

# POEMS ON THE MOVE

## Guernsey's International Poetry Competition 2017



### 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](http://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](http://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](http://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.

*ONE CONCESSION AND CHILD*,

**Fiona Ritchie Walker**, Blaydon-on-Tyne [www.fionaritchiewalker.com](http://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](http://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 strands 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

### *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](http://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

*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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](mailto: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*, **Elizabeth Lavers**, London  
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

[elizabeth@lavers.com](mailto:elizabeth@lavers.com)

*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](http://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](mailto: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](http://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.'