

# Gizza POEM

REFERENCE COPY

# Gizza Poem

Published by The Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers.  
Tel: 0742 551746

## Gizza Poem

GIZZA POEM was a poetry competition launched in January 1987 by The Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers. Mersey Television and Granada Television each provided £250 as prize money. Alan Bleasdale agreed to be our final judge. And Merseyside Arts in general—Ann Gray in particular—gave us tremendous support with organisation and administration. To all these companies and individuals the Federation is extremely grateful.

There were over a thousand entries and in this book you will find the 25 poems that were shortlisted. The two winners were Patrick Snape for TEA GARDEN, a poem of great visual impact, and Doreen Dean for UN, a poem which emphasises the ordinary person's struggle to be heard, a struggle in which the Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers is deeply involved.

The Federation consists of over 30 writers' workshops and small community publishing projects. Its aim is to promote the growth of working-class writing throughout Britain. If you would like information about the Federation, or details about the next GIZZA POEM competition, please telephone 0742 551746 or 0602 251587.

Jimmy McGovern.

# CONTENTS

Tea Garden — Patrick Snape	Page 7
Un — Doreen Dean	8
Bicycles — Neil Ansell	9
Greenham Volunteer — Aba Caradoc	10
Round 100 — Helen Kruk	11
Ikiru — Richard Armstrong	12
Our Son — Carol Abramson	13
Blossoms — Catherine Feeny	14
Rape — Kevin Rogers	15
The Right To Protest — Sue Moules	16
Incident — Beryl Fenton	17
Sheepskin and Binoculars — Bill Balmer	18
The Second Week of February — Emma Must	19
Winter's Tale — Penny McKenna	20
London Evening — Rebecca O'Rourke	21
The Idea Was — Dave Eva	22
Lovesong — Roger Elkin	23
Beach Combing — Ruth Hanley	24
Johnnie come home — P. A. Wilson	25
Watch Me Swim — Alison Chisholm	26
An Old Theme — Anne Cassidy	27
September — Tony Lewis Jones	28
Flash Point — J. E. Holmes	29
Beneath The Want — Simon Wilkin	30
Living On Gloucester — Alison Clayburn	31

Copyright © 1988

In all cases, copyright remains with the authors. All rights reserved.  
ISBN 0 906411 01 7

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Merseyside Arts in the  
publication of this book

TEA GARDEN

Sweets

Held by hallmarked tongs  
placed in hallmarked mouths

Tiers of sumptuous confectionery  
melting on silver salvers  
beneath the tea garden sun

Heads

turn in disbelief  
at the sound of approaching footsteps

Shit shod workboots

Tied with string  
and caked with despair  
crunch on the gravel path  
toward the marquee.

Patrick Snape

Patrick Snape lives in Newcastle Upon Tyne. *Tea Garden* was joint winner of *Gizza Poem*.

"UN"

Unmade beds, unwashed pots, unfed children  
Oh! That guilty feeling  
As I sit amongst the chaos  
Seeking words that will not come.

My head is full of  
Lines unpenned, dreams untold, poems unborn.

So, I remain  
Unheard, unread, unfulfilled.

My world is full of "un"

I will change all that.  
I will be heard.

Doreen Dean

Doreen Dean was made redundant five years ago and has attended a W.E.A. writers' workshop in Darlington for the past year. Winning *Gizza Poem* has given her the confidence she needed to submit her work to other competitions and magazines. Her aim is to be published in her own right.

## BICYCLES

a great sight in my youth  
was knocking-off time down the docks  
from the unicorn gate came a tidal wave  
ten thousand turned as one  
a host of gleaming bicycles  
an army of pedalling labour

now the wheel has turned full circle  
now bicycles are solitary things  
sullenly rusting in garden sheds  
emerging just once a fortnight  
to rub spokes down the dole.

Neil Ansell

Neil Ansell was driven to the pen by winter on the dole in Newcastle. A summer on the dole in Newcastle has driven him south to the land of unequal opportunity. This is his first published poem.

## GREENHAM VOLUNTEER

In one bright mitten  
And too-thin jeans  
She stands a little apart  
Like one twice bitten  
And forever shy  
Just a muddy rainbow  
Under a mackerel sky.

Aba Caradoc

Aba Caradoc, a gypsy, was conceived in the middle of the Red Sea and brought to Britain courtesy of the R.A.F. where she was born at the same time as the atom bomb. She has published a song or two and a number of academic books on education and science. She lives in London.

ROUND 100

Why am I in this fight again?  
I ask myself,  
resting between boxing bouts  
with you

I have to keep my gloves up high  
the body blows  
come thick and fast and you  
fight dirty.

I'm black and blue, I ache  
but still  
we keep the punches coming  
glove after bloody glove  
they call it love.

Helen Kruk

Helen Kruk is a housewife who has been writing for twenty-three years, both short stories and poetry. She belongs to Bristol Broadsides Writers' Workshop (a member of F.W.W.C.P.—see introduction) and is at present working on a novel.

IKIRU

By Friday night  
the art of living  
successfully  
feels not unlike  
an act of heroism.

On Friday night  
the slog and vanity ends;  
the week has exploded like  
pigeons panicked  
by traffic.

Richard Armstrong

Richard Armstrong is a civil servant and has been writing poetry, essays and journalism for ten years. He has had one poem and two articles published in the United States. Nothing that his bank manager need get excited about, he hastens to add. He lives in London.

## OUR SON

We didn't have much  
but what we could—we gave him.  
Our love and our hope and our working.  
He grew up good.  
Sometimes a little wild like young men are.

They keep him alive now  
On a machine.  
No wildness now, not even a flicker.

He was in the wrong place at the wrong time  
and the policemen got him.

We'd given him everything we could  
and we couldn't help  
giving him the colour of his skin.

Carol Abramson

Carol Abramson is the mother of two young children. She also works part time as a secretary and literacy tutor. She has been writing poems (all unpublished) for as long as she can remember. She lives in London.

## BLOSSOMS

Vandals have broken the young saplings;  
their branches hang limp, dead and blossoming.

They had worked so busily for spring,  
it was a present their tight buds expected,  
a little glory among fag ends and crisp packets.

The council will dispose of them  
and local residents will write letters to the local paper,  
indignant at the loss of beauty and possibility.

Catherine Feeny

Catherine Feeny is a teacher and freelance writer. Her interests include left-wing politics and the alternative movement.

RAPE

The judge  
viewed her tears coldly  
and recalled his wife's unfaithfulness.

Kevin Rogers

Kevin Rogers is at present studying English and Philosophy at Liverpool University. He is 34 years old and never drinks gin. This is his first published poem. Please, he says, give generously.

## THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

A child in clown's outfit dances, smiles,  
asks: "Daddy, will I be on T.V.?"  
The cameras film, she spins around,  
turns a cartwheel, laughs charmingly.  
The procession snakes into conference halls  
listens, claps, cheers,  
makes resolutions for the future.

On the next day's local news  
there's no mention of the  
bright-bannered demonstration,  
yet camera crews took rolls of film.

Somewhere, in secret bunkers  
faces and names are linked subversively;  
a child in clown's costume dances into computer files.

Sue Moules

Sue Moule's latest collection METAPHORS (Spectrum) was published in 1986. She is now working on a new collection of poems about gestation and birth, and looking after her baby daughter. Sue lives in Dyfed, Wales.

## INCIDENT

Happily boozed, an itinerant  
outside the second-hand clothiers,  
bent to the wet cement pavement and  
scored his initials—  
with his forefinger.

Angered, the clothes shop proprietor  
shouted from door-hanging overcoats . . .  
Hollywood stars do their hand-printing,  
This man was proud of his name.

Beryl Fenton

Beryl Fenton has recently acquired Senior Citizen status. Married,  
with one daughter, she lives in Hove and collects old photographs.

## SHEEPSKIN AND BINOCULARS

Another year, and sheepskin and binoculars  
Make their goings good  
A wealth of wet betting slips  
Their legacy to Liverpool.  
Tainted glows, hydraulically-plush  
Shuts automatically,  
The corduroyed cargoes satisfied.  
And automatically the departing eyes  
Are blinkered to these streets' and lives'  
Frustrations and torments and hopes.

So what *did* they see in Liverpool?

Horses. They saw horses.

Bill Balmer

Bill Balmer, 19, a one-time part-time soldier, ex-Militant and university dropout, has/hasn't been writing poems for two years. Admitting to "little faith in poetry" he's written about eight poems. He resides in Aintree and lives in Newcastle.

THE SECOND WEEK OF FEBRUARY

The greengrocer is selling red roses.  
His display has transfixed a spray  
Of six girls, who bud floriate dreams  
Full of stamens and calices heaped  
At their feet, or focussed hazily  
Around a single clutch of petals  
Hand-plucked by a blushing stranger.

The older women queue for fruit—  
A more tangible source of nourishment.  
Adolescent fantasies now bed-ridden,  
Activity is restricted to fingertips  
Groping through rack-fulls of factual  
Apples, pressing each fleshy piece  
To make sure it is hard enough.

Emma Must

Emma Must, 21, is a former Geology Student currently working with computers and studying English in her spare time. This is the first poem she has had published. She lives in County Durham.

## WINTER'S TALE

Case closed on Mrs. A. Dunleavy  
Found in her bed dead, Jan. 87.  
Presume O.D.'ed: Possible hypothermia.

(Didn't say much, Annie, quick silvery woman,  
But the blue keen eyes of her saw fair and true.  
She showed her sadness to the waiting cold,  
Questioning wryly through a frozen window,  
And when the silence gave her its reply,  
She took the ride to death on hoarded pills).

No relations known. Social Services  
To arrange funeral (Catholic)  
After inquest. Have made inquiries  
Why she had no heat in such a bitter winter.  
Signed: Duty Officer, Area 7.

Penny McKenna

Penny McKenna is a musician and social worker. She works in a mental health centre in London, and has been writing poetry since she was a child.

LONDON EVENING

Behind a cloud, obscured, the light flickers  
in some new cluster. Carelessly, light and space  
echoes above me. When the sound registers, it comes  
from another quarter of the sky. As in war time,  
when calm blue hummed with destruction.

Grandma Bilsbury would say:

“wherever you stood, they always came

from back of you,”

Here and now the star dissolves, swoops down fast.

This small part of the world is being policed.

Rebecca O'Rourke

Rebecca O'Rourke lives and works in Hackney. A member of  
Hackney Writers' Workshop (itself a member of F.W.W.C.P.—see  
introduction), her first novel was recently published by Virago.

THE IDEA WAS

a red brick  
balconied, risen from  
rubble new beginning.

a city of tall  
clean children  
drinking milk

now camped out  
among the empties.

Dave Eva

Dave Eva works with young children in North London. He's been writing poetry, on and off, for the last couple of years.

LOVESONG

Watching her dressing this morning  
I saw she wore my beard between her thighs.

Panicked into sweat, I fingered chin,  
And found her electric fuzz  
Triangling round my lips. Amazed,  
I claimed she'd preyed on me  
While I lay fast asleep.

She laughed, then said,  
—Didn't I know I'd had her heart for years?

Roger Elkin

Roger Elkin is co-editor of PROSPICE, and organiser of the Leek Arts Festival Poetry Competition (S.A.E. to 44 Rudyard Road, Biddulph Moor, Stoke on Trent). A first collection, PRICKING OUT, is due from Aquila late 1987.

WATCH ME SWIM

Watch me swim, Daddy, watch me swim.

Sodden echoes lift and fall on waves  
of childish handbeat. Green of malevolence  
floats on the water. I turn to catch  
the merge of voice and action. Limbs  
reverberate irregular, chill air to colder  
damp. Fronds of river weed that were her hair  
stretch into lifelessness. Her cry  
is stifled in perpetual memory.

Watch me swim, Daddy, watch me swim.

Alison Chisholm

Alison Chisholm lives in Southport.

AN OLDE THEME

Death came looking for me  
Last Tuesday.  
He was a slight man  
Staring wildly out of the windscreen  
Of a seething lorry. Rushing  
Up pavements and harassing women of  
Thirty five  
With hunched shoulders and curdled mouths.

But I was busy:  
Stopped to pick up a piece of metal  
Shining with promise on the pavement  
While Death, his tattered shoe on  
The accelerator  
Hit a bank clerk from Redbridge instead.

Anne Cassidy

Anne Cassidy is active within the Federation of Worker Writers  
and Community Publishers. She lives in London.

## SEPTEMBER

The willow bends to sleep.  
A smell of mashed leaves in a gutter  
Revives Autumn.

September:  
Beating into winter  
Like a failing pulse.  
Waking up early  
I am no longer surprised

To find frost  
On the bedroom window.  
And that the coffee  
You must have made me  
Before you left  
Is already cold.

Tony Lewis-Jones

Tony Lewis-Jones was born in Wales, shortly after the Dark Ages. Having wandered the country with his family, he settled in Bristol and joined Bristol Broadsides (a member group of The Federation of Worker Writers). He now rides a motorbike (very slowly).

## FLASH POINT

BLACK BASTARD! They shout from their disappearing cars  
Usually a wide brimming Ford, winding the window down  
To spit and crack their obscenities. Youth  
White macho, muscles, bulging tee shirt  
Turning to the girls to share their audacity.  
Giggling, girlishly, slapstick, make up  
Clothes from C&A's, they feel grown up  
Among the world, in their boyfriend's motor.  
Steering their lives through  
Council estates, secondary education,  
A job in the factory, the lights of the city.  
So they end up the same as before, at the bottom  
And blacks are easier to kick than the system.

J. E. Holmes

J. E. Holmes describes himself thus: "Now self employed in Hackney with a mate we struggle to raise spirits, children and income. Poems lie somewhere in between. Still looking."

## BENEATH THE WANT

I am the son of a peasant man,  
And the lore of the city was a constant call.  
The arrogance of the concrete cells,  
And the power of the protected man,  
Tell other truths. And now, while hair  
Turns grey and the light in the eyes grow dim,  
We grope for fish in a dirty river . . .  
There are limits—the aftermath of strikes,  
And life on the edge of anxiety—  
The lot of the unemployed. And yet,  
Beneath the muddle and the intolerable ache,  
As persistent as a blind man's stick,  
There is a wondrous harmony,  
Altogether more enduring . . .

Simon Wilkin

Simon Wilkin studied at the Royal Academy of Music, took his finals in 1939, then served in the Royal Engineers throughout the Second World War. He has played modern jazz in clubs, written light classical music and has had several poems published. He lives in Liverpool.

'LIVING ON GLOUCESTER'

The smell of warm pee permeates  
From the lift floor that's porous  
Round the iron walls, ungraffitiable.

Ungratifying, this place  
Though the doors grate, on the floors  
That resound, as we walk

Every sound booming  
From one end to the other

Boomerangs, from one estate to another

From one view of dirty grass  
And other people's windows

From one view of netted glass  
And other people's privacy

To another, and another.

Alison Clayburn

Alison Clayburn has lived and worked in inner city London for 15 years. She has just moved from an estate in Peckham to a new co-operative, the result of ten years hard work by local people.

GIZZA POEM was a poetry competition launched in January 1987 by The Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers. Mersey Television and Granada Television each provided £250 as prize money. Alan Bleasdale agreed to be our final judge. And Merseyside Arts in general—Ann Gray in particular—gave us tremendous support with organisation and administration. To all these companies and individuals the Federation is extremely grateful.

There were over a thousand entries and in this book you will find the 25 poems that were shortlisted. The two winners were Patrick Snape for TEA GARDEN, a poem of great visual impact, and Doreen Dean for UN, a poem which emphasises the ordinary person's struggle to be heard, a struggle in which the Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers is deeply involved.

The Federation consists of over 30 writers' workshops and small community publishing projects. Its aim is to promote the growth of working-class writing throughout Britain. If you would like information about the Federation, or details about the next GIZZA POEM competition, please telephone 0742 551746 or 0602 251587.

Jimmy McGovern.

Price £2.95

ISBN 0 906411 01 7

Published by The Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers, supported by Merseyside Arts.