

POEMS ON THE MOVE
Guernsey's International Poetry Competition 2023
Judge: Jackie Kay

OPEN CATEGORY

1st prize: *ON THE HOSPITAL BED*, **Owen Lewis**, USA
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions, £1000
www.owenlewispoet.com

On the hospital bed

my daughter passes me her daughter
hours old and swaddled and in the kicks
and turns and

(something brushes by)

in the flannel's unswaddling this mid-
winter metamorphosis within my arms
this memory held on chest, in hand,

in this same hospital this moment happened,
the infant's mother, once hours old—
and this very moment will happen again—

the infant, already Herself a grandmother
astride another hospital bed—
holding Her daughter's daughter.

2nd prize: *AT ST AUGUSTINE'S*, **Nina Quigley**, Ireland
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions, £500
email: ninaq@runbox.com

AT ST AUGUSTINE'S

I be Yellow Yard summer seat waiting with a breeze. High day
sunning in a trees. Them be oak be sisters three and them be dancin'

just for me. Derry walls be tower up high, Bogside she be hunker low.
Lunchtime peoples comes and goes, talks from bitcoin, I don't know.

Augustine, I'm say him howdy do, him wave on over, how you be?
Not so bad, I'm say him back. Clock be tick for show to go.

Graveyard peoples rubbernecks, knows me show, and wants ta look.
Gots plenty stuff in plastic bag, props for what me wants ta say.

All them womens' rape and war, show I'm got 'bout misso genie.
Pal come latey from parka car, smile and wave, she happy be.

Hair be crop and breast be flop. I'm gets up, we starts ta play.
Augie ups and lets a cheer, and all them dead planters claps for we.

3rd prize: *WHALE BONES*, **Sarah-Kate Simons**, New Zealand
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions, £250

Whale Bones

Put your ear to those bleached ribs the way
you listen to blushing seashells
those staid supports that formed the
echo chamber for a worn old heart
and perhaps you'll hear a proper song.

Not the distant splish-splash of the tide
that wavers in and out of a seashell but
the belly-deep groan of a melody built out of
bones as old as that sea
the leviathan's cry amongst the endless waters
weaving its way home.

CHANNEL ISLANDS CATEGORY

1st place: *BETWEEN THE SUN AND THE SNAIL SLIME*,
Kevin Bales, Guernsey

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

BETWEEN THE SUN AND THE SNAIL SLIME

Between the sun and the snail slime your
Laugh ran like a child down the beach

On my toes were flecks of sand and crab bone
Glistening like happy death and winking
Their light of constant longing

When the tide slid up behind us
I felt the answer to your perfect caring
The slippery chill pressing me to decide

If we were the light or the snail slime
The beginning or the end.

2nd place: *ALL ABOARD THE 92*, **Sally Pond**, Alderney
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions, £50

All Aboard the 92

I waited, one foot in Port Soif, yearning for Cobo Bay
I'm going for a swim, and I don't mind a chat along the way
Shuffle up the bus, don't make a fuss, I need to sit a while
Warro, mon ami, good to see you friend, Oh caw damme là,
we do travel in style*
Cum t'chiqui l'affaire va, I ask how you are, I'll sit and listen long
Around us are nature loving visitors, chitter chattering in their
native tongue*
Bienvenu, welcome to you, cosily wrapped people from France or
Holland or Spain*
We're steaming up and smelling of wet dog, but it's good to get out
of the rain*
He unfolds the map and is on his feet, it might be their stop, he can't tell
Trànchille, mon ami, your stop's after Grandes Rocques, you won't miss it,
I'll ring the bell*
At my stop I'm hit by the sun and the bracing wind off the sea, so twinkly
and deep*
I love to tour around the island and the Puffin Pass makes it so cheap
There's a colony of us bus riding Puffins and anyone can join
Tan tchi, thank you to the driver and, à la perchôine

**these six broken lines are meant to be read as one line each,
broken here for readability...*

3rd place: DIVERSION, **Hayley North**, Guernsey
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions, £30
www.undergroundfoxclub.com

Diversion

I am not yet late and
I know the way. It is this way, down
this road, no
this one with the big stone house. So
many stone houses, no
lights in the dark and this rain, heavy
and incessant like the
journey a test, a rite of passage, do
I belong here? Did
I not pass this house just now? So
many roads for such a small island and no
way of knowing if I have taken the right turn. Only
time will tell and
it always does.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CATEGORY

1st place: *GROWING PAINS*, **Sarah-Kate Simons**, New Zealand
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions, £250

Growing Pains

I know I promised to be nicer to myself,

should go fill my hands up with goldenrod
and pretend there is nothing
wrong
pretend that the tree of my spine is not rotting,
is not infested with ivy and held erect by those
twisting tendrils alone
and—help me—
but sometimes I want to snap the bones
of my ribcage apart
and count
the whirlwind of paper butterflies
roosting
in my lungs.

2nd place: *BAT DETECTING*, **Emily Hunt**, Warwickshire
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions, £50
Instagram: [@em_loves_nature_](https://www.instagram.com/em_loves_nature/)

Bat Detecting

I tell him I have a *noctule* - 25 kHz, whirring
with guttural clunks, gunning through the night.
27 kHz, *serotine* (*quiet, hear the knocking, the
tapping, a slow clock ticking*) and 45 kHz, *pipistrelle*,
pin-wheeling, disappearing, skimming insects from leaves.
I see his face, that slight twitch of jaw. 82 kHz,
greater horseshoe! Torch beam to canopy, his smile,
the pale green light of the dial. 55 kHz, *soprano*.
It's hard to know where the darkness ends
and he begins, where the bats end and he begins.
45 kHz, *pipistrelle* - again. I want to raise my arms
to the night, for all the bats to come down,
to be coated with a new kind of skin.

3rd place: *MEMORIES*, **Oshadha Perera**, New Zealand
Poems on the Move & Poems on the Buses Exhibitions, £30

Memories

Do you remember how you ran,
the gravel road cutting into your feet,
a lonely sky gushing down with water?

Do you remember how you looked back,
and the flames seemed so close,
the ground breaking apart behind you?

Do you remember standing at the fence,
how you hugged your backpack,
and watched the barbed wire glint in the sun?

Do you remember your new home,
the language that tasted like apples,
how your eyes stared into the nightlight,
legs still ready to run?

POEMS ON THE BUSES

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

BOTTOM OF A BARREL, **Lorelei Clarke**, France

Poems on the Buses Exhibition

lorelei.el.clarke@gmail.com

Bottom of a Barrel

I've never scraped the bottom of a barrel
Nor have I swept the skies
Simply wafted past achievers
And collected tears from their eyes
And in all my embarrassment
My ghosts clap for me
My measure is the measure I set
Not a race to isolation
A pincushion of withheld tears
My lip is bloody from sewing my mouth shut
Fit to burst past even willing arms
And out of all the burned shadows
I'm seared deeper in these walls
Who knew that sideways was worse than going down?

IT RAINS WHEN I MISS YOU, Lorelei Clarke, France
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
lorelei.el.clarke@gmail.com

It Rains When I Miss You

I thought I had made my peace when we said goodbye
But now I miss you on the bus-the full moon floods the window in cream
It hangs heavy like the weight of missing pieces in my stomach
Maybe next time it'll rain upside down in sheets of you missing me too
And I didn't think I liked it but I did like feeling your heartbeat
fighting back mine*
Sometimes missing someone is missing an opportunity
But I also miss pretending I was above your goofiness (secret smiles
are hidden backstage)*
And I pretended I hated every minute of it to protect unwanted truths
And now when I drum my fingers in the bus I can't not think of you
and your movement*
But I knew from the start I didn't want you and you didn't want me
We live in carefully cut worlds
And my thin threads of wistfulness aren't enough to stitch them together
So I just miss a taste of an undiscovered place

**these three broken lines are meant to be read as one line each,
broken here for readability...*

CORNUCOPIA, **Simon Evans**, Wales
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

Corncucopia

I fetched the horned ram's head down
from the field where we had hidden
it behind a tree buried in bracken
as though we had committed a crime
and hidden the evidence grey

and weather worn ten years old or
more it sleeps in silence an empty
snail's shell curled within the cavity
of its brain stilled spirals signs of
two lives stopped cycled into eternity

AT NIGHT, **Sarah Hemings**, Bristol
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
twitter: @SarahHemings1

at night

when you are away and I am wrestling with sleep
I have learnt to hold my own hand
to feel my body giving and receiving
warmth to and from itself

it has taken all the years of our distance love
to show me how to comfort myself
in solitude as I would comfort
a lover a family member a friend

THE FIRST TIME I SAW, **Judy Mantle**, Jersey
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
[email: judymantle@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:judymantle@hotmail.co.uk)

The first time I saw

A slow worm, a glow worm
an ant carrying a leaf
my father throwing beer over my mother
my mother crying
a hoopoe in our garden by the sea
a crested newt swimming upstream
my son close to death
my daughter fly from her trapeze
my other daughter cradle her new-born
a scorpion in my tent in Italy
a badger shuffling ahead of me at dusk
a hare staring at me
a fawn in a rainstorm
my mother no longer alive.

A SUDDEN TURN, **Jenny Mitchell**, London
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
twitter: @JennyMitchellGo

A Sudden Turn

The day before my mother dies
 lying on a sunken bed
 she wends a river through the room

 each word a steady flow
 whispered over rocks. Jagged shapes
lodged in her throat, prove obstacles. In time

a breeze helps rub them smooth, rushing
 to re-tell her life, battered on the shore
 forced along by currents

 she did not control. At night
 her breath calm now, she takes
 a sudden turn, aims towards the sun.

INUNDATION, **Sandra Noel**, Jersey
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
email: sandra@twoplustwo.je

Inundation

My husband shovels brown-flow and seed potatoes from the drive,
slews the wheelbarrow to the garden. He pushes root-tangles
into sodden soil with last week's half-grown veg
from the farm up the hill.

Corn stalks bristle the surface of mud-sludge,
and coupled ducks are swimming in furrows;
even the spillage of birds are in full-witter.

A guy on the radio says large smacks of barrel jellyfish got caught
in storm currents, floated into bays,
clogging the harbour, closing the power plant inlet.

THE NIGHTIE I KEEP AT MY MOTHER'S HOUSE,
Martine Padwell, London
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

The Nightie I keep at my Mother's House

Mother and baby ducks waddle across
this cotton nightie, the colour of milk.
I sleep in it four, maybe five, times a year.
Front-fastening buttons, a neat little row,
still work but aren't needed. Those 4 a.m. feeds
were nearly a quarter of a century ago.
Somewhere between then and now, I lost
the athlete I was. Now I can't run.
My son limps from a soccer scar
and frets about receding hair,
while Mum is fearful on the stairs
and can't remember the word for mouse.
The nightie holds me, soft, un-frayed,
in much better nick than the three of us.

ACCIDENT, **Miranda Pearson**, Surrey
Poems on the Buses Exhibition

Accident

I cover my eyes at the accident on the road.
A man my son's age running along the highway,
his plaid shirt flapping, his long hair
tied back and coming loose. I cover my eyes.
There is so much I don't want to see.
Let's keep going, climb higher into the range,
where clouds journey over broken horizons,
make their layering smoke between trees,
this perilous landscape empty of anything human.

SWING SET, **Divya Venkat Sridhar**, Switzerland
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
Instagram: [@divya.vks](https://www.instagram.com/divya.vks)

Swing set

I push you into the sky
and it blushes, freckled with clouds.

Breeze combs through your hair,
hems your arms like sparrow feathers.

Behind you the moon, large enough
for you to climb in- your nest.

I hear you laugh, over and over,
fold ripples into the silk of the air

And I feel a love rising
like a thousand soaring swallows,

just as I imagine
at any moment it'll fly away.

ELSEWHERE, **Divya Venkat Sridhar**, Switzerland
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
Instagram: [@divya.vks](https://www.instagram.com/divya.vks)

Elsewhere

When the bus leaves, the street mourns.
Roads flake like wallpaper paste.
The streetlights are bitter like soap, so
the night chews it up and spits
it into blandness, dust.
The clouds press themselves down
like lips draw ghosts on the windowpane.
The sky bends inwards like wax,
threads silence between
crosswalks. Smoke hangs over
the tarmac, brittle
like an empty house—
home is elsewhere,
and you with it.

LIKE A SONNET, **Roger West**, Glasgow
Poems on the Buses Exhibition
www.rogerwestmusic.com

like a sonnet

so she was like i called him up
i swear to god i called him up
and i was like you called him up?
oh my god you called him up!

and she was like what am i like?
and i was like what are you like?
and she was like it's like a dream
oh my days i'm in a daze

i was like you like him then?
and she was like what's not to like?
sometimes it's like we're so alike
peas in a pod that's what we're like

'cos i was like and she was like
and she was like and i was like