

POEMS ON THE MOVE
Guernsey's International Poetry Competition 2017
Judge: Gwyneth Lewis



List of Winning Poems

OPEN CATEGORY

1st prize:

DEMETER'S LAMENT, **Sally Douglas**, Exeter

Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions, £1000

www.sallydouglas.co.uk

DEMETER'S LAMENT

I shall hack the branches from the trees,
plant each pruning in a salt-dark bed;
scour unborn seeds from every flower,
sow them in the voiceless mouths of wells;

pluck the sun from the witless sky,
let it rot upon the ground;
punch out the peach-pit hearts of stars
and crack them till they weep.

I shall reap the sharp green blades of days
grind them to a bitter meal –
harrow the land till it screams her name:
louder, louder, louder

2nd prize:

SPIDERS, **Gabriel Griffin**, Italy www.poetgabrielgriffin.com
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions, £500

SPIDERS

I didn't know but
read somewhere
that swifts hunting
sky's oceans

catch not only all winged
insects – and, bless them,
mosquitoes – but also hosts
of spiders engaged

in sailing the airways
on silken threads, their
frail crafts blown
by vagrant winds

and no return to Ithaca.

JOINT 3rd prize:

MONSOON, **Sally Douglas**, Exeter

Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions, £250

www.sallydouglas.co.uk

MONSOON

Granny said the heavens would open at five

so I stayed outside, waiting for angels:
fixing my eyes on the grey vault of sky,
burning inside with the strangeness.

The heavens bulged darker and darker.
The air grew too solid to breathe –

and the angels fell like watery swords;
with shining blades they pierced my skin.
Rivers of angels inside my head,

washing me out, washing something else in.

JOINT 3rd prize:

ONE CONCESSION AND CHILD,

Fiona Ritchie Walker, Blaydon-on-Tyne www.fionaritchiewalker.com

Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions, £250

ONE CONCESSION AND CHILD

He inflates her armbands, gentle as a kiss,
not like his blood pressure tests on Fridays.
Her arms are pink chipolatas,
he has to stop himself from squeezing them.
She sits on the tiles, claps her hands,
throws herself towards the blue, knowing
he will catch her, skim feet across the ripples.

He watches her pick up the yellow watering can,
hold it above his head, always acts surprised.
Your face is raining Grandad!
His eyes flow, hidden in the chlorine water,
until he blinks himself back to the present
where she's wearing her grandmother's smile.

FINALISTS

4th place:

THE CLIFF, **Sally Douglas**, Exeter

Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

www.sallydouglas.co.uk

THE CLIFF

As each year passes, more is worn away.
Inch by inch and stone by stone, the edge
creeps closer. Every day
we check our boundary hedge.
I know it won't be long before it falls.

Your hand is slack in mine. Each night
brings gales and spattering squalls;
but when dawn comes, its shreds of tattered light
show roots still clinging over empty space.

This morning, when I wake, it's dark and still.
I think I see the outline of your face
but greyness slowly fills the room until
I realise. You've slipped down to the sea.

There's nothing next to me.

5th place:

MONKFISH, **Judy O'Kane**, London [twitter: @judeokane](https://twitter.com/judeokane)

Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

MONKFISH

He looked up, mouth open, from a bed of ice
in the English Market. I found myself
staring morbidly at his flat
face, his teeth frozen
into a smile. You
brought
one
straight
off the boat.
I harvested flesh
below the eyes, severed
the head, struggled with the tail
as the slimy film slipped over the chopping board.
It almost filled a crate, but you wouldn't take anything for it.

6th Place:

ANCHORESS, **Ian McEwen**, Bedford

Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

ANCHORESS

(Pholcus Phalangoides)

Certainly six months since I've been thinking of it &	listen
I should reach up with that long-handled duster &	listen
wrap the grey threads of her palace round & round &	listen
round like some goth candyfloss. Could be a year &	listen
all that time she's not eaten – I've not seen her eat &	listen
there's no evidence, no body farm, her musty table &	listen
no banquet. Spider stays, spider subsists, metal &	listen
tight inside her harp of aerals and powerlines, &	listen
I see her test the long attachments of her legs &	listen
make discreet adjustments of the loom she is &	listen
up in her panaudicon she listens for the universe &	listen
I hear her	listen

CHANNEL ISLANDS CATEGORY

1st place:

AFTERTHOUGHTS, **Julia Meredith**, Guernsey
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions
bluenasturtium@gmail.com

AFTERTHOUGHTS

Red leaf poised
above twisting koi
...yesterday,
or twenty years ago?

Our dog on the
sun-warmed landing –
what puppy dreams
make those stiff paws twitch?

Cold feet on stone tiles.
I boil the kettle, then slowly
put your cup back.

If life were a play
I'd say it lacked plot.

The flowers need throwing out.

2nd place:

LOVE POEM, **Marlene Morris**, Jersey

Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

LOVE POEM

You are my bread and butter.

Some days, crunchy crisp-bread, dry and hard.

Or exotic, exciting, rich, dressed in best balsamic and virgin oil.

Maybe, soft sliced familiar, fulfilling old needs.

Sometimes bog standard, bread, a necessary staple.

Best of all:

Fresh-baked artisan, covered in melting gold.

3rd place:

LA FÊTE DU CIDRE, **Wendy Falla**, Jersey
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions
www.wendyslifelaudry.wordpress.com

LA FÊTE DU CIDRE

In the cobwebbed half-light of the cider barn
a well-tempered mare pulls the wheel
around a granite crusher filled to the brim
with autumn's tawny harvest.
Once pressed, the liquor extracted,
casked or bottled, the cloudy remains
are collected and stirred all through the night
in a brass bachin over an open fire.
More apples are added, with spice and liquorice
and the nocturnal watchers sing folk songs in the old language
accompanied by fiddle and accordion.
They toast this year's batch of Cider and Black Butter.

FINALISTS

SARK DARK, **James Willis**, Guernsey
Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

SARK DARK

Ink like, silk like, black velvet night,
Moon dark, Sark dark...devoid of light,
Silver chalk-dot diamonds... midnight bright,
Star spark lightning, as it might.

A shard of splintered prism glass,
Reflects the sun, rising fast, at last,
To paint the rainbow's multi coloured mass,
And bends the rays to light the drip-dry grass.

BUY LOCAL, **Lester Queripel**, Guernsey
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

BUY LOCAL

Buy local or else it will be bye local
Please don't procrastinate or hesitate
Make up your mind before it's too late
We need to rejuvenate not disintegrate
We need to re-energise
Or everything will crumble before our eyes
Buy local or it will be bye local
And that will be a great shame
Because we'll only have ourselves to blame

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CATEGORY

1st place:

THE TIMELESS WALTZ, **Isaac Powers**, Guernsey
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

THE TIMELESS WALTZ

The Clock perches patiently,
Waving perpetually
To those same spheres of light
Teasing each other
In a never-ending dance.

Eternal orange, yielding only
To a scintilla of marble:
Ethereal; intangible...
Waltzing on... on... on,
Gliding, cruising, sailing.

The Clock gazes, mystified:
How can such miracles
Forever cross the sky?

2nd place:

OLD FOLK, **Eilidh Lang**, Switzerland

Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

OLD FOLK

Once I was in a home
And I saw the old folk
In the room where they keep them
When they can't even talk
And what is the point
When they can't even talk?
My mother said
That they still need kindness
When they're drooling in bed
Yes they still need kindness
But I didn't understand
Because it sounded so dull
That the space in their hearts
Was still full

3rd place:

WHERE I WANT TO GO, **Alex Soulsby**, Guernsey
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

WHERE I WANT TO GO

The bus is going where I want to go
Though where that is I don't exactly know
Though I know I'll know when I get where I'm going
And in a sense it's more fun not knowing
Where exactly the bus is going,
Though perhaps if it's just toing and froing
I might be better off just knowing
And it's hard to know if where I want to go
Is where the bus driver is going to go
When where that is I don't exactly know
So perhaps we'll just go to and fro
Until I know where I want to go.

FINALISTS:

SKATEBOARDING, **Caine Langlois**, Guernsey
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

SKATEBOARDING

Skateboarding is exciting
Putting your gear on before you go out
Pushing with your feet
In the skate park
People practicing tricks
Pegs grinding with a stunt scooter
Feeling happy
I smell burning
I feel proud of myself doing 360 backflips

MY LADYBUG, **Pauline Boateng**, London
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
pauline13b@yahoo.co.uk

MY LADYBUG

My dear, please don't tell me that you feel entrapped,
Are you prisoner to your mind? Have you lost authority over what you control?
I understand.

But my darling, did you know,
With a closed fist nothing that comes in can come out.
With a closed lid pressure will build, tides will rise high.
You will drown. My child you will drown.
For your lungs will fill with deep despair, depressive desperation and fear of your known.

Yes my lovely, you are a brain in a skeleton with a soul of purity.
Your mind is a chosen conscious. You chose once, choose again. Choose happiness

So, my love, if you find yourself bottled up once more then open your lid from the top.
And if that lid of yours is jammed tight,
Remember that glass was once sweet sand between your toes,
So smash it open.

POEMS ON THE BUSES

(listed *alphabetically* by poet's surname)

CLEAR NIGHT, **Pat Borthwick**, Yorkshire

Poems on the Buses Exhibition patborthwick.wordpress.com

CLEAR NIGHT

The night gentles and is clear
for our long outward passage.

The sky, entertaining as a pinball machine
shoots two stars above our mast.

Yes, I would have furled you close then too.
It is something about

how we have known endings before,
how promises begin this beautiful.

Deep-keeled, we head out
past other lit silhouettes

crossing the *Separation Zone*
to slip silently along their lanes.

I am not far from myself, nor you,
and not another masthead light in sight.

COPPICER, **Pat Borthwick**, Yorkshire
Poems on the Buses Exhibition patborthwick.wordpress.com

COPPICER

Between bluebells and brambles
a coppice untangles brash,

thins out tall trees. In a cacophony
of crows, witch-elm and ash

lean and fall to his chainsaw's yawl.
They beckon the sun come play

around their sappy stumps.
Last autumn's coppicing fountains

green jets. It's suddenly awash with
a promise of pea sticks and fence panels,

carved splats and spindles. Nursing chairs.
His strangest ash will be a new lathe pole

turning long pale ribbons for rattles.
Wild flowers will bathe in the open light.

AVOCADO, **Sharon Black**, France
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

sharonblack.co.uk

AVOCADO

An opened avocado doesn't darken
if you leave the pit in.

Brown nut baby in your creamy
green-gold womb, what spell do you summon

when the fridge-light cuts?
What seed of mine

should I keep hold of to stop
the damage setting in?

WHITE COTTON CURTAIN, OUTDOORS, **Sharon Black**, France
Poems on the Buses Exhibition sharonblack.co.uk

WHITE COTTON CURTAIN, OUTDOORS

This is the wind's shape,
the sound of jasmine;
the river's touch as it billows
down the valley:

how solitude smells,
how quartz tastes when you're
down on your knees;
the last breath of the fox's kill –

the sleep of the barn owl,
the curve of the egret's wing in flight;
the size of your shadow
as it disappears over the hill.

PUMPKINS, **Pauline Hawkesworth**, Portsmouth
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

PUMPKINS

Like hatching suns
pumpkins shelter under leafy wings
each in their allotted space.

From the roadside
a tangle of green and gold;
then suns explode

explore their galaxies.

LOVE SONG IN OLD AGE, **Doreen Hinchliffe**, London
Poems on the Buses Exhibition doreen.hinchliffe@ntlworld.com

LOVE SONG IN OLD AGE

Through chinks in faded curtains sunlight streaks
across their faces, wakes them. Below the eaves,
young swallows hail the day. The mattress creaks
as his feet feel for the cold floor. He leaves
her lying in its hollow, creeps downstairs
and, listening to the kettle pouring out
its heart in steam, remembers love affairs
long gone that they have never talked about.
Tonight, he'll watch the full moon glide above
their bed and listen to her sleeping breath,
its steady rhythm soft and warm, like love,
its measured pulse relentless, sure as death.
They'll lie and wait for dawn, the sound of birds,
two silent lovers who have outgrown words.

MEMORY STONE, **Pamela Trudy Hodge**, Plymouth
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

MEMORY STONE

A strange find. He rubs it against
his uniform trousers, holds
it to the scouring sun. Sparks
like daylight stars flare against
blue desert sky. Moorland granite
ticking away the years, decaying,
evoking memories. A peat-brown
stream, a girl, skirt above her knees,
mouth bruised, eyes drowning.

SIAMESE FIGHTING FISH, **Peter Kenny**, Brighton
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

SIAMESE FIGHTING FISH

Bored stupid in the box room,
I taunt the scarlet fighter in its tank.

It unfurls from Java fern,
wants to murder the mirror I show it.

My curtains are opened and,
superimposed on the night,

I glimpse my reflection;
how my face gloats over its game.

FIRST AID, **Chris Kinsey**, Powys, Wales
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

FIRST AID

All morning in a windowless room
learning to stem the trickiness of bleeds
rolling healthy strangers into the recovery position
thumping compressions into a dummy with no vital signs.

Lunchtime, I wipe the sting of antiseptic from my lips
go out to clear my airway with a draught of deep September.

Jet vapours unravel like bandages
though the sky over rowans is cloudless.
These scarlet trees have spread their protection
from lone hill-steads to town's corrugated factories.

I pick a sprig to ward of afternoon's harm, carry
a cluster of summer scorch back to artificial light.

AMBUSH

At the high point, with two views of the cradling sea
Round this small island, chickens control the road
In a blatant extortion racket. Footpads, or worse,
Amazon bandits – not ordinary hens –
Flaunting bright, glossy feathers, strong, handsome legs,
They hold to ransom startled visitors.
A mistake, it turns out, to linger to admire
With pockets devoid of any offerings.
They flutter shoulder high to attack an ear,
Peck viciously at ankles, hands and shins.
No people about. One solitary cow
Without a glance goes slowly sauntering on.
The strangers turn tail and flee to the friendly shore.
In the welcoming teashop, bird food is for sale.

INSURGENCE, **Janet Lees**, Isle of Man
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

janetlees.weebly.com

INSURGENCE

Three houses south
wild strawberries are escaping
from patio containers;
throwing lines out over the lips
of terracotta cliffs,
abseiling down to occupy
the crazy paving.
In nights to come
they will creep up the street
to blindfold our windows,
choke our sockets, slip
their green fuses under our door
and pick their moment.

DISENTANGLING, **Donald S. Murray**, Shetland
Poems on the Buses Exhibition dsmurraya@yahoo.co.uk

DISENTANGLING

France diminishing as the ocean swirls
upending nests of gannets, gulls
from ledges, crags where they've been hitched
for years. These islands have unravelled,
cast off their stitches, pitched up north
to new locations, more threadworn hems of earth
till Jersey's swapped with Fair Isle,
Guernsey's shuttled off to Harris,
while Alderney and Sark
now have Norwegian summits
peeking down their cold and naked backs.

ELSIE, **Judy O’Kane**, London
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

twitter: @judeokane

ELSIE

i. m. Elizabeth O’Kane

The smell of sponge cake cooling
on the rack; clear vegetable soup
with pasta, not potatoes. Bottles

stacked up in the shed like a wine cellar:
red lemonade delivered every week
by a man on a float. The radio announcing

football scores like the shipping news. Needles darting
in and out: a bolero jacket for the baby. A landscape
drying on the sideboard. Mills &Boons along the shelf;

photos everywhere. Her hands on your face, her fingers
pulling across your forehead, as you sit on the sheepskin
rug, your head in her lap. It’s your sister’s turn.

A few minutes longer, you say. Just a few minutes longer.

INTO, **Abigail Parry**, London
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

INTO

It's something with the keys. Ramshackle crew
of russet, fawn and fox. So many notches cut.
So many two-bit skeletons. A door, clicking shut.

It's something with the locks. A closing door,
a turning key. And somewhere quite obscure,
something working, sliding shut. *Tick, tick, tick.*

It's something in the gut – a skeleton clock,
a turning cog. Something working, sliding shut.
A small thing, clicking this way, moving there,

and tallied with the keys. Your skeleton crew.
One for every time you bent or broke yourself
in two. The way that opens up. That way. Go.

DRIFTED DOWN, **Shauna Robertson**, Somerset
Poems on the Buses Exhibition shaunarobertson.wordpress.com

DRIFTED DOWN

Now and then
I drive through
the business district
at dawn
and pick up
all the concrete blocks
that have drifted down
in the night.

THE PERFECT PAIR, **Guy Russell**, Milton Keynes
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

THE PERFECT PAIR

What luck, my love, that you're so marvellous
And so am I! This star-stunned planet's never
Beheld two souls as marvellous as us
Divided. We're the perfect pair, together:

Your lovely Clapham home. My cosy hovel.
Your great career. My hopes, soon, for success.
Your deathless prose. My not-quite-started novel.
Your sorted calm. My issues to address.

Your brains, my thanks. Your beauty, my frank awe.
Your sexy looks, my love of chips and diets.
Your help with my depressions. When we soar
Like twin-shaped rockets in the wowing sky, it's

A minor miracle, how both of us
Have both found someone else so marvellous.

PENCIL, **Steve Voake**, Somerset
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

Pencil

I want you to help me
but you refuse
lying there sharply accusative and pointing towards the window
you would rather be anywhere but here
'But I have paper,' I say
I show you a neat pile of A4
playing on the fact that you are distantly related
but you are dreaming of a time
when you stood in the forest
with the wind in your leaves
listening to the sap rising
I say:
'We can write about that if you want.'