

## **McLellan Poetry Award 2009 - Prize Winners**

### **First: Garry MacKenzie**

'Humphrey Spender: Newcastle United Football Club Changing Rooms, Tyneside, 1938

### **Second: A.C. Clarke for**

'The Anatomists'

### **Third: Daphne Schiller for**

'Lunch At The Talbot'

### **Scots Language Centre Prize for Best Poem in Scots: Allan Harkness**

'Glamourask Gloss'

### **Commended Poems**

Chris Preddle for 'These Cattle'

Lynn Roberts for 'Charles Lartigue and the Invention of the Algerian-Listowel Monorail'

Polly Atkin for 'When I lived alone'

### **Humphrey Spender: Newcastle United Football Club Changing Rooms, Tyneside, 1938**

Accepting a cigarette as he pulls mud  
from his boots, snapping the studs together,  
he strips himself of half a city's adulation.

In the chiaroscuro of the struck match  
he forgets the victory or loss, the way he played  
and how his name was chanted from the stands,

forgets the camera and watches the glow  
as he'd watch a campfire on a battle-plain,  
approaching it like any other man.

**by Garry MacKenzie, First Prize**

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## **The Anatomists**

Their trophy cases line the walls  
of the medical school. Imagine their patience  
the deftness with which they'd ease a kidney  
free of it's moorings, scoop a brain out of its shell  
under dull light in a fug of ether and coalgas  
their white coats bloodying like butcher's.

And in the mounting such attention to detail!  
See how hey rolled back muscle-sleeves  
from a flayed arm before digging to the bone,  
assembled precise as meccano  
the twenty-seven bones of a filleted hand,  
syringed quicksilver through tissue-slivers

until they glowed, starbursts in formalin.  
Even a fused foetus, toggled across  
its opened chest with stitches no seamstress would own,  
displayed for dramatic effect, each head tilted  
openmouthed away from the lungs  
which couldn't breathe for them both.

All tis for a final answer. On the brink  
these men could walk blithe among skulls,  
bottle stillbirths, with the same cool zeal  
as the tutor whose corpse (his last request)  
his students carved, noting with precision  
the curious pathology of the heart.

**by A.C. Clarke, Second Prize**

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## **LUNCH AT THE TALBOT**

My walrus grandfather  
dipped his whiskers  
in tomato soup, blew on it

and slurped, whilst my mother  
nervously prized segments  
of grapefruit, and watched me

crumble bread, which she tidied  
with her napkin. I was wearing  
my blue sundress with smocking

as she'd asked, though I preferred  
my yellow second-hand. Grandpa  
joked with the waitresses

who wore white frilly aprons  
and laughed politely, then  
brought me cheese salad

and chocolate ice-cream. When  
we got up to go, Grandpa said,  
Put this in your pocket,

and gave me half a crown.  
Thank-you, I said. My mother smiled.  
Life in their world wasn't easy

but at Brownies that night,  
I was in charge of the Pixies,  
could cheerfully boss the others about.

**by Daphne Schiller, Third Prize**

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## Glamourask\* Gloss

(leish translation o Yves Bonnefoy's 'Lieu de la Salamandre')

Aa feingit -'deid' -glocken stookie  
stane-boun glamourask's  
fire-rinnin : hiz hech-how o wizzen.  
Thocht skiffs saclick.

Twaloors glamourask, hauf-ways  
up this wa o blinnin licht,  
hiz glower's granite  
tho hiz hairt thuds for aye.

Wizzen-thocht : feegur  
fur a that's pure.  
This greenin, fainness o aesomeness,  
aiver fur vieve seelence,

aiver fur starnlicht in blin  
bosie'd seil - haudin hiz waught -  
aiver thi owerhan o hete  
ei gliffs thi sin.

\*fur ilka thoosan heather ask, ye fin yin wi glamour's gloss

by Allan Harkness, Best Poem in Scots  
(sponsored by the Scots Language Centre)

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### Glossary

*glamourask = salamander (fire spirit)      gloss = flame, light      leish = active*  
*feingit = feigned      glocken = start with fright      stookie = playing at standing still*  
*hech-how = old routine      wizzen = life, being      skiffs = moves lightly, quickly*  
*twaloors = twelve noon      greenin = longing      fainness = joy*  
*aesomeness = solitude      aiver = eager, ardent      vieve = vivid, lively*  
*bosie'd seil = bosom'd bliss      waught = deep breath      owerhan = conquest*  
*gliffs = gives a startled glance      glamour = magic      ask = lizard, newt*

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## **Charles Lartigue and the Invention of the Algerian-Listowel Monorail**

The lid of the kettle jounces and strains  
like a carriage horse reined in, and the spout  
snorts power in a dragon's gush of steam  
for anyone to see; et no-one saw  
till Newcomen - and in a brilliant beam  
of revelation, Stephenson. The brain's  
ability to solve a crossword clue  
there, in a nano-flick; lights which were out  
light up a whole new room, unthought before.  
Lartigue, desert-bound under the infinite blue,  
idly watching the camels pad and sway  
beneath their panniers, double swags, looked through  
the kettle's steam and saw beast made iron  
swing on a single ail across the dunes -  
the shifting contours of hat sandy way -  
is siamese burden balancing behind  
a double-barrelled engine. Darwin-like,  
he saw the desert's ship evolve, a  
catamaran; he saw the hybrid find  
its rolling way across the Kerry plain.  
Celebrate the inventor, old lion,  
stalled in a lay-by while the TGV  
roars through the world; he will not wait in vain;  
dreams of the future run on single rails.

**by Lynn Roberts, Commended**

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## **These Cattle**

These are the cattle of Holme. These cattle  
come on at a trot, kick their heels,

kick their helm or hovel  
head over heels,

kick over the gates and pails and rails  
and take to their heels,

down the village street, helter-  
skelter, heel and toe, showing their heels.

May they never be turned or caught, or haltered  
or tied by the heels.

But one day Hermes of Holme  
with his wand as light as a grass stem or haulm

will escort them home,  
back to Far End, between the gate-wards or herms

of Rake Lane,  
still at a run or rake, in a line,

down the narrow rake or clough, downhill  
with a god at their heels,

to the grass-culmy isles  
of the blessed, where they may cool their heels.

**by Chris Preddle, Commended**

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## **When I lived alone**

When I lived alone I was clean. Good.  
I drank jasmine tea in the afternoons  
working by lamplight in the gloom. At night  
I read by candlelight. Drank Rooibos. Played  
piano to the guitar, guitar to the piano.  
Sometimes I sang., to them both, to the room,  
to myself, alone. Sometimes I went out.  
If I left for more than a day I'd stroke  
the walls and tell the house to be good  
without me. Occasionally, people came round  
and made the still, contained air busy.  
Mostly though it was only me,  
me and the house being good together.  
I slept curled up against the cool  
stretch of its ribs like a cub. It breathed  
gently into me. How I loved  
its scent of damp sandstone and old warm  
wood. I loved how it touched on my mind  
and shifted its light to my mood. How  
it helped me be good. In the mornings I'd sit  
in its eye with a pot of good black coffee,  
reheating it on the hob as it cooled.

**by Polly Atkin, Commended**

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