orphanage

Abandoned down a village well,  
The two year old, Suppumalee  
Has come to learn some basic words,  
Pic cit, and Ida and Hari

Neela, the oldest shakes his head,  
Wary, for not all men are friends  
They may pretend to care but can  
Abuse your trust for other ends

Sama is six years old and lame  
A landmine took away a limb  
But she can hop and she's alive  
And oh the joy to see her swim!

Raja is blind. A single shot  
Robbed him of sight. Such cruelty  
In war zones is the common lot  
He nods, in mute servility.

A mother killed by drought or gun  
The left ear eaten from the head  
By prowling leopard, rescued now  
The six-week old is bottle fed

We all lose parents, late or soon  
Are orphaned, every mother's son  
But seldom by the mindless act  
Of terrorist or poacher's gun

The tourists flock to see the herd  
A happy ending's worth the cost  
Forgetting for a moment that  
For one that's saved, a hundred's lost.

Eager to reach the orphanage  
We blank the beggars of the place  
The withered flea-infested sage  
The cripple's dumb, accusing face.

Sheena Blackhall

# Waiting For A God To Come Along

In the land of cacti and crosses  
A small white donkey wearing a red saddle  
Is waiting for a god to come along.

Meanwhile, a cricket is cricketing.  
Local idols are taking to the skies  
Crowned by wedding cakes  
Ablaze with clouds and candles  
Dressed in ivory cassocks,  
Capricious as Queen Victoria's crinolines.

Sheena Blackhall

# Waiting For Mr Charon

The pier is a seam of rotting teeth  
Bearing a queue of perishable cargoes

I am waiting for Mr Charon  
Already he's ferried many dear ones away

All night I dream that a tinchel of pitchblack rats  
Plague ridden, close around me  
Their needy bites are nibbling at my days

I eavesdrop on the conversations of ghosts  
Mumble to no-one in ear shot, echoes of my journey

I have known the slough of despond  
The weight of guilt and regret

For a while I stayed in the house of the interpreter  
Rested in house beautiful, all too briefly

Oftener than I'd have wished,  
I've squirmed in the vale of humiliation

Vanity Fair lost its savour long ago  
Though by-path meadow's often led me astray  
Into the home of despair, that doubting castle

All the King's Horses and all the King's men  
Won't put my past in good order again

Mr Charon, you're the ferryman to silence  
Where all the birthday candles are blown out

Sheena Blackhall

# Waiting For The Snail

I am waiting for the snail  
To emerge from her whorled house  
So I may engage with her

I've set siege to the wall  
She sticks to it like a clam

It seems she prefers the loneliness of her shell  
She has no wish to pretend to be a person  
Or to be a person pretending to be a snail

Maybe the snail is dead  
Maybe she's menopausal  
Maybe she's off to visit an aunt in Swansea

Next day the wall is snail-less  
Not a slime, not a crunch of snail

Was there ever a snail? you ask, mistrustfully  
There must have been  
She's slithered along this poem

Sheena Blackhall

## Waking In Wolf Light (15 Scots Poems)

Castlegate's Mary

The 7th panel carved at the top of the Mercat Cross in Aberdeen's Castlegate, is that of Mary Queen of Scots. After the Battle of Corrichie, Lord John Gordon was executed before Mary in Aberdeen.

Queen Mary views her subject in the toun  
A Catholic cross deep-cuttit in her gown  
A merble unicorn still stauns abune:  
An Honi soit qui mal y pense, forbye

Gulls ootraxx their braid wings tae furl aroon  
Their screichin mellin wi the traffic soun  
Dis Mary ee thon courtin quine an loon?  
Ah, Honi soit qui mal y pense, the cry.

Aince, aa fur luv o Mary, at the foun  
O this toun cross, her Scottish lords cast doon  
John Gordon, heidit wi a mortal woun  
Bit Honi soit qui mal y pense, the sigh.

A lass, she thocht fair France the mapamoun  
O aa her joy. Flooers at her feet war strewn  
In Embro, Knox turned lauchter tae a froun  
Bit Honi soit qui mal y pense, sez I.

litus: A Scots Owersettin  
Heraclitus' poems were known as 'nightingales'.

It gart me greet, wurd o yer daith, auld frien,  
Myndin foo whyles at gloamin-tide we'd spikk  
Oor claik wad turn the sun intae the meen  
An noo I'm telt that yer bit stoor an rikk

Tho Hades nicht hae taen ye tae thon airt  
Far aa maun gyang, yer poems will sing yer praise  
Upon the branches o ma steidfaist hairt  
Fur poems are daithless in the Buik o Days.

e Tae Veeditin Scholars Tune: The Dundee Weaver

Ye delegates frae as the airts convened in Aiberdeen  
It's planned tae takk ye towrin aroon the local scene  
The whisky at Glenlivet beats a tequila slam  
An kitties up yer speerits, sae be sure tae takk a dram

Syne aff tae Cawdor Castle far Macbeth wis ance a thane  
Ye'll see it in the sunshine, bit aftener in the rain  
An weir an Afghan Burkah tae keep the midgies oot  
An pray the anely bites will be upon yer een an snoot

Culloden Muir is dowie far the floer o Scotian fell  
An ilkie man that stauns there, maun face its ghaists himsel  
There's nae a single kintra, that hisnae felt the stoun  
O war an confrontatioun, o skaith an battle woun

An fin ye reach Kildrummy ye micht hear a skreich or twa  
The blacksmith traitor Osborn, bit mair nur he could chaw  
The English gaed him gowd tae reward his treachery  
They meltit it an poored it doon his thrapple for a fee

Ye canna come tae Scotian an nae jyne a Ceilidh daunce  
As weel drink Earl Grey in the Moulin Rouge in France  
They'll birl ye an kerfuffle ye, in eichtsoms reels an knots  
They fairly like their jigs an jinks the contermaschious Scots

Sae as ye furreign delegates come listen here tae me  
Ye canna come tae Scotlan an nae gyang on a spree  
Oor howfs'll gar ye hooch wi their firey usquebaugh  
Sae here's tae lear an fellowship, guid confiers, slainte mha!

Auld Line, Ballater

The bumble dauchles in the meadow-sweet  
The ragged robin brichts the river's bank  
The geans are swaalled, reid-chikkit on the stem  
A rabbit lowps, hett-fittit, swank o shank

Hyne ower the birks, the kirk bell's clapper tongue

Clangs. In the larick squirrels showd the boughs  
The sun spreids meltin gowd ower puils o Dee  
The ivy furls the aik in emerant towes

Wee trootlins brakk the portal o their hame  
Breenge up, gowp air, takk fleg, syne splyter back  
A saftsome breeze sets ilkie jinkin leaf  
A-jiggin ower a hurcheon's jobby back

Twa creashie grumphies in a ferm neuk  
Lie laired, twa tubs o lard wi sappy snoots  
At the glen tap, sun bathin in the yird  
Frae deep inbye the wid, a hoolet hoots

July's the month fan man an breet may sup  
The hinney frae the Simmer's crucible  
The harebell hings abune her dweeble stem  
Blue as the Heivens afore Auld Cloutie fell.

Arbuthnott Kikyaird

St Ternan's kirk stauns dour  
In the reid stoor o the Mearns  
Fifteen hunner years without a flittin  
Surviving reformation, lowes, the antrin extension  
Raxxin its dimensions, or teemin the stoup  
That held the haly watter

The kist o Hugh Le Blond hauds the banes  
O a cuckoo corp..the perk's o being a son  
O a belted laird.

A kist o fussles, like Pan's Pipes swalled  
Tae the heicht o a muckle waa  
Pynts tae the kirk reef, a heeze o moosewabs  
Ootbye a brock's howked oot his beeriet hoose  
Blaik an fite, as clean-cut's Guid an Ill  
Nae hauf wye meisurs fur yer Protestant.

Ower the dyke, the corn growes fat fur hairstin  
Rattlin in the breeze like rosaries



The merklers ower the mools are a dominie's register  
Naethin byordnar, barrin a muckle buik

Dowped in a neuk, bearin the name o the Mearns's  
Famous screiver, weel laired fur his Sunset Sang  
Preenin him doon aneth the wecht o his fame

Yet still, his wirts jink aff the typeset  
Firey's the nettle hidden in the sheugh  
Haudin a reid stang in its green leaves  
That's warm bit stings betimes.

on the Cat Wauk

Press Report: Feb 25th 2008: German & Belgian Police dogs in Dusseldorf are  
getting blue plastic fibre shoes to protect their paws from broken bottles near  
pubs

Hae ye heard the news o the Dusseldorf dugs?  
They're getting braw new plastic sheen  
They'll think that they're waukin on Persian rugs  
As they sniff roon each German shabeen

The dugs at Auld Rayne'll be wintin the same  
Wellies mebbe, or strang hikin buits  
While Yorkies an Wasties'll bauchle in safties  
Fin they're oot stravaigin the streets

In the Champs Elysee, poodles perfumed an gay  
Will be hyterin about on stilettos  
Frae ahin they will luik as they corner each neuk  
Like candyfloss on fower cornettos

In ikie pooch parlour frae Cairo tae Cannes  
Fowk are busy designin new trainers

Fur dugs great 'n' sma.  
Gin their prostate's awa  
There'll be holes in the soles for pee-strainers

Shock

Press Report: 26th June 2008- Drinkers in the Australian out-back invite crocodile into their watering hole

A pub fu o lads feelin boozy

In Australia's oot-back, nane ower choosy

Took a croc in the bar, cryin `Gie her a jar

She's got winnerfu teeth fur a floozy! '

in on Parade: Tune: Jock McGraw, the Stootest Man in the Forty Twa

Press Report: 23/8/2008- Nils Olav, a three foot high penguin from Edinburgh Zoo, was knighted on behalf of King Harald V of Norway, and adopted as the official mascot of his Royal guard.

A penguin bides in the Embro Zoo

His heid is black bit his bluid is blue

For the king o Norroway quo ae day

makk him a knight an a mascot tae.'

Nils Olav wis thon penguin's name

Bit noo he's a Sir in the haas o fame

He's the Colonel in Chief o King Harald's guard

Touched on the shooders bi the Royal sword

A fanfare played as he waddled oot

Tae inspect the troops frae hat tae boot

Bit at three fit high Nils anely saw

The sodjers belts an their buckles braw

Fin Norroway's sodjers tae Embro come

Tae jyne the tattoo wi pipe an drum

Nils Olav's hairt it'll swall wi pride

The best-kent knight on Morningside

a Bag o Floor

Wee sonsie bag o hale-meal floor

The sicht o ye makks me feel dour

Tho I am telt ye are the cure

Fur constipation

Redemption's in yer gritty stoor  
Tae save the nation

White floor, that millers eesed tae yield  
In hefty bannocks aince concealed  
The carbohydrates that congealed  
In rock hard faeces  
Till double chins an kytes revealed  
Ower muckle pieces

Sic is the fate o modern man  
That aa maun hae a diet plan  
An bide awa frae scone an flan  
Pie tart an cake  
An stick tae hale-meal broon an blan  
For oor hairts' sake

Sune, ilkie meal tae pass yer mou  
Wad be mair fittit fur a coo  
Wi roughage in't tae gar ye chew  
Strang teeth, nae savour  
White floor is a mirage that noo  
Is ooto favour

Galore

Press Report: June 1 g 2008. Berliners are being pestered by boars rooting up their gardens. One broke a man's leg when it entered his living room and he tried to shoo it out with a broom.

In Berlin fowk are pestered by boars  
Finiver they step oot their doors  
Ane, attacked bi a broom, in a chiel's livin room  
Tuik nae tent as it chawed his hors d'oeuvres

11.A Dram

At a kistin, a waddin, new face in a pram  
Ye'll hear aa the faither's cry 'Let's hae a dram! '

Is't ower caul? Is't ower hett?

Is the gaffer a bam?  
The remeid niver alters...it's 'Let's hae a dram'

Yon stunner ye beddit wis mutton, nae lamb  
Fa's wyte wis't yer speirin?  
Fit else, bit the dram!

-Gollach

The horny-gollach disna ken  
Fit side his breid is buttered  
Because it skites oot frae his claws  
Syne baith o them are gutted.

the Cauldron

I gie ye Angus Calder  
Son o Lord Ritchie-Calder o Balmashannar  
O the Royal Burgh o Forfar  
(An honorary citizen o Jerusalem)

Raise a dram tae this Angus,  
(Champion o heidbangers, keelies,  
Tinks, nutters, ootlinns, orrals)

This kenspeckle Angus  
Fa waukit in Waikato  
Killed time bringin sodjers tae life (reid poppies in prose)  
Blitzed umpteen myths frae the watter  
Brocht Horace tae Tollcross  
(A terrible dearth o olives, the poet said  
Settlin fur pickelt ingins in a chippie)

There's a when mair stumps tae his wicket:  
This faist bowler o poetry  
This explorer o Rooshun fiction (Pushkin tae Chekov)  
This Angus, fa re-acquantit Scotland wi the randy  
Deevillick-bardie Byron (Radical or Dandy)  
In the auncient bulks o the wab,  
This Angus is said tae cairry the bluid o

Fortun Ortiz Calderon, still-born an dowed  
In a cauldron, till his greets let aabody ken  
He wisna fur bylin.  
Likewise, the Norman Knight, Hugo de Cadella,  
Rins in his femoral artery  
An wi'oot twa wirds o a lee  
This Angus cam doon frae the Cawdor Thanos o Nairn.  
There is likewise a queer auld bodach, a tinker-fiddler  
Ayont the wids o Birse...we'll let thon flee stick tae the waa

Sae raise yer glaiss tae this Calder,  
This poet o roch clear water  
Wi the toast o the queen's ain Heilanders:  
Cabar Feidh Gu Math: The deer's horns forever!

Calder, Embro's Bard: tune Maggie Lauder

Born wi Scotland in his veins  
(his faither cam frae Forfar)  
Tae Cambridge, gaed, tae learn his trade,  
A scholar and a screiver  
He kept alive 'The Peoples' War'  
The Empire an its Culture  
He weirs the poet's laurel wreath  
His name is Angus Calder

The wark o mony's an eident Scot  
He edited an gaithered  
On Scott, MacDiarmid, Byron, Burns  
He pondered ower an blethered  
Gin ye stroll doon auld Embro toon  
Ye cud dae war nor dauder  
Inby a bar tae tak a jar  
An news wi Angus Calder

Some can screive o history  
In boredom's thoomb screws squeeze us  
Whilst ithers threip on endlessly  
About some stoory thesis  
Bit gin ye seek a lichtsomen claik  
On Barbie, theres nae baulder

Or tales o Winkie, best o doos  
I gie ye Angus Calder

Gin fowk war cups tae quench yer drooth  
Some wad be flat as watter  
An ithers be as wersh an soor  
As swyte frae Nero's oxter  
For wit an lear, baith douce an clear  
A malt o rarest order  
For hame an haa, a man for aa  
His name is Angus Calder

ic Jam

Fit's adee? Fit's adee?  
This bus hisna moved since hauf past three!  
There's a taxi o quines in ballet frocks  
There's a steer o fishermen up fae the docks  
There's a pipe band marchin, twenty loons  
Wi a drummer in leopard skins duntin the tunes  
There's seagulls skreichin ower the melee  
Far is the haud up? Fit's adee?

Sheena Blackhall

# Wales

I am passing through Wales on a coach  
I am looking for marks of Welshness  
(Apart from the signs such as Mold (Yr Wyddgrug))

Look! There is Shirley Bassey  
Shimmering in the sequins of a birch tree  
She is singing Big Spender in a throaty voice  
Like a Welsh coal miner  
Smoking sixty a day

Behold! ...A small green dragon  
Is leading a pack of corgis into the nettles  
Where it will devour them,  
Welshly.

Sheena Blackhall

# Walking In Blake's Garden (18 Poems In Scots)

Tod frae the Wids

Fin gloamin time begins tae saftly faa  
A tod cams steppin frae a brukken waa  
Its paws pad-paddin ben the widlan snaa

The warld hauds its braith, the nicht is cauld  
A bodach humphs a puckle sticks, twa-fauld  
Winter is coorsest tae the young an auld

The bodach weirs twa layers abeen his sark.  
He hashes hame afore the cranreuch dark  
The tod bides back an wytes in the braid park

The chukken in the hen hoose on its reest  
O strae can cheep nae prayers tae ony priest  
Fin tod's sherp teeth sook on its feathery briest

The tod has littlins neth the fairy ring  
An they maun feed like ony leevin thing  
Hungeret, they winner fit their dam will bring

For, like the bodach wi his bairns near-by  
Aa breets maun keep their ain frae gaun awry  
A family, pack, a flock, a herd o kye

## 2.A Fartin Cat

I dinna gie a fartin cat  
For under-dugs. I sheet the craa  
Frae beggars priggin on the street  
I hash on by. I haud awa

For I hae seen them, pooches stapped  
Wi coins frae the saft-hairtit stapped  
Ahin bare trees, aside a kirk  
Share junkie needles in the mirk



An sae the siller pruves a curse  
That leads tae crime, coorseness, an worse

### Owersetts o Ho Chi Minh's Poems From Prison

A Fier's Paper Blanket  
New buiks, auld buiks,  
the leaves aa haived thegither.  
A paper blanket  
is better than nae blanket.  
Ye fa sleep like princes,  
happit frae the cauld,  
D'ye ken foo mony chiels in jyle  
canna sleep aa nicht?

Autumn Nicht  
Afore the yett, a guaird  
wi a rifle on his shooder.  
In the lift, the meen flees  
ben clouds.  
Heezin flechs,  
like blaik airmy tanks in the nicht.  
Squads o mozzies,  
like waves o attackin planes.  
I think o ma hamelan.  
I dream I can flee far awa.  
I dream I traivel trappit  
in wabs o wae.  
A year has cam tae an eyn here.  
Fit crime did I commit?  
Greetin, I screive  
anither jyle poem

Cauld Nicht  
Autumn nicht.  
Nae mattrass. Nae happins.  
Nae sleep. Body an legs  
Huddle up an cramp.  
The meen glimmers  
on the cranreuch-shawled banana leaves.  
Ayont ma bars

the Muckle Bear showds on the Pole.

Owersett in Scots o Fishing in Autumn by Nguyen Khuyen

The Autumn puil dreich, the watter caller  
I fish fae a smaa boat rowin here.

Wee blue ripples spreid throw the mist  
The win, the leaves flee by wi the year

Fae a deep blue lift hing raws o clouds  
On a bamboo pathie, naebody appears

Knees tae briest, I cana pit doon this pole,  
Mony fish yark at the duckweed yonner.

skivvies o Chatswirth Hoose, circa 1902

A hoosekeeper,  
Sax washer-wives  
A scullery maid  
A laundry porter

A bylerman,  
Upholsterer,  
An odd job chiel,  
Twa windae cleaners  
A chaplain, secretary tae  
Jyners an stable farriers  
Sax hoosemaids  
Sivinty gairdeners,  
A still-room quine  
A groom o chaumers

Twa lodge porters  
A nicht fireman  
Ae dairy lass  
A hired sparkie  
A coalman,  
Cook, an a hoose steward

Pittin a stop tae aa malarkey

A valet, steward's room man, an usher  
The stable maister, groom an loon  
The Lady's maid wi frocks an blusher

The governess,  
The gamekeeper  
Three fitmen  
An the unner butler

The nanny, nurse, fin littlins cam  
Wi titles prefixin their names  
The hale-jing bang employed tae tend  
Aristocrats an aa their games

The peintins, marbles, busts an trock  
Noo ained bi the museum fowk  
Fad sikk tae dicht the plate an jorums  
Frae sic a rowth o Whigmalarums?

## 6. Jock Thamson's Bairns in the Ship of Charon

Charon's boat is biggit for aa  
Bizzims, nickums an cyards  
Jaads an lairds an skinnymalinks  
Souters, fermers, bards

Whyles the ferry is unca roch  
There's stooshies atween the fowk  
There's tuilzies atween the antrin tykes  
O gangrels, gomerils, gowks

Bit aince awa frae the world's shore  
Strippit o flesh an fame  
It's little account the starnies takk  
O the pouer o a body's name

## 7. I mynd the wirds ma grannie eased tae spikk

I mynd the wirds ma grannie eesed tae spikk  
The birdie wirds, like spurgie, dyeuk an craa  
Like whaup an peesie, yalla yeitie, erne  
At nicht they flichter roon the chaumer waa

In dreams the meenlicht fulls wi grannie's flooers  
Wannerin Willies, pee the beds an gowans  
The trees wyve in the starnies, birks, and saughs  
Geans, aiks an laricks, aipples, boortrees, rowans

The shelts cam trottin by, wi antrin breets  
Yowes, brocks an bawds, twa puddocks frae a troch  
A sharny coo, a hornygollach clan  
A wyver wi a flech, a flee, a moch

The weather wirds: like doonpish, dreich an cauld  
Blin drift, blin smore, snaa, birsslin heat an haar  
That fermer laddies watch for, fishers fear  
Rowin their boaties by the herbour bar

Thon wirds o bairnhood, hinney in the lug  
Bide in the benmaist crannies o ma heid  
Granminnie's wirds, sae couthie, kent an fine  
The wirds that are the reets o ma Scots leid.

er Maitters

Ye've a meetin. The fowk are gey frosty  
An ice-brakker's aywis the weather  
Is it mochie, or fooshtie, or jeelin or dreich?  
It's the safest o bets for a blether

We dinna hae steers like a monsoon  
Tornado or cyclone or waur  
Bit still we can girn an gie't laldy  
About blizzards an satt on the car

Is it hett? Weel the midgies will like it  
Is it winny? It flattens the craps  
Is't a doonpish? The gutters are chokit

Unless it faas doon in wee draps.

Is it snaay? An inch wid be certain  
Tae close aa the skweels roon about  
Ay the weather is fairly the topic  
Tae gar wurdies like floeries sprout!

s

It's April. Aa the parks are ploeed  
The early craps are brierin  
The sap is risin in the trees  
Gulls ower the rigs careerin

The lift is lichtsome, set for fair  
There's daffies in the sheugh  
An showdy powdy in the wids  
Reest hoodies, coorse an teuch

On the howe heids there's skirps o snaa  
Grown smaaer ilkie day  
The gweed reid glaur o fermin grun  
Lies quate in Auchenblae

The birlin turbines hairst the win  
Boats aff Steenhive rowe weel  
Fur aince the gurly waves are calm's  
A puil at a bonspiel.

10. In a Rugby Park, Derbyshire

Yowes in a park in the sypin rain  
Chawin awa, chawin awa  
Niver a scrum nor a tackle nor baa  
Garrin them faa, garrin them faa

Craa on the goal post tholin the weet  
Teetin aboot, teetin aboot  
Rain teems doon like a brukken spoot  
Ower his funeral suit, his funeral suit

Pheasant is coortin ower the line  
A birdie maun try, a birdie maun try  
Will he score as he follaes his dearie ootbye?  
She's blate, bit he's spry, thon pheasant, fegs ay

s the Cuddy

It's a bad hair day for Seamus the cuddy  
He lowers his boddom lip  
Raises the draabrig o his teeth  
Lattin oot a roch 'Hee-haw'  
His een o navy-blue are dowie an weet  
Like tears nicht drap  
Gin he shoogled his powe ower hard

Mary, jyled

The braw Scots princess, raised in France  
Damask and gowd were her bairn frocks  
Deerskin gloves on her leddie-hauns  
Cap on her heid happed reid-fair locks

Gleg in Spanish, Italian, French  
Played the lute, could draa an sing  
Daunced an rade wi the great French lords  
Mary, bird wi a restless wing

Wed tae the Dauphin aged 15  
Twa short years an the idyll eyndit  
Ower the waves back hame she sailed  
Murder, rape, aa joy suspendit

Wirthless husbands an fechtin Earls  
Mary's choices war ay ill-wyled  
Fa'd hae thocht that her cousin Bess  
Fur 19 years wad haud her jyled

Chatswirth brocht her a whyles remeid  
There, the Earl o Shrewsbury kept her

Weel amused wi the hawk an bow  
Wi pets that the kind French courtiers sent her

Till at the eyn, in Fotheringhay  
There, whaur Richard the Third wis born  
Hame o thon humphy-backit deil  
Mary's heid frae her neck wis shorn

The Earl o Shrewsbury grat, they say  
In Notre Dame, wi a wae oration  
The Great Archbishop o Bourges himself  
Spakk o the loss tae the Scottish Nation

James the Saxth, whan he jyned the crouns  
Made Westminster her burial seat  
There in the Abbey, noo she lies  
Wi the Lion o Scotland at her feet.

ie

Sheltie wis the hudderie coatie  
Chawin girse wi yalla teeth  
In the lea o Stirlin Castle  
Think ye o the fowk aneth?  
Warriors beeriet in thon yird  
Focht wi arra an broadsword  
Noo, the stage o war's a park  
Sheltie wi the hudderie sark

y Spring

Heich Bennachie an the Mither Tap's  
Like a brock in a strippit jaiket  
An the breem an heath in the icy howes  
Is taigit an hallierackit

It's cranreuch cauld in a latchy Spring  
The knowe-heids, fite an glimmin  
The daffs are laith tae unfurl their flooers  
Mangst snaa-draps jeeled an chitterin

There's smirr in the nyaakit wids ootbye  
Dreich, dreich is the gurly cloud  
An the lammies born in the hap o snaa  
Step frae birth-caul inno a shroud

A hardy billie's the shepherd syne  
Wi his cromack an collie sikkin  
His flock in the blin-drift gloamin time  
Thrawn chiel wi his blue neb dreepin

Bit the inbye fowk in office an toon  
Ken nocht o the winter's blast  
In the cosy bield o their heatit neuks  
Ne'er a cloot nor a cover they cast  
Their siller is easy won an spent  
Till Mey wins throwe at last.

15. David Toulmin: Tune: The Holy Ground, traditional Irish Sea Shanty

John Reid wis born tae a cottar  
An Buchan wis his hame  
Bit as David Toulmin he's weel kent  
Fin his screivin name brocht fame

Chorus: He wis ne'er dinged doon bi Fortune  
He wis clivver, gleg an thrawn  
An he grew in pouer wi each antrin shooer  
Frae a lad, tae a famous man

He vrocht mangst glaur an slyster  
He tcyaaaved mangst sharn an strae  
An the sweyt gaed sypin throwe his sark  
Fin he humfed great bales o hey

Chorus: He wis ne'er dinged doon bi Fortune  
He wis clivver, gleg an thrawn  
An he grew in pouer wi each antrin shooer  
Frae a lad, tae a famous man

His neives war rocheded bi wirkin



Bit his harns were keen's a scythe  
As he jottit doon the antrin thochts  
An the spikk o fermin life

Chorus: He wis ne'er dinged doon bi Fortune  
He wis clivver, gleg an thrawn  
An he grew in pouer wi each antrin shooer  
Frae a lad, tae a famous man

At nicht, his pynts he wad lowse, syne  
Fin his tea wis hott'rin on the byle  
Wi an oor o peace, frae his darg, release  
He wad scribe his tales fine style

Chorus: He wis ne'er dinged doon bi Fortune  
He wis clivver, gleg an thrawn  
An he grew in pouer wi each antrin shooer  
Frae a lad, tae a famous man

He wis ne'er acquaint wi siller  
Wi a rowth o schulin an gear  
Bit like ony lintie in the park  
His thochts rose heich an clear

Chorus: He wis ne'er dinged doon bi Fortune  
He wis clivver, gleg an thrawn  
An he grew in pouer wi each antrin shooer  
Frae a lad, tae a famous man

Sae here's tae Mither Natur  
Fa wyes the Justice scales  
An tips them whyles gainst wealth an wyles  
Blawin win in the smaaest sails

Chorus: He wis ne'er dinged doon bi Fortune  
He wis clivver, gleg an thrawn  
An he grew in pouer wi each antrin shooer  
Frae a lad, tae a famous man

Ice Queen's Panjotterels

She's awa tae caulder climes,  
Teemin oot the scrapins o her cauldron  
Leavin's wi:

Tooshties, nippicks, puckles, pyokies o sna  
Schmoodrichs drappit on firs  
Runkled like bridal sprays  
Like a French jabot  
Like Flanders lace  
In ilkie crannie an neuk  
In howe an sheugh  
Driven ahin the dykes in boorachies  
Like a moose chittered shroud  
Makkin a tinchel roon a puil  
A torc o frost  
Thon divots an dauds o drifts  
Ice Queen's panjotterels

#### 17. On the Death of Margaret Thatcher

Passin road kill by Scotch Corner  
(Pertrick in a puil o reid)  
Bleep! A message on an i-phone  
Chirrup 'Margaret Thatcher's deid! '  
Floors on the antrin crash site  
'Cannie drivers! Cut yer speed! '  
Miners on the airwaves clakin  
About Margaret Thatcher, deid.

Lue or hate her, sae divisive...  
Dae ye staun for need or greed?  
Thon will colour yer reaction  
Noo that Margaret Thatcher's deid

Hairt o steel, a hard big wigger  
Tory o the permed heid  
Haun bag swingin Iron Lady  
Nation...Margaret Thatcher's deid!

erfield Spire (1)

Chesterfield kirk has a cruikit spire  
It wis twistit throwe a begeck  
Fowk say that a vergin wis merriet there  
Unheard o in sic a Haly lair  
Gawpin doon caused the crick in its neck

Sheena Blackhall

# Walking In Woods

A buzz saw crumbles sawdust  
Heard not seen

Three brown alder leaves,  
Dangle out of season

Water falls thin and weak's  
An old man's pee

In the oak tree's hollow  
Tiny whorls and cracked bark  
Holding hidden tenants

Tits swerve round a feeder  
Replete with seeds

The mandala at the shrine room's  
A wooden moon  
Orbited by galaxies of insects

The grass cutter's spared  
The forget-me-nots  
Six resting flies breathe thanks

Ten single raindrops on a shining leaf  
Like little pearly spinsters

Between place of spirit and air  
The bee, the buzzard, circling

Stripped of swaddlings and trappings  
Into the pond of the mind  
Dropped scenes form ripples  
A purple butterfly  
Opened it's wings  
It's face, a violet's heart

Yields up her scent  
Gifts her seeds for thought

Sheena Blackhall

# Walking The Mat

Nobody walks the mat today. They click, date, dump by text  
Union Street's a conveyor belt of consumers  
Trailing bags of shopping like Livingstone's bearers

Toddlers scream unchecked in red-faced rage,  
While child-mums flick their ash on buggy- heads

Skateboarders scrape the flagstones, striking sparks  
A teenager riding a bike bombs past the Adelphi  
Parting the waves of walkers, Moses on speed

At bus stops, peroxide grannies grumble at city changes  
An ambulance parks at McDonalds for a human carry out

The sun puts in an unexpected appearance  
The sounds are of Eastern Europe, Africa, Dubai, Doric

Everyone stops as a white stretch limo oozes over the tarmac  
As large as its driver's ego, sleek's a suppository

By the greasy steps to the Green  
A scraggy, spaced out youth has hit ground zero

A child drools at the tempting aroma of chocolate  
Wafting out from a shop of candied morsels

In the cool of Archibald Simpson's,  
A beer drinker downs his lager,  
Flashing a bicep tattooed with a Devil's leer

At the Market Cross, the feeky drinkers  
Swagger and stagger, frightening away the tourists  
Under the indignant hooves of the rearing unicorn

Everywhere, seagulls indulge in seagull thuggery  
Everyone's keeping their rowies under wraps

Sheena Blackhall

# Walking To Music

Do you My Fair Lady skip down the street?  
Do you bob as you go, like a maid?  
Do you stroll as you would down Parisienne ways  
Under branches with cherry flowers splayed?

Do you tramp like a convict on habit's treadmill?  
Do you trudge like a shopper weighed down?  
Do you jog like a squirrel off foraging food?  
Well how do YOU walk through the town?

Sheena Blackhall

# War 1914-1918

Who killed our sons  
Both the Tommies and Huns?  
Us, said the guns.  
We killed your sons

Who saw them die?  
I said the fly  
Through my wicked black eye  
I saw them die

Who drank their blood?  
I, said the mud  
Where the mortar bombs thud  
I drank their blood

Who dug their grave?  
None could I save  
Said the fierce battle wave  
Neither gallant or knave

Who profits from that  
Like skittles knocked flat?  
Through them I grew fat...  
I did, said the rat

Who tolled the bell  
For them as they fell?  
In the gateway of Hell  
I did, whined the shell

Were our soldiers misled?  
So many, all dead  
For victory they bled  
The Old War monger said

When does grief end?  
You must labour to mend  
Our lost family, my friend



Said the ghosts in the wind

Sheena Blackhall

# Warfare Canaries Museum Installation,2014

Reaching up from a pail  
A clutch of prosthetic hands

A gas mask head is perched  
On a roll of barbed wire  
Standing on a plastic skeletal foot

A faceless skull has clockwork for a brain  
A child's hand becomes its tick-tock nose  
Not telling the time but waving

A sabre skewers an excellent kebab  
Of liver, intestines, kidneys

A pulpy mass of pink with two green eyes  
Hangs upside down in a canary's cage

Miniature toy soldiers made of lead  
Are dwarfed by a forest of bullet shells  
All pointing up to the heavens

On a salvaged hospital bed  
(Its mattress, torn khaki, canvas)  
2 crimson painted stumps of uprooted trees  
Resemble ripped out hearts with screaming arteries

Mortars pierce ceramic, shuttered busts  
The world is perched on a spiral  
Diminishing down

For afters, a walking stick,  
Nailed with the badges of many far flung countries

Black balls of blood like a child's metal marbles  
Clotted and skewered on prisms,  
End with a horse's tail

Sheena Blackhall

# Washing

Eek! I am a sheet of the line,  
Yawning.

Wumf! I am a pillow  
Fawning into the billows of the wind.

I am a linen shirt  
Like an American flag

Flump!  
I am a quilt-slip,  
Playing fast and loose with air.

Whump!  
I am a tablecloth In full sail,  
Suddenly caught by the tail.

Slump!  
We are the washing.  
Tossing.

Sheena Blackhall

# Washington Interlude

The Mall sat at the hub of things.  
The Hirshhorn, with its fountain  
Of naked water, a spiritual oasis.

Gold days under the needle tower  
Were a lucky strike. A shifting tableaux,  
Tents and trees and sun.

The shy smile of melons luscious as Judy Garland's lips,  
Old Glory hanging from every second wall  
The red shoes of squirrels tap-dancing through the leaves

Sheena Blackhall

# Waterbabes

Jean Sim, a clippie, dressed in navy-blue,  
Shouldered her punch as if it was a gun,  
Her netted hair caught tightly in a bun.

She'd lift her pocket flap, tap out a fag,  
Take a long drag, quick-sip a mug of tea,  
Never missed the ashtray.  
Snibbed her smoke, was thrifty,  
Always looked the other side of fifty.

One year she took her leave of Christmas cheer  
Trussed in a belted coat, with red beret  
And matching scarf and gloves from Auntie Joan,  
Zipped up her fur lined boots (the frost cut to the bone) ,  
Left by the back door, cutting across the fields.

Finding the note too late, her father sought her,  
A railway worker, shouting his daughter's  
Name across the snow.

Sharp frost that held the furrows in a vice  
Warned that minds too, can chill and turn to ice.  
Storm brewing darkly over the woods,  
The narrow burn was raging,  
Thinking itself a torrent, thinking itself a Tiber -  
Pretentious, piddling puddle, three feet deep,  
Where Jean stepped in and laid her down to sleep.

For weeks she stalked my dreams, hands on lap,  
Her clippie's uniform immaculate,  
The raging burn roaring across her face,  
Unreachable by censure or disgrace.  
Her father's knuckles wrung his tweed cap raw.

One summer the smiling river pulled me down,  
And played with me as if I'd been a toy.  
No kindly tree stretched down its boughs to save,  
Forget-me-nots watched blankly from the waves;  
I could have been a stone thrown in by boys.

Till, struggling, I broke free.

I love to watch the river, find it haunting  
Its moods and sudden eddies so enchanting;  
I dabble with it, toe-dip, do not enter  
I am no Jean, could never go dead centre.

Sheena Blackhall

# Waterfall

Water cleaves the air  
A tiger charge  
Through wheat

Sheena Blackhall

# Waterloo Teeth

At the peak of their powers, from London to Leith  
They died in their dozens, brave, coward and thief  
But to sufferers with toothache each man did bequeath  
A prize beyond measure, his Waterloo teeth

They battled Napoleon, so strong their belief  
In the magic of Wellington, idol and chief  
And fell on that blood-sodden, miserable heath  
Each man with a full set of Waterloo teeth

No maiden to mourn them, no fond mother's wreath  
Too far from their homeland, beyond pain and grief  
In battle-lines tumbled, above and beneath  
Those rows of impeccable Waterloo teeth

Oh denture restorers from Croydon to Crieff  
From Montrose to Manchester, Troon, Cowdenbeath  
Yanked out from the gums of each scythed human sheaf  
Of soldiers, those wonderful Waterloo teeth!

Sheena Blackhall



# Wedding Ho Chi Minh

Wedding: Ho Chi Minh

A sleek white Mustang, laden with red roses  
Rolls up at the family home.

Offerings are laid at the shrine of the ancestors  
Incense burns. A Buddha's smiling face  
Looking on munificently.

Diamonds and money are proffered  
Sealing the marriage union

Great grandmother, dapper in deep black velvet  
Cries tears smaller than rice seeds  
Lifts the hem of her jacket to dab them away,  
So tiny they do not wet the trim of gold.

Her long grey hair's pulled back in a tiny bun  
She is fragile as a twig aged by the Seasons

Delicate as a butterfly tasting nectar  
She sips from a cup of rice wine  
Her eyes as they join with the bride's  
Are two bright mirrors  
Joy reflecting joy

Sheena Blackhall

# Wedding Party

The bride is a young dragon,  
Exquisite, with eyes of deepest jade;  
George the dragon-slayer is her groom.

His lips are working up to a bon mot,  
See how his armour glitters above the bridal cake!

He will slay her affection slowly,  
He will turn her fire to ash,  
He will feed her to the Lady of the Lake.

Sheena Blackhall

# Welcome In Scots To A New Born Child

Welcome tae the warld new littlin  
Bare an Bonnie, welcome in!  
Aa yer lifetime lies afore ye  
A hale journey tae begin

May yer days be fulled bi pleisur  
May health be yer greatest treisur  
May luv find ye, in gweed meisur  
Bonnie littlin, welcome in!

Sheena Blackhall

# Werewolves

An ostrich is fluffy  
An ant-eater's snuffy  
A zebra is black and white

But nobody knows  
What a werewolf's like  
Cause he only comes out at night.

Sheena Blackhall

# Western Civilisation Comes To The East

Wagner thundered over Vienna airwaves  
Deep into Indian airspace.  
As the plane descended onto the racing runway  
A brown doll on a beach flashed on the in-flight screen  
Its hair was matted with salt or spit or spray (Perhaps all three)  
Its bright skirt raised by the tide

A plump European hand  
Exploratively ran the gamut of paedophilia  
Fondled the small thigh  
Child Abuse is not a pécadillo. It's a crime  
The warning flashed in German, English, Hindi

After the passport queues  
The forms  
The fans  
Whirring like hovercrafts above our heads  
Remarkably, a red light at a junction said  
'RELAX' Rather than STOP.

Sheena Blackhall

# Westminster Abbey

Cascades of tourists tick their targets off:  
The Mall, Buckingham Palace, Nelson's Column  
This global seat of power, this heart of London.  
'Mors Mihi Lucrum' (Death is gain to me) ☐

Westminster Abbey stops them in their tracks  
Kings, statesmen, soldiers; poets here a-plenty  
There's not a space in Westminster that's empty  
'Mors Mihi Lucrum' (Death is gain to me) ☐

Priests, heroes, villains all are buried here  
Over one million visitors each year  
Stream in to gawp, to savour and explore  
'Mors Mihi Lucrum' (Death is gain to me) ☐

Monarchs, musicians, authors, politicians  
The Tudor queens, the unknown warrior,  
The coronation chair, all shriek of Time  
'Mors Mihi Lucrum' (Death is gain to me) ☐

And every corner crammed with tombs and plaques,  
Mary Queen of Scots in her laced ruff  
Evensong service - Tourists love that stuff  
'Mors Mihi Lucrum' (Death is gain to me) ☐

I think at night they sally from the door  
Distinguished ghosts, those long extinguished dead,  
To float above the Thames, masked by the fog  
Bone-breathings from each stiff and stately bed

Sheena Blackhall

# What Does The Owl Say?

Three times every night, and that most loud  
The owl hoots high in the trees

She is breathing in the air of wood and mouse  
She is saying hello to the oak whose bough she leans on

Sheena Blackhall

# What I Learned At Passchendaele Museum

The silent cities of the dead were speechless  
Till all were gathered in, here given tongue

Trenches had wattle walls of hazel, willow  
Topped off with sandbags where fat vermin throng

Jews don't bring flowers to graves, they're for the living  
They place small stones upon the headstone top  
Les Gueules Cassées, les pauvres 'Broken faces'  
False eyes, false noses, raw as mutton chop

In 1917, Chinese Labour entered  
They cleared the battlefields of rotting dead  
And delicately carved art on shell cases  
'Where's my beloved? ' in the land of lead.

Sheena Blackhall



# What Is Scotland?

What is Scotland?

Hope, said the asylum seeker's lawyer

What is Scotland?

Salvation for us few, came the Wee Free's prayer

What is Scotland?

Golf courses, said the prosperous tycoon

What is Scotland?

Clouds, said the bird passing over Dunoon

What is Scotland?

Roads and rivers and maps, said the map-maker

What is Scotland?

A very good place to die said the undertaker

Sheena Blackhall

# What's In Your Handbag, Honey?

Size matters. Man, she's tanned,  
She's lean's a greyhound  
Except for her silicon knockers.  
What's in your handbag, honey?

Sweet thing, eye candy,  
Doctors her doubts with gin  
Swallows her baby-blockers.

Sheena Blackhall

# When Walking In Blake's Garden Et Al (8 Poems)

Walking in Blake's Garden once I saw:  
An elephant who wore a bridal veil  
A bowl with sixteen squirrels and one snail  
A lemon hedgehog dancing with a dog  
An oak tree leaping like a frisky frog  
A Quaich that held the frothing Bay of Biscay  
A dish of smiles from sayings sweet and risqué  
A slice of moon with twenty pips of stars  
An angry little pot pourri of wars  
And Blake himself. He grinned and said 'Hello'  
And introduced me to a pedalo  
We jumped on board, he sailed me round his dreams  
Of growling lions, lambs, and green sunbeams

Street

Two students walk by whispering, arm and arm.  
Nobody's grandfather curses the dog shit on the pavement.  
It's a black and white day,  
Raggedy round the edges  
Mrs Kablinsky stands in her winter coat and slippers  
Putting out the bin

Nobody passing by gets anything they deserve  
The trees on the hill look thinner.  
Like skinny railings  
The cyclist stares right through them

The starlings sing to a cabby who doesn't listen.  
A shrieking seagull repeats itself like an onion,  
The Canales' cat, sidles up to a chirping sparrow  
Mrs Kablinsky is still in her winter coat and slippers  
Having forgotten her name.

A mother bends to a buggy  
Stoops to wipe the drool from a toddler's mouth.

Mr Baxter's dishes are done.  
He is as graceful as a zebra  
Sometimes he smiles. Sometimes he spits

His shadow is light as candyfloss spun at the fair

The water sings in the drain with a cracked voice  
Behind Miss McTavish's screens  
A tsunami of grief crashes over the carpet  
Though she says her prayers once daily  
Twice on Sundays.

Who needs steak if you've got bread?  
The grass sits by the path, envies the tree

No-One Poem

No-one spread rose petals on my bed  
No-one ever wooed me with a song  
Some folk go all through life without romance  
It's slam-bang -thank-you mam, good-bye, so-long

No brave knight ever saved me from a tower  
I always had to pick the lock myself  
And now, a wizened cynic here I sit  
Dusty and cracked and back up on the shelf

ater

On the last day of the Ice Age  
A bee unthaws and buzzes, drunk on frost

From the dark flank of an ice floe  
A whale breaks from its moorings

In the green, deep shadow seas  
Beams from the warming sun  
Fall on a gold-scaled turtle

On the last day of the Ice Age  
A Women softens like dough in a jug of milk

A black-sailed boat emerges out of the mist  
With a sword on its deck. Its figurehead is a plough

The stars above are unconcerned by the Earth's arousal  
Stirrings and deaths are cyclical, cosmic work of a moment

yman

Sea-Citizen, friend or foe?

He has a bird's skull for a head

A scalp as white as a bone

Scoured, scalded by storm and blistering heat

The brain's washed clean away, leaving

The horror of empty spaces,

Ghastly gape of the eye sockets.

Shellyman, conceived in a womb of seaweed

From the seed of drowned sailors

Time has picked him bare as a newborn

Under the beaks of carrion crows

His vowels and consonants are clacks

Of a skeleton's rattle.

That coat: a shawl of clams and barnacles

Smelling of sea rot from the ocean's outswill

Appals and fascinates

Here are he stands, confronting me

Foam drips from his shoulders

Echoes of shell-halls fathoms beneath the waves

Sigh from his clattering throat.

-Bhata

A ghaoth ag iarraidh na'm port

The wind is wanting the harbour

The boatman follows the wind on its way to Harris,

High heart of the Hebrides

His yellow oilskin is slick as a wet sun

He is riding the racing waves, breasting their highs and lows

Dogging the steps of the wind,

Through foam and fathoms of gloomy deadfall water

Spirits of drowned companions keen in the air  
Like voices carried by wires too high for decoding

How wide the loneliness, as he moves in the fishes' element  
A snagged hook trapped in a hull, as his boat  
Climbs the slopes of the heaving sea

A ghaoth ag iarraidh na'm port  
The wind is wanting the harbour

Ah, now he sees them, the hills, cut from Lewisian Gneiss,  
A lunar landscape.

The bays by the bright Atlantic, unpeopled, untrodden

#### 7. Isaac Benzie's

Establishments with etiquette retain  
An assured niche is memory's trinket box

Such places speak of genteel assignations  
The ensemble in the corner, playing the current songs  
The hierarchy of the plates  
Sandwich, cakes, confections

The tinkle of tea poured into a china cup  
The mahogany table seats  
The doilies like Elizabethan ruffs  
And a great aunt powder-puffed to the absolute nines

Hats like perching pheasants lurk in corners  
A-line mink coats cosy up to North East calves  
15 denier nylons sheer as the cliffs of Dover  
Crackle beneath silk petticoats and lace

My hostess, telling me what a treat I'm getting  
My mouth sticky with icing  
Crumbs dribbling down my Shirley Temple coat  
My knickers damp from holding in the pee  
My stomach turning over like a wringer  
The luckiest little girl in Aberdeen

r, Glen Quoich

Three deer teeter on ballet dancer's toes  
Raise perfectly synchronised necks  
To stare in wonderment at a passing crow

A hare thuds up from a ditch  
Sideleaping the snowdrops  
Thumping into the woods with its skinny branches

Snow lies like an old ewe's pelt  
Dirty and shaggy, crusting the road's edge

Sheena Blackhall

# Where Were You When Kennedy Died?

Where were you when Kennedy died?  
Watching Hitchcock's film 'The Birds'?  
Did you hear the news from a TV screen  
Could you take in the words?

Did you sit by the radio all night long  
As the news bulletins rolled on  
'Assassination... hospital',  
Surgery... Hope all gone....

Did you hear them playing the dead march  
On evening BBC?  
Would November, month of bitter cold  
Bring a nuclear tragedy?

At the funeral service, Dimbleby said,  
'The drums were the beat of a heart, '  
It's easy to judge a dead man's faults  
Slice the good and the bad apart.

Sheena Blackhall



# Why Do I Write?

The moon was ripe and I wanted to carry it home  
My heart was wet with tears, but no cry came  
I wanted my dead to rise from their funeral pyre  
Tomorrow moss will cover the stone's face  
The page is my speaking clock, it reaffirms me

Sheena Blackhall

# William Wallace At The Stirling Monument

'I tell you a truth, liberty is the best of all things,  
my son, never live under any slavish bond.'

On display is the 700 year old sword,  
Five feet four inches long.  
Face to face with such a killing blade  
You wonder, what kind of warrior could lift it?

'...a tall man with the body of a giant,  
cheerful in appearance with agreeable features,  
broad-shouldered and big-boned,  
with belly in proportion and lengthy flanks,

pleasing in appearance but with a wild look,  
broad in the hips, with strong arms and legs,  
a most spirited fighting-man,  
with all his limbs most strong and very firm.'

Seventy one steps up, is the display  
His triumphs, his betrayal, in three -D

Sir John Menteith, a friend and freedom fighter  
Stole his weapons, summoned English soldiers.  
Betrayed & captured Wallace was roped to a horse,  
Seventeen days forced march to the great wen, London  
There removed to the Hall of Westminster,  
Crowned with oak leaves. Nicknamed King of Outlaws  
A mock trial, barbarous and bare of justice

'I can not be a traitor,  
...I owe him no allegiance.  
He is not my Sovereign;  
he never received my homage;  
...whilst life is in this persecuted body,  
he shall never receive it.'

Treason was styled a triple crime to answer:  
Against God, man, against the English King.  
The sentence being Wallace should die three times:

Hanged, ghalloched, quartered  
Torture was not enough to sate their hate  
And after death his body was to be:

'...cut up and divided into 4 parts,  
the head, cut off, set upon London Bridge,  
in the sight of such as pass, whether by land or water'

No appeal was permitted, no mercy given  
Dragged naked through the baying, jeering crowd,  
The mighty Wallace, tethered between two horses  
Crowds pelted him with stones and rotten fruit,  
Up to the elms of Smithfield  
A three mile walk through pain & purgatory

Hanged, cut down yet alive  
His genitals cut off and burned before him  
His stomach slit and ritually disembowelled  
His beating heart removed, and held on high  
All burned upon the grisly brassier

And finally, beheaded, quartered,  
Newcastle, Berwick, Perth & Aberdeen  
Each to receive one of his severed limbs  
No sadistic detail to be overlooked

Returning, chastened, down the spiral staircase  
Twenty-first century visitors reach the shop  
The Tea Room, coffee and scones in pleasant surroundings

A courtesy bus returns them to the car park  
Having watched a piece of history, sanitized  
Like watching an extinct creature in a movie  
But some will think on bravery and choices.

Sheena Blackhall

# Win-Blawn (Poems In England)

The Flâneuse

I walk my city, soles-to-the-pavement  
Eyes-on-the- street-engagement  
Torn between wandering and settling.  
Alighting momentarily on a bench

I am the town's observer  
Outwith the spider's web of interaction  
I watch the tug of the threads  
As others are drawn into communication

I am all eyes, like a gigantic fly  
I flee when others try to come too close

I am a matchstick person  
Strike me, strike me, I burst into flame  
I am the solitary walker Flâneuse is my name

Wedge of Chastity

Like a tooth set in a gum  
Snug nestling in the pink  
Womb matters  
A bloody inconvenience  
Roll the stone over  
The dark mouth of the cave  
Try a Wedge of Chastity

Winnie on a Swing

Her feet touch the chimney  
Where a crow is roosting

Her pigtail on the backswing  
Brushes the grass,  
Flicks away an aphid

Tick tock, an hour of play till sleep  
Winnie laughs softly.

The swing slices the air.

Hop on Hop  
Hop on hop off, by the Scott monument  
Bagpipe music skirls. The air is rent

Tacitus was here and warlike Celts  
With skulls on poles, tricked out in grim wolf pelts

Five star hotels, dispensing haute couture  
The Grassmarket, once home of herd and whore

The inn once owned by Biddy Milligan  
Greyfriar's kirk where Greyfriar's Bobby ran  
His snout now rubbed as bright's a Brasso can

George Heriot School, the towering Edinburgh Castle  
Where tourists throng and chatter, pant and bustle  
Up its steep sides. See Chambers Street today  
Where art students once sketched Sean Connery

The World's End- John Knox House- place of stories  
Samson's Ribs- the Pleasance- tourist foreys

Down to the Parliament, affairs of state  
Facing the Palace for the high and great

Dynamic Earth- Burns monument- such views!  
From Arthur's Seat, to gaze on and amuse  
The Iron Duke, the National Galleries  
King George IVth found much to thrill and please  
A sight for sore eyes in his mini kilt  
Twentyfive stone in weight, like a tank built

Yellow canaries, hop on hop off crew  
Herd folk on board, to tell old tales anew

Post Mortem  
June. The leaves hang limp with heat  
A woman sits painting her nails on her doorstep

In homes across the city, hot in the clammy evening  
Families strip down to the very bare necessities

I choose to think you were suddenly called away  
To a far country

I am a moth, circling the light of your memory  
Sorrow's a quicksand, it sucks you down like a stone

A year of rain, snow, sun has passed  
Since you lay down with the moon and did not rise

Ice-Cream

Ignore tsunamis.  
hurricanes, the ephemeral  
whims of the Seasons

change comes with little,  
personal griefs and losses

gouging your heart out  
like an ice cream scoop

Change (3)

Change is a whin-pod bursting  
Change is the scythe of sorrow  
Change is an axe descending  
Change is the death of tomorrow

Change is schismatic winter  
Change is a wood of ash  
Change is a son coffined  
And the world, turned to trash

Relics of my Parents' Marriage

A heavy metal stew pot which survived a war  
The last of the dining room chairs  
Dark thick varnish. Legs like marathon runners

These are all that outlived the clocks  
Those martinets of time  
His shotgun, his braces, the purplish peony roses  
The mousetraps primed to decapitate small rodents  
The rolling pin, her frocks, the gas mask  
The rusting tin of Vic. The porridge spurtle  
The keys that locked the cupboards of their kingdom  
Grandmother's Highland cattle painted in mist  
The wireless with the wonky on/off switch  
Diaspora of the grave goods, Who are your owners now?

The Enigma of the Shells  
When I was small I was a living loom  
Tilting my hands like a cat's cradle  
While grandmother wound the wool  
Into a widening ball

Tom Thumbs in the garden  
Rioted over the path  
A rumba of sunny flounces  
Wetting my tiny ankles

Peony roses eased their velvet waistbands  
Cracks of shadows, like pleats between their petals

Then there was the enigma of the shells  
Devoid of occupants, as if the horned snails  
Had glided into the air and disappeared

So many mysteries of loom, of shadow, of shell  
Finding my thread in the greater pattern  
A Shirley Temple girl in somebody else's frock

Childhood in the Cup of a Glen  
Memories blaze up like wildfire in my thoughts  
I grew with the Gaelic of places in my ears

On summer nights, I heard the thunder speak  
Grumbling between the hills like a beast in a cage

Back and fore, back and fore between the heather Bens

The moon was a jiggly Chinese lantern bleared by rain  
Always, I heard the river, murmuring  
Like granny when she muttered in her sleep

And it seemed like the walls were paper thin  
Could tear wide open, letting the thunder enter into the room

The wind rose and fell in waves  
Like painted galloping horses in a carousal

As a I child I spoke the language of the glen  
Its nights, its days, stepping from the ladder of the river  
Up to the loft of the Bens. My skin smelt of thyme and peat  
My footsteps cupped its pebbles. My tongue was a green fern

The glen was a cunning woman, a healer  
A Cailleach of hopes and secrets  
It held the elixir or life, the alchemy of youth

I would sit cross legged with a toad in the glen  
Staring into its jewelled eyes like a zealot adoring an idol

When I swam in the loch I was a salmon's child  
Silver scaled in the sun. I knew I would always return  
In thought or flesh to the water.

Deeside wombed me.  
My vertebrae are the pebbles of Glen Gairn, Glen Muick  
The little tinkling stream of Allt-an-Sneachda

I came to womanhood here  
A rough wooing, bloody and harsh  
Smelling of fish and tin

The braille of heather etched poems on my hands  
My mind was a quaich, its tangs fermented there

This place will be my shroud  
My dead lie under this soil  
The moon kisses their stones



Their souls, like pigeons, curmur  
On the kirk slates, looking down  
On their bolt-hole, their bone-lair  
Their precious scoop of ash

Now I am toughened and leathered like a cured hide  
I draw near to the lip of the grave  
Deeside is the mouth that will swallow me  
My kist will rest easy, there

The Naming of the Hens  
First, I name this hen Starboard  
In full sight of Ben Ledi and the River of Teith

May all the books in Callander  
Bow down and rustle in reverence as she passes

Second, I name this hen Runnymede  
May her yolk be as yellow's the thatch  
On Donald Trump's temporal lobes  
For she is feathered fore and aft  
And hulled like a Fin man's duvet  
And this is no false news

Third, I name this hen, Hetty-Sequins-coquette  
She of the scaly shanks  
Patterned like the fish net stockings  
Of a red light Embro lady of the night

Fourth, I name this hen Sheba- Kingschoice the Third  
Queen of the fowls of the pleasure- garden  
For she has an eye as shiny  
As the seat of a call-centre worker's bottom

Fifth, I name this fine hen Port  
For her beak is a well-oiled piston  
Her belly, a barrel of goodness  
She pops out eggs  
Like balls fired off in a squash court

Sixth, I name this hen Flibberty-Gibbet  
For her claws rake the ground beneath her  
Like a gold digger dragging her nails  
Down a sugar daddy's back

Seventh, I name this hen Leda Kaminski  
For she cocks her leg like Pavlova  
In mid-arabesque

Go forth unto the garden and lay  
Oh feathery flotilla of cackles and c-c-c clucks  
Away with you, into the hedge  
To unload your precious cargo,  
Whilst shielding your henny modesty

Benefactresses of breakfasts  
Providers of omelette and quiche  
Burbblers o bubbling fecundity  
Who could watch you strut and not dream  
Of beheaded egg, sun-tanned bread soldiers  
Ready to plunge into your savoury depths?

The Neighbour

His Saxon wife had skin like alabaster  
He was a scientist- a brilliant mind  
Liked Bach. Despised pop dirge and ghetto blaster

He had a mistress, this was no disaster.  
She lived in Rome (he was the secret kind  
In Scotland, a good husband, honest master)

Couples have cracks, stay wed by using plaster  
To fool the world around, in street or wynd  
A lie once told next time is spoken faster.

It suited her to act as a pilaster  
She had her children, so she acted blind  
And for his soul, she'd say a pater noster  
My father talked of gardens with this mister,  
A cultural bridge, all difference left behind  
The thistle and the rose, bluebell and aster

At Hogmanay, he gave him drink, a gesture  
Of goodwill, to this English gent, refined  
By learning, widely travelled, knowledge vaster  
Than ours, whose marriage was a small disaster.

For Morven, in June  
Grief, I'm told, is yesterday's news  
Fit only for holding greasy chips  
Or wrapping flower stems dripping greenishwater  
Destined for the grave

My prodigal, starved of love in life  
Your frame turned skeletal

In the moments between work and thought  
A hurt opens up inside me, a kick in the gut

Your voice is stilled, your human footprints gone  
A bulldozer had turned my world to rubble

I have joined the ranks of the bereaved, the sorrowing  
Even when I lay me down to sleep, the wound weeps on

Passport Control, Eternity  
Cloudy, nebulous setting  
In a room of no furniture, no walls

Out of the dust of the dead  
Here come the happily wedded  
Here come the never bedded  
Here come the moaners and weepers  
The young, the sagacious, the crude  
The runners, the fops, the creepers

Yesterday, like ivy, still stakes its claim on them  
Sweat, nails, hair, flesh, fat  
Detritus of mankind all left behind  
360% of surplus requirement  
But the yearning remains to go back

The sorting of souls must be  
Like herding cats. For minds  
Are slippery as eels

The queue of ghosts is restless  
Waiting for their souls to fly the coop

Sheena Blackhall

## Win-Blawn (Poems In Scots)

### The Hairst

Plastic potties, tubs an trays  
Yoghurt cartons, cans o juice  
Cardboard, paper, bottlies, tins  
Rowed up ferlies on the lowse

Chittered letters, pyokes an lids  
Ribbons, tinnies frae a bevvie  
Soss o aipple rinds an pips  
Haunwash bottles, phone buiks wechty

Buiks an aerosols an sauce  
Save the planet is the aim  
Magazine an catalogue  
Reuse, recycle an reclaim

### The Tenants

There's breets that bide in a body's hame,  
Forkietail, slater an moose  
Emerteen, flech, moch, ratten an wirm  
The tenants that bide in yer hoose

They chitter an chaa they piddle an keech  
Ower cashmere cotton an linen  
Thon hornygollachs are breets tae fleg  
A mini breets' Armageddon

Gin ye wir a Jain ye'd sikk them in  
Tae share her maet wi aa  
Bit Mr Ratten a step ower far  
He's nae tae be tholed ava

### Tragic Form

Hae ye seen Ken Currie's peintin o a skate?  
The dowiest moo in the warld,  
Doonturnin, deid.

Ae meenit sweemin ben the sea,  
The neist, caught in a picture o Aybydan wae  
Post Mortem state

Le Coureur: The Runner.  
Plap, plap, plap  
The soun o the rinner's trainers  
Skelpin alang the howe  
Pechin, alane an shilpit  
Hochs like knottit towe

Plap, plap plap  
The rinner's semmit is sypin  
Frae the tip o his snoot tae his taes  
The swat faas dreepin

Plap plap plap  
Like a chiel on a wirkhoose wheel  
The rinner is thin's a straa  
Blawn ben a lanesome dreel

Plap plap plap  
Tho ilkie jynt is stoonin  
Fit is he rinnin fur?  
Fun o a kind. Inhuman.

The Anely Solution  
Wee bairn dowped in a baby cairrier  
Strapped in wi a safetyharness  
Alane on the fleer itsel

Is it asleep?  
Is it deid?  
Far is the mither? The faither?

It has the reenge o a bomb  
Tae rive a faimily apairt

Foo's it bin left it's lane?  
Somebody'll hae tae pye!

Will ye wauk on by? Ignore it?  
Wid ye becam pairt o the problem  
Gin ye deciddit tae haud it?

#### Ghaist-Spikk

Fit dae ye dae in the eftirlife  
Ma darlin son, ma lammie?  
I keep nicht-watch wi the ghaistie-fowk  
That's fit I dae, ma mammy

Fa dae ye tryst wi in the derk  
Ma darlin son, ma lammie?  
I tryst wi the deid fowk bi the kirk  
They're ma friens noo, ma mammy

Fan nicht I jyne ye in the mools  
Ma darlin son, ma lammie?  
Fin ye've larned the wirth o human jewels  
Fin ye've larned their wirth, ma mammy

Can ye forgie me ma mistaks  
Ma darlin son, ma lammie?  
It's your mistaks caused ma hertbrakks  
Ower late wi her tears, ma mammy

#### Paedo

He stude ootbye the schule  
Breeks at hauf mast  
Giein it laldy

The bairns watched bumbazed  
The daddies chased him  
Stottit his heid aff the grun

The polis arrived an oor eftir  
Spylin the fun

#### The Mechanic

Scrappy the mechanic,  
Luiked like a deevilick frae Hades

As a bairn, I thocht he bedd  
In thon pit aneth the intimmers o hurtit buses

Ile dreeped ower his lugs  
Straikit his hale physog like a twa legged panda

Whyles he fussled in his yirdit overalls  
Maister o the wrench, the sowder iron  
His een aye glowerin up at weers an plugs.

He wis swack as a Futterat, gleg as a hoolet.  
His wireless blooterin oot some Fifties tune  
As ither buses birred aff stappt wi fowk  
Tae Ben an lanely clachan

It maun hae taen is wife a month o Sabbaths  
Tae scoor an dicht the ile frae Scrappy's skin

I passed him in the street aince, didna ken him  
A cheil wi glentin een an rosy chikks

Desperate Dan at the Holyrood Gairden Pairty  
At the Holyrood Gairden Pairty  
(I'm a National Treisur ye ken)  
I'd rather hae coo pies than canapes  
I'm a cultural icon mangst men

Ma muscles are better nor Pope Eye  
Ma chest hair could thatch Bennachie  
I beat Batman an Shrek intae bitticks  
Superhero frae Bonnie Dundee

The Day Las Vegas Flittit tae Aiberdeen  
Croupiers wir mugged bi scurries instead o scorpions  
Hostesses in fish net hose  
Crooded into Casualty wi pneumonia



Ower in Americay  
Aiberdonians swapped wintry clyes fur semmits  
Their duggs poo birssled intae heat-baked crummles  
Nae need tae scoop the poop

Whuppity Stoory as Mither  
Whuppity Stoory's bin spied in Mamas & Papas  
Buyin babby claes fur a new-born littlin

Adoption agencies wisnae sympathetic because:  
She wis three hunner year auld  
She wis a puir role model  
She wis a caird-cairryin pagan  
She keepit puddocks in the kitchie  
She cudnae answer the questions on British ceetizenship  
(Bar aa the info about Jamie Saxth)

The fertility gadgie widnae treat her because:  
Her ovaries wir crined as hizzlenuts  
Her wyme wis a howked-oot Halloween neep  
Her titties wis dry as the Kalahari desert  
It wid be like sawin seeds in a teem chunty

Bit she kent hersel she'd be a braw mither  
Better than thon girnin gype wi the seek grumphie  
Sae easy tricked intae giein the bairn awa

Whuppity story dreamt that herself an the laddie  
Wid flee tae Disneywarld on her breem  
She'd makk him the warlock o aa warlocks  
It's nae as if thon gype, his mither  
Wid iver jeloose her name...

Sheena Blackhall

# Winnie On A Swing

Winnie on a Swing

Her feet touch the chimney  
Where a crow is roosting

Her pigtail on the backswing  
Brushes the grass,  
Flicks away an aphid

Tick tock, an hour of play till sleep  
She laughs softly.  
The swing slices the air.

Sheena Blackhall

# Winnlestrae: Cradlit, Coortit, Waddit, Kistit: (23 Scots Poems)

-Face

Angel-face, short sock, straicht cut fringe,  
Oot on a veesit tae a frien on the scheme  
'Gonna watch a video, eat some crisps,  
Hame afore it's dark Ma, by 9.15'

Bring gings the telephone, cord like an eel,  
Hett braith catches in the mooth-piece net.  
Lug like a quine's nae weel.  
Casualty calling. Are ye aa richt, pet?

Doon on the rail line stray dug's bark  
Glue sniffers dauchle far it's ile-can dark  
Wee quine playin wi her toys an dalls  
Follaein the teenage bairns, her pals.

Voddie in a bottle o the Irn Bru,  
Fizzed up, screwed up, she is stottin fu  
Wee quine dauncin tae a strange new beat  
Like a runawa peenie on pure mental feet

Wee quine faain like a coin gaun plop  
Screich gings the ambulance come tae mop her up.  
Angel face, short sock, straicht cut fringe,  
Tubes in her veins like straas in a jar.  
Heid fu o monsters, a doctor's syringe,  
Bangs inno bruises that are black as tar.

Wee tottie lassie, blootered on the road,  
Picked up an patched, like an auld torn clot.  
Played hide n' seek by the auld rail line  
Thank God they fand her, or she'd be oot.

e's Jewels

Donnie in the mornin, getting Izzy up  
Makkin sure she feenishes the cocoa in her cup  
Puin on her schule claes....butterin her toast  
Raikin fur a sweetie, tae sooth his sister's hoast.

Izzy's peed the bed again. Izzy disnae sleep  
Donnie's waukent hauf the nicht, coontin stars an sheep  
Hamewirk's niver haundit in. Teacher'll ging gyte  
Denner money's niver pyed. Donnie gets the wyte.

Dealer on the corner, sellin hash an smack  
'Hello Mrs Flanagan. Wid ye like some crack?  
Wid ye like a dooner, an upper or an e?  
A ticket fae the cooncil scheme tae lan o fantasy?

Dealer's watchin Donnie. 'Here's a penny, son.'  
Easy catchin customers fin confidence is won.  
Needles, gear an syringes lie aside the bed  
Wi Donnie's pyoke o polomints an Izzy's Mr Ted.

Ma sez she lues them, her bairnies are her treisurs  
Bit mas hae needs like littlins. An mas maun hae their pleisurs  
Fit's aa the steer aboot? She disnae wauk the street!  
She niver lifts a haun tae them! They've aywis crisps tae eat!

It's lanely fur a littlin fin the dragon comes tae play  
Fin the big fowk on the sofa dinna hear a wurd ye say  
She niver leaves them hame alane tho bendin aa the rules  
Mas can be hame bit hyne awa, fin yer a junkie's jewels.

Toun Crazies Rule, OK?

Back o the Bingo, they aa hing oot,  
Wee Mo, Pamela, Jake an Spats,  
Big Plug Patterson, Ranjit, Newt,  
Jinx McPhail frae the high rise flats.

Wee Mo, Pamela, Jinx an Spats,  
Fower moos puffin on the ae weet fag,  
Fower lums rikkin like Ganges ghatts.  
'Pass roon the cancer, gie's a drag'

'Young Toun Crazies Rule, ' they craw.  
Big Plug Patterson sprayed his name  
Wi a tinnie o gloss on the bike shed waa,  
The Jackson Pollock o Deid-End Lane.

Strongbow cider's chaiper nur ye think,  
Soor an strong, bit ye maun belang,  
Bauld an gallus efter ae wee drink,  
Young Toun Crazies, the hale jing-bang.

Jinx haived a steen at a windae peen...  
Tinkle, tinkle, the schule room glaiss  
Bobbies at the door bi the licht o the meen.  
Are ye his ma wi yer feart -like face? '

Ranjit's pooch hauds a bottlie o hooch,  
Chored frae the grocer, Bill McGraw.  
'If ye wint tae be in the Y. T. C.  
Dee fit we tell ye. Oor wird's law.'

Newt is chitterin, his claes are thin.  
Bides wi his gran. She's a coorse auld troot.  
King o the causie, kickin at a tin,  
Newt luvs Mo, bit he cannie spit it oot.

The street is cauld, and the street is teem,  
Anely the tom cats strut their stuff,  
Roon the dug-pished waas o the cooncil scheme,  
Far the tellies growl, an the lullaby's gruff.

The video plays. Aa the doors are shut.  
KIMBERLEY-ANNE YE'VE MISSED THE BUS!  
YER HEID'S IN A SCHULE BUIK, SOOK-SOOK SWOT'  
The pack yowl oot 'ARE YE EEN O US? '

Kimberley-Anne gotta giftie frae a frien...  
Wrappit roon wi tin-foil. Daith in the bluid.  
Kimberley-Anne she sits her leen,  
Wauked wi the dragon on a short, short, lead.  
Her wee dall's face is a mask o steen.  
A knife in her bosie, a wirm in her heid.

#### 4. D.N.A.

According to some sources, St Machar's Cathedral is the resting place of Scotland's national hero.

Inno the waa o St Machar's kirk  
There's a bit o a hero fa held a dirk

William Wallace, if ye could gie  
Yer D.N.A. fur posterity  
In Holyrood fitna a steer there'd be  
As the member fae Widside, RIP  
Gaed clankin doon, a stinch like chiel,  
sikkin the richts tae his film as weel.

ep

Toddlin I creepit, neist I shauchled  
I lowped, I breenged, fin sair, I hirpled.

A halflin I stravaiged at ease  
I daunced or dauchled ben the trees  
Until I hytered. Doon I fell  
Near drooned in my ain wishin well

It wis a tyauve tae scammle oot  
A hauf-drooned wyver oot a spoot

I'll wish nae mair. I'll nae luik back  
Fur wishin wells are deep an black

An this is foo I dinna rin  
The safer throw the world tae win.

Open Letter to Mr MacNormal

Fit if my skin wis blaik as tar?  
Wid ye kiss ma moo wi-oot a grue?  
Fin the wee Scotch comic sez, Ae beat

Gars as blaik-skinnt fowk tap their feet'  
Wid ye agree? Shift ben yer seat  
If I sat aside ye? Wid ye noo?

Fit if ye passed a kicked-in shop?  
If I wis a plooky halflin there  
Wid ye turn me intae the nearest cop?  
Nae even speir fit I'm deen there?

Gin you and masel should disagree,  
It's nae ay doon tae PMT!  
Fit if atween ma legs there swung,  
Twa baas. Wid ye show me mair respeck?  
Dae ye value a wummin's opeenion,  
Fair an square, like a chiel'd expeck?

Fit if ma chooks war sookit in?  
Ma face wis wrunkled? Ma hair wis thin?  
Wid ye see the speerit aneth the skin,  
Mr MacNormal, or are ye blin?

Fit if ye saw me nurse a bairn,  
A teet in ma left haun, syringe in ma richt?  
A junkie ma. Wid yer broos knit, stern?  
Wid ye pit me ooto yer blameless sicht?

Fit wid ye dee, if I speired fur cheenge  
As ye wauked on by on weel-heeled feet?  
Wid ye teem yer pooch? Wid ye turn awa?  
Fur fear oor warlds, or wir een should meet?

Mr MacNormal, fit if I rode on a cuddy's back doon Princes Street?  
Heich upon real-life ecstasy wi the reid stigmata upon ma feet?

Wid ye gie me a hame in the city slums?  
Community care fur the drap-oot bums?  
Mr MacNormal fariver ye bide, in Rubislaw Den or in Kelvinside  
Wi yer internet fur a stockin-filler,  
Fariver ye bide, yer god is siller.

The Millennium Speerit is threids an thrums.  
The Peer aye wyte fur the Rich Man's crumbs.

ia

Littlin gyang forrit. There's naethin tae fear,  
The widlan is Pleisur. Nocht touches ye here.  
Nae bummer wad stang sic a deintie wee lass,  
Ye shakk like a leaf, lassie. Rise noo, an pass.

The hey park is heich as ma heId. Foo it briers  
Like an airmy o sodjers. A howefu o spears!  
It's fuserin, fuserin, trystin me in  
Tae be scythed tae the grun, like the roch muirlan whin.

The sea's playin, littlin. Oh dinna staun, cowed.  
There's puils tae be paiddlit, there's sun shinin gowd

Its clooks claw tae claim me... the tide rages roon...  
Fur a wattery grave, far the fisher fowk droon  
Yer blethers are havers... rain stottin aff tin.  
Fear drums in ma lug. I maun rin like the win.

Littlin climm easy. The world's at yer feet.  
Sae lichtsme the road hapt wi heather an peat!

The clouds crood aroon me. The lift's gaun tae drap  
Ma hairt's a wud greyhound that Terror cud stap!

Licht yer neep lantern! Come, littlin, step oot  
In the nicht far yer brithers are birlin aboot.

Canna ye see that the neep lowe's the Licht  
O the Deil as he wytes in the derk oorie nicht?

Littlin fit ails ye, tae coorie sae blate?  
Ye've heat in the hairth an ye've breid on the plate.

A corbie fur howdie. Oh cauld is the crib  
Fin a bairn comes unwinted, wi Sorra its sib.  
A lammie sherp thorn busses circle aroon  
A wirm etten dall in a clay corpse's goon



8. Low Road Hame Inspired by the painting Maternité, by George Hitchcock.

.  
She humphs a muckle wechty pack,  
A littlin in her airms,  
Twa dooncast een, twa trauchelt sheen,  
A pathie, teem o cherms.

A weariet deem. Afore her een,  
Her shadda raxxes, black.  
A wee fitfa, in stirkie's staa,  
The laddie at her back.

An neither spikks, fur spikk is by,  
They haik the stoory road,  
That aa maun wauk, frae first day-brakk,  
Each, wi his different load.

Wi some auld wrang, her thochts are thrang.  
Her bairn wad like tae climm  
Intae her briest. Anither, reists  
Far aince she bosied him.

A mither's like the risin sun,  
She smiles, the bairn rins weel.  
Bit fin she's wae, it soors his day,  
And dowie is his dreel.

A meenit's rest wad cheer the bairn,  
Fa hyters on clean-deen.  
The mither seeks a langer sleep...  
The wyvin girse abeen.

9. Candlemas: The Purification of the Virgin

Creepin throw the leafy fen,  
Twa sma feet cam steppin ben  
Humbled noo, fa aince wauked prood,  
A lassie wi a back that's booed.

Nae a wechty pack tae bear,

She is loadit doon wi care  
She'll nae win back fit she has gaen,  
Aathing rypit, aathing taen.

Kneel doon by the burn an greet,  
Quine, for here ye eesed tae meet  
Wi the ane fa stole yer pride  
In the bonnie gloamintide.

Aince ye cairriet a gweed name.  
Watter winna wash yon stain  
Frae it, nor restore tae ye,  
Back, yer tint virginity.

Lassie kneelin there sae blate,  
Wash awa. It's late, ower late  
Tae win back fit he did pree,  
Innocence and chastity.

Scoor yer skin an dicht yer face.  
Clean yer claes an tie yer lace  
Stockins, crooked at the seams,  
Lassie, lassie, like yer dreams.

#### 10. The Tryst inspired by Afterglow – Joseph Farquharson

Fitpreints in the gloamin, fitpreints in the sna,  
Meltit bi the mornin, in the rinnin thaw.  
Fitpreints in the gloamin, far hae ye gaen?  
Trystin wi a laddie, far ye waurna seen?

Fitpreints in the gloamin, lichtsomes, gaun awa  
May the luv he promised, laist langer than the sna.

#### 11. Chance Encoonters Inspired by a postcard entitled 'Chance Encounter'

Spanner in girse.  
Dyeuk's weet flipper skelped on tarry road.  
Biro rowin on fleer.  
Daud o fluff on the held o a sheeny postbox.

Chance encounters,  
Like the day that Mrs O'Rourke met  
Danny Grady in the mids o Killarney  
Her on the wye tae the shops,  
Him gaun hame fae the gowf,  
An the twa o them daunced their socks aff  
Till a band playin 'The Forty Shades o Green'.

## 12. A Social Eddy After a painting by Orchardson, 'The Marriage of Convenience'

Cauld dowp. Cauld cheer  
Ithers dauncin on the fleer.  
Muckle pech. Muckle sigh  
Lauchin couples birlin by.  
Fit's the time? Watch the clock  
Fa's comin? Snochry Jock.  
Are ye dauncin?  
Nae wi you  
Fit wye nae?  
Yer ower foo.

Will she bide, or gyang hame?  
Social eddy's dreich, yer lane.  
Aa hersel in a neuk  
Feint the suitor. Fit a sook!

## 13. The Young Achilles Lies Apairt fae his Armour

An ileman hame on leave fae a far kintra,  
Sprauchled abeen his bed, a young Achilles.  
His gymnast's wechts at reest in their iron stauns  
Like seamen dowpit doon in humfy hammocks.

The black curls stuck tae his broo are weet wi swyte  
His briest-been heists and draps like Vulcan's bellas.  
A kittlin sniffs at the kent scent o his side.  
The chaumer hauds him, gled o this brief incam.

His een hae glisked fey tribes fa eat their deid,  
On vultures, riggit oot in Saturn's plumes

Fa stap their wyme on Daith's prophetic entrails.

Broth o this loon's bin spiced wi unca ferlies,  
Hett continents far snakes raxx slivv'ry fangs.  
His daily armour's tummelt ower the fleer  
This mither's son, this young invincible,  
His ileman's wage buys pouer tae cross the seas  
Weemen an warssles, sweet fermented wine.  
He needs nae Sibyl's witrins. Youth is strang.

#### 14. Ravelins

The wag at the waa like the dubby tail o a stirk,  
Wheechs back an forrit a forcey kinno a fung.

Dowie, the hizzie dowed at the rikkin lum  
Is pykin threids an thrums in the dreich pit mirk,  
The ravelins o a merriege, gweed braid-claith,  
Chittered awa in the howf bi her droothy man,  
Capernuitie, hyterin skweejee hame.

The sleekit ratten's ettlin tae snap a sup  
Fae the steen cauld plate that wytes fur him on the brod.  
Inno the hyne awa, her derk een gley  
The lowe in the hairth gyangs whizzlin doon tae aisse.

#### 15. Echtsome Reels

Echtsome reels are gates on wheels ye open up an birl,  
An mony the merriege partnership's begun wi ae quick furl.

Coortship is like a chappit door that some fowk ay keep lockit,  
For gin ye eence slip back the lock, it's unca hard tae stoppit!

Some skirl like feels, they birl like eels, an some gyang heelstergowdie,  
An mony's the reel that's sterted weel, has endit wi the howdie.

#### 16. Annie's Sang

Sing about Tifty's Annie, coorseness, plain an bare  
Ae quine's assisted passage intae a kirkyaird lair.

Sing about Tifty's Annie, yon's nae parlour sang,  
Murder, reid in the mools, a lang unbeerit wrang.

Auld Scots lays an ballads, can richt weel express,  
The bluid that turns tae ice, on the derk side o the glaiss.

Maist victims ken their killers. Faimly hames breed hairm.  
A punch-bag, whiles, is the face o a coerin wife or bairn.

Ahin closed doors some bully, somewye, losses the heid,  
Kickin the hairt an sowel, frae their ain flesh an bluid.

Mebbe the soup wis cauld. Mebbe the wine wis late.  
Mebbe the clock wis slaw. Wis it a dirty plate?  
Sic sma domestic triggers detonate in-hoose hate.

Sing about Tifty's Annie... Ay, bit sing it sair.  
Sing it as if ye kent her. Sing it as if ye care  
That the clarty yird lies black  
On a young quine's gowden hair.

Sing it derk as the raven, oorrie's a flappin craa  
Like the blush o a ripenin wound that blossoms ahin the waa.  
Takk her pain...and feel it. Makk each note a bruise  
Sing her sorras for her. J'accuse. J'accuse. J'accuse.

Sing about Tifty's Annie... Ay, bit sing it sair  
Sing it fur as the Annies, feart o the fit on the stair.

## 17. Still Life with Knife

Nae fish again, quine!  
Yer batter's mingin, yer patter's hingin,  
An cut yon veggies oot.  
Nor wid I thank ye fur a bit o fruit.  
A nice wee greasy pie is main my line.  
The national Scottish diet, means fry it.  
A swatch o hairt disease, floatin in butter.

Afore ye decry it, try it!  
Chips wi a sauce-spurt.  
Some fowk dee furt!

#### 18. Parkin Lot Nummer 44: Advocates Car Park

Parkin Lot nummer 44:  
Doon the steps fae the Signet Library  
Weet blaik tarmac, back o the door  
Waddlit ower bi cooshies  
Shitten on bi scurries  
Wattered bi flurries  
O shoosers.

Parkin Lot nummer 44  
Blaik as Bible Brods  
A bield fur boozers  
Yowled ower bi Toms an touners  
Here lieth the mortal beens  
O John Knox RIP  
The VIP o mony's a history lesson  
In Scottish skweels on mochie efterneens.

Parkin Lot nummer 44,  
In life yer tenant  
Niver brichtent the warld  
Like a flicht o cockatoos  
Explodin ooto a pink flamingo loch

The dreich rain piddles doon  
Cairryin roon his crotch  
The bree o Embro toun.

The claik o Hindi□  
Rattles abeen his heid.  
John Knox, fa wis alive,  
Bit noo is deid.

#### 19. Winnlestrae From Ecclesiastes 3

A time fur aa aneth the sun  
The Heivens decreed it sae:  
A time tae live, a time tae dee  
Fur Man's but winnlestrae.

A time tae plant an seed the grun  
Ahin the cuttin ploo  
A time tae gaither in the crap  
A time tae bend an boo

A time tae kill, a time tae heal  
Tae merk an bigg a foun  
A time tae greet, a time tae lauch  
Afore Daith dings ye doon

A time tae grieve, a time tae daunce;  
A time tae gaither steens,  
A time tae lue, tae turn awa  
A time tae follae dreams

A time tae lose, a time tae fin;  
A time tae stert anew;  
A time fur soun, a time fur quate  
A time fur fause or true.

A time tae spikk, a time tae rend  
A time fur bomb an gun.  
A time o peace, a time tae mend  
Fur aa aneth the sun.

Oh winnlestrae's mortality  
Like gibbet cloots that blaw  
The corbie watches frae the dyke  
In time, he swallas aa.

e tae Toronto for the late Charles Middleton Ritchie, Oshawa, Ontario

Three thoosan mile frae derk Lochnagar,  
Rises Toronto hyne ower the haar,  
Skyscrapers towerin, bricht as the star  
Steered the fill boaties frae Scotia.

Grey the Atlantic, wintry its wave,  
Wirk is the prize the emigrants crave,  
Wide is the ocean, cauld as the grave  
Thochts that are beeriet in Scotia.

Buffalo, beaver wolf on the Ben,  
These are the neebors immigrants ken,  
Cedar an maple, dapplin the fen,  
Far frae the laricks o Scotia.

Gloamin by Huron, brings the black bear,  
Ebon as midnight, fierce frae its lair,  
Dae the lost clan, the kin that bide there  
Mynd on the muirlans o Scotia?

Dowie its keenin the dirge o the whale,  
Swift rins the boat wi Hope in its sail,  
Hairtbrak o leavins waur nor the gale,  
Blawin the flooers frae Scotia.

Bonnie the linn that faas wi a sang,  
Bonnie the harebell, dauncin sae thrang,  
Wages are scarce, sae mony maun gyang,  
Far fur a livin frae Scotia.

Seed frae the Heilans, oceans awa,  
Tho lochans freeze an lilies doonfa,  
Memories are green, we mynd on ye aa,  
Bluid in yer veins o Auld Scotia.

Three thoosan miles frae derk Lochnagar,  
Rises Toronto hyne ower the haar,  
Shoeshine on sidewauk, Mohawk in bar,  
Warm is their welcome tae Scotia!

21. The Neebor For Tam & Beldie Fraser, Westlodge, Glenmuick, Ballater

My kinsman's Glenmuick neebor deed yestreen  
An auncient craitur, trauchelt an clean deen  
She bedd across the wye...her ain front door



A puckle helpers rinnin back an fore

They need a haun, fin auld age soors the bluid  
Tho she wis spared fey tribbles o the heid  
She pyed her bills, wis niver on the scraun  
A widda-wummin, liked the antrin dram  
Her hats were braw. Her smiles like butter, spreid.  
For years she wis their neebor. Noo, she's deid.

They say the grandson's takkin it real ill  
She meant a hantle mair nur jist The Will  
Tae him, pur vratch. He aften eesed tae bide  
Wi granny at her hoose. A place tae hide  
Fae yon gran skweel fa's credo wis Excel  
Wi granny, he wis safe tae be himsel.

My brither's cousin's neebor deed yestreen  
They didna veesit. She wis eence a Queen  
Ye dinna lowp the dyke o circumstance  
An yet she brocht a thochtie o Romance  
Intae Glen Muick, for she wis since a belle  
The Rose o Glamis, pued for a King's lapel

22. The Send-Aff: St. Moluag's Kirk, Tarland For Isabella Green, née Middleton,  
born Tarland 1902, died Aboyne 2001

The snaa faas saftly ower the kirk,  
Cromar, Kinaldie, Migvie  
The mavis chitters on the birk  
North Gellan, Tomnaverie

The Tarlan burn rins bauld an black  
Glendeskry, Blelack, Drummy  
Storm rings the sun at Morven's back  
Kinraigie, Tillypronie

The yawnin grave is deep an weet  
Coull, Melgum, Dauch, the Knockie  
The cords drap doon. Fowk shakk tae see't  
Corse, Corachree an Ordie.

Shelt, astronaut, new-plottit stars  
The Clash, Millheid an Ruthven  
Frae cradle sang ben world wars  
Barehillock an Newbiggin

A godly an a hamely life  
Crossfauld an Balnagowan  
Frae toddlin bairn tae canty wife  
Sweetbrier's bonnie rowan.

Nae spider web o flimsy threid,  
Her reets ran through the Howe  
As lang's the skirts o Pressendye  
Far the white snawdraps grow

Ay, Belle wis o ma faither's bluid,  
An o ma faither's line  
An fine she wis, and kind she wis,  
As mellow hinney-wine.

Ye ken foo weel a body's liked  
Bi mourners cam tae pray  
For Belle, fa niver judged a frien,  
The pews stude full, the day.

### 23. Funeral

Baldy heids like golf baas wytin the final putter.  
In't it faist foo years skyte doon the gutter?  
Daith isnae blate tae clear awa a generation's clutter!

Sheena Blackhall

## Wittins (32 Scots Poems)

mation

I will spikk in ma first-born leid,  
foonert f'erfochan fey.  
It is safe and kent,  
the lowe is ayewis lichtit i the hearth,  
Drookit, dowie, dreich.  
I will spikk in ma first-born leid,  
Far short socks hing on the line,  
Far the meen an the eirde,  
Are roon an fixed an hale.  
Sleekit, slystery, stoory stammygaster.

I will spikk in ma first-born leid,  
Glaury, glysterie, gomeril,  
Afore the buik cam,  
An the buckled skweelbag,  
An the pen that ayewis blots,  
Afore I learned that silence wis ma frien.

### Changelin Burn

The Linn that niver sees the sun  
Cams tummlin doon unaskit  
Tho dreich an dowie is its warld  
Its weird's tae be disjaskit.

Roon draps o dule its watter laps  
An skelps like blyther burns  
Tho feint the sunbeam brichts its broo  
The dowie Linn that murns.

Widdershins roon life's nerra neuks  
Gyang baith thon burn an I  
Yet whyles, doon fae the gowden lift  
Licht pierces derkness. Shaddas shift  
like wauchtin glimmers o spendrift

The fireflaucht sun sens by.

### Bishop's Bells

The names of the largest of the twelve old bells of Kings Chapel,  
Old Aberdeen, were Trinity, Gabriel, Raphael, and Maria.  
Only 'ae wee bell' survived after 1736.

Peals frae Trinity's muckle moo  
Sonorous knell o Gabriel  
Douce Maria's Hallelu  
Ring the matins wi Raphael.

Bishop's bells in the infant toon  
Sweetened the braw new college air  
Caain physeecian, lawyer, priest,  
Novice scholar an aa tae prayer.

Plainsang melled wi the derk merle's notes  
Lavender, parsley, mint and thyme  
Sweyed tae the tune frae the great bells' throats  
Violet, nettle and columbine

Trinity, Gabriel, Raphael,  
Maria, dung frae their cloudy bouer,  
The heich and the mighty...short's their reign  
Gaen like girse in a puff o stoor.

Ae wee bell cam hame tae rest  
Hings in its eyrie, fair bumbazed  
Gaen are the cuddies, cassies, loch,  
Traffic birrs far the milk-kye grazed.

Trinity, Gabriel, Raphael's  
Haly threips langsyne tuik wings  
An douce Maria...her sweet lay  
Lies foraye in the dyew o King's.

I Visit of a Scots specialst□

Good morning, I am Mrs X, Head Teacher.  
I believe you have contacted the school wishing to visit?

What would you bring to our classes here?  
What would you come to tell?

I'd bring ye a leid baith stoot an guid

Aince spak bi the king himsel.□.

Is there a need to sow this seed by stories, poems and words?

Fin Scots steps oot tae the nation's youth  
It rins an sings an girds.

Maybe a poem, once a year  
Lip service to times past?

Twill come like a loon in a scarlet goon  
Nae some sairmade ootcast.

But what of the cost, should we welcome it  
Through Education's door?

Fit ye gie, ye get. Fit price d'ye set  
On a kintry's leid an lore?

The firmament ower the birlin warld  
Hauds multiple constellations  
Like a wattergaw, foo rare an braw  
Is the culture o different nations.

5. Buchan in Winter

Buchan. The lan is twa third sky  
Heich clouds o oceans waucht ootbye  
Far skurries sweem, forked swiftes sail

Galleons o haar briest gurly gale

The parks lie laigh. Nae Bens raise prods  
Tae teir the face O Heiven's brods  
The deein sun bleeds crammosie  
Ower derkenin steadin, dwaumin lea.

Here, winter cowps his creel o sna  
Here, hop-scotch leaves blaw clean awa  
Far starnies shine like wolvine een  
Shards o Eternity, abeen.

n the Beads o Mornin, Balquhidder.

Cauldly, cauldly lifts the mist,  
Fae the chitterin taps o fir  
Dreichly, dreichly hings the frost  
Blae wi smacherie o smirr.

Hye awaa the brukken baa  
O the yowes that reenge the glen  
Brakk the seelence o the warld  
Birds an gangrel bodies ken.

Gurly grey as dragon's braith  
Like a ghaistie fae the grun  
Cauldly, cauldly lifts the mist  
Tellin winter has begun.

## 7. Ballater Brig

Aneth the brig I skim a skippin steen.  
This cauld, calm bield these antrin wirdies vrocht.  
Fitfaas abeen stert saft... mid ben, growe strang  
Hyne ower they dwinnle doon tae soonless nocht.

Fa cud be dowie bi this bonnie brig?  
Gleg bandies glide, a wattery Strathspey,

Far preen-prick midgies link an jink an jig  
An craikin dyeuks their simmer biggins thigg  
An burns cam trinklin doon tae plink an play.

The geans hing thick far the stinch Sabbath bell  
Cries fowk tae book an prayer inbye the kirk,  
As roon Craig Coillich's shooders, clouds drift snell,  
Like ermine tips on green an pleisunt birk.

'Cheepity cheep', a bobbin dipper cries.  
The cheery notes frae his wee throat doonfaa  
'The glen is riggit in her Sunday best  
The leverick's pibroch's ringin oot oweraa.'

Aff flees the dipper on his wee quick wings.  
His mapamound's a smaaer span than mine  
'The glen's spreid oot its yearly feast o joy.  
Simmer is short. Sit doon an drink its wine.'

#### 8. Lament for a Bard: a tribute to Sorley Maclean

The waves o the warld, dunt at the herbor waa  
A skirlin skurrie brakks frae the gurlly faem  
'I cairry bitter news frae the Western Isles  
The tides rin wersh, at the daith o the great Maclean.'

A shag gaed slidderin doon the stony strand  
Grave cloots, its wings, as blaik as the gapin moo.  
An cauld, its skreich rang oot ower the ocean's mane  
'The Lan o the Gael this nicht, is steeped in dool.'

'A new birk grows, ' cry the geese, "in Hallaig's wid.  
Its eildrich leaves shine gowd in the dour Deid Thraa  
Its sap is the lear o the starns, an the Mapamound  
The lear o the auncient Bens, an the robin, sma.'

Douce, the dun deer liftit its heid tae list  
The spurgie held its wheesht in the willow tree  
'Oh Raasay's beatin hairt's in a timmer kist

He his jyned the shades, in the Glen o Eternity.'

'He wis the tore, on Scotia's grizzled craig  
The thrum o its clarsach, thrillin abeen the corn  
In the midst o war, he'd pause tae murn a foe  
Tho lesser men, gied sic puir stock the scorn.'

'Maclean wis a dauncin flame in a drift o snaa  
A quaff o hinny ale in a droothy throat  
A seannachie, o infinite pouer an grace  
He wis the win, in the sail o Gaeldom's boat.'

The waves o the warld, sab at the herbour waa  
The pulse o the Norlan, freezes in the vein  
The keenin wins, rise in the coronach  
'The star o the West has set. Sleep weel, Maclean.'

## 9. Scotched

As I stude in a Scottish street  
An breathed the Scottish air  
A Scottish spurgie in a tree  
Come jinkin frae its lair.

It flew ootower the Scottish hames  
The hooses, schule an kirk  
It flew abune the Scottish lawns  
The wids o aik an birk.

It flew abune the Scottish bus  
That I wis set tae catch  
Aside a queue o ither Scots  
A mixer maxter swatch

0 ither Scots fowk like masel.  
Three Chinese engineers,  
A Polish driver, Sikh GP,  
Five Suffolk mountaineers,

Aa stude disjaskit bi the waa



The rain drapped dreich an thick  
The doonpish tuik nae tent ava  
Tae makk, belief or spikk.

#### 10. The Yalla Yeitie

Inspired by Nichole Robertson singing in celebration  
of her great aunt, renowned singer Jeannie Robertson.□

Doon the centuries daunced the sang,  
Prood an fine, like a slaw Strathspey  
Like the lacey rowan, licht an fite  
The blossom afore the crammosie.

Whiles it wad reest in the antrin throat,  
That gart it craik like a banshee's skirt,  
Coorse, fur a bonnie tune like yon,  
Tae be torn an rived like a ruggit curl.

Whiles, it wad pass frae moo tae lug,  
Tae a bigsie chiel ower swallt wi pride  
Tae sing the sang as it should be sung...  
Fur fit's a waddin without a bride?

Whiles, it hirpled wi hurdies sair,  
Its notes aa flat, nae twa wirds richt,  
Tint in the twang o a thumpin beat  
A pearl, that an oyster haps frae sicht.

On a nicht o stars in a Norlan toon,  
The gangrel tune fand a siller reest,  
Fin a gowden heidit quine steppt up  
An lent yon sang baith breath an breist.

Syne throw the howf in the reeky toon,  
The past swept by on bleedin feet,  
For the sang wis cruel as it wis braa,  
O a bairn an its mither, left tae greet

An ye micht hae heard a preen doonfa,  
Fin Sorra chappit the door ajee,  
An the singer jyned wi a quine langsyne,

Tae gie her dule tae eternity.

Oh watter in a crystal glaiss,  
Is winnerfu an pure,  
Bit watter in a dubby troch,  
Is midden-bree, an soor.

An snaa that faas in quate wids  
Lies skinklin throw the derk,  
Bit snaa that f aas on steerie roads,  
Is blaik's a miner's sark.

Oh I hae sat throw symphonies  
Played tae a packit haa,  
A yalla yeitie sang this nicht  
Sae sweet, she beat them aa.

An at her shooder, grey as haar,  
Raxxed back a ghaistly line,  
O singers that hae kept yon sang,  
Alive, time ooto mine.

Like a smaa precious, flickerin flame,  
First kinnlit bi her kin,  
Her cannie hauns she cupped it roon  
Tae shield it frae the win.

She didna chyne the rhythm o't,  
Nor vauntie, sikk tae smore't,  
An frae the yalla yeitie's moo,  
Thon sang took wings an soared.

## 11. The Lodger□

The fishin fleet sails oot along the sea  
Stars cut metallic diamonds in the nicht  
the bed-sit lodger shares immensity

Wi table, •tickin clock, the open door.  
The stink o fish in ilkie nook an crannie  
San shauchles saftly forrit tae explore

Like a sea cave her chaumer, derkness fills.  
Marooned, she is a swatch o driftwid here  
Her landlord an his wife hae hidden gills.

Like twa auld crabs they squat aneth her room  
Their hauns like fower hinged pincers curled ower  
Their faimly Bible, black's the crack o Doom.

Their drooned son brocht them different agonies,  
Fur him, a sexless bed, fur her, an ache,  
His waukin thochts, a mix o psalms an sleaze.

It's hett; the open door's ower still tae craik  
He's nae yet tried tae rape her, bit he will  
The lodger that he watches aa the wikk.

Odysseus wad never anchor here.  
The shoreline's slowly ground tae skin an bane  
The seaweed rings the herbour like a bier  
The fisher clachan wi the hert o stane.

#### Wake Song for my Father

Could I have dressed ye at the last  
Green growe the birks o Dee  
Ye'd hae bin clad in honest tweed  
the rcchlin wave wins free

In yer richt haun, a heather sprig  
Frae lanely Bheinn a Bhuird  
An in yer left, a larick twig  
Three months in snaa-bree smored

I wad hae bathed ye like a bairn  
Wi muckle wae an care  
Pit on yer back a linen sark  
As fite's the mountain hare.

Ye wad hae bedd till beerial  
A guest, in yer ain hame  
I wad hae guairded ye three nichts  
As stinch as ony stane

An tho the mortal banes o ye  
Wi yird are happit weel  
Yer marra haunts the Builg Loch  
Tween Crathie an Gairnsheil.

### 13. Hello again Grampian

Weel, Grampian, I hae bin aff on ma travels  
Hobnobbin wi a wheen nearhaun Strathyre  
Bit I aye come back tae ye, Grampian.

'Mmmphm', ye say. Ye niver say muckle  
'Yer affa quate, ' the fowk doon yonner telt me  
Bit I'd spukken fower hale sentences aa wikk  
An this, as ye ken, Grampian, is a lang langamachie  
Fur ain o yer North-East bairns.

### 14. Parkin Lot Nummer 44: Advocates Car Park

Parkin Lot nummer 44:  
Doon the steps fae the Signet Library  
Weet blaik tarmac, back o the door  
Waddlit ower bi cooshies Shitten on bi scurries  
Wattered bi flurries  
O shooers.

Parkin Lot nummer 44  
Blaik as Bible Brods  
A bield fur boozers  
Yowled ower bi Toms an touners  
Here lieth the mortal beens  
O John Knox RIP  
The VIP o mony's a history lesson  
In Scottish skweels on mochie efterneens.

Parkin Lot nummer 44,  
In life yer tenant  
Niver brichtent the warld  
Like a flicht o cockatoos  
Explodin ooto a pink flamingo loch  
The dreich rain piddles doon  
Cairryin roon his crotch  
The bree o Embro toon.

The claik o Hindi Rattles abeen his heid.  
John Knox, fa wis alive, But noo is deid.

### 15 Icons of Scotland

I'm a furry Loch Ness Monster  
Frae Bangladesh tae Brighton,  
I'm up fur sale,  
By road, sea, rail,  
I'm a mail order item.

My name is Bonnie Prince Charlie,  
I'm the tap o a shortbread tin,  
I weir ma wig cause my hair fell oot,  
Through drinkin ower much gin.

I'm the auld wife tenors sing o,  
In Granny's Heilan hame,  
Wi a pail an an ootside lavvie,  
An nae twa socks the same.

I'm the stag on a whisky bottle,  
I tapsalteerie tip,  
Wi hooves up tae the ceilin,  
Each time ye poor a nip.

I'm the Burns ye hear fin the haggis  
Is piped tae the room in state,  
The poem afore the ceilidh  
Fin the neeps grow cauld on the plate.

I'm a clockwork Heilan dancer,  
In a musical box I bide,  
I'm made in Japan by a geisha's haun,  
And exported world wide.

I am the nation's brakkfast,  
Hett oats in satty watter,  
Wi a jeelip o milk as soft as silk,  
I'm fit for a prince's platter.

I'm the reel frae a Hollywood movie,  
In tecbnicolour dartit,  
Mel Gibson's William Wallace  
Is nae fur the faint hertit.

I am a Scottish fitba,  
My colour's blue and green,  
In Dundee, I am orange,  
Bricht reid in Aiberdeen.

I'm a Celtic fashion nose ring,  
Wi a Cairngorm stud fer yer snoot,  
If ye hae a snottery pyocher,  
I'd advise ye tae takk me oot.

Oh we are the Scottish icons,  
Fur exiled hairt-strings ruggin,  
They liked us sae weel, like a rotten's flees,  
They louped on a boatie an they crossed the seas,  
Wi their gear, an their siller, an their gran degrees,  
Oh we are the Scottish icons,  
That keep the brain drain gluggin.

## 16. Samhuin

The jeelin yird cracks at the neep's side  
Noo firelicht zips its reid hood up its face  
The cauld canal has swallaed its ain tail  
Beech trees are fickle murners, seen forget  
Their leaves fan now taps chitter in snaadrift  
Yird's thoosan keyholes turn tae steek life in.

The clocks rin widdershins, withoot, wi'in...  
Haar sypes up frae the bleary knowe's blin side  
Here, thistledoon meets rock like time's spindrifft  
In Heptonstall, weeds warssle tae re-face  
Gravestanes wi ilkie tae-haud they can get.  
The blackie's sang is gagged... a mummer's tale.

The skreikin hoolet spreids her killjoy tail  
A daithly fan. Some aik tree is her inn  
Tae raise the stakes... a race o beaks beget.  
Wheen daffie bulbs lie featureless aside  
The rogue dry elm leaf uses tae efface  
Its corpse's fitness, aince it's cut adrift

There is a time tae anchor, time tae drift  
Each Sizen's ritual shrivin maun entail  
A lettin gyang, the better tae ootface  
The door o strippin back tae hanel in  
Win like a scythe that pairts the reeds outside  
Far fitpad tod hunts aa that she

Foo quickly tummelt aipple fruits forget  
Their seedtime, bridlepath, their blossom drift  
Noo that Ophelia's by the riverside□  
Sic auld wife's snell attentiveness tae detail  
Her roan hauf meens turn black, her een turn in  
Winter's a hag wi peat-bree on her face

The deein wabs unraivel. Frosts deface  
The bricht collage o leaves. They dinna get  
An artist's retrospective, gaitherin in  
O glory. Raither they beam a drift  
O bards, tae flesh a disappearin tail  
Soaked wyme-back tae the world's derk inside.

Forget the lowes o Autumn! I wid drift  
Inna the side o Winter, lossin face  
inbye the fyauchie seggs... A moose's tail.□

## 16. Four signs o Samhuin

Conkers rowe like een that hae tint their sockets  
The hurcheon coories inno its coat o stabs  
The rotten yird cracks at the neep's faun  
A blaikie's yalla tongue is steeped in dule.

## 17. Sea God

A God o the sea's amang us.  
Dinna ye see the sheen  
O faddoms o dulse an slier cod  
In the glent o his wintry een?

A God o the sea's amang us,  
His wirds hae the storm's wheep  
An the skelp o the satt-tailed herrin  
Fished up frae the glaiss-green deep.

A God o the sea's amang us.  
His hair is derk's a shag,  
Frae the belt o his ice-cauld middle  
A when fouled anchors drag.

A God o the sea's amang us,  
His thunner and lichtenin rage,  
Can skail wi the blast o wasterie  
A skipper's hard-won wage

A God o the sea's amang us,  
D'ye feel the warld showd  
Like the deck o a tiltin trawler  
As he wauks throw the teemin crowd?

The glitterin tide turns bonnie  
As a train o skirlin gulls,  
Herald their maister's comin  
Wings white as drooned men's skulls.

The clouds lower blae an gurly  
Fin he leaves his partan's betth



An raiks wi his icy fingers  
The vertebrae o earth.

He caas tae crocanation  
Wi the pouer o his wattery cleuk  
An nerra thochts an nippit  
In their shilpit, shargeret neuk

Takk tent fin he draws near ye,  
Wersh wersh wi spindrifft years  
For the sea god's nets are wechty  
Wi shattered hairts an tears.

### 18. The Seal

I am a seal at the Brig o Don  
I lie in the dubs an pech  
Fur an oor or twa in the autumn sun  
I rowe on my kyte an flech

I skelp ma tail in the sappy glaur  
As the traffic birrs on by  
I am a seal at the Brig o Don  
My warld is waves an sky.

### 19..Cleopatra□

Priestess o Isis, seed o kings  
Born tae a croun, by servant fanned  
Frailty, her strength. She could makk aa  
Boo tae the Queen o Love's command.

Rowed in a cairpet as a gift, she  
Conquered the Caesar in her Ian  
Made the great Roman General  
Boo tae the Queen o Love's command.

Romans despised her. Fan her lord  
Dee'd, as the happed assassins planned,  
Beauty was eeseless. Nane wad noo

Boo tae the Queen o Love's command.

See her in barge wi gowden stern  
Purple sails by her broon quines manned,  
Perfumed - noo wad Mark Antony  
Boo tae the Queen o Love's command.

Wakken the asp an milk its fang  
Hither, Anubis, pairt the san  
Open the yetts nae mortal sees  
Boo tae the Queen o Love's command.

ng the Bees

for the late George McConnach, Birse, bee keeper and farmer

I kent a gairden aince, perfumed an bra  
Simmer flooers wauchtit there, heich as the wa

Bees bizzed frae skepps tae Ben, ryped heather bell  
Ferryin sweetness frae brae heid tae cell.

I kent the maister fa hairsted their caimbs  
Creamy wax chaumers wi gold in their wames

Aa throw the winter, he kept the hive hale  
Syne in the simmer he brewed hinney ale

Toonsers supped seerip. His bairns on a plate  
Spreid rich dreepin nectar on breid that they ate

Naebody telt them, wyce craiturs, bees kent  
Fit the weeds niver howked roon the blawn roses meant

Sic a deep seelence! Nae rikk in the lum  
Frae his winged servents, nae saft eident hum

Nae need tae spear wis he cauld in his lair  
Teet in the gairden. The bee skepps war bare

a Halflin's Suicide□

Gowden-tapped like a settin sun  
A sinsheen smile fae the daylight's pairtit  
white limbs happt in the clarty grun  
A life is ower that barely sterted.

Passed through schule on invisible feet  
Gang-lands nae fur the tender hairtit  
A wauk ben thorns tae the douce, the sweet  
A life is ower that barely sterted

Teachers canna recall his face  
Ane that wisna wi malice mertit  
Kept his coonsil an kent his place  
A life is ower that barely sterted

Ae step forrit an twa steps back  
Future's cauldribe fin hope's desertit  
Easy tae jink the warld wi smack  
A life is ower that barely sterted

Smack takks geniis ooto the box  
Reason's rocky in seas unchertit  
Deevilicks lowp through the stinchest locks  
A life is ower that barely sterted

Grace an youth war his only jewels  
Dreich's the wecht fin the kist that's cairtit  
Carries a laddie inno the mools  
A life is ower that barely sterted.

## 22. Traffic Jam

Fit's adee? Fit's adee?  
This bus hisnae moved since hauf past three!  
There's a taxi o quines in ballet frocks,  
There's a steer o fishermen up fae the docks,  
There's a pipe band marchin, twenty loons  
Wi a drummer in leopard skins duntin the tunes  
There's seagulls skreichin ower the melee;

Far is the haud up? Fit's adee?

Ootin

Iona, Shona, Rhona, wi Andrew, Fergus, Neil  
Gaed up tae tour the Heilans wi a labster in a creel

Ben McDuih's yeti, ett Fergus fir a snack.  
The Carlin-wife o Morven threw Angus doon a crack.

Iona, syne, an Rhona, war cowpit in a gale,  
An the monster kent as Nessie swallaed  
Neil an Shona hale

Sae dinna book yer holidays far ghaists an monsters heeze  
Yer safer in the Congo than in the Hebrides.

Bat

The Bat's a midnicht falderal,  
An upside doon asleep.  
Umbrella at a funeral,  
Hung in the kirk, tae dreep.

Oh blin-eed, blearie, fleein moose,  
We canna aa be bonnie,  
Bit fin the Lord dispensed guid looks,  
He didna gie ye ony!

Tiger

Let's nae tell a sowl, but oor hoose has a tiger  
Wi' a lowe, an a skirl, an a killer inside her

She dines upon heroes. She teirs at her cages  
She's restless in taxis. She an she rages

She's cweel when she raxxes her cleuks on the mat  
Let's nae tell a sowl, but oor tiger's a cat!

## 26. Ghost Story heard at a Bus Stop

My ma jist canna sleep if that cat's oot.  
Fit cat? Ye hinna gotta cat?  
Ye hae niver seen it. It's nae real.  
Ma took a feelie, last time it cam oot.  
I'm sayin, a richt mentler. Sic a brute!  
Fit happened? Dis it scrat, this muckle cat?  
Na na, than divil's far ower fly fur that.  
It's jist a shadda. Creeps sae quately,  
Ma bides awake tae see fit it'll dee.  
Weel, tell me then. Dis it sprout wings an flee?  
Na na. It's jist a shadda. It's nae real.  
That maks it fearier, because ye feel  
It could dee onythin, a shadda, loose like that.  
I dinna unnerstaun. Ye hinna gotta cat?  
Bit we've its shadda creepin roon the mat!

## 27. At Ghandi's Shrine Raj Ghat

Efter the thrang derk alleys  
The stobshie o the bazaars  
The thunnerin larrie.s  
The goat that stauns an bleats

Efter the buyin an bribin  
The priggin, swickin venders  
The sto•or an the bumbazement  
O rickshaws' dirdin seats

Efter the bamboo scaff oldin:  
The saris cairtin. cement  
The cricket, the polo,  
The staas o baccy an

Efter the wechfy bullocks  
The cobras wyvin an dauncin  
The glaur o the gutters  
The fowk fa sleep on the streets

Here is Delhi's •oasis  
Here, far the shade is sweet  
The verra girse cried 'Ghandi',  
The chiel fa cowpit an em: pire  
Walkin in wyes o peace on twa bare feet

## 28. Jannie□

I stride atween the skirlin bairns  
Fechts stop. An argy-bargy dwines.  
I am the jannie. My wird's law  
A schuleyaird god in my size nines.  
The teachers gie them Science, Art  
Gymnastics, cookin, the three R's  
A wum: min's wye... an ourglaiss day  
I steek their neives, their playgrun wars.

The menfowk that they see at hame  
Pairt-timers, dossers on the mooch  
Heich upon hash, or booze, or baith  
Their haun stapt in r's pooch  
Is aa some ken, I tilt the scales  
Ay in command o my five senses  
I teach them men hae qualities  
That raxx ower past an present tenses  
like Janus, back in auncient Rome  
I guaird their world. Nane pass me by  
That seeks tae herm, misfit or vex  
The littlins in my territory.  
The teachers hae their tests tae set  
They educate, a wechty dreel  
I patch up windaes, see fair play  
I keep them warm, an safe an weel.

e tae a Bonnie Fechter, 51st Highland Division  
In Memoriam Hamish Henderson

Fareweet tho editorials

Tell yer fame ower city an lea  
Sangs are yer best memorials  
Liltin an lowpin fu brawly!  
Fareweel tae mirth an jollity  
Scholar-sodjer poet sae braw  
Fareweel tae grace and gallantry  
Scotland's the puirer without ye

Tales ye tuik fae quine an seannachie  
Airs fae trench, fae bothy an aa  
Screivin •sangs o fire an honesty  
Best bloody sangster in Scotia!

Fareweet here comes the ferryman  
Weel ye'll ken the ranks that ye'll meet  
There's nocht tae pack or cairry, man  
Takk. the lang rest o the wearie  
Fareweel the squaddies' champion  
Bonnie fechter, richter o wrangs  
Jynin yer auld battalion  
Stinch in the pages o history

Tinker Gaelic, Cant or Romany  
Roon Blairgowrie chasin the tune  
Rypin Jeannie's buss o balladry  
Berries ye'd hairvest sae cheerie

Fareweet tho editorials  
Tell yer fame ower city an lea  
Sangs are yer best memorials  
Liltin an lowpin fu. brawly!

Fareweel tae mirth an jollity  
Scholar-sodjer poet sae braw  
Fareweel tae grace and gallantry  
Scotland's the puirer without ye

Praises cudna bribe the like o ye  
Siller coin nur braw O.B.E.  
Comrade Captain, bard o quality  
Makkar o Freedom come all ye

Fareweel, here comes the ferryman  
Weel ye'll ken the ranks that ye'll meet  
There's nocht tae pack or cairry, man  
Takk. the lang rest o the wearie  
Fareweel the squaddies' champion  
Bonnie fechter, richter o wrangs  
jynin yer auld battalion  
Stinch in the paaes o history

Bombed an tombed an shelled the infantry  
Some nicht live bit ithers maun dee  
Fa takks the human invent'ry  
In the Derk Valley sae drearie?

Fareweel, tho editorials  
Tell yer fame ower city an lea  
Sangs are yer best memorials  
Liltin an lowpin fu brawly!  
Fareweel tae mirth an jollity  
Scholar-sodjer poet sae braw  
Fareweel tae grace and gallantry  
Scotland's the puirer without ye.

Nous□

□

I didnae cheenge the front. Same cooncil door  
The gairden's minimal... girse, ivy, trees  
Deliberately a soss, sae nae tae tease  
The burglar inno sikkin tae explore.

Ten years syne it luikkit ower the river.  
Reid tods slipped like sodjers aff the leash;  
Noo, supermarket chynes hae found their niche  
Health Club's arrived, a bigsie biggit neebour.

The traffic thunners forrit, thunners back  
My bairns left, for traivel, wurk or lover  
The hoose sank inno cauld an disregard.  
Noo ane's returned, his life in ae rucksack.  
Tae soothe wioot the lullaby is hard.



### 31. Tempus Fugit (ii)

Foxglove hings its dwinin heid  
Blossoms wauchtin aff the tree  
Nettles fiery in the sheugh  
Aathing fair or foul maun dee.

Here's a ram in Simmer's warmth  
Jaw an backbeen caad ajee  
Een are teem o starnie-licht  
Aathing fair or foul maun dee.

Jade bluebottle, drappit gem  
Bonnie tho her colours be  
Flicht will fail an wing will fauld  
Aathing fair or fonl maun dee.

Mavis wheeplin in the birk  
Mistress o sweet minstrelsie  
Even sic a sang will eyn  
Aathing fair or foul maun dee.

See the chunnerin kirk Yaird wirm  
Crawlin ben the blackie's ee  
Dwinin as the sizzens birl  
Aathing fair or foul maun dee.

### Gift

This'll be yours, an yours alane  
Bairn: the gift that we gie's yer name  
Weir it proodly an weir it weel  
This'll be yours fin ye stert the schule

It'll be yours fin yer auld an gray  
At wark, at study, wi friens at play.  
Fin yer grown an ye takk a wife  
Wi it she'll pledge tae share yer life

An fin ye lie in yer timmer sark  
Yer name'll follae ye tae the Dark  
The gift that laists fin ithers hae gaen,  
Bairn, the gift that we gie's yer name.

Sheena Blackhall

# Wolf Prints

I write in a cold climate.  
There may be a moon,  
There may not. There may be snow,  
There may not.  
I write from need, from no-need.  
I write from joy from no-joy.  
My words are stones,  
Skimming ancient water.  
Finned poems,  
Five fat salmon leap  
Up the ladder from wave, to sky, to page.  
The Wolf-King pads through mist, through no-mist,  
Weaving in and out  
Of the mind's dark chamber.  
I sit by the bank unmoving,  
Watching for wolf prints,  
Waiting to catch the drips  
From the salmon's slap-dash tail.

Sheena Blackhall

## Written In Flanders (2 Poems) 2014

### White Feathers

White feathers are worn by doves, by angels, by swans  
Women gave them to men they branded cowards  
(In a cock fight, pure-bred fighters showed no white)

Private Ernest Atkins, on leave from the Western Front.  
Was riding a tram when the girl beside him  
Turned to give him the feather  
He smacked her across the face with his pay book  
Said: 'Thanks, I'll take it back  
To the boys at Passchendaele. I'm only in civvies  
Because folk think my uniform's lousy  
But it's not half as lousy, girl, as you.'

Touring Flanders, 2014, read & overheard on board the bus

I've got an attic with a dormer window  
Not a mansion but it suits us both

Officers slept in dug outs, men made do  
With 'funk holes' dug in the side of the trench.  
They slept under overcoats along with the lice and rats

Those continental breakfasts give me piles

Lice caused Trench Fever, took three months to cure.  
Red slugs oozed from mud and rotting flesh  
Corpse rats ate bodies, peed out Weil's disease

Frank couldn't understand a word they said  
They call that English? Not the kind we speak!  
And what a stink came off that farmer's midden!

Mustard gas was oily, blistered skin  
That festered, causing horrid mutilation

Listen campers, we're not Johnny Foreigner  
We'll let them know we'll all be eating early

Phosgene gas was said to smell like hay  
The victim died by choking on his tongue

Did you know we've got a reptilian tongue?  
It's true, the way we actually taste water

400,000 Tommies caught VD  
The Belgians say that all the whores were French

Our country's morals have gone down the pan  
Those single mums...kids who don't know their father

The winter of '16 saw a flour shortage.  
Trench food could be pea-soup with horse-meat chunks.  
Weeds, nettles, leaves would whip up stews.

Someone raided my veggie plot last week

Irritant gas is colourless, poisons the blood  
Men breathe it. Vomit, cough, and quickly die

Our hotel bedroom stinks of cigar smoke  
I'm going to complain, demand a refund

The catering staff put food in cooking pots  
In petrol cans, old jam jars to send out.  
But when it reached the front it was stone cold.  
I always tell the grandkids 'clean your plate'  
I ate the widow's mite, asparagus

Chlorine gas was yellow-green in colour  
It smelt like bleach, attacking lungs and nose  
A million men on both sides died by gassing

She had a workman in to clear the drains  
Clogged up with fat from all those greasy fries

Flanders was flooded in 1917  
The wettest weather on record for 70 years

I've my umbrella here...it's spitting rain  
Look at those farms! So rich!  
Subsidized from all us mugs in Britain

La Basse Cour in Belgium, an attractive farm  
Set in acres on the Messines Ridge  
The problem lies with an unexploded bomb  
Still there,80 feet beneath the farm,  
Potential for redevelopment might cover it.  
Farmers reap an iron harvest still  
Mines, mortars, shells and skeletons of course

Oo look at all those cyclists in their lycra  
Help for Heroes. Oh, the thighs on them!

Trench Foot was caused by filthy, damp conditions.  
Untreated,it can lead to amputation  
20,000 British Army soldiers suffered  
With trench foot in the winter of '14.

They should settle every war by a game of football  
But Germany would win on penalties

To pass the time in the trenches, men killed lice  
Running a candle flame across cloth seams

I've just been here two days. Ten mozzie bites!  
Martin's bought a Saab, and with the top down  
Whoosh...you really feel the turbulence

British tanks had genders, male and female  
Male tanks had cannon, females had machine guns

The policeman slapped her wrist, said 'Get off home dear'

Russian women joined 'The Legion of Death'  
They captured over 100 German soldiers

His hands got impetigo with the filth  
His legs were chaffed red raw with soiled puttees

The average service time of a British pilot  
In ww1? Eleven days at the front.  
More than half were killed whilst still in training.  
Many were in their teens. A strange existence  
By day, they lived in chateaux, playing croquet,  
Swimming in beautiful pools and eating well  
Then off, to do the most dangerous job on the Front.

My sister's got a villa outside Paphos  
We thought, 'This year we'll do the War instead.'

The French slang for a soldier was 'le poilu'  
(The hairy one) .8 million of them died

In England, you go 3 miles down the road  
Then accents change. Don't start me on the Irish!

A duck pond leads to Lone Tree Cemetery.  
These are graves of the Royal Irish Rifles,  
Many killed when the Allies blew a mine  
Buried alive in rubble...friendly fire

Two Spanish women shared our breakfast table  
And never said 'Excuse me'. What a cheek!  
And by the way, the Belgians can't do tea  
It tastes like mud. I'd rather have a latte

Fritz Haber researched mustard gas, that killer.  
His wife, with his service pistol, shot herself

My father cycled every day to the bank  
Wearing his bowler hat. He was a trooper!  
I'm not a twitcher, but I do like birds

100,000 pigeons flew in the war  
If you wounded a homing pigeons ...6 months jail!

Back home they're taking over. It's a disgrace  
Our jobs, our schools, they drain our social service

Belgium was occupied for four long years  
Bridges were blown. Roads blocked. Land, women, raped.

Folk killed, displaced, whole towns turned refugee  
Belgian civilians used as slaves in camps  
The usual weary list of atrocities

We know for sure that our village of Overijse,  
Was liberated by Scottish troops at the end,  
Gordons, who fought in the village of Rosières?

Sheena Blackhall



# Your Country Needs You

The men in civvies with the passive voices  
Timorous clerks, conshies with attitude  
Soldiers with livid scars and narrow choices  
Whores who trade in lust, thrusting and crude

A poster of a German painted villainous  
War veteran with a begging bowl, a cripple  
A politician devious and crass  
A furious flag blown on a windy steeple

Medical staff defusing any fuss  
A plough horse shackled to an army gun  
Upper crust majors, born to lead and cuss  
Welded together, pledged to beat the Hun

Sheena Blackhall

# Ypres, 2014

The Ypres Cloth Hall, ruined, blown to shreds  
Patched up, invisibly mended, stands  
As its old/new self, a replica  
Two fingers up to Fate  
Good flax of Flanders doesn't fray so easy

The busy shuttles of bullet and machine gun  
Unstitched the tapestry of this fair country  
The fields drank blood for years,  
Yield harvests now fed by the silent dead

Within the museum, it's battle over-kill  
Mind-blowing assault on the senses  
There's a clock face riddled with holes  
There's a horse trussed up like a roast  
In rolls of pronged barbed wire.

There's Mary Borden, stepping out from the screen  
In her nurse's uniform  
Talking of mangled heads and chests  
With holes as big as your fist

There's rows of prosthetic limbs, some hooks for hands  
In the so-called 'Verwoeste Gewesten'  
The devastated lands

After, I stumble out into the blazing sunshine  
Out to the screech and whine of carnival, carousel  
Out to Euro-youth gorging on frites and cokes  
Out to German sausage and blue ice cream

Roll up, roll up to the shooting galleries  
Nobody jumps but me in the sunny square

Sheena Blackhall