

POEMS ON THE MOVE

Guernsey's International Poetry Competition 2020

Judge Simon Armitage

List of Winning Poems

OPEN CATEGORY

1st prize: *ANGELA ONCE SAID THAT PARENTING IS IMMERSIVE*,

Jane Wilkinson, UK

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

ANGELA ONCE SAID THAT PARENTING IS IMMERSIVE

We are paddling in a splash of children when Sarah holds up a wet stone, it's the shape of a breast: *symbol of my parenting life* she says. The sphere was the tint and opacity of cold, stewed tea: the thing was tannin strong. It's not hot-swollen nor punctured flat but the size of a small, clenched fist, perfectly hard and round except drawn to a neat bifurcated pout. *It's even got a cracked nipple*, I point out. In the cliff car park by the gritty toilets with no mirrors, on a *What did you find today?* ID board, *a mammoth tooth, anemone fossil* and there, unmistakable, her stone, named as *cannon shot flint*—a cup of boiling quartz cooled to indestructible grace.

2nd prize: *CINEMATIC*, **Jane Wilkinson**, UK
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions, £500

CINEMATIC

Mime me a café at the Marché aux Fleurs. You point out
twin tables like two empty plates. I shuffle round to face

the street. You'll pretend to strike a match, light me up.
I'll smoke my contraband Gitane with a pout. You order

two small glasses of mahogany Cognac We see a boy
coming home from l'école primaire, immense satchel

on his back, por quoi, you say *a boy needs his parachute*.
I unfold a map of the invisible city with the wide arms

reserved for bed linen, iron out the creases with the heat
of my hands. The best time to visit Paris is in unfinished

darkness October or November, when street lights double
in the Seine at five pm. But here in the bath-water

weather of late July, first a crushed-raspberry kiss then
a summer rain storm. We drench in its hissing medicine.

3rd prize: *THE CALLING*, **Paul Stephenson**, UK
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions, £250

THE CALLING
after Philip Levine

I think I've lived a life before. Centuries ago.
Most likely a monk in south-west France,
given my appreciation of garlic and silence.

My monastery was near Albi, I'd hazard,
its bright red Gothic cathedral majestic
above the parched banks of the river Tarn.

Scrap that. It was by the sea. Yes, definitely
Atlantic not Mediterranean, where oysters
grew plump and the lagoon was brooding.

I pressed my own grapes with my own feet.
After the harvest, I'd sit by myself as the sun
clung to the cloister on a late October day

and I'd pray, for fat bulbs of garlic and silence,
dream of cellars and barrels and plentiful bottles.

CHANNEL ISLANDS CATEGORY

1st place: *EXPAT*, **Simon Crowcroft**, Jersey
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

EXPAT

A squirt of blue
in white china,
an aerogramme,
azure, like skies
and as light, our
Queen's serene gaze
westward; nothing
allowed inside:
a single hair
and my news went
by sea, took weeks;
punched in the face,
my glasses held
by Sellotape.

2nd place: *A GOOD POURER*, **Juliette Hart**, Jersey
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

A GOOD POURER

I took from the fridge the cut glass cream jug, sipped
the dregs, then on tiptoes set it in the sink with a squirt
of detergent, determined to do it all by myself.

I felt the crack as hot water burst through the base,
the burn of tears scalding my face long after Mum's

But it was such a good pourer

For years she used the chubby pottery replacement
I slipped out to buy (for 12 ½ pence). Mismatched,
yet solid on the table, Mum handled it delicately:

though it always poured with hesitance,
as if choking an apology.

3rd place: *SHOWER*, **Cameron Parker**, Guernsey
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

THE SHOWER

There is one place
It is like your shower in the morning
It has heard you sing your heart out
And heard your cry
It has seen you refreshed and contented
And has seen you hungover
It's the place where you have won arguments inside your head
And the place you went to cry when you lost it in reality
It sanctuary replicates the rush of warm water, cascading over you
The droplets washing away the dirt
That place, your sanctuary
It is like your shower in the morning

2nd place: *A LITTLE CHANGE*, **Maddy Pope**, Guernsey
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

A LITTLE CHANGE

Sometimes I ache for a different time,
a few decades before.
When the stars who watch me now had seen a bit less.

I would paint my bedroom walls in stripes
pink and white.
And we would have a real telephone with a spiral chord,
our fingers blackened from the newspaper as we reach for it
ringing.
A radio playing in the symphony of the breakfast chaos.

Real things and real people.
Time not tainted by staring through screens,
trying to glimpse the person behind theirs.
Everything just the right amount of different.

3rd place: SUN'S A' *BLAZIN'*, **Rebecca Gibson**, Guernsey
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions

SUN'S A' BLAZIN

I breathe heat.

Perspiration covers my body.

The dragons in the air send no breeze my way.

The sun holds its hammer and chooses to hit my face with it.

Aha! The advantage of light shines a glimmer of hope on a cold drink.

It melts in my throat and somewhat lowers my temperature.

Cool.

POEMS ON THE BUSES

(12 poems listed *alphabetically* by poet's surname)

BOY, **Christina Buckton**, Cambridge
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

BOY

This small body
soft as a shelled pea
popped from its pod
last of six
too many to hold
dropped onto stony ground
sits close whispering
fingers along her arm
holds the thread
anchored to her knitting
cradles the ball of wool
shapes it with urgent hands
"like a nest" he says.
Yes. Like a nest.

MARIDI, **Matt Bryden**, Somerset
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

MARIDI

Santino is back with supplies of petrol,
batteries and bottled water, not to mention
his contemplative chin-on-the-wheel diplomacy.

They are equally welcome. Food comes in bowls,
a soup whose meat I can spit into my hand
and re-conceal beneath the liquid.

Simon poses with his rifle,
flashes his fifteen-year-old's crocodile grin.
Coughs without covering his mouth.

In the white Toyota, a grandmother taps her head
to advertise her wisdom. It is minutes
before I tire of the potholed roads, broken systems.

UNFORGIVEN AT THE COMPANY REUNION,
Brian Clark, North Yorkshire
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

UNFORGIVEN AT THE COMPANY REUNION

Those fragile memories shattered as though
I've dropped my glass while toasting the past
with reincarnated colleagues I don't recognise
who's that in the turquoise dress who glares?
I swerve through hostile stares to the gents
check in the mirror to see if it's still me
head through batwing doors into the saloon
into the thick air of vengeance before a brawl
ready to draw on whoever whispers my name
after all this time, yet still looking for my Delilah
and now not so sure I'd know her if I saw her.

YELLOW HOUSE, **Ion Corcos**, Australia
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

YELLOW HOUSE

You live in a yellow house,
the walls, groynes in the North Sea;
a damp wooden table,
seals and gulls and salt on your blue-edged plate.
You turn on the oven,
cut the skins of potatoes,
your small kitchen window overlooking
an asylum. *Guernica* hangs
in your sitting room, mist and fog in the street.
You scale fish on rocks,
throw them into a net bag.
You crush garlic, wash samphire,
mutter as you look for a pill,
forget to turn the tap off.

COUPLES HOLIDAY, **Ian McEwen**, Bedford
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

COUPLES HOLIDAY

3am by the L.E.D.
of the bedside clock-radio-alarm.

The en-suite regards itself again.
Mirror is the international finish.

A gecko watches me pee.
He sticks to the world.

His hands are small corn-plasters,
intimate with everything.

I try the mirror, whorl to whorl,
8ml between my index and my back-off self:
two thieves in the constant glass.

The gecko licks his eyes.
His pallid flesh transposed,
transposed, transposed.

THE APPLE PEELER, **Bruce Meyer**, Canada
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

THE APPLE PEELER

When it fell from a wooden box
stored on a cellar shelf, she explained
how it worked why it never worked
the way it was intended, its blade

biting too deep into the fruit's soft flesh
and turning the orb to a baluster
upright on a lathe; yet having been consigned
to history, the handle still cranked

and the gears responded, spinning
pronged spikes like compass needles.
The blade had gone rusty and if used
left a trail of blood around the girth

of all it mapped on an apple globe,
the awful history that brought us here.

JASMINE TEA, **Bruce Meyer**, Canada
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

JASMINE TEA

When water touched their sleeping buds
the jasmine flowers opened as *pinyin*
then floated to the surface
the way thoughts become a poem
and blossom into words.

My father would put his ear to the lip
and listen to what the blossoms spoke
as they renewed their lives in warm spring rain.

He would offer me a sip of April,
though April was never as perfumed
as the music I am certain he heard
when he closed his eyes, inhaled the fragrance
rising in tendrils of curling steam
steeped in legend and a rice grained bowl.

TEACUPS, **Bruce Meyer**, Canada
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

TEACUPS

In a cabinet stabled with blue Mikado
and glass shelves upholding Minton,

I saw the ghost bones of my hand
through the porcelain's translucent paste;

and being taught never to put a finger
in the delicate scroll-looped handle,

I cup one in my palm and lay it now
in manger of straw like a newborn lamb

or a gospel taught in a linen field.

MAN AND BOY, **David Smith**, Derbyshire
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

MAN AND BOY

I wanted to plant six, one for each year.
You said nine was your favourite number.

I said each bulb was a little miracle.
You told me that only Jesus could perform those.

I thought each green tip was a hand shooting up in class.
You said they were rockets blasting off to the moon.

I ransacked colour charts to describe the blue.
You said we had a pot full of sky.

I felt they were as sad as spent fireworks.
You told me meteorites didn't last long either.

I stood there thinking this was a metaphor.
You went off to find something better to do.

WAKING, **Phil Vernon**, Kent
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

Waking

the night is anaesthetic
white

I draw the curtain silently
and stare

at frosted,
broken clods

and the splintered
stumps of trees

and ask no question of
the moon

PEAR, **Peter Wallis**, Norfolk
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

PEAR

I'm eating the moon, or wet sand
in edible form

grainy as tasting
Baby's first scan.

The tree weeps, fruit
designed as a scent bottle.

On my tongue, new fruit
with the skin of an octogenarian.

HERON, **Patricia Helen Wooldridge**, Hampshire
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

HERON

Can't believe the heron landing on our house

long arrow beak and doubling height
of his unfurled neck

bones opening in my spine

or last night the ash a scaffold for the moon –

snowball caught in a web

or this morning spider lines guyed to the tree

hanging out to weigh a soggy sun

or the heron's pendulous flop on a too-small-tree

a would-be-snake sun-streaked

reaching until

we're both swallowing the blunt ends of summer.