

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
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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 bladded nest—
An dowie has the yalla yeitie sung
Fin sic like waes hae rived its teenie breist.

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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 wallopin
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 ootlinned 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's

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 flooers gied nectar tae the bees
The geans war ryped bi blackie, mavis, craa

In April flooers 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 oorie
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 pruv in 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 wyes 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 sunlight 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.

"Is it yersel?
Dinna hash."

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:

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

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 aidder, 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? '

Lost Brother: Ian Alexander Middleton
(11) 3287-5730 Rua Eng Monlevade,166 Rev.8 A(01308-07) Sao Paulo, Brazil

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 wheen 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 wallop in 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 lampstoun 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

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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 Tammass, 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. Tammass 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 Tammas: 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 Tammas knells his staff three times on the grun.

True Tammas: Watch the Future ye will see
Murder, daith an mystery
Widdershins I furl awa
Frae this wid o erne an craa
True Tammas 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 mowser
Like a deein hairy oobit

Ye'd takk him fur an unnertakker's clerk
A neckie like tae thrapple him
A wrunkled, 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 sclimnt 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 aipple, 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 brackfaist 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
Trysted 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 catched 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 Pocrá 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 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 nicht 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 thrapplit 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
Throze 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 puitith 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 faimlies cuppies, tins an joogs

Eeno 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 Tippetty'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 deaf 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 playwright 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, 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

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 towe
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
Alang 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 gurlly 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 rowes 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 lower 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 pirled 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 briests 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 mids 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. ~~The~~ Readin this Be Ready: Scots owersett of a poem bi William Stafford
Sertin here, fit dae ye wint tae myne?
Foo sunlicht 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, ridders

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 hansel in
Win like a scythe that pairts the reeds outside
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 interpentecostalism 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 asper toys!

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 cauld rife 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)

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□

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 pucklie 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 brow 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 though 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 cursèd 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 booded 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 Rhynie....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 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 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 without 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 warld 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
Chaffeured 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 floer,
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, Wisser
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 hodgees 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 sproot 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 fulled 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 mowser-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 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.

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 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 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 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.

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 thistledown 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 rizen 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-winda (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 wirds 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
Roofs 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 wurd
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 insteid

'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

Lowsted 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 micht 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' insteid 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 saftly,
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 flooerin whin
Fur yalla breem's the feys accursed flooer
Twill pyson the guidluck in ony booer.

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 flooers 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 flooers 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 gaither
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 knight
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 cawp 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 Hooze,
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) at17,000 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 nicht 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
Priggitt 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 truth:
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 lichtsomes 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 gorblies 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 horned 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
Thrope 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, ainnoored 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 cloot
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 birlid 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 wrik 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 cawk;
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 saft, 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 Preens

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 cercl 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. 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 chaunce

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 Clottie'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 Sizzen
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 for the home farm Buchanan illies sturdy banes
people building heavy walls strong stout granite stones
shelter for the home 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 nicht 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 herbours 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, alang 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, lowsed, 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 wheen streekit 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 cloot 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 sunlicht, 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 lichtsome 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 along 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-about-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 lichtsome 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, halfpins 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 gaithered
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 prowl 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 birlled 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 flooer
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 wheeched
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 cratur's 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 Blair's for 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 lichts

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 wurd 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 braw 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 scan
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 whaups 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 condescension

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
Wallop'd 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 stapp'd 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 sing'd 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 fyauchsom' 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 taigit canopy. A bairn,
I dookit in yon hidden boouer
Ringed roon bi secret widlan floouer
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 boouer

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"...pause....'Charge! "
'Scotland for ever! " 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 saftsom 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 scan
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 bood 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 bood, 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.

Aawye 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 saft 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 fleggit 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 braisse
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 luvvers' trysts an delichts
Fowk steered hame frae their wirk
Swyty an trauchelt, sikkin a bite tae ett
A shooser, 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 Ljóðahús
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 piddle, 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, gurlly, 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 roosity 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 along 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 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 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 bummer 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 targ's 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, puir 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 wyes 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 owerjie
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 birr 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 birr
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 tcyaaaved
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 pearled 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 furled 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, Crotsk, Ushaw, Hardwick, Seaham

Wharton Park, Nettleworth, 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, pur 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 braise 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, luvin, 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 about 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 fermes 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, atap 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,
Lichtsomen 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 flooer 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 haesome 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,
Malagarroosin 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, nicht skail ootower
Nicht 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 froom

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

H₂O 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 cooly 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 splattered 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 piddlin 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 daunder
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 wakening

Gaelic

2a. PISEAG

Tha piseag a 'cluich
Ball cloimhreach
Le na spuirean
A' leum,
A' sabaid.

English

2b. KITTEN

The kitten's playing
A wooly ball
With claws.
A jump,
Fighting

Gaelic

3a. LEANABH A' MHONaidh

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 òrd

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.

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 micht 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 Whene 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 Balquhiddy 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 bladded 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 caughted 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 thunnars doon a sermon.
Bubbles are spectacled 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 micht 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 dugs,
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 mower.
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 tinks, 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 dreep 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 taiglit 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 floery 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 widsmān wīdna 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 wīd'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 loused 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 nichtmare 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 wurd,
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, cherms,
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 saft 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 wioot 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 herbour.

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, gurlly 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 shooer 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 scunner
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 luve 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

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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 West 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 boozers' 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 Bidy 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 brow 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!
Ruppee 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 aawye 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 flooerin 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 furred 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, alang 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 traivelled
An Mary rubbit her een at yon
An swore her wits wis raivelled.

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; plash! 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 nicht 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 nicht 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 breets, 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 aيدر, 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 safer 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 failmies 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 ploood,
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 world
Burn fierce an bricht...sae quick the wheel
That wracks the humpback in the deep.
That makks a squardaunce 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 clout 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, lichtsme 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 aيدر 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 etlin 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 booser
It smeeths the tresses o the reeds
Like luvseek luvver, 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 spitoons?

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 haar

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 Mrscock
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 luvers 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 ploored wi
Auld Sodjer, wi his hin hoch scarred an boored.

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 annointed
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 about 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 quarter
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 wabby 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 warld 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 bumper 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. Muttering 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-blonde, 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
Hungriily 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.

hidder 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. Recht 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 ‑
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 ‑
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.

eweed

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.

y 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 ‑
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 ‑
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‑
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 briars

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‑
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

hiddler 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 wurd
She canna hear. She's chokin
Hauns are stappin a clood 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 Thoomb's 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

About 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 cauldri fe 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 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

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 tummles 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 Sizzin'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 crow'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 world'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 world

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 ploow 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 claith. 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 floers faa
Spring comes, a hunner floers brier
Life passes quick afore oor een
On ma heid, age has hunkered doon
Dinna say floers 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 braise, 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 luvvers 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 blearie 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 paiddlin 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

Pirrins 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 brews 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 oorie skreich
A sab that fulls the muirlan dreich
The tabor beat ben brittle reed's
The ghaistie-dauce 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

Ricket-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 haunit 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 owegie 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 cauldri fe 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 cauldri fe 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 meevied 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 Hung
(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 soft 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 wurd
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,
Risin ooto the smoored 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 stappet 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."

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 wirds 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.
"Cercling, " 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 chấy nguớc lên nguớc n?
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,
Fechtín 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 scraun.

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 puils 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 aboot,
Clype aboot 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 braisse 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 `ower 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-daunched at Marischal, it's daunched 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 nicht 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 gurly
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.

Whye 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 paidlin 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 o 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 o 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 o 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 warld →

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 ootraxed 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 wyes 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 airmy
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 clot

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 aloft
Stude in his stirrups, jinked the comin' door
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' sodgers' 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, sodger, 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 nicht 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 pruded 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 warned 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 cinners 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 micht the lassie prayed, as Cloutie caught 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 fuspers, 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 caught them aa
Aywis ailin
An a steen frae a sanbag tuik oot his eebaa
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 floer 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, gurlly, 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 alang 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 trinketry 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 fireflauchts 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 crow:
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 saddled 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 breek
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, souglin 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
Wyin 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 fermes 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 among 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 brows, 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 mixter-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

(3.9)

Nicht I be as a treisur kist fur aa
That suffer..be a servant fur their guid

(3.10- 3.11)

I set aside the pleisurs o the flesh
That aa things leevin I nicht benefit
Nirvana is aff-castin ilkie thing
Tae this, I set my hairt, my heid, my fit

(3.12)

Kennin my weird's tae dee, I set my sicht
Upon Nirvana. As a wheepin post

(3.13-3.14)

I'll owergie aa I hae tae succour ithers
Thole scuds an cloors, an niver coont the cost
I carena fur ma wardly sel ava
Belittled, throoshed, befyled, tae me thon's nocht

(3.15-3.16)

May aa their actions bring them anely guid
May my trysts ay yield meanin, socht, unsocht
Gin fowk fa tryst wi me hae angered thochts
Fin meetin wi me, herbour quanter musin
Gin they miscaa me, herm me in their wye `
Spite aa, nicht lamps be lichtit in their reason

(3.17-21)

Oh I wad be a lamp tae licht the derk
I'd be a bed fur ony weariet randy
Oh I wad be a skiffy, far thon's socht
A wishin gem, a reamin cup o plenty

Oh I wad be a fey, an eildritch, tree
Ane o the kye that aa things may desire
Oh I wad be a cure-aa, a strang spell
(Fur in the mapamound, naethin's entire
Untae itsel.) An sae, I wad sustain
Ilkie last ane, till they their freedom gain.

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 fullid 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 fullid 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-goosed 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 truith, 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 ootlined 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 resisters
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 Colquhonnies
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 thochtie 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 furled
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 speecial bielts fur speecial 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 girnin 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 clot.
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 about a hunner years.

28. KEEKIN AT FUSHES BAI JUYI (772-846)

As roon about 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 alang 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 cherms
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 mummings, 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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Do you know what it is to be poor?

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 floers 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 floers 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 throve 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 nicht 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

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, unstiching 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 streetch 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 smeddom. 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 danggers, 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 bumper 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. LÆDDYLANNERS

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 caught 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, glimmrin, 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-about 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 puils 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 world 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 gorblied 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 pother 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,0 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,0 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 pucklie 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 Ianely 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 caughted 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 sabbin 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 micht share her blitheness, an be gled

Intae a pleisur gairden he did stray
His frien the bodach priggit 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
Fleggitt 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 Norrway
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 midnight 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 maggoties 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 about 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'n 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 floer
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 warld 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 shitehoose)

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 bow
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

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 bood 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 butterfly 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 micht 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 nose 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
Rispie 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 puckle 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 caught 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, instead.

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 hysters 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 shoosers 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 producin 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 mixter-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 deef.

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 blooterred 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 terriffee 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 wyas?
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 fleggit 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 wallop in faulds
O the pooch o time.

33. THE MITHER KIRK O AIBERDEEN

Lang afore Embro's flooers' famous yoam,
A quill scried 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,
Dirls 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 wird;
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 upgathered 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 nights
War fuled 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 nicht 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 nicht 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 craw
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 micht 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'ned 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 lichts 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 snaafakes 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 warld, 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 gaiter 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 coerin 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 herdsman 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 speeirtual 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-biggit
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 wioot 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 craiteurs
Fur the guid o aa craiteurs
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 warld 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 reef tap 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,
Catched 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
Beggins 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 streetched 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

Sheena Blackhall

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

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 forehead, 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, hoosewives 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 Whigmalorums?

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 clood 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 Aunty 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, gralloched, 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 lightsome 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 Maternitê, 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, lichtsome, 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 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 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 when 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

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Doon the steps fae the Signet Library
Weet blaik tarmac, back o the door
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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 floers 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 schuleyard 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