

PASSAGE TO MANSTON

She strokes the warm wall of her home, soft and sandy

One last time with hungry hands

No more a place of shelter

Her family scattered everywhere

She takes a stone from the garden

She travels in darkness four days and four nights

Unknowing unthinking unblinking

Staring straight with empty eyes

Lorries and planes, cars and trains,

It doesn't matter where

She sleeps outside amongst many men

Shadowy whispering in the night.

Blood spurts as she grabs too tight

The sharp stone in her hand which protects her

She sits in a black rubber dinghy for hours

Grey sea, grey skies, her stomach churning

With hunger and hope

She's dragged roughly by strangers

Out of the boat and into a bus

They squash her hand as they push her along

To a place with barbed wire on top of its fences

A fortress, a prison, she's done nothing wrong

Marquees and mattress on the floor

No food she can eat, no beat in her heart

Until she hears voices in English and Arabic

Singing softly, keeping her strong
Through a slit in the fence she sees many people
With banners and torches and whistles and flags
They stay through the rain and into the night
She raises her hopeful hand to the wire
It's no longer bleeding, a scar in the shape of a smile.