



The Stephen Spender Prize
for poetry in translation 2019

Sucularin hiç durmayan cingirak
The bells of water-carrier's endless r

私は二階から飛び降りて
I got through without jumping

Dinabhari sukēkō bāmsai
All day like dried bamboo

die vergifteten bäume die befallene
the poisoned trees the infested

Кад затворе се уставе небеса
That heaven's sluice-gates should

Nie moim głosem śpiewa ryba w
It is not with my voice the fish in the n

in association with

**The
Guardian**

The Stephen Spender Prize 2019 for poetry in translation

in association with *The Guardian*

Winners and commended

14-and-under



First

Ide Crawford
'Cad Goddeu'
by Unknown
(Middle Welsh)



Second

Jonathan Webb
'The Cats'
by Charles Baudelaire
(French)



Third

Ebrar Aygin
'I am Listening to Istanbul'
by Orhan Veli
(Turkish)

14-and-under commended

Jasper Gabriel Birkin
'Trees'
by Toon Hermans
(Dutch)

Hannah Kripa Jordan
'Incomplete Victories'
by S. Varalakshmi
(Tamil)

Iona Mandal
'Amolkanti'
by Nirendranath Chakraborty
(Bengali)

18-and-under



First

Shrinidhi Prakash
Extract from 'Notebook
of a Return to My
Native Land'
by Aimé Césaire
(French)



Second

Lulu Walsh
'The Blue Horse'
by Sagawa Chika
(Japanese)



Third

Anusha Gautam
'Blind Man on a Spinning
Chair'
by Bhupi Scherchan
(Nepali)

18-and-under commended

Scarlett Stubbings
'The Intruder's Work'
by Anjela Duval
(Breton)

Joseph Harrison
'The Reversal of the Tiber'
by Virgil
(Latin)

Open



First

James Garza
'Going Home'
by Itō Shizuo
(Japanese)



Second

Ollie Evans
'nature – no thanks'
by Elfriede Gerstl
(German)



Third

Francis Jones
'Sea'
by Ivan V. Lalić
(Serbian)

Open commended

Alasdair Gordon
'Myris, Alexandria'
by C. P. Cavafy
(Greek)

Norbert Hirschhorn
'The King'
by Fouad M. Fouad
(Arabic)

Kevin Maynard
'Five Poems from the Borderlands'
by Nai Xian
(Classical Chinese)

Polish Spotlight winners and commended

10-and-under



Winner

Roksana Tkaczyńska
'In School'
by Maria Konopnicka

Commended

Jakub Śliwa
'Poland'
by Antoni Słonimski

Harrison Nye
'Fox'
by Jan Brzechwa

14-and-under



Winner

Michaela Konkolewska-Grybė
'Glasses'
by Julian Tuwim

18-and-under



Winner

Zuzanna Osińska
'I am too close for him to
dream of me'
by Wisława Szymborska

Commended

Alexander Norris
'For this exactly'
by Cyprian Kamil Norwid

Introduction to the Stephen Spender Prize 2019

There have been no shortage of highlights over this past year at the Trust, with the launch of our 'Creative Translation in the Classroom' programme and a record-breaking number of entries to the prize. But the most memorable moment for me came on a sunny afternoon in July, when I was invited to award the prizes at an internal 'Stephen Spender Prize' competition at a large state school in Slough. Having only heard about the prize for the first time in May, the Head of Modern Languages had pulled out all the stops to encourage entries from pupils and teachers right across the school, resulting in translations out of twenty-five languages. Talking to the winning pupils that day confirmed what the Stephen Spender Prize can be: an inclusive, aspiration-raising, shared experience that engages and celebrates linguistic skills for all levels and backgrounds.

This was reflected in the translations that flooded in for the national prize, with entries this time from sixty-five languages. It's heartening to see this evidence of a country engaging with other languages and cultures, and further proof of the intense

creativity of translation and its power to build bridges, start conversations and celebrate difference.

It has been a great pleasure to work with judges Margaret Jull Costa and Olivia McCannon again, and to welcome Mary Jean Chan to the judges' panel. Sitting in on the judges' meeting gives a wonderful insight into the sincere care and attention that they give to each entry, and all the micro-decisions that lead to the poems printed here rising to the top of the multi-lingual pile. I commend these superb winning translations to you now, with thanks to all who have supported the Trust this year: the Rothschild Foundation, Old Possum's Practical Trust, Redcase Ltd, the Sackler Trust, the Polonsky Foundation, the European Commission Representation, the British Council and the Polish Cultural Institute. Thanks also to all the entrants to this year's competitions, and to the teachers who take the time to encourage and support their pupils' entries.

Charlotte Ryland
Director of the Stephen Spender Trust



I was truly impressed by the quality of submissions from across our three categories, which amounted to nearly 2000 pages of translations and original verse. We agreed that the Middle Welsh poem 'Cad Goddeu' translated by Ide Crawford was a worthy winner of the 14-and-under category, with its vivid use of imagery and effective deployment of anaphora throughout. Jonathan Webb's 'The Cats' cleverly captures the humour and wit in the French poem by Charles Baudelaire, and is this year's second prize winner. In third place, we chose Orhan Veli's 'I am Listening to Istanbul', translated from the Turkish by Ebrar Aygin, which offers a wonderful balance between observation ('The Grand Bazaar is calm and cool') and inner revelation ('I know / A silver moon rises between the pine trees / I can sense it all in your heart's beating'). Our commendations go to Hannah Kripa Jordan for 'Incomplete Victories' (Tamil), Iona Mandal for 'Amolkanti' (Bengali) and Jasper Gabriel Birkin for 'Trees' (Dutch). All three translations captured a sense of our common humanity, and evoked a deep emotional engagement from the judges.

In the 18-and-under category, we selected Shrinidhi Prakash's evocative

translation of an extract from Aimé Césaire's 'Notebook of a Return to My Native Land'. In addition to the translated poem, we particularly admired the commentary for providing a close reading of Césaire's thematic preoccupations and poetics. In second place, we chose Sagawa Chika's 'The Blue Horse', a poem translated from the Japanese by Lulu Walsh, which poignantly conveys the speaker's struggle with depression and suicidal thoughts, punctuated by moments of comic relief: 'If I could only forget / the love and regret / and the patent shoes! / I got through – without jumping / from the second floor.' In third place is Bhupi Sherchan's 'Blind Man on a Spinning Chair', translated from the Nepali by Anusha Gautam. The translator's attentiveness to the original poem's fragmented form comes across in the translated poem's precise use of enjambment: 'Rumours flinch, / frightened by the headlights / as darkness descends'. Our commended poems were Scarlett Stubbings' translation of 'The Intruder's Work' (Breton) and Joseph Harrison's translation of 'The Reversal of the Tiber' (Latin), which stood out to the judges for their precise diction.

The Open category proved the most varied and difficult for the judges to agree upon. We were very enamoured of 'Going Home' by Itō Shizuo,

translated by James Garza, which rose through the ranks to become our Open category winner with its subtle eco-poetics, sensual imagery, and ability to inspire hope in dark times. In contrast to the winning poem is the bleak vision inherent within 'nature – no thanks' by Elfriede Gerstl, which we chose as our second prize winner in light of its ability to capture a relatable sense of nihilistic despair as the speaker experiences the degradation of our natural world, expertly translated from the German by Ollie Evans. In third place, we chose Francis Jones's translation of 'Sea' by the Serbian poet Ivan V. Lalić, with its epic vision of the natural world and its keen attentiveness to rhyme and musicality. Our three commended poems were truly outstanding: Norbert Hirschhorn's translation of 'The King' (Arabic) by Fouad M. Fouad, Kevin Maynard's translation of 'Five Poems from the Borderlands' (Classical Chinese) by Nai Xian, and Alasdair Gordon's translation of 'Myris, Alexandria' (Greek) by Constantine Cavafy.

In sum, it was deeply heartening to see both classical and contemporary poetry continuing to be of interest to experienced and budding translators alike, across an ever-broadening variety of languages from around the globe.

Mary Jean Chan



Once again, being a judge on the Stephen Spender Poetry Translation Prize has been a richly rewarding experience, an introduction to all kinds of poets, poems and languages. The principal joy, though, is the sheer enthusiasm for the translation process. In the 14-and-under category, I was immediately impressed by Ide Crawford's bold translation from the Middle Welsh of 'Cad Goddeu', so full of rhythm and sound and alliteration. Jonathan Webb's translation of Baudelaire's 'Les Chats' is another

exercise in rhythm and sound, and the translation vividly conveys the wit and sensuality of the original. I found Ebrar Aygin's version of Turkish poet Orhan Veli's 'I am listening to Istanbul' utterly hypnotic and incantatory, a haunting evocation of place. I also particularly liked Yusuf Hassan's version of Octavio Paz's poem 'Acabar con todo' for the sensitive way he captured the beauty in what, as he says in the commentary, can seem like 'nonsense'.

In the 18-and-under category, I really enjoyed the sweep of Shrinidhi Prakash's winning translation of Aimé Césaire's 'Extract from *Notebook of a*

Return to My Native Land', with its many astonishing lines: 'limping from littleness to littleness', 'this modest nothing of hard splinters'. Brilliant. Lulu Walsh's 'The Blue Horse' revels in the casual surrealism of Japanese poet Sagawa Chika – 'If I could only forget / the love and regret / and the patent shoes!' In 'Blind Man on a Spinning Chair' by Nepalese poet Bhupi Sherchan, Anusha Gautam – translating from her mother tongue – confidently reproduces the extraordinarily evocative images of the original: 'Numerous noises come and go / dressed in different outfits', 'All day / Like dried bamboo, /

dozing / in my own hollowness'. I also enjoyed 'The Intruder's Work' lovingly translated from the Breton by Scarlett Stubbings.

As usual, the Open Category had the largest number of entries. The winning poem, 'Going Home' translated by James Garza (whose work was highly commended last year), was one that really stayed with me. It has such a convincing voice and – the ultimate test – is equally convincing when read out loud. As James says in his commentary: 'Here, in simple but carefully chosen language, is a real place.' We were all also very taken with Ollie Evans' version of Elfriede Gerstl's acerbically

energetic 'nature – no thanks', which, as Ollie explains in his commentary, very sensitively unpicks the poem's subtext. Then there is Francis Jones' rhythmic translation of the Serbian poet Ivan Lalić's poem 'Sea', so full of sussurating s-words. Another poem that haunted me was Norbert Hirschhorn's version of Syrian poet Fouad M. Fouad's 'The King', translated in close collaboration with the poet. I also very much admired 'In the dark' by N.S. Sigogo, translated by Stephen Walsh from Ndebele, a language spoken by the Northern Ndebele people, or Matabele, of Zimbabwe – in which the darkness the poet describes speaks

of many other possible darknesses. Other translations that impressed me, in addition to our commended entries, were Eva Bourke's playful translation of Jan Wagner's 'Small hymn to crows', Christophe Fricker's version of 'Embrace' by Matthias Politycki, and the 'whirlwind of imagery' in Patrizia Cavalli's 'Datura', another entry by our first-prize-winner James Garza. My thanks to all those who entered.

Margaret Jull Costa



This year, I was delighted to encounter poems from an ever-widening range of languages, including Nepali, Dholuo, Basque, Breton, Korean, and Klingon, as well as entries connecting with bilingual heritage. Different eras were well represented, with work from ancient languages surfacing alongside contemporary contexts – and plenty in between.

I was on the lookout for writing that held itself open to its source, which sought not to impose, or project, or correct, but to listen, and learn, and feel with. All of the winners and commended entries displayed these qualities and there were many more besides. It was a real pleasure to discuss such considered work with my fellow judges, and to see such a high standard overall.

In the 14-and-under category, we were won over by the lively metamorphic sequencing of Ide Crawford's 'Cad Goddeu' (Old Welsh), charmed by Jonathan Webb's elegantly feline Baudelaire (French), and drawn in by the vivid, felt presence of Ebrar Aygin's Veli (Turkish). Other standouts were Iona Mandal's touching 'Amolkanti' (Bengali), Hannah Kripa Jordan for her insightful work from Tamil ('Incomplete

Victories'), and Jasper Gabriel Birkin for his memorable 'Trees' (Dutch).

In the 18-and-under category, Shrinidhi Prakash's translation of Césaire shows impressive maturity, with its close attention to the role of nuance in weaving a cohesive texture. Lulu Walsh, translating avant-garde poet Sagawa Chika (Japanese), creates 'a complex, alienating effect to match the strangeness of the poem's impact', taking risks to come in closer; while Anusha Gautam's confident translation of Bhupi Sherchan (Nepali) thoughtfully broaches the issue of what to do with language embedded in a particular 'collective consciousness'.

There were also accomplished offerings from Scarlett Stubbings (Duval), picking up on French/Breton power dynamics, and from Joseph Harrison (Virgil), who created a lovely metrical tension inspired by Old English and Welsh. I also enjoyed the hymnic accumulations of Sorrel Banfield's Manciet (French/Gascon), and the clear imagery of Lydia Mekonnen's Edda (Old Norse).

The open category was packed with impressive talent! Spender Prize returnee James Garza's 'Going Home' (Itō Shizuo) pulses with presence, the intense synaesthesia of a walker at night, becoming part of the world in and beyond the beam of a torch: 'and I

hear it, the rustle in / the colour, and I hear it, / the way home'. With his finely tuned sensitivity to word choice and aural patterning, Ollie Evans captures the dark energy of radical Vienna Group poet Elfriede Gerstl, while Francis Jones brings close the voice of Lalić's sea, 'the wild waves' calling, through his surefooted use of enjambment, and skilled metrical balancing of lightness and weight.

We also loved and admired 'The King', a listening co-translation by Norbert Hirschhorn and the Syrian poet Fouad M. Fouad; a sequence of living-breathing 'eyewitness snapshots of life in China's north-western borderlands under the Mongol Yuan dynasty' by Kevin Maynard (also commended in 2017), and Alasdair Gordon's beautiful flowing and quickening stream-of-consciousness Cavafy. I also enjoyed translations by Martyn Crucefix, of the Corsican poet Angèle Paoli, and by James Womack, of the Basque poet Rikardo Arregi.

Overall, I was heartened by the rise in translations and commentaries committed to creating authentic living connections between texts, and engaging with the complex ethical entanglements that shape the energetic tissue of translation.

Olivia McCannon

Cad Goddeu

Bum yn lliaws rith
Kyn bum kisgyfrith.
Bum cledyf culurith.
Credaf pan writh.
Bum deigyr yn awyr.
Bum serwaw syr.
Bum geir yn llythyr.
Bum llyfyr ym prifder.
Bum llugyrn lleufer
Blwydyn a hanher.
Bum pont ar triger.
Ar trugein aber.
Bum hynt bym eryr.
Bum corwc ymyr.
Bum darwed yn llat.
Bum das ygkawat.
Bum cledyf yn aghat.
Bum yscwyt ygkat.
Bum tant yn telyn
Lletrithawdc naw blwydyn.
Yn dwfyr yn ewyn.
Bum yspwg yn tan.
Bum gwyd yngwarthan.

Unknown

Cad Goddeu

In many forms have I appeared
Changing through the wheeling years
Once the swift-flung shaft of the spear
Once the sky's tears dropping clear
Once the climbing spark of the star
Once the shield tight-held in war
Once a great bridge stretching far
Over the fierce free-flowing flood
Once the sword that drew the blood
Once the harp-string by fingers stirred
Once the path, once the binding cord
Once among the letters the word

In the book of birth and beginning
Once food at the feast, the bowl brimming
Once the wild hawk high in the tree
Once the winged ship on the wasted sea
Once the white water, the froth-foam free
Once the moving flames that tune-like play
Once in the whirling wood the winding way
Now the torch in the dark before the day
With full unflinching fearless rays.

*Translated from the Middle Welsh
by Ide Crawford*

Ide Crawford's commentary

This is the opening of the Middle Welsh poem 'Cad Goddeu'. It follows a traditional pattern also found in ancient Irish texts, where the poet claims incarnation in a diverse string of physical forms. I am fascinated by the way this trope confidently elides the subject/object relation which is so complicated in poetry in the modern period, with poems like John's Clair's "Clock o' Clay" occasionally stepping back

into direct identification.

Although I write poetry all the time, I have never translated anything before – so researching how to set about it was a fascinating process in itself. Translating a text written in the fourteenth century, and likely formed through a much older oral tradition, brings the translator up against issues at once of linguistic and dense cultural difference.

I have kept close to the original rhyme

scheme, and attempted to preserve parts of the alliteration, which involved minor changes and rearranging of the lines. It is almost impossible, however, to duplicate exactly the intricate Welsh sound patterns in English.

As I am not fluent even in modern Welsh, I have relied largely on dictionaries. Even this is complicated by the many mutations which change the first letter of words.

Les chats

Les amoureux fervents et les savants austères
Aiment également, dans leur mûre saison,
Les chats puissants et doux, orgueil de la maison,
Qui comme eux sont frileux et comme eux sédentaires.
Amis de la science et de la volupté,
Ils cherchent le silence et l'horreur des ténèbres;
L'Érèbe les eût pris pour ses coursiers funèbres,
S'ils pouvaient au servage incliner leur fierté.
Ils prennent en songeant les nobles attitudes
Des grands sphinx allongés au fond des solitudes,
Qui semblent s'endormir dans un rêve sans fin;
Leurs reins féconds sont pleins d'étincelles magiques,
Et des parcelles d'or, ainsi qu'un sable fin,
Étoilent vaguement leurs prunelles mystiques.

Charles Baudelaire

The Cats

Passionate lovers and dry scholars
Love equally, in their ripened season,
Cats, powerful and soft, pride of the house,
Who, like them, are aloof and, like them, still,
Fellows of learning and of pleasure,
They seek the silence and the horror of darkness:
Erebus would take them for his funeral harbingers,
If they could tilt their pride to servitude.
In contemplation they take the noble attitude
Of the great sphinxes reclining, in the depths of solitude,
Who seem to slumber in an endless dream,
Their fruitful forms are full of wondrous sparks,
And grains of gold and fine sand,
Their mysterious pupils glimmer distantly.

*Translated from the French
by Jonathan Webb*

Jonathan Webb's commentary

I chose this poem because I have always thought the French language is feline in its elegance, sophistication and nuance and so was keen to select a poem about cats. This poem, 'Les Chats' by Baudelaire, not only portrays the grandeur of cats through its lofty language but it also reflects the absolute belief in their superiority held by cats, scholars and lovers alike: they all assume that their experience is unique and unrivalled.

I enjoyed choosing words which reflect the sensory nature of Baudelaire's vocabulary. I particularly liked the way Baudelaire uses imagery to juxtapose light and dark

throughout the poem. This perfectly represents the duality of cats, as one moment they are docile companions and the next they are small savage beasts which is reflected in Baudelaire's contrasting imagery.

The rhyme scheme was challenging and when I attempted it I found I lost some of the meaning of Baudelaire's dense, evocative vocabulary. Consequently, I focussed on the sense and tone of the language to convey respect and affection for cats because the poem packs a tremendous variety of the complex facets of cats into a short number of lines. 'Aloof' is not the exact translation

of 'frileux' but as this perfectly describes a cat, I used it.

It is Baudelaire's clear understanding of the attitudes and behaviour of cats which inspired my choice of vocabulary. I used more formal language to mirror Baudelaire and demonstrate the aloofness of cats, scholars and lovers. I then tried to use colder language to convey cats' enjoyment of darkness and warmer language towards the end of my translation. I hoped to convey Baudelaire's sense of affection for cats, which I share, and our sense of wonder at their magnificence which has been constant through the ages.

İstanbul'u Dinliyorum

İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı
Önce hafiften bir rüzgar esiyor;
Yavaş yavaş sallanıyor
Yapraklar, ağaçlarda;
Uzaklarda, çok uzaklarda,
Sucuların hiç durmayan çingirakları
İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı

İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı;
Kuşlar geçiyor, derken;
Yükseklerden, sürü sürü, çığlık çığlık.
Ağlar çekiliyor dalyanlarda;
Bir kadının suya değiyor ayakları;
İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı

İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı;
Serin serin Kapalıçarşı
Cıvıl cıvıl Mahmutpaşa
Güvercin dolu avlular
Çekiç sesleri geliyor doklardan
Güzelim bahar rüzgarında ter kokuları;
İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı

İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı;
Başımda eski alemlerin sarhoşluğu
Loş kayıkhaneleriyle bir yalı;
Dinmiş lodosların uğultusu içinde
İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı

İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı;
Bir yosma geçiyor kaldırımdan;
Küfürler, şarkılar, türküler, laf atmalar
Birşey düşüyor elinden yere;
Bir gül olmalı;
İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı

İstanbul'u dinliyorum, gözlerim kapalı;
Bir kuş çırpınıyor eteklerinde;
Alnın sıcak mı, değil mi, biliyorum;
Dudakların ıslak mı, değil mi, biliyorum;
Beyaz bir ay doğuyor fıstıkların arkasından
Kalbinin vuruşundan anlıyorum;
İstanbul'u dinliyorum

Orhan Veli

© Orhan Veli Kanık, *Yapı Kredi Kültür Sanat
Yayıncılık Ticaret ve Sanayi A.Ş.*, 2003

I am Listening to Istanbul

I am listening to Istanbul, my eyes are closed
At first there is a gentle breeze
The soft sway
And the leaves on the trees
Out there, far away,
The bells of water-carriers' endless ring
I am listening to Istanbul, my eyes are closed

I am listening to Istanbul, my eyes are closed;
Then suddenly birds fly by,
High up, flocks of them, with a hue and cry
While the nets are drawn into the fisheries
And a woman's feet dabble in the water
I am listening to Istanbul, my eyes are closed

I am listening to Istanbul, my eyes are closed
The Grand Bazaar is calm and cool,
The chitter chatter at Mahmud Pasha
Mosque yards are full of pigeons
The hammers bang and clang at the docks
Spring winds and the smell of sweat;
I am listening to Istanbul, my eyes are closed

I am listening to Istanbul, my eyes are closed;
The drunkenness of the old worlds
A sea coast with dim boathouses
In the hum of the dead southern winds
I am listening to Istanbul, my eyes are closed

I am listening to Istanbul, my eyes are closed
A pretty girl walks by on the path
Words, whistles, and songs, rude-remarks;
Something falls out of her hand
It must be a rose;
I am listening to Istanbul, my eyes are closed

I am listening to Istanbul, my eyes are closed;
A bird flutters around your skirt
Is your forehead hot? Cold? I know
Are your lips wet? Or not? I know
A silver moon rises between the pine trees
I can sense it all in your heart's beating
I am listening to Istanbul

*Translated from the Turkish
by Ebrar Aygin*

Ebrar Aygin's commentary

I chose this poem because my home language is Turkish and this poem has a really nice meaning to the Turks. It is one of the most effective Turkish poems that describes Istanbul. The poet, Orhan Veli, is in Istanbul and listening to the nature and the people surrounding him and puts all of it together in this poem. I really like this poem because every time I read it or hear somebody else read it I feel like I am in the

setting because of the powerful vocabulary that the poet has used.

When I was younger I learnt Turkish and English at the same time and my Turkish is fluent but when I read poems I struggle on word meanings sometimes, so my parents helped me a lot whilst translating this poem. Also, the most difficult thing was getting the word order right and letting it make sense at the same time and what some

specific words meant...

Due to the fact that this poem is very famous in Turkey and is written by a very important poet, every Turk that reads this poem will be reminded of Istanbul and its history because in Turkish literature everyone will have heard this poem at least once in their lifetime and it means a lot depending on your point of view to it.

Cahier d'un retour au pays natal (extract)

Partir... j'arriverais lisse et jeune dans ce pays
mien et je dirais à ce pays dont le limon entre dans la composition de ma chair : « J'ai longtemps erré et je
reviens vers la hideur désertées de vos plaies ».
Je viendrais à ce pays mien et je lui dirais : « Embrassez-moi sans crainte... Et si je ne sais que parler,
c'est pour vous que je parlerais ».

Et je lui dirai encore :

« Ma bouche sera la bouche des malheurs qui n'ont point de bouche, ma voix, la liberté de celles qui
s'affaissent au cachot du désespoir. »

Et venant je me dirais à moi même :

« Et surtout mon corps aussi bien que mon âme, gardez-vous de vous croiser les bras en l'attitude stérile du
spectateur, car la vie n'est pas un spectacle, car une mer de douleurs n'est pas un proscenium, car un
homme qui crie n'est pas un ours qui danse... »

Et voici que je suis venu !

De nouveau cette vie clopinante devant moi, non pas cette vie, cette mort, cette mort sans sens ni pitié,
cette mort où la grandeur piteusement échoue, l'éclatante petitesse de cette mort, cette mort qui clopine de
petitesses en petitesse ; ces pelletées de petites avidités sur le conquistador; ces pelletées de petits
larbins sur le grand sauvage, ces pelletées de petites âmes sur le Caraïbe aux trois âmes,
et toutes ces morts futiles
absurdités sous l'éclaboussement de ma conscience ouverte
tragiques futilités éclairée de cette seule noctiluque et moi seul, brusque scène de ce petit matin
où fait le beau l'apocalypse des monstres puis, chavirée, se tait
chaude élection de cendres, de ruines et d'affaissements

– Encore une objection ! une seule, mais de grâce une seule : je n'ai pas le droit de calculer la vie à mon
empan fuligineux ; de me réduire à ce petit rien ellipsoïdal qui tremble à quatre doigts au-dessus de la
ligne, moi homme, d'ainsi bouleverser la création, que je me comprenne entre latitude et longitude !

Au bout du petit matin,
la mâle soif et l'entêté désir,
me voici divisé des oasis fraîches de la fraternité

ce rien pudique frise d'échardes dures
cet horizon trop sûr tressaille comme un geôlier.

Ton dernier triomphe, corbeau tenace de la Trahison.

Ce qui est à moi, ces quelques milliers de mortiférés qui tournent en rond dans la calebasse d'une île et
ce qui est à moi aussi, l'archipel arqué comme le désir inquiet de se nier, on dirait une anxiété maternelle
pour protéger la ténuité plus délicate qui sépare l'une de l'autre Amérique ; et ses flancs qui secrètent
pour l'Europe la bonne liqueur d'un Gulf Stream, et l'un des deux versants d'incandescence entre quoi
l'Equateur funambule vers l'Afrique. Et mon île non-clôture, sa claire audace debout à l'arrière de cette
polynésie, devant elle, la Guadeloupe fendue en deux de sa raie dorsale et de même misère que nous,
Haïti où la négritude se mit debout pour la première fois et dit qu'elle croyait à son humanité et la comique
petite queue de la Floride où d'un nègre s'achève la strangulation, et l'Afrique gigantesquement chenillant
jusqu'au pied hispanique de l'Europe, sa nudité où la Mort fauche à larges andains.

Et je me dis Bordeaux et Nantes et Liverpool et New York et San Francisco

pas un bout de ce monde qui ne porte mon empreinte digitale
et mon calcanéum sur le dos des gratte-ciel et ma crasse

dans le scintillement des gemmes !
Qui peut se vanter d'avoir mieux que moi ?

Notebook of a Return to My Native Land (extract)

Leaving... I'd arrive plain and young in this country of mine
and I'd say to this country whose silt embeds
itself in my flesh: 'I've wandered a long while and I'm returning
to the deserted ugliness of your wounds.'

I'd come to this country of mine and I'd say to it: 'Kiss me without fear... And if
I only know how to speak, it's for you that I speak.'

And again I'd say to it:

'My mouth will be the mouth of mouthless suffering,
my voice, the liberties of those shut up
in despair.'

And on the way, I'd say to myself:

'And my body, especially, as well as my soul – careful not to cross
your arms in the sterile attitude of a spectator, for life is not
a show, a sea of sorrows is not a proscenium, a shrieking
man is not a dancing bear...'

And look, I'm here!

Again this hobbling life before me – not this life, this death, this death
without sense or pity, this death in which greatness is a sorry failure – the dazzling
littleness of this death, this death limping
from littleness
to littleness – these shovelfuls of rapacity over the conquistador; these shovelfuls
of flunkies over the great savage; these shovelfuls of little souls over the triple-souled
Carib.

And all these futile deaths, absurdities under
the splutter of my open conscience, tragic futilities lit by this lone sea-sparkle and me
alone, an abrupt early-morning scene where the apocalypse of monsters
parades, then, keeled over, is
quiet. Warm election of ashes, of ruins and collapses.

'One more thing! One, for the love of God just one: I don't have the right to
calculate life by my sooty handspan; to reduce myself to this ellipsoidal
little nothing trembling four fingers above the line, I, a man, to thus capsize
creation, including myself between latitude and longitude!'

At the close of the early morning, male thirst and obstinate desire.

Look at me, cut off from cool oases of fraternity.

This modest nothing of hard splinters

This too-certain horizon quivers like a jailor. Your last triumph, tenacious
crow of Treason.

What is mine, these few thousand death-stricken who go round in circles in the calabash
of an island and what is mine too, the archipelago arched like the uneasy desire to deny
oneself, like a maternal anxiety to protect the more delicate subtlety which separates
one America

from the other. And its flanks which secrete the good
liqueur of a Gulf Stream for Europe, and one of two slopes of incandescence
between which the Equator walks the tightrope towards
Africa. And my non-fence isle, its clear daring, standing at the back
of this Polynesia, in front of it, Guadeloupe cracked
into two by its dorsal line and as impoverished as us, Haiti where blackness is standing
up for the first time and saying that it believes in its humanity and the funny little tail
of Florida where they're rounding off the strangling of a black
man, and Africa caterpillaring titanically towards the Hispanic foot of Europe, its
nudity where Death reaps in large windrows.

And I say to myself Bordeaux and Nantes and Liverpool and New York and San Francisco

Not a nook of this world without my fingerprint

And my heelbone on the skyscrapers' shoulders and my muck
in the sparkle of gems! Who can brag of having more than I?

*Translated from the French
by Shrinidhi Prakash*

First prize, 18-and-under category

Shrinidhi Prakash's commentary

Cahier d'un retours au pays natal is a great literary experiment – a raw, lyrical mosaic drawing on a staggering range of tone to convey the disorientating nature of colonialism. I chose this rather long extract to best show off its protean nature, which, however, is held together by an underlying anger. Its complexity is difficult to translate, but deeply rewarding because its freedom implicitly allows the translator their own. I have played freely with the structure of the stanzas for a variety of poetic effects. Sometimes structure enhances meaning; death limps from littleness to littleness over

three lines, and one America is visually separated from another. It is also a form of further commentary; Florida rounds off the 'strangling of a black/man'; his humanity is an afterthought to his race. I have also left out, out of personal preference and for the isolated coherence of the extract respectively, the first line of the first stanza and the last line of the last. As for the language itself, I have created a pun where there is none in the French; where Césaire literally says: 'my voice, the liberty of those sunk in the dungeon of despair,' I translated 'my voice, the liberty of those shut up/ in despair,'

emphasising the double meaning with the line break. Of course, I was also alert to double meanings Césaire probably did intend; for example, I translate 'flanc' as 'flank' rather than the geographical 'slope,' as he humanises the landscape with the verb 'secretes.' The most challenging word was probably 'mortifié', which fuses the adjectives for 'murderous' with 'plague-stricken'; I translated it as 'death-stricken.' It is a darkly striking creation, reminding us that death is not an absolute but a wasting malady. Like the rest of the poem, it flaunts Césaire's philosophical genius.

Second prize, 18-and-under category

青い馬

馬は山をかけ下りて発狂した。その日から彼女は青い食物をたべる。
夏は女達の日や袖を
青く染めると街の広場で楽しく廻転する。
テラスの客達はあんなにシガレットを吸うのでブリキのような空は貴
婦人の頭髪の輪を落
書きしている。悲しい記憶は手巾のように捨てようと思ふ。恋と悔恨
とエナメル靴を忘
れることが出来たら!
私は二階から飛び降りずに済んだのだ。
海が天にあがる。

Sagawa Chika

The Blue Horse

A horse galloped down
the mountain, and went mad. Since
then, she eats blue food.

Summer dyes women's
eyes and sleeves blue and, joyful,
whirls in the town square.

Guests on the terrace
smoke so many cigarettes
that the tin-like sky

scrawls loops onto the
ladies' hair. Let's throw away
the sad memories

like a handkerchief.
If I could only forget
the love and regret

and the patent shoes!
I got through without jumping
from the second floor.

Sea rises to sky.

*Translated from the Japanese
by Lulu Walsh*

Second prize, 18-and-under category

Lulu Walsh's commentary

This poem, taken from a collection of poems by Japanese avant-garde poet Sagawa Chika, does not have a clear meaning on a surface level; the striking but bizarre imagery invites the reader into the world of the poet.

We are aware of worries, regrets and her broken heart; however, the ending of the poem is optimistic. There is a suggestion that she has escaped from suicide, and the last line, with the mention of 'rising' to the sky, reflects how she has risen above the worries she has faced.

This poem is in modern Japanese – it was written in the early twentieth century – and having some knowledge of Japanese made translating the poem at a literal level not excessively difficult. I did not take huge liberties; the core content was strange enough.

The structure of the original poem is loose to the point of being nonexistent – it is decidedly and deliberately unstructured, even using enjambment in mid-word, such as '忘 | れる', or 'for | get') – but in translation this did not seem sufficiently strange.

Having experimented with various forms I decided to structure the poem into a series of haikus. This was paradoxical. I was seeking a complex, alienating effect to match the strangeness of the poem's impact. Somehow this form framed the strange imagery of the poem better.

Using such a traditional form for such an untraditional poem was dangerous of course, but it had an extra benefit – this traditional lens could playfully reflect the stereotypical way in which the average Western reader perceives Japanese poetry.

Third prize, 18-and-under category

Ghumne Mech Mathi Andho Manchhe

Dinabhari
sukēkō bāmsajhaiṁ
āphnō khōkrōpanamāthi
uṁghēra,
pachutā'ēra,
dinabhari
rōgī malēvājhaiṁ
āphnō chātī āphnai cuccōlē ṭhuṁgēra,
ghā'uharu kōṭṭyā'ēra,
dinabhari
sallāghārījhaiṁ ēkalāsamā
avyakta vēdanālē suṁkka suṁkka rō'ēra,
dinabhari
pātē cyā'ujhaiṁ
dharatī ra ākāsakō viśālatādēkhi ṭādhā
ē'uṭā sānō ṭhā'uṁmā āphnō khuttā gādēra,
ē'uṭā sānō chātālē āphūlā'i dhākēra,
sām̄jhamā jaba nēpāla khumci'ēra kāṭhamāṇḍau
kāṭhamāṇḍau ḍalli'ēra nayā saḍaka
ra
nayāṁ saḍaka asaṅkhyā mānisakā pā'umuni kulci'ēra, ṭukri'ēra,
akhabāra ciyā ra pāna kō pasala banča,

Blind Man on a Spinning Chair

All day
Like dried bamboo,
dozing
in my own hollowness,
regretting;

All day
Hurt,
like a sick pigeon,
pecking at its own wound;

All day,
Sobbing with unexpressed suffering
like the wind
through an empty pine forest;

All day
Like a folio mushroom
stuck in the vastness of the distance
between heaven and earth,
stuck in a small corner,
digging my feet into the ground,
hunched under a small umbrella;

In the evening,
When Nepal cowers into Kathmandu,
And Kathmandu scrunches into New Road,
And New Road, trodden under innumerable footsteps,
fragmented,
shrinks into newspaper, tea and betel stands;

Third prize, 18-and-under category

kisima kisimakā pōśākamā
ōhōra dōhōra garchan? Tharitharikā hallāharu,
phula pārēkō kukhurājhaiṁ karā'udai
hiṁḍchana akhabāraharu
ra
ṭhā'um̄ ṭhā'um̄mā andhakāra pēṭimā uklincha
mōṭaraharukō prakāśadēkhi tarsēra,
ani asaṅkhya maurīkō bhunabhuna ra ḍadā'idēkhi
ātti'ēra
ma uṭhchu
n'yāyakō dinamā prētāt māharu uṭhējhaiṁ
ra
napā'ēra bismṛtikō 'lēthē' nadī,
raksīkō gilāsamā hāmaphālchu
ra
birsanchu āphnō pūrvakathālā'ī
pūrvajunī ra mṛtyulā'ī
yasarī nai sadhaiṁ
ciyākō kiṭalibāṭa ē'uṭā sūrya udā'um̄cha
sadhai raksīkō rittō gilāsamā ē'uṭā sūrya astā'um̄cha
ghumirahēkai cha ma basēkō pṛthvī —pūrvavat
phagata ma aparicita chu
variṭparikā parivartanaharudēkhi,
dṛśyāharudēkhi,
ramā'ilōdēkhi,
pradarśanīkō ghumnē mēcamāthi
karalē basēkō andhō jastai.

Bhupi Scherchan

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Numerous noises come and go
dressed in different outfits,
Newspapers walk about
clucking like laying hens,
Rumours flinch,
frightened by the headlights
as darkness descends;

Panicked by the angry humming and stinging of bees,
I arise,
Exactly like spirits on the Day of judgement,
Unable to drink the oblivion of Lethe,
I dive into another glass of wine,
and forget my lives and deaths;

From a tea kettle,
rises the sun,
And always,
from an empty glass of wine,
it sets;

The world on which I live continues to spin, as always,
only I am an outsider
to the changes around me,
to the scenes,
to the joy -
like a blind man at an exhibition,
forced to sit upon a spinning chair.

*Translated from the Nepali
by Anusha Gautam*

Anusha Gautam's commentary

I chose this poem because it provides an esoteric snapshot of a period of cultural upheaval within Nepal, contrasting nature and modernity and their effect on humanity. It presents a disconnect from the world around the speaker, which is part of the reason I picked this poem. There's a sense of bitter poignancy as the speaker feels unable to adjust to the sweeping changes taking over society, consumed by their own suffering, wanting to forget and being unable

to. I also think Sherchan's voice typifies the voice of Nepali poetic satire, and I enjoyed this process for that very reason, as I could connect to my culture.

The expression of nuances through the word choice was particularly difficult for me, as many words trigger a 'collective consciousness' shared by the Nepalese population, and much of the emotion is deeply engrained within these words – preserving this was a challenge. Sherchan's use of free verse gave

me a lot of freedom to take liberty with the structure, especially as tenses in the original language are differently expressed, being very fluid and ambiguous. I have attempted to preserve the fragmentation of the original form, which I think is very important in presenting the mental state of the narrator, and thus, the depth of the poem. However, translating this fragmentation, while also making sure the poem made sense, was quite difficult – due to the use of colloquialisms.

歸 路

わが歩みにつれてゆれながら
懐中電燈の黄色いちひさな光の輪が
荒れた街道の石ころのうへをにぶくてらす
よるの家路のしみりした伴侶よと私は思ふ
よる
夜ちゆう風が目覺めて動いてゐる野を
かうしてお前にみちびかれるとき
いつかあはれなわが視力は
やさしくお前の輪の内に囚はれて
もどかしい周囲の闇につぶやくのだ
——この手の中のともしびは
あゝ僕らの「詩」にそつくりだ
自問にたいして自答して……それつきの……
光の輪のなかにうかぶ轍は
晝まより一層かげ深くきざまれてあり
妖精めくあざやかな緑いろして
草むらの色はわが通行をささやきあつた

Itō Shizuo

Going Home

It sways up ahead
its rhythm my rhythm
in the dark, this small
yellow circle splashing
dully on the pebbly road.
Oh my solemn friend:
Take me home. My eyes
are sore and happy to be
your prisoner in this field
of restless winds. There's
something eager in the dark.
I speak to it. 'This light in my
hand is our poem, it answers
to no-one else.' In the glow
the furrows in the road seem
carved of a deeper dark, yet
the grass is greener than green,
and I hear it, the rustle in
the colour, and I hear it,
the way home

*Translated from the Japanese
by James Garza*

James Garza's commentary

This poem is from the fourth and final collection of the Japanese Romanticist Itō Shizuo (1906-1953). A devotee of Rilke and Hölderlin, Itō sought to break down the barrier between subject and object, and to give voice to truths inherent in the physical world. The scholar Takeda Hideo sees something 'pantheistic' about the poet's relationship to the non-human in his first collection, *Laments to My Beloved* (*Waga Hito-ni Atauru Aika*, 1935). In his second collection, *Summer Flowers* (*Natsu Hana*, 1940), the poet's world had become one where objects seem to call out directly to

him. The poet is no longer the one that sings, but rather the one 'sung to,' in Itō's words.

According to Donald Keene, Itō's final collection, *Echoes* (*Hankyō*, 1947), was 'written in a much simpler style than his earlier poetry, so simple indeed that the poems have been faulted for their prosiness.' However, this is exactly what drew me to the poem I chose to translate. Here, in simple but carefully chosen language, is a real place. Desolate though it may be, each detail is so *present* it contributes to a tremendous sense of repleteness. The words are plain but full.

This was by far the most difficult thing to translate. I wanted my words to be plain but full. How does one attain 'fullness' in language? In the Japanese, the lines are long-ish and prosy, and I tried at first to match the length of these lines in my translation. But the feeling that something special was happening did not come until I broke the lines up a bit. It struck me that when using plain words, perhaps it is best not to be able to see too far down the road. I hope my line breaks preserve this sense of anticipation.

natur – nein danke

von zeit zu zeit seh ich sie gern
die vergifteten bäume
die befallenen wiesen
diese verlauste landschaft
aus dem zugfenster meines abteils
wo ich mich gerüstet fühle
mit tinkturen und
tabletten und
anderer munition
gegen die bissigen bakterien
die killervire
das riesige feindliche heer
an mir und in mir
soll ich vielleicht hinaustreten
ins verseuchte grün
wo neue feinde warten
nein danke sage ich zu meinen freunden
den berg- und talsteigern
ich habe hier drinnen
schon genug natur

Elfriede Gerstl

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nature – no thanks

from time to time i like to watch
the poisoned trees
the infested fields
this louse-filled landscape
from the window of my compartment
where i feel fortified
with my tinctures
and tablets and
other ammunition
against the biting bacteria
the killer viruses
the giant enemy hoard
on me and in me
should i step outside perhaps
in the toxic green
where new fiends lie in wait
no thanks i say to all my friends
the valley hopping rock climbers
i've got more than enough
nature here inside

*Translated from the German
by Ollie Evans*

Ollie Evans's commentary

Elfriede Gerstl (1932–2009) played an important part in the post-war Viennese literary scene. This poem combines her distinctive style and humour with themes of landscape and alienation.

I emulate the poem's visual style. *Kleinschreibung* (lower-case writing) was typical of the radical poetry of the Vienna Group (with which Gerstl was associated) with its roots in Bauhaus modernism. The closest anglicising equivalent is lower-case first person pronouns, recalling e e cummings. While abolishing hierarchies between words, it also highlights the speaker's sense of alienation; as the subject isn't capitalised, they no longer take precedence over nouns

and verbs. Metrically, I paid close attention to syllables and stress in order to create an equivalent rhythmic echo of the original.

Several word choices diverge from the German to highlight the interweaving of historical violence with the everyday. In line 16, I used the Germanic, 'fiends', instead of the French, 'enemies', in order to highlight the unsettling proximity between 'fiend' and 'friend' ('Feinde/Freunde'). For someone who survived the Holocaust in Vienna by hiding in cupboards, this ambivalence can be a matter of life and death. The etymological allusion also reveals a connection between the two languages that is both familiar and

alienating; a tension that I think underlines the poem as a whole.

'Gerüstet' means both 'ready' and 'armed', like a soldier ready to attack, while 'fortified' could allude to a castle or a more quotidian sense of fortification against a cold. I decided that the combination of the two senses – the military with the everyday – was more effective than the more literal 'armed' as it gets at something that subtly underlines the entire poem (as well as much post-war Austrian literature): the silent historical violence that pervades everything from everyday language to the supposedly 'natural' landscapes of the Austrian and Teutonic *Heimat*.

More

Јеремија, 31,3

То исцурело је уље из машине
Првога покретача; још се хлади,
Еон по еон, још изнутра ради
По такту прапочетка; из модрине
Куља врв ларви видљивога света
И све што садржано је у слутњи
Његовог озверења, колоплета
Молекула и ватре: море тутњи.

Ту целост што на збир несводива је
Ти разлажеш на призоре у духу,
Неувежбаном да свари, да схвати
Ограничени бескрај; море траје
У одломцима, у блеску, тишини
Паслике звучне слеђене у слуху
После олује; и не можеш знати
Ни право, тајно име тој модрини,

Па кажеш: море, а мислиш на свашта,
На летњи дан, на бродовље, на луке –
Поступком уходаним, којим машта
Претвара слутњу у слике и звуке,
Вечност би хтео да се саобрази
Потреби да је изричеш, и тако
Храниш и пламен где сагори свако
Смртан, увек у истој парафрази

Заборављеног изворника. Море,
Море на сунцу и у ноћној мори
Неког Колумба насуканог, или
Вода што кротко покори се сили
Кад затворе се уставе небеса,
Море послушник моћи што га створи,
Море од крви и море од меса
Празвери која храни метафоре –

[...]

Sea

Jeremiah, XXXI, 3

An oil-leak from the primum mobile,
For aeons now the sea's been losing heat
But keeps on running to the inner beat
Of its first cause; the blue beneath the spray
Teems with the larvae of the world that we
Perceive, and the suspicion now unfurling
That it might shape-shift to a beast, to whirling
Molecules and fire: the roar of the sea.

Although that sum can't be reduced to mere
Amounts, it's parsed to scenes inside your mind,
Which balks at thoughts of endlessness with bounds:
The sea lasts on as shards, as glints, in sound's
Faint after-images which stay behind
When storms have passed, and freeze inside the ear
As quietness; you cannot hope to know
The secret, real name of that blue, and so

You say: the sea, at which your thoughts veer round
At random – ships, a quay, a summer day –
Since, by routine, imagination plays
The sixth sense back as images and sound.
You'd like eternity to fit your need
To put it into words, and so you feed
The flame in which all mortals burn away,
Forever as the selfsame paraphrase

Of some forgotten master copy. Sea,
Sea seen in sun, and booming through some stranded
Columbus's recurring nightmare, or
Meek waters which comply with the decree
That heaven's sluice-gates should stop off the flood.
Sea, lackey to the power which commanded
That it be, sea of muscle and of blood,
Blood from the ur-beast that's its metaphor –

[...]

Шта урониш у море, лакше бива
За истиснуту количину бола,
По Архимеду; присилно крштење
Утопљенику гране плућа скрши,
А благослов је тог преображења
Природа воле што насиље врши,
Јер све је живо само парабола
Несавршенства, што милост је жива.

Не куни море. Не куни ни празнину
Што сакрива се у неизреченом.
Све се на једну чисту сведе црту
Обзора, када слегне се бонаца
И море расте ко нокти мртваца,
У непокрету; све се на тишину
Насушну сведе, у одјеку њеном
На шаптање у Гетсиманском врту.

И можда је зарибала машина
Првога покретача, после чина
Стварања сврхе која правда Творца;
И свет се не исцрпљује у слутњи
Испомераног свог преображења –
Но верност слутњи верност је поморца
Који до краја има поверења
У море.

Слушај море: море тутњи.

Ivan V. Lalić

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Whatever you might plunge into the sea
Is lighter by the weight of pain displaced,
As Archimedes showed; the bronchial tree
Of one who's drowning shatters in the forced
Baptism – this transfiguration's blessed,
Though, by the nature of the will which caused
Its pain, for all things living are at best
A curve of imperfection: life is graced.

Don't blame the sea. And do not even blame
The emptiness which hides in the unsaid.
It all falls back to one pure line, look, ruled
By the horizon when the seas turn tame
And, like the fingernails of those who're dead,
Grow on in stillness; everything is spooled
Back to a quiet whose normality
Echoes a whisper in Gethsemane.

Perhaps the primum mobile has rusted
Fast, after the creation of the aim
Which proved its Maker right; the world's not going
To give up on the effort of foreknowing
Its shifts of shape. To keep faith, all the same,
With this foreknowing is the loyalty
Of sailors who, right till the end, have trusted
The sea.

That roaring, listen: it's the sea.

*Translated from the Serbian
by Francis Jones*

Francis Jones's commentary

Ivan V. Lalić (1931–1996), one of twentieth-century Yugoslavia's and Serbia's leading poets, was also a Mediterranean poet: the sea is a constant theme throughout his oeuvre. 'Sea', which I translated for an English-language compilation of Lalić's poetry (expected 2020), continues that theme. Its philosophical search for meaning characterises his later verse, but also reflects a personal tragedy: in 1989, Lalić's eldest son drowned when his yacht capsized in a storm on the Adriatic.

Virtually all of Lalić's mature work uses free verse, but in the 1990 collection which concludes with this poem, he turns to fixed forms, paying homage to his early-twentieth-century poet forebears. My

translations, I felt, had to reflect that turn, though translating into free verse would have been easier. However, I converted the original's eleven-syllable line, often used for 'serious' South-Slav poetry, into iambic pentameter, as a close target-culture equivalent, and because it can carry a similar number of English ideas as the Serbian original. Following the original's largely irregular rhyme scheme made finding rhymes slightly less hard (though never easy), as rhyme-partners could be sought anywhere in the verse.

When the constraints of fixed form inevitably forced surface meanings to change, I sought to reflect Lalić's underlying image,

or his wider poetics. Thus 'modrine' ('dark-blueness') became 'the blue beneath the spray' to rhyme with 'the primum mobile' (pronounced 'mobilé'): sea-spray often occurs in Lalić's poems. Sound-based challenges sometimes interacted with word-level challenges. The original's lines 1–2, say, has oil leaking from the 'primum mobile's engine' ('mašine Prvog pokretača') – a startlingly concrete image, especially as 'pokretača' also means 'starter-motor's'. I regretfully had to drop 'engine' in English, because the only available rhyme-words forced the lines to end where they did. But if translations are to live as poems in another language, they must find their own poetic pulse.

I'm delighted to introduce the second year of our 'Polish Spotlight', which combines our education programmes – creative translation workshops for young people – with a special prize for translation from Polish. This new focus has enabled the Trust to reach out to diverse groups of young people across the UK, introducing more pupils, teachers and community groups to the inspiring activity of creative translation.

The Polish Spotlight originated in workshops run by the Stephen Spender Trust in Hull in 2017, during its year as UK City of Culture. Since then we have developed the Spotlight into a series of workshops in primary, secondary and community-led supplementary schools. Each workshop

is a hugely stimulating experience in its own right, and is also designed to inspire pupils to enter the Spotlight prize. That prize is open to all young people across the UK, and we are very pleased that award-winning translator Antonia Lloyd-Jones has once again judged the entries. You can read her reflections and the winning entries below.

We are grateful to the Polish Cultural Institute in London, the Rothschild Foundation, the British Council and Christ's Hospital School for their support of the workshops and prize, and we look forward to developing additional language 'spotlights' in the years to come.

Charlotte Ryland
Director of the Stephen Spender Trust

Judge's commentary



Once again, the Polish Spotlight prize for translators aged 18 and under, 14 and under, and 10 and under has provided an opportunity for British children to explore Polish poetry, whether they have Polish family roots or not.

For children growing up in an adopted country, it can be hard to keep in touch with the culture their parents knew at their age. Naturally, as they get older, they're more absorbed by the local culture that they share with their friends, and the songs and poetry their grandparents have told them about are left behind. But they're often curious about their 'secret' language, and the doors it can open for them. Initiatives like the Polish Spotlight give them valuable inspiration to find out what's on the other side of those doors.

As last year, the workshops organised to encourage children who speak Polish at home to get to know it and translate from it, and to explain its mysteries to their classmates, have brought in

plenty of entries for the competition, most impressively in the 10-and-under category.

The workshops for children aged 10 and under from a number of primary schools focused on short animal poems by Jan Brzechwa – classics in Poland that every child grows up with. Their charm relies on humour, rhythm and rhyme, so the success of the translation depends on retaining all three of those qualities. I loved Harrison Nye's entry, 'Fox', because he managed to achieve just that, showing a youthful awareness of what makes a comic poem effective.

There were several other brave competitors who took on Brzechwa's longer verses, and one who chose a charming contemporary love poem. But the two translations that stood out for me were of works by classic authors now less familiar to schoolchildren in Poland. A commendation goes to Jakub Śliwa for his translation of 'Poland' by Antoni Słonimski, a nostalgic poem mourning his country's fate in the Second World War. Jakub wasn't put off by unfamiliar words, and the translation

shows sensitivity to the poet's intentions, aiming to keep the rhymes where possible, and capturing the sense of homesickness – a remarkable achievement at an early age.

The winner, Roksana Tkaczyńska, chose 'In School', a poem by nineteenth-century author Maria Konopnicka, perhaps best remembered for her children's stories. This is a comic poem relying on rhymes, humour and pace, and Roksana has risen to the challenge excellently. 'There were words in Polish that you can't translate or they don't seem to work in English,' she has realised, and has then found imaginative ways to convey the poet's aims using different words, but keeping similar techniques.

In the 14-and-under category the workshops run at Highcrest Academy in High Wycombe produced a fine crop of translations of poems by contemporary poets, including Wanda Chotomska and Michał Rusinek, as challenging as the classics. One competitor made a brave attempt at tackling the opening verses of Poland's nineteenth-century epic, *Pan Tadeusz*, by Adam Mickiewicz. Once

again, it was Jan Brzechwa and Julian Tuwim – the other founding father of Polish comic verse – who inspired the most original entries, despite being fiendishly difficult to translate.

I loved the winning translation by Michaela Konkolewska-Grybè, of Tuwim’s ‘Glasses’, because she understood that the success of the poem relies on using technical effects to heighten the humour. Her translation stood out for going the extra mile beyond straightforward translation into creativity. She explains her approach well in the commentary, revealing that there were several stages, some effort and imagination involved in the translation work. ‘I honestly thought it would be easier and would take less time’, she writes, showing that she has learned a basic lesson of translation. ‘Overall I really enjoyed doing this,’ she continues, ‘I would recommend this to so many people, because even if you don’t win, there is still a great memory that you will keep forever.’

There were fewer entries in the 18-and-under category, possibly confirming my theory that at this stage in life, teenagers coping with the demands

of GCSEs and A Levels have less time to explore beyond the curriculum. So I was particularly impressed by the choices of poems, and to find that young Polish-speakers are aware of the work of Poland’s greatest poets. The commentaries also showed a mature approach to the meaning of the poems and some intelligent thoughtfulness about what exactly successful translation involves. Two translations were of poems by the nineteenth-century Romantic poet Cyprian Kamil Norwid; again, his work is not for the faint-hearted translator. In his translation of ‘My Last Sonnet’, Alexander Norris shows a subtle understanding of the poem’s emotional depth, as well as a creative approach to Norwid’s techniques, boldly opting for a nineteenth-century tone in English, the success of which earned him a commendation.

One of the entrants chose a love poem by Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński, who died tragically young in the Warsaw Uprising – it’s good to know that his beautiful poetry is alive and well among teenagers. Two of the entrants chose poems by twentieth-century Nobel prize winners, Czesław Miłosz

and Wisława Szymborska, the former recommended by the translator’s grandmother. The outstanding entry was Zuzanna Osińska’s translation of Szymborska’s ‘I am too close for him to dream of me’. Her admiration and enjoyment of the lyrical language of the poem comes across in her fine rendition of metaphors such as ‘I hear a hiss / And see the shimmering scale of this word’. She untangles the translation knots competently, explaining for instance in her commentary the need to translate the word *kasjerka* (meaning ‘female cashier’) without losing its gender. She also shows a feel for the moment when the translator needs to let instinct take over: ‘...The best way to stay true to the poet’s style was to play around with sentence structures... Szymborska herself was not a fan of poetry rules... and this was something I tried to emulate’.

Congratulations to all on their inquiring exploration of Polish poetry, and on their perceptive approach to the very difficult art of translating it. I hope they will feel inspired to let their curiosity and creative talents take them further down this path.

Antonia Lloyd Jones

W szkole

CHŁOPCZYK

Ej ty szkoło, nudna szkoło!
Wcale w tobie niewesoło.
Tu rozmyślasz o zabawce,
A tu siedz kamieniem w ławce
I patrz w książkę z drobnym drukiem.

GŁOS

Ale brzydko być nieukiem!

CHŁOPCZYK

Rozwinęły się już drzewa,
Łada wróbel sobie śpiewa,
Łada motyl sobie leci,
Gdzie mu kwiatek się zakwieci,
A ty w szkole... w zimie, w lecie!

GŁOS

Ale głupim źle na świecie!

CHŁOPCZYK

Ławka twarda, niegodziwa
Czasem aż mnie coś podrywa,
Żeby chociaż kilka chwilek
Jak ptak bujać, jak motylek,
Żeby wybiec w łąkę... w pole...

GŁOS

Próżniak, kto się nudzi w szkole!

Maria Konopnicka

In School

SMALL BOY

Hey, you school, boring school!
Nothing in you is good or cool.
I'd rather play toys and games,
Than sit like a statue with lots of names
Or gaze at a book in microscopic print.

SOMEONE'S VOICE

What a shame to be ignorant!

SMALL BOY

The trees have been growing for long,
The sparrow is singing a song,
The butterfly's flying around,
The flowers are growing really round,
But I am stuck in school, whatever the month!

SOMEONE'S VOICE:

Life is not easy for the ignorant!

SMALL BOY

The school bench is uncomfortable and tough,
I wish someone would pull me off it, rough,
I wish I could spend a few moments,
Chatting with guys who win tournaments.
To run into a meadow... into a pool...

SOMEONE'S VOICE:

Only lazy boys get bored in school!

*Translated by
Roksana Tkaczyńska*

Roksana Tkaczyńska's commentary

I chose this poem because it's about school and I LIKE to go to school to learn. It was hard because there were words in Polish that you can't translate or they don't seem to work in English. I still enjoyed translating this poem because I love challenging things and I actually found it easier this time round after taking part in last year's competition.

Okulary

Biega, krzyczy pan Hilary:
„Gdzie są moje okulary?”

Szuka w spodniach i w surducie,
W prawym bucie, w lewym bucie.

Wszystko w szafach poprzewracał,
Maca szlafrok, palto maca.

„Skandal! – krzyczy - nie do wiary!
Ktoś mi ukradł okulary!”

Pod kanapą, na kanapie,
Wszędzie szuka, parska, sapie!

Szpera w piecu i w kominie,
W mysiej dziurze i w pianinie.

Już podłogę chce odrywać,
Już policję zaczął wzywać.

Nagle - zerknął do lusterka...
Nie chce wierzyć... Znowu zerka.

Znalazł! Są! Okazało się,
Że je ma na własnym nosie.

Julian Tuwim

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Fundacja im. Juliana Tuwima i Ireny Tuwim
(The Julian and Irena Tuwim Foundation)*

Glasses

“Where are my glasses? Where are my glasses?”
Running and screaming is poor Mr Francis.

“Where have they gone? I have no clue!”
He checks his frock, trousers and shoes.

His whole wardrobe is knocked over,
He pats his dressing gown and pullover.

“Unbelievable” he shouts, “unacceptable!”
“Somebody has stolen my spectacles!”

Under, inside, on the lounge chair;
Snorting and gasping; ripping out his hair.

He peeps in the oven and up the chimney,
Inside a mouse hole and each piano key.

He wants the police to come straight away,
He wants to rip out the floorboards today!

Suddenly he looks in the mirror,
He doesn’t believe it, he looks much clearer.

He found them! They’re here! Who could’ve known?
That his glasses were on his very own nose.

*Translated by
Michaela Konkolewska-Grybė*

Michaela Konkolewska-Grybė’s commentary

The poem I decided to choose was ‘Okulary’ by Julian Tuwim. I chose it for many reasons; one of the reasons I chose this was because it reminded me of a family member, my mum. She always runs around the place shouting “Where is my phone!?” or “Where are my keys?!” when they’re right behind her.

I started off by writing down the literal translation of the poem (even though it didn’t make much sense) and then I re-wrote it

so that it made sense but some of it didn’t rhyme (a few stanzas did though). It took me quite a while to translate this poem because I didn’t know a few of the words in English or I couldn’t find anything to rhyme with a specific word. Then I thought about the website my mum uses, *Thesaurus*, and I started searching from there. I honestly thought that it would be easier and that it would take less time but that wasn’t the case.

To keep the rhythm flowing, I sometimes had to change the word order or add words with similar meaning.

Overall I really enjoyed doing this and it was a great experience and I had never translated a poem before. I would recommend this to so many people because even if you don’t win, there is still a great memory that you will keep forever.

Jestem za blisko, żeby mu się śnić.

Jestem za blisko, żeby mu się śnić.
Nie fruвам nad nim, nie uciekam mu
pod korzeniami drzew. Jestem za blisko.
Nie moim głosem śpiewa ryba w sieci.
Nie z mego palca toczy się pierścionek.
Jestem za blisko. Wielki dom się pali
beze mnie wołającej ratunku. Za blisko,
żeby na moim włosie dzwonił dzwon.
Za blisko, żebym mogła wejść jak gość,
przed którym rozsuwają się ściany.
Już nigdy po raz drugi nie umrę tak lekko,
tak bardzo poza ciałem, tak bezwiednie,
jak niegdyś w jego śnie. Jestem za blisko,
za blisko. Słyszę syk
i widzę połyskliwą łuskę tego słowa,
zniecieruchiała w objęciu. On śpi,
w tej chwili dostępniejszy widzianej raz w życiu
kasjerce wędrownego cyrku z jednym lwem
niż mnie leżącej obok.
Teraz dla niej rośnie w nim dolina
rudolistna, zamknięta ośnieżoną górą
w lazurowym powietrzu. Ja jestem za blisko,
żeby mu z nieba spaść. Mój krzyk
mógłby go tylko zbudzić. Biedna,
ograniczona do własnej postaci,
a byłam brzozą, a byłam jaszczurką,
a wychodziłam z czasów i atlasów
mieniając się kolorami skór. A miałam
łuskę znikania sprzed zdumionych oczu,
co jest bogactwem bogactw. Jestem blisko,
za blisko, żeby mu się śnić.
Wysuwam ramię spod głowy śpiącego,
zdrętwiałe, pełne wyrojonych szpilek.
Na czubku każdej z nich, do przeliczenia,
strąceni siedli anieli.

Wisława Szymborska

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(the Wisława Szymborska Foundation)*

I am too close for him to dream of me

I am too close for him to dream of me.
I don't fly above him, I don't hide from him
Under the roots of trees. I am too close.
It is not with my voice the fish in the net sings.
It is not my finger from which the ring rolls.
I am too close. A big house burns
Without me screaming for help. Too close
For the bell to ring on my hair.
Too close for me to enter as a guest,
Before whom the walls slide apart.
I will never, for the second time, die so lightly,
So much outside my body, so unwittingly,
As I did once in his sleep. I am too close,
Too close. I hear a hiss
And see the shimmering scale of this word,
I'm paralysed in embrace. He sleeps,
In this moment more accessible to a ticket lady
at a travelling circus with one lion,
seen once in a lifetime,
Than to me lying beside him.
Now for her a red-leafed valley in him grows,
Closed by a snowy mountain in the azure air. I am too close
To be a godsend for him. My scream
Could only wake him. Poor,
Limited to my own form,
And yet I was a birch, yet I was a lizard,
Yet I left behind times and satins,
Flickering through colours of my skin. Yet I had
The favour of disappearing before amazed eyes,
Which is the treasure of treasures. I am close,
Too close for him to dream of me.
I slip my arm from under his sleeping head,
Numb, filled with imagined pins and needles.
On top of each of them, ready to be counted,
Fallen angels sit.

*Translated by
Zuzanna Osińska*

Zuzanna Osińska's commentary

I decided to enter this competition to test my skills of translation from my own language into English. This nameless poem, commonly referred to as 'Jestem za blisko, żeby mu się śnić', is a gem that I found when searching through the poems of Wisława Szymborska, whose gorgeous turns of phrase were a joy to translate. It is a touching poem about the ponderings of a woman on her relationship becoming too comfortable whilst her lover is sleeping beside her. I particularly love all the metaphors she uses to convey her distress at her realisation, as

well as the easy flow of the poem which portrays her thoughts.

I found the translation particularly difficult due to the complexity and meaning of some of the phrases: I had to sometimes switch them around and change some words to preserve the original meaning as best I could. As Polish doesn't use the same phrases or grammatical rules as English, I had to think very hard about the best way to convey the same meaning as the original language, for example I had to use the word 'ticket lady' as English does not have a

gender-specific version of the word cashier. Due to the deeply emotional nature of this poem, I also had to ensure that even a direct translation of a sentence would convey the same tone and emotion as the original.

I also decided that the best way to stay true to the poet's style was to play around with sentence structures, as Szymborska herself was not a fan of poetry rules, instead opting to write what came naturally. This was something I tried to emulate by focusing more on the feeling of the poem than the structure.

Stephen Spender Prize in association with the *Guardian*

The idea of a poetry translation competition for young people was born of a discussion with the late Daniel Weissbort (co-founder with Ted Hughes of the journal *Modern Poetry in Translation*) and Susan Bassnett (founder and Director of Warwick University's Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies). At the time, young people studying languages rarely encountered literature, translation was frowned upon (it is now back on the curriculum) and language learning had ceased to be compulsory after the age of 14. Paradoxically, as the message went out that languages were not valued by educational policy-makers, the number of children in UK schools with mother tongues other than English was growing and has continued to grow ever since.

The annual Stephen Spender Prize was launched in 2004 in partnership with *The Times* under Erica Wagner's literary editorship and with the support of Arts Council England. Fourteen years later, and now in partnership with the *Guardian*, the prize continues to celebrate the art of literary translation and encourage a new generation of literary translators.

Entrants are invited to translate a poem from any language – ancient or modern – into English, and submit both the original and their translation together with a commentary of not more than 300 words. The commentary – a requirement described by AS Byatt as 'splendidly intelligent' – is intended to shed light on the translation process, revealing the decisions the translators have made and the solutions they have come up with, as well as each translator's reason for choosing a particular poem.

There are prizes in three categories: Open, 18-and-under and 14-and-under. For the first time this year we are awarding three prizes in the 14-and-under category: testament to the growing number of entries from this younger age group, and to the quality of their translations. For many of the younger entrants, the



Stephen Spender – poet, critic, editor and translator – lived from 1909 to 1995. Inspired by his literary interests and achievements, the Stephen Spender Trust was set up to widen appreciation of the literary legacy of Stephen Spender and his contemporaries and promote literary translation.

competition is an introduction to poetry in another language and a first attempt at poetry translation; for the adult translators, winning can bring public recognition, publishing contracts and new contacts and networks.

Booklets of winning entries from previous years can be obtained from the Trust or downloaded from its website (www.stephen-spender.org), which also provides advice for entrants, an attempt (with examples) by former judge George Szirtes to categorise translated poetry, and a growing bank of poetry translation activities aimed at teachers.

The Trust's new education programme, Creative Translation in the Classroom, brings together our education work with the

prize and will result in a bank of teaching resources for teachers wishing to integrate creative translation into their teaching. For the first time this year we are also offering digital certificates to all entrants in the youth categories, in order to mark and celebrate all effort and participation.

The Polish Spotlight is the first in a series of language-specific strands for younger entrants. There are three categories: 18-and-under, 14-and-under, and 10-and-under, and the prize is supported by creative translation workshops in schools and community groups. We are grateful to our translator-facilitators Anna Blasiak and Maja Konkolewska for devising and running workshops, and to the following schools for hosting Polish Spotlight workshops in 2019:

Bersted Green Primary School, Bognor Regis; Southway Primary School, Bognor Regis; Highcrest Academy, High Wycombe; Christ's Hospital School, Horsham – host to pupils from Greenway Academy; Maidenbower Junior School; Slinfold, Primary; St John's Primary; St Mary's Primary; Shelley Primary; Sompting Village Primary; Our Lady's Queen of Heaven; and Warnham Primary.

Stephen and Natasha Spender

Stephen and Natasha Spender's manuscripts, letters, diaries and other personal papers are available to readers in the University of Oxford's Bodleian Library. *A House in St John's Wood*, Matthew Spender's intimate portrait of Stephen and Natasha Spender (William Collins, 2015), draws on his personal memories and unpublished material found in the north London house his parents had rented since 1941. It supplements Stephen Spender's *New Selected Poems* (ed. Grey Gowrie, Faber, 2009), his *New Collected Poems* (ed. Michael Brett, Faber, 2004), the *New Selected Journals* (ed. John Sutherland and Lara Feigel, Faber, 2012) and John Sutherland's authorised biography of z Spender (Penguin, 2005).

The Stephen Spender Trust

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