



The Stephen Spender Prize  
for poetry in translation 2020

Только в уборную — и сразу же в  
You wrote countless letters; one more

orna azzurro il sereno, e t  
the air turns blue, and shadow

Desenha o sol na página  
That draws the sun on an em

漫云女子不英雄

Do not tell me women cannot be her

staub. Ich höre die wespe, die über mi  
dust. i hear the wasp, who is abov

Zemsta reki śmiertelnej  
Taking revenge against the hand of dea

in association with

**The  
Guardian**

# The Stephen Spender Prize 2020 for poetry in translation

in association with *The Guardian*

## Winners and commended

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### 14-and-under



**FIRST**  
**Hannah Kripa Jordan**  
'And Yet – Our Tamil Life'  
by Manushya Puthiran  
(Tamil)



**SECOND**  
**Grace Wu**  
'muse of the moon'  
by Li Bai  
(Chinese)



**THIRD**  
**Caroline-Olivia Edwards**  
'Versos Sencillos, Verso III'  
by José Martí  
(Cuban Spanish)

#### COMMENDED

**Vishal Saha**  
'When we were kids'  
by Mario Benedetti  
(Uruguayan Spanish)

**Maddie Stoll**  
'Hope'  
by Ai Qing (Chinese)

**Omar Ullah**  
'Lest they say something'  
by Kamini Roy (Bangla)

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### 16-and-under



**FIRST**  
**Megan Turtle**  
'Do not leave your room'  
by Joseph Brodsky  
(Russian)



**SECOND**  
**Alessandro d'Attanasio**  
'Saturday in the village'  
by Giacomo Leopardi  
(Italian)



**THIRD**  
**Alice Garcia Kalmus**  
'I write against an open window'  
by Mario Quintana  
(Brazilian Portuguese)

#### COMMENDED

**Matilda Stepek**  
'Passions of a Ghostly Fury'  
by Ovid (Latin)

**Gabriela O'Keefe**  
'Tears for America' (extract)  
by Michael Davitt (Irish)

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### 18-and-under



**FIRST**  
**Maryam Zaidi**  
'The Lemons'  
by Eugenio Montale  
(Italian)



**SECOND**  
**Olivia Flint**  
'The Schoolchildren'  
by Pedro Serrano  
(Mexican Spanish)



**THIRD**  
**Isobel Birkeland**  
'Writing rhymes with  
Sir Ishii'  
by Qiu Jin (Chinese)

#### COMMENDED

**Vassil Gilbert**  
'A short summer night'  
by Yosa Buson (Japanese)

**Jasper Maughan**  
'Stay'  
by Rainald Simon (German)

**Cosima Deetman**  
'Cyber Insomnia'  
by Martin Piekar (German)

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### Open



**FIRST**  
**Stuart Lyons**  
'Wild West Cambridge  
at Dusk'  
by Xu Zhimo (Chinese)



**SECOND**  
**Marta Ciechanowicz**  
'The Joy of Writing'  
by Wisława Szymborska  
(Polish)



**THIRD**  
**Ben Fergusson**  
'dust'  
by Nadja Küchenmeister  
(German)

#### COMMENDED

**Oliver Fallon**  
'Conception of a New God'  
(verses 1.33-47)  
by Kālidāsa (Sanskrit)

**Peter Frankopan**  
'The Night of the Falling Apples'  
by Bella Akhmadulina (Russian)

**Christopher MacDonald**  
'Twelve Today's'  
by Temu Suyan (Taiwanese Mandarin)

## First-time entrant commendations

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**Fiona Garratt**  
'Colours'  
by Cécile Coulon  
(French)



**Lorna Amor**  
'The one who speaks'  
by Ling Yu  
(Taiwanese Mandarin)



**Mark Grainger**  
'The Evolution of Mankind'  
by Erich Kästner  
(German)

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## Polish Spotlight winners and commended

### 10-and-under



**WINNER**  
**Aaron Ferguson**  
'From dog to dog flea bobs'  
by Zbigniew Machej



**COMMENDED**  
**Maximilian Hempler**  
'A sawfish'  
by Łukasz Dębski

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### 14-and-under



**WINNER**  
**Alexander Fletcher**  
'Opposing Winds'  
by Tomasz Różycki



**COMMENDED**  
**Michaela Konkolewska-Grybė**  
'Tea Party'  
by Agnieszka Frączek

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### 18-and-under



**WINNER**  
**Hanna Kisiala**  
'Homecoming'  
by Bronisław Maj



**COMMENDED**  
**Skye Slatcher**  
'And that's why'  
by Adam Zagajewski



**COMMENDED**  
**Patrick Lynch**  
'A song about the end of the world'  
by Czesław Miłosz

**2020** was always set to be a year of change for the Stephen Spender Prize. We aimed to diversify the languages represented and to increase entries from young people and emerging translators. To that end, we planned two new categories (16-and-under and first-time entrants), booklets of suggested poems in multiple languages, and a guide for new translators. But we could not have anticipated the real change that the prize underwent this year, as it adapted to life amidst a pandemic. Thanks to the support of our remarkable community of translators and poets, and new funding from Arts Council England, we were able to transform the prize into a virtual programme that brought the joy of poetry translation to isolated young people and adults. Through video masterclasses and live illustration, remote workshops and lesson plans, we beamed international poetry into virtual classrooms and into homes, ensuring that this border-crossing, collaborative activity could be shared by as many people as possible during lockdown.

Translators and poets from across the world were hugely generous with their time and advice, sharing ideas and contributing texts to be included in our resources. I'm

especially grateful to our judges Khairani Barokka, Mary Jean Chan, Daljit Nagra and Antonia Lloyd-Jones for a lively and warm judging process, to our new prize coordinator Jamie Lee Searle, to SST's trustees and patrons, and to the prize's funders the Rothschild Foundation, Polonsky Foundation, Old Possum's Practical Trust, Sackler Trust, and Redcase Ltd.

We received a record number of entries this year, tangible proof that poetry can sustain and inspire through difficult times. This was particularly marked in the youth categories, with more than double last year's figure, and in the 80 languages represented across all categories. The thirty-three translators and seventeen languages in these pages reflect the vitality and diversity of those entries, and we're delighted to be able to award more prizes than ever before. We hope that, just as for those working on their prize entries during spring and summer 2020, this booklet enables readers to travel vicariously to new lands and to hear new voices.

*Charlotte Ryland*  
*Director of the Stephen Spender Trust*

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## Outstanding Teachers 2020

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**T**he large numbers of youth entries this year are due in particular to the encouragement and commitment of teachers across the UK, who went out of their way during school closures to enable and encourage their students to enter the prize.

This year we are delighted to introduce a new set of awards, to recognise teachers who show particular commitment to the prize. Our outstanding

teachers and schools this year are:

**Nadia Siddiqui**

The Westgate School, Slough

**Sabine Pichout and colleagues**

Swavesey Village College,  
Cambridgeshire

**Kilda Giraudon and colleagues**

Colyton Grammar School, Devon

Book prizes for these teachers and for our first-time-entrant commendations

in the open category have been generously donated by Faber & Faber and Nine Arches Press.

The teachers were also invited to nominate students to participate in a workshop for this year's youth winners and commendees, which we ran for the first time this year. We're grateful to SST patron Kate Clanchy, who gave a workshop on multilingual poetry for the young translators.



It was a treat to read the entries for this year's Stephen Spender Prize. There was a significant increase in submissions from last year, and this is a remarkable achievement for each entrant, considering the pandemic. We sincerely thank all of you who took the time to create, to submit, to submerge in so many languages. We present to you poems that moved and delighted us.

In the open category, we celebrate first prize winner 'Wild West Cambridge At Dusk' for its creative idiosyncrasies, Stuart Lyons playfully presenting Xu Zhimo's charming descriptions of 'lush lush dense dense shagginess', of sky as 'mixed-star mosaic'. Then we have Marta Ciechanowicz's translation of Wisława Szymborska's 'The Joy of Writing', a journey of gratitude for the written word, keenly translated from Polish. In third place, Ben Fergusson's translation from German of Nadja Küchenmeister's 'dust', evoking 'fever feelings' through intense sensorial description. The commended entries are Oliver Fallon for his translation from Sanskrit of Kālidāsa's 'Conception of a New God' (verses 1.33–47), Peter Frankopan for Bella Akhmadulina's 'The Night of the Falling Apples' (Russian), and Christopher MacDonald for Temu Suyan's 'Twelve Todays' (Taiwanese Mandarin), each resonant and considered. We also

have a special category commending first-time entrants. This year, those commendations go to Fiona Garratt for Cécile Coulon's 'Colours' (French), Lorna Amor for Ling Yu's 'The one who speaks' (Taiwanese Mandarin), and Mark Grainger for Erich Kästner's 'The Evolution of Mankind' (German), all of which showed sensitivity for 'each subtle nuance' (to quote Garratt's translation), remarkable for it being their first attempts.

In the 18-and-under category, we were uplifted by 'the golden trumpets of sunlight' in Maryam Zaidi's translation of Eugenio Montale's 'The Lemons' (Italian), taken by how 'the chain unravels, takes flight, re-joins' in Olivia Flint's translation of Pedro Serrano's 'The Schoolchildren' (Mexican Spanish), and felt deeply for Qiu Jin's inner monologue as both 'solitary sailboat' and 'heroic', in Isobel Birkeland's translation of 'Writing rhymes with Sir Ishii' (Chinese). Our commended entries are all skilful: Vassil Gilbert for Yosa Buson's 'A short summer night' (Japanese), Jasper Maughan for Rainald Simon's 'Stay' (German), and Cosima Deetman for Martin Piekar's 'Cyber Insomnia' (German).

For the 16-and-under category, Megan Turtle's strong translation from Russian of Joseph Brodsky's 'Do not leave your room' – in which 'Outside nothing makes sense, happiness included' – wins first prize.

Alessandro d'Attanasio wins second for Giacomo Leopardi's 'Saturday in the village' (Italian), sensitively conjuring up 'a day full of joy', and Alice Garcia Kalmus takes third for Mario Quintana's 'I write against an open window' (Brazilian Portuguese), jarring us with the 'thought of light fingers painting me!'. Commendations go to Gabriela O'Keeffe's translation of an extract from Michael Davitt's 'Tears for America' (Irish), and Matilda Stepek for Ovid's 'Passions of a Ghostly Fury' (Latin), both passionate odes on politics and war.

Finally, in the 14-and-under category, Hannah Kripa Jordan wins first prize for the boisterous, charming 'And Yet – Our Tamil Life' (Tamil) by Manushya Puthiran, followed by Grace Wu's translation of Li Bai's 'muse of the moon' (Chinese), successfully conveying a self-avowed 'mystical and ethereal atmosphere', and third goes to Caroline-Olivia Edwards' translation of Cuban poet José Martí's 'Versos Sencillos, Verso III', in which 'the air sings and romps'. Commended are Vishal Saha, Maddie Stoll, and Omar Ullah, for Mario Benedetti's 'When we were kids' (Uruguayan Spanish), Ai Qing's 'Hope' (Chinese), and Kamini Roy's 'Lest they say something' (Bangla), respectively – all containing profundity in deceptively simple language.

*Khairani Barokka*



As a recurring judge for the Stephen Spender Prize, I can safely say that the judges were once again treated to submissions of the highest quality from across our translation categories this year. The inaugural commendations for first-time entrants in the open category also allows us to celebrate translators who have submitted to the Stephen Spender Prize for the first time. The judges agreed that the Tamil poem 'And Yet – Our Tamil Life' by Manushya Puthiran was a worthy winner of the 14-and-under category, a poem full of wisdom for our difficult times, thoughtfully translated by Hannah Kripa Jordan. Second place goes to the 'muse of the moon' by Li Bai, translated by Grace Wu, who expertly expressed this classical Chinese poem in a fresh and vivid manner in English. In third place, we chose the Cuban Spanish poem 'Versos Sencillos, Verso III' by José Martí, with its crystalline imagery translated wonderfully by Caroline-Olivia Edwards. Our commendations go to Vishal Saha for 'When we were kids' (Uruguayan Spanish), Maddie Stoll for 'Hope' (Chinese) and Omar Ullah for 'Lest they say something' (Bangla), as these poems felt expansive and moving in multiple ways.

In the 16-and-under category, the judges selected Megan Turtle's translation of 'Do not leave your room' by the Russian-American poet Joseph Brodsky as our winner, as it speaks directly to our current predicament amidst COVID-19, with its clever use of biting satire expertly translated into English: 'Stay home for furniture will keep you company. / Practice wallpaper fusion. Barricade the door to protect us / from Chronos, Cosmos, Eros, the Virus.' In second place, we chose Giacomo Leopardi's 'Saturday in the village', tenderly translated from the Italian by Alessandro d'Attanasio, who evokes rural village scenes with striking imagery: 'Then when every other light is quenched, / and all else is

silent, / you hear the hammer striking, you hear the saw / of the woodworker'. Mario Quintana's 'I write against an open window' is third, translated from Brazilian Portuguese by Alice Garcia Kalmus. Despite its short length, the poem evokes the wonder of creating art as one oscillates between inspiration and daydream: 'Flashes of light dancing on the leaves! / I almost forgot what I was going to write / But why would I bother? / I also come from this landscape / I keep daydreaming'. Our commended poems go to 'Passions of a Ghostly Fury' by Ovid, translated by Matilda Stepek from Latin, and an extract from Michael Davitt's excoriating 'Tears for America', translated by Gabriela O'Keeffe, both of which captured the judges' attention.

In the 18-and-under category, we selected Maryam Zaidi's translation from Italian of 'The Lemons' by the poet Eugenio Montale as our unanimous winner for its lyric sensibility and ability to inspire hope through an appreciation of nature's bounty: 'among the trees of a courtyard / we catch a glimpse of the yellow lemons; / and the frost in our hearts thaws, / and into our chests pour / their songs – / the golden trumpets of sunlight.' In second place, we chose Pedro Serrano's 'The Schoolchildren', a poem translated from Mexican Spanish by Olivia Flint with tenderness and clarity, evoking the lovely image of a group of schoolchildren relishing one another's company: 'It is strange / this way of melding, of becoming one being. / As if they do not know who they are without following. / They seek each other, reach each other, become entangled.' In third place is 'Writing rhymes with Sir Ishii' by the Chinese revolutionary feminist writer Qiu Jin, translated by Isobel Birkeland with panache: 'Ashamed, I have sweated my warhorse, yet achieved nothing. / Grieving over my homeland fills me with regret, / How can I spend my days here? / A guest, enduring your pleasant spring breezes.' Our commended poems were Vassil Gilbert's translation

of 'A short summer night' (Japanese), Jasper Maughan's translation of 'Stay' (German) and Cosima Deetman's translation of 'Cyber Insomnia' (German), which stood out to the judges for their evocative imagery and clarity of voice.

Last but not least, the open category once again proved to be the most varied and challenging for the judges to agree upon. After much deliberation, we found ourselves returning to Xu Zhimo's 'Wild West Cambridge at Dusk', translated by Stuart Lyons. We were enamoured of the playfulness and irreverence of this translation, particularly in terms of the translator's use of syntax throughout, which allows the English version to take on a life of its own with lines such as these: 'braving cloud-billows cloud-tides / pip-pip pitter-patter afloat / in a blink the dusk-blaze subsides / see you later mate'. In second place, we were drawn to Wisława Szymborska's 'The Joy of Writing' for its lush metaphors, expertly translated from Polish by Marta Ciechanowicz: 'The written doe. Where is she running through the written wood?' In third place, we chose Nadja Küchenmeister's 'dust', translated by Ben Fergusson, for its atmospheric quality and ability to lightly convey deep-seated emotions: 'fever feelings. the wood softly cracks. / only a wasp pounding the window. outside the pine / trees rock.'

In terms of our first-time entrants in the open category, the judges chose as our winner Cécile Coulon's 'Colours' translated by Fiona Garratt from French, as we were impressed by its vivid lines: 'deaths and births, / twisting above / neighbouring houses / the bolt of storms, / floating over rooftops fortified / with bees and mice'. In second place, we picked Ling Yu's 'The one who speaks', translated from Taiwanese Mandarin by Lorna Amor, for its deep sense of place and appreciation of the landscape of Taiwan. In third place, we picked Erich Kästner's 'The Evolution of Mankind', translated from German by Mark Grainger, for

its futuristic vision and satirical tone: 'They travel wide. They've mastered the car. / They've built an orbital station. / They brush their teeth. They've conquered tartar.' Our overall commendations go to Kālidāsa's 'Conception of a

New God' (verses 1.33-47) translated from Sanskrit by Oliver Fallon, Bella Akhmadulina's 'The Night of the Falling Apples' (Russian) translated by Peter Frankopan, and Temu Suyan's 'Twelve Today's' (Taiwanese Mandarin)

translated by Christopher MacDonald.

Congratulations to all our winners and commended translators. It has been a true joy to read your tremendous work.

*Mary Jean Chan*

## Judges' commentary – Daljit Nagra

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Having judged many prizes over the past two decades, I have to say, and without any detriment to any other competition, that this has been the most enjoyable to judge. Entries varied from adults to children, and translated poems were either classic poems that I have loved for years, or classic and contemporary poems that were unfamiliar to me. In several cases, the names of translated poets were new to me, and I found myself repeatedly searching for the exciting poets online and ordering their books where they had already been translated.

This is one way of saying that the poetry submissions were of an exceptionally high standard. I came across many translations that felt as though they had, always and only, been written in English, such was the quality of the translators' way of transforming poems from one language into another.

In the open category, there were many superb translations that missed out. Our winning poem justified its place because of its lively mix of language that dramatized a scene at Cambridge with linguistic vigour; the commentary was helpful in explaining

the Joycean influence on the original. I also enjoyed the second prize poem almost as much as the winner, but alas it just missed out. The clean syntax and lineation of this poem captured the stark simplicity of the surface, drawing us into the complex thoughts of the poem, the feeling that art can hold us, momentarily, in a place of safety. The many strengths of our third prize poem, 'dust', included the exquisite precision of the details which sit beautifully against the voice of controlled despair; the explanation of the compound nouns in the commentary was also helpful in explaining key decisions.

There were several first-time entrants, and many showed great skill at capturing the tones of the original. Our three first-time entrant commendations were very different: 'Colours' had a dreamy quality that held back the terrors of the mind; 'The one who speaks' was a beautifully quiet poem about loss; while 'The Evolution of Mankind' was a confidently rhymed poem that humorously captured our beleaguered state of being.

There were many impressive entries in the 18-and-under category, especially the energised and grammatically exciting 'The Lemons', which showed

a highly skilled translator at work; similarly, 'The Schoolchildren' was able to delay the true impact of the story through the deployment of syntax and run-on lines.

In the 16-and-under category, the second prize-winner, with 'Do not leave your room' shows a translator able to find a poem that is apt for the times; it is written simply, yet with verve, and conveys the fear of going outside as institutions and ideals collapse.

In the 14-and-under category, I was delighted that a poem translated from Tamil became our winner, especially as this indicates the wide range of languages our winning entries came from. 'And Yet - Our Tamil Life' is both funny and moving, and the translator's commentary was also an enjoyable read. In its original Chinese, 'muse of the moon' is visually simple on the page, but the translator has played havoc with the lineation to create a fresh and dynamic poem in English. 'Versos Sencillos, Verso III' was our third prize in the 14-and-under category, and I enjoyed the restraint of the lines as they developed the mood of hope cast against despair.

*Daljit Nagra*

தமிழ் வாழ்க்கை

அழைப்பு மணிகள்  
வேலை செய்யாவிட்டாலும்  
வந்த யாரும் திரும்பிப் போனதில்லை

குளியலறைக்குத் தாழ்ப்பாள் இல்லாத  
இந்த ஒன்ஹரை வருடத்தில்  
யாருடைய அந்தரங்கத்திற்கும்  
அபாயம் நிகழ்ந்துவிடவில்லை

நாற்காலியின் ஒடிந்த கால்  
சிறு சமன் குலைவுக்குமேல்  
விருந்தாளிக்கு  
எந்த அவமதிப்பையும் ஏற்படுத்தாது

ஒரு வாரமாய்  
பிரேக் சரியில்லாத வாகனத்தில்தான்  
கடந்து திரும்புகிறேன்  
தெய்வம் துணையிருக்கும் இந்த நகரத்தை

அடிவயிற்றின் இடப்பக்க வலி  
இப்போதெல்லாம் அடிக்கடி வருகிறது  
குறிப்பிட்ட... கோணத்தில் கொஞ்சம் படுத்துக்கொண்டால்  
சுமாளித்துக் கொள்ளலாம்

எல்லா இடதிலும்  
சீர்படுத்த வேண்டியவை ஏராளம்  
என்றாலும் சிக்கலற்றது  
தமிழ் வாழ்க்கை

*Manushya Puthiran*

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And Yet – Our Tamil Life

These doorbells –  
Does it matter they don't ring?  
And yet –  
None of my visitors  
Have gone without today's gossip.

The bathroom latch is broken, so what?  
A year and a half has gone by.  
And yet –  
No one's privacy has been invaded,  
No daydreams interrupted.

The chair may have a broken leg,  
Its balance a little rocky.  
And yet –  
To the startled guest,  
Not a hint of disrespect.

For more than a week now,  
My car brakes have been failing.  
And yet –  
God keeps watch on the city.  
Still I return home,  
In one full piece.

I suffer a pain in my belly,  
But what can I do?  
Nowadays it returns frequently.  
And yet –  
If I recline at a certain angle,  
I can just about bear the pain.

Predicaments may be endless  
In most parts of our life,  
And yet –  
Tamil life is plain sailing,  
A thread without knots.

*Translated from Tamil  
by Hannah Kripa Jordan*

Hannah Kripa Jordan's commentary

I liked this poem, which I found on the Poetry International website, because I found it true to my experience of life in India; my family are constantly fixing things for my grandparents. As soon as we arrive there, my dad puts together a long list of all the things that need fixing. Inevitably, when we return, there is another list, yet we all get by just fine, even if the monsoon winds blow through the gaps in the wall or the brakes in the car we borrow don't work.

After I chose this poem, my mum provided a gloss of individual words which

helped me to understand tricky Tamil words. I first wrote out the literal meaning of each line in English with her help, and then I started to put the words back into more poetic lines and create a light, playful rhythm for the whole poem. The repetition of the line 'And yet –' in my version soon fell into place, giving the stanzas a bit more structure and emphasising the contrast between the negative and the positive in the English version. As the poem developed, I had to allow stanzas four and five an extra line to accommodate the contrasting tones fully.

One difficulty was making sure that the poem sounded funny in English yet kept the specific Tamil problems in the translation; at some points I had to move away from the original a little as it was just too difficult to maintain the light tone otherwise. In the last stanza the flow of the Tamil lines made sense but a literal English translation sounded awkward and too serious. I managed to keep the final image, which works in English as well, giving the poem an ending that accurately reflects the original.

静夜思

床前明月光，  
疑是地上霜。  
举头望明月，  
低头思故乡。

*Li Bai*

muse of the moon

The lucid moonlight my bed	lies	before
I thought	it was frost	on the Earth
To the light of the moon	I raise	my head
But long	for my home	instead.

*Translated from Chinese  
by Grace Wu*

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Grace Wu's commentary

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While translating this poem, I faced problems mainly linked to poetic form, individual words and the atmosphere or air the poem created in the original language.

I found the most difficulty in translating the title. Translated to English, it literally means 'Quiet Night Thought'. I was far from satisfied by this title because it did not have the same breath or personality as the title of the original, and didn't seem natural in English. I decided to translate it as 'muse of the moon' ('to muse' as in 'to think'). Even though not the most accurate

translation, it related the context of the poem while seeming more natural in English.

The poem rhymed on the end of lines 1, 2 and 4. I decided that I wanted to preserve this quality of the poem, because it would make my translation seem more fluid and natural. It was not particularly hard for me to create a rhyme for this poem, because 'bed' and 'head' were both mentioned. However, I did need to change the rhyming lines to lines 1, 3 and 4.

In Mandarin, most poems have this rhyming quality, coinciding with short,

descriptive phrases of the landscape. I believe this makes Chinese poems particularly special and different because they paint a picture with so few words, allowing the reader themselves to imagine the scene. I enjoyed the simplicity of the poem because it created a mystical and ethereal atmosphere. To maintain this quality, I used simple, descriptive words, while also playing with gaps which created space and made the speaker seem lost and broken, due to the broken lines and phrases: essentially how Li Bai seemed to feel when writing this poem.

## Third prize, 14-and-under category

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### Versos Sencillos, Verso III

Odio la máscara y vicio  
Del corredor de mi hotel:  
Me vuelvo al manso bullicio  
De mi monte de laurel.

Con los pobres de la tierra  
Quiero yo mi suerte echar:  
El arroyo de la sierra  
Me complace más que el mar.

Denle al vano el oro tierno  
Que arde y brilla en el crisol:  
A mí denme el bosque eterno  
Cuando rompe en él el Sol.

Yo he visto el oro hecho tierra  
Barbullendo en la redoma:  
Prefiero estar en la sierra  
Cuando vuela una paloma.

Busca el obispo de España  
Pilares para su altar;  
¡En mi templo, en la montaña,  
El álamo es el pilar!

Y la alfombra es puro helecho,  
Y los muros abedul,  
Y la luz viene del techo,  
Del techo de ciel o azul.

El obispo, por la noche,  
Sale, despacio, a cantar:  
Monta, callado, en su coche,  
Que es la piña de un pinar.

Las jacas de su carroza  
Son dos pájaros azules:  
Y canta el aire y retoza,  
Y cantan los abedules.

Duermo en mi cama de roca  
Mi sueño dulce y profundo:  
Roza una abeja mi boca  
Y crece en mi cuerpo el mundo.

[...]

### Versos Sencillos, Verso III

I detest the mask and vice  
From the corridor of my hotel:  
I turn to the meek noise  
Of my mountain of laurel.

With the poor of the earth  
I want to cast my luck:  
I am more pleased  
With the mountain stream than the sea.

Give in vain the tender gold  
That burns and shines in the crucible:  
Give me the eternal forest  
When the sun first shines in it.

I have seen the gold made land  
Bubble in the flask:  
I prefer to be in the mountains  
When a dove flies.

The bishop of Spain is finding  
Pillars for his altar;  
In my temple in the mountains,  
The pillar is poplar!

And the rug is pure fern,  
And the walls are of birch,  
And the light comes from the ceiling,  
From the ceiling of the blue sky.

The bishop, at night,  
Goes out, slowly to sing:  
Rides, quietly in his coach,  
Which is a pinecone.

The pullers of his chariot  
Are two blue birds:  
And the air sings and romps,  
And the birch trees sing.

I sleep in my bed of rock  
My sweet and profound sleep:  
A bee grazed my mouth  
And the world grows in my body.

[...]

## Third prize, 14-and-under category (continued)

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Brillan las grandes molduras  
Al fuego de la mañana  
Que tiñe las colgaduras  
De rosa, violeta y grana.

El clarín, solo en el monte,  
Canta al primer arrebol:  
La gasa del horizonte  
Prende, de un aliento, el Sol.

¡Díganle al obispo ciego,  
Al viejo obispo de España  
Que venga, que venga luego,  
A mi templo, a la montaña!

*José Martí*

The great mouldings shine  
In the morning fire  
That dyes the hangings  
Pink, purple and scarlet.

The bugle alone in the mountains,  
Sings to the first flush:  
The gauze of the horizon  
Is burned by the Sun with one breath.

Tell the blind bishop,  
The old bishop of Spain  
Let him come, let him come later,  
To my temple, to the mountain!

*Translated from Cuban Spanish  
by Caroline-Olivia Edwards*

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### Caroline-Olivia Edwards' commentary

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Whilst translating the poem, one of the challenges that I faced was whether to preserve the rhyming form (ABAB) in English. I tried many different synonyms, but when I did this, I found that it began to affect the structure and meaning of the poem. As I did not want this to happen, I decided not to keep the rhyme scheme.

Secondly, the word order of some of the sentences needed changing so that they made more sense in English. There were some sentences that I had translated but

which then made no sense to me, and I had to go back to the poem in Spanish to check that I had translated the words correctly. After that, I changed the word order of the sentences so that they read better in English and were easier to understand. For example, I translated the phrase 'Que es la piña de un pinar' as 'Which is the pineapple of a pine forest.' This means a pinecone. I thought that 'pinecone' was more suited to the poem's style, so I changed it.

I am not fluent in Spanish, so I used

the *Collins Spanish School Dictionary* and the *Oxford Online Spanish Dictionary* to assist me with the translation of the poem. Another challenge was the fact that I could not find some of these words in my *Collins Spanish School Dictionary*. I was able to predict the meaning of some of the words based on the context of the poem and subsequently check the meaning of them with the online *Oxford Spanish Dictionary*.

### Не выходи из комнаты

---

Не выходи из комнаты, не совершай ошибку.  
Зачем тебе Солнце, если ты куришь Шипку?  
За дверью бессмысленно всё, особенно — возглас счастья.  
Только в уборную — и сразу же возвращаясь.

О, не выходи из комнаты, не вызывай мотора.  
Потому что пространство сделано из коридора  
и кончается счётчиком. А если войдёт живая  
милка, пасть разевая, выгони не раздевая.

Не выходи из комнаты; считай, что тебя продуло.  
Что интересней на свете стены и стула?  
Зачем выходить оттуда, куда вернёшься вечером  
таким же, каким ты был, тем более — изувеченным?

О, не выходи из комнаты. Танцуй, поймав, боссанову  
в пальто на голое тело, в туфлях на босу ногу.  
В прихожей пахнет капустой и мазью лыжной.  
Ты написал много букв; ещё одна будет лишней.

Не выходи из комнаты. О, пускай только комната  
догадывается, как ты выглядишь. И вообще инкогнито  
эрго сум, как заметила форме в сердцах субстанция.  
Не выходи из комнаты! На улице, чай, не Франция.

Не будь дураком! Будь тем, чем другие не были.  
Не выходи из комнаты! То есть дай волю мебели,  
слейся лицом с обоями. Запрись и забаррикадируйся  
шкафом от хроноса, космоса, эроса, расы, вируса.

*Joseph Brodsky*

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### Do not leave your room

---

Do not leave your room, do not make a mistake.  
What use is the sun if your smoke chain must break?  
Outside nothing makes sense, happiness included.  
Go quickly to the restroom but remain elusive.

Do not leave your room.

Do not leave your room, do not call a taxi.  
Space is nothing but a hallway floor, waxy,  
that ends with a meter, counting. If your lover  
knocks, undresses, caresses - expel her.

Do not leave your room.

Do not leave your room, feign illness, face white.  
What's more interesting than the lamp's soft light?  
Why leave your room when you will come back later  
the same, unchanged, if not more mutilated?

Do not leave your room.

Do not leave your room, instead dance the bossa nova  
Naked except for shoes with your coat thrown over.  
The smell of cabbage lingers in the hallway, heavy.  
You wrote countless letters; one more, too many.

Do not leave your room.

Do not leave your room, let these four walls become  
your only friend, your mirror. Incognito ergo sum  
as substance once informed form, in the chaos of nightmare.  
Stay at home, sleep, dance, write. It's not France out there.

Do not leave your room.

Do not be a fool! Be what others couldn't be.  
Stay home for furniture will keep you company.  
Practise wall-paper fusion. Barricade the door to protect us  
from Chronos, Cosmos, Eros, the Virus.

*Translated from Russian  
by Megan Turtle*

### Megan Turtle's commentary

---

Joseph Brodsky (1940–1996) was a Russian-American poet who explored the relationship between the poet and society through his writing.

This poem bears no title, but is known by its first line. It was written by Brodsky in 1970, shortly before he was exiled from Russia by Soviet authorities, after they concluded he was 'not a valuable person at all and may be let go'. I chose this poem because, when removed from its Soviet context and read alongside UK government guidance to stay at home amidst an ongoing pandemic, it is particularly relevant to today. It is important to mention that

Brodsky wrote this poem in an entirely satirical manner to mock the intelligentsia of Leningrad at the time, who loathed life under Soviet control but did not take action to oppose it. However, I still felt that the poem's imagery and lyrical quality definitely made it worth a fresh translation.

Before I translated the poem, I listened to a recording of Brodsky reading it aloud in order to understand the poem's rhythm, which proved invaluable as a non-native speaker. When I first read the poem, I was surprised that Brodsky maintained a strict rhyme scheme throughout. Yet upon reflection I realised that the use of rhyme

perfectly counters his satirical spirit. I used an online dictionary to help me translate the poem, which allowed me to further explore Brodsky's ingenious writing. My favourite rhyme in this poem is in the fourth stanza: 'боссанову' (bossa nova) and 'босу ногу' (bare foot). They are pronounced in an almost identical way yet have very different meanings. This was difficult to reflect in English, so I chose to instead use internal rhymes such as 'undresses, caresses'. I also inserted a line in between each stanza to emphasise the commanding tone of the speaker.

## Il sabato del villaggio

La donzelletta vien da la campagna,  
in sul calar del sole,  
col suo fascio de l'erba; e reca in mano  
un mazzolin di rose e di viole,  
onde, siccome suole,  
ornare ella si appresta  
dimani, al dì di festa, il petto e il crine.

Siede con le vicine  
su la scala a filar la vecchierella,  
incontro là dove si perde il giorno;  
e novellando vien del suo buon tempo,  
quando a i dì de la festa ella si ornava,  
ed ancor sana e snella  
solea danzar la sera intra di quei  
ch'ebbe compagni de l'età più bella.

Già tutta l'aria imbruna,  
orna azzurro il sereno, e tornan l'ombre  
giù da' colli e da' tetti,  
a la luce del vespro e de la luna.  
or la squilla dà segno  
de la festa che viene;  
ed a quel suon diresti  
che il cor si riconforta.

I fanciulli gridando  
su la piazzuola in frotta,  
e qua e là saltando,  
fanno un lieto romore:  
e intanto riede a la sua parca mensa,  
fischiando, il zappatore,  
e seco pensa al dì del suo riposo.

Poi quando intorno è spenta ogni altra face,  
e tutto l'altro tace,  
odi il martel picchiare, odi la sega  
del legnaiuol, che veglia  
ne la chiusa bottega a la lucerna,  
e s'affretta, e s'adopra  
di fornir l'opra anzi il chiarir de l'alba.

[...]

## Saturday in the village

The farmer girl comes from the fields  
at the setting of the sun;  
with a sheaf of grass, she bears in hand  
a posy of roses and violets  
to adorn her chest and hair  
tomorrow, as usual,  
for a day of celebration.

The old woman sits on the stairway  
with her neighbours, spinning,  
facing the descent of the sun,  
and recounting her best years,  
when she would adorn herself for the festival;  
still healthy and slim, she once  
would dance the night with those  
companions of a more beautiful age.

Already the whole sky darkens,  
the air turns blue, and shadows return  
down from ridges and roofs,  
to the frosting of the just-risen moon.  
Now the ringing of the bell beckons  
the return of the festival;  
the heart takes relief from that sound.

The boys shouting as one,  
jumping here and there  
on the small square,  
make a glad noise:  
meanwhile the farmhand  
returns to his modest meal, whistling,  
and dreams of a day of respite.

Then when every other light is quenched,  
and all else is silent,  
you hear the hammer striking, you hear the saw  
of the woodworker, awake  
in the closed shop under lamplight;  
he hurries, and endeavours  
to finish the work before dawn.

[...]

Questo di sette è il più gradito giorno,  
pien di speme e di gioia:  
diman tristezza e noia  
recheran l'ore, ed al travaglio usato  
ciascuno in suo pensier farà ritorno.

Garzonzello scherzoso,  
cotesta età fiorita  
è come un giorno d'allegrezza pieno,  
giorno chiaro, sereno,  
che precorre a la festa di tua vita.  
Godi, fanciullo mio; stato soave,  
stagion lieta è cotesta.  
Altro dirti non vo'; ma la tua festa  
ch'anco tardi a venir non ti sia grave.

*Giacomo Leopardi*

This is the most welcome day of the week,  
full of hope and joy:  
tomorrow the hours will bear  
sadness and boredom, and each in their thoughts  
will return to habitual toil.

Playful young man,  
your age like flowered spring  
is a day full of joy,  
a clear, serene day,  
a harbinger of the festival of your life.  
Enjoy, my boy;  
sweetness, gladness is yours.  
I do not wish to say more.  
Your festival may yet seem late in coming;  
let that not worry you.

*Translated from Italian  
by Alessandro d'Attanasio*

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### Alessandro d'Attanasio's commentary

---

For Leopardi, human joy comes from idyllic hope and nebulous imagination. The lightness of the scene derives from the simplicity and familiarity of the Italian; however, it is simultaneously poetic and dreamlike. I used a straightforward and natural lexicon, especially in the imagery. In the second stanza, the elderly lady 'faces the descent of the sun' while wistfully 'recounting her best years': in equating the empyrean to the nostalgic, my translation emphasises Leopardi's attachment to memory. Only the woodworker, symbolising modernity and distance from nature, breaks this melody and simplicity; I used consonance, in describing 'the hammer striking...the saw / of the woodworker,

awake', to emphasise the dissonance of night-time labour against the harmony of the village.

Anticipation, not underwhelming enjoyment, is the source of this joy. Leopardi achieves this using enjambment, which I have retained. Within the hendecasyllabic metre, rhymes strengthen thematic connections. I opted to emphasise these connections using sibilance ('with a sheaf of grass, she bears in hand / a posy of roses and violets'), alliteration, as in the third stanza, and consonance in the description of the woodworker.

The final stanza was the most difficult to translate. With an apostrophe, Leopardi's cosmic pessimism achieves temporary

catharsis from the suffering of maturity. I translated 'cotesta età fiorita' as 'your age like flowered spring', changing the natural imagery to a more familiar metaphor in English. After this, the tone is prosaic, peaceful, and melancholy, as if an admonition, without enjambment or anastrophe. The poet ultimately conceals the deceptive disillusionment of adulthood from the 'garzonzello': he 'do[es] not wish to say more'. The Italian is archaic, so I split these two lines into three, adding gravitas to the assurance that the young man's carefree stasis and anticipation is indeed a state of perfection, and one that the poet envies.

Escrevo diante da janela aberta

Escrevo diante da janela aberta  
Minha caneta é cor das venezianas:  
Verde!... E que leves, lindas filigranas  
Desenha o sol na página deserta!

Não sei que paisagista doidivanas  
Mistura os tons... acerta... desacerta...  
Sempre em busca de nova descoberta,  
Vai colorindo as horas quotidianas...

Jogos da luz dançando na folhagem!  
Do que eu ia escrever até me esqueço...  
Pra que pensar? Também sou da paisagem...

Vago, solúvel no ar, fico sonhando...  
E me transmuta... iriso-me... estremeço...  
Nos leves dedos que me vão pintando!

*Mario Quintana*

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I write against an open window

I write against an open window.  
My pen is the colour of the shutters:  
Green! And what light, beautiful metalwork  
That draws the sun on an empty canvas!

I don't know what crazy landscaper  
Would mix the different colours... failing... succeeding  
Always trying to make a new shade  
Every day, colouring in the hours as they pass

Flashes of light dancing on the leaves!  
I almost forgot what I was going to write  
But why would I bother?  
I also come from this landscape

I keep daydreaming, randomly, my thoughts dissolving in the air  
And suddenly I am uplifted... enlightened... shuddering  
At the thought of light fingers painting me!

*Translated from Brazilian Portuguese  
by Alice Garcia Kalmus*

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**Alice Garcia Kalmus's commentary**

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The main challenge in translating this poem was retaining the meaning of the old-fashioned language. The collection that this poem came from was published in 1940, so the manner of speaking is very different from modern-day Portuguese.

Furthermore, some words were very technical and not used colloquially, for example 'filigranas', meaning 'filigrees', which I changed to 'metalwork' to allow the reader to understand, whilst still encapsulating the original meaning. Another example is 'folhagem' meaning 'foliage', which I changed to 'leaves', a better-known word. 'Doidivana/s' is an old and rarely used

word, technically meaning eccentric, but I thought 'crazy' was a better translation, as it isn't far from the original meaning and its use conveys the speaker's confusion at the behaviour of the imagined landscaper. I also struggled with metaphorical language. 'Página deserta' literally means deserted page, which in Portuguese sounds poetic, but I thought 'empty canvas' was a better translation as 'empty' has a more appropriate connotation, and 'canvas' alludes to the metaphorical 'painting' more clearly. Another example of this was 'acerta... desacerta...' meaning 'hits... misses...'. In Portuguese the meaning is clear, but in English this doesn't flow well,

so I chose 'fails...succeeds...' as the meaning is the same but it's more literary.

Another difficulty was translating 'Pra que pensar?' which translates as 'Why think?', but the speaker is trying to say 'Why would I think about what to write?', which is too long so I shortened it to 'Why bother?'.

The greatest challenge was translating the penultimate line. 'Transmuta' means 'transmute', which is again a very niche word and in this case is used metaphorically (the speaker doesn't change form, but his thoughts/feelings change very suddenly). Since it is implied that he feels happy, I changed it to 'uplifted' to make it clearer.

## I limoni

Ascoltami, i poeti laureati  
si muovono soltanto fra le piante  
dai nomi poco usati: bossi ligustri o acanti.  
Io, per me, amo le strade che riescono agli erbosi  
fossi dove in pozzanghere  
mezzo seccate agguantano i ragazzi  
qualche sparuta anguilla:  
le viuzze che seguono i ciglioni,  
discendono tra i ciuffi delle canne  
e mettono negli orti, tra gli alberi dei limoni.

Meglio se le gazzarre degli uccelli  
si spengono inghiottite dall'azzurro:  
più chiaro si ascolta il susurro  
dei rami amici nell'aria che quasi non si muove,  
e i sensi di quest'odore  
che non sa staccarsi da terra  
e piove in petto una dolcezza inquieta.  
Qui delle divertite passioni  
per miracolo tace la guerra,  
qui tocca anche a noi poveri la nostra parte di ricchezza  
ed è l'odore dei limoni.

Vedi, in questi silenzi in cui le cose  
s'abbandonano e sembrano vicine  
a tradire il loro ultimo segreto,  
talora ci si aspetta  
di scoprire uno sbaglio di Natura,  
il punto morto del mondo, l'anello che non tiene,  
il filo da disbrogliare che finalmente ci metta  
nel mezzo di una verità.  
Lo sguardo fruga d'intorno,  
la mente indaga accorda disunisce  
nel profumo che dilaga  
quando il giorno più languisce.  
Sono i silenzi in cui si vede  
in ogni ombra umana che si allontana  
qualche disturbata Divinità.

[...]

## The Lemons

Listen to me – laureate poets  
only seem to move among plants  
with rarely used names: boxwood, privets or acanthus  
as for me, I love streets that lead to grassy  
ditches where in partly dried up puddles  
young boys grab at some scrawny eels:  
the narrow streets that follow these banks  
descend onto tufted reeds  
and unfold onto the orchards, among the lemon trees.

Perhaps it is better if the chorus of the birds  
dwindles, swallowed up by the azure sky;  
you can hear the whispers of the friendly branches  
more clearly now in that almost immovable air,  
and the essences of this fragrance  
that cannot separate itself from the earth  
pours into our chest with a restless sweetness.  
Here by some miracle, the war  
of adverse passions is stilled,  
here even the poorest of us can reach our share of wealth –  
the fragrance of the lemons.

Look, in these silences when things  
yield themselves and seem close  
to revealing their ultimate secret,  
sometimes we expect  
to unearth an error in Nature,  
the world's dead point, the link that comes loose,  
the thread that, untangled, might finally lead us  
to the heart of a truth.  
Our gaze searches all around,  
The mind probes, assents, disconnects  
in the fragrance that sweeps over us  
when the day grows faint.  
These are the silences where one sees  
in every fading human shadow  
some disturbed Divinity.

[...]

Ma l'illusione manca e ci riporta il tempo  
nelle città rumorose dove l'azzurro si mostra  
soltanto a pezzi, in alto, tra le cimase.  
La pioggia stanca la terra, di poi; s'affolla  
il tedio dell'inverno sulle case,  
la luce si fa avara – amara l'anima.  
Quando un giorno da un malchiuso portone  
tra gli alberi di una corte  
ci si mostrano i gialli dei limoni;  
e il gelo del cuore si sfa,  
e in petto ci scrociano  
le loro canzoni  
le trombe d'oro della solarità

*Eugenio Montale*

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But the illusion is lost, and time returns us  
to noisy cities where the azure sky only shows itself  
in fragments, high up, between the cornices.  
The rain then wearies the earth;  
the tedium of winter thickens over the roofs,  
daylight becomes miserly – the soul bitter.  
Yet one day through a gate left ajar  
among the trees of a courtyard  
we catch a glimpse of the yellow lemons;  
and the frost in our hearts thaws,  
and into our chests pour  
their songs –  
the golden trumpets of sunlight.

*Translated from Italian  
by Maryam Zaidi*

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### Maryam Zaidi's commentary

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In 'I limoni', Eugenio Montale distances himself from past literary conventions. The poem is memorable because it focuses on quotidian life – not the 'superior' poetry of the prestigious 'poeti laureati' (laureate poets) and their use of florid language. Montale instead captures the roots of his personal experiences. Montale paints a nostalgic picture of the Ligurian landscape where he spent summers with his family: the lanes, the bird-chorus, and the all-encompassing scent and sight of the local lemon trees. The poem goes on to become a more existential look at the truth in human

experience, but the final stanza grounds Montale's philosophical thoughts back in reality. There is a sense of the 'mal di vivere' (the pain of living), through the multifaceted references to the arrival of winter. Montale conveys that even through the monotony of winter, contentment awaits him in the form of an orchard of lemon trees.

The dry sounds in the original Italian were a challenge to translate: the 'z's and 'c's within 'mezzo seccate' (half-dried-up) and 'gazzare' (to uproar) had to be translated into harsher words to match with the Italian double consonants. Another task was to try

and keep to the lyricism of Montale's original form. This was somewhat difficult in the final phrase of the poem, where the subject 'le loro canzoni' (their songs) is purposefully separated from its sentence in the previous line. Here, I made a decision to preserve the original version. The most difficult thing, however, was when to substitute singular for plural and vice versa. For example, in the original Italian, the young boys are grabbing at a singular 'sparuta anguilla' (scrawny eel), but I have decided to take some liberty and translate it as a plural, as it suits the English better.

## Escolares

Como hojas de viento sorprendidas en ráfaga  
se desprenden del grupo compacto,  
un niño, dos, cada vez más,  
levantan en vuelo para encrespar la calle,  
soplados hacia sí, impelidos a unirse,  
deshaciendo el grupo en el que estaban,  
buscándolo de nuevo, conformándose.  
Un imán los aleja y los reúne,  
los dispersa primero hacia la calle,  
los vuelve a congrega. Es muy extraña  
esa manera de llenarse, hacerse ser.  
Como si no supieran quiénes son sin seguimiento.  
Se buscan, se tocan, se apelmazan.  
Nada se da de golpe sino en un desafío  
que los impide de uno en uno.  
Hay dos o tres que ya han cruzado,  
dos o tres más que empiezan a desprenderse,  
hasta que, como si se expandiera el motivo,  
el bucle se despega, vuela, se asimila,  
cruza la calle en masa. Queda  
un aliento, una suavidad que mece,  
que acompaña a los rezagados, que los hace  
ver que allá no están, que ya no están, que el grupo  
está del otro lado. Todo  
con una naturalidad de viento amable,  
sin violencia, como en ciclo,  
masa compacta nuevamente  
al fin, tras movimiento, apaciguados.

*Pedro Serrano*

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## The Schoolchildren

Like leaves in a flurry caught on the wind  
they break off from the huddle,  
one child, two, more and more,  
rise up in flight awakening the street,  
blown inwards, compelled to come together,  
dispersing the group they were in,  
seeking it again, settling.  
A magnet dispels them and gathers them,  
scatters them first across the street,  
reunites them. It is strange  
this way of melding, of becoming one being.  
As if they do not know who they are without following.  
They seek each other, reach each other, become entangled.  
Nothing occurs abruptly except when a challenge  
halts them one by one.  
There are two or three that have crossed now,  
two or three more who are starting to peel away,  
until, as if the plot were revealed,  
the chain unravels, takes flight, re-joins,  
crosses the street as one. A courage  
lingers, a tenderness that sways,  
that befriends the stragglers, making them  
see that they are not over there, that they are no longer there, that the group  
is on the other side. All  
with the effortlessness of a gentle breeze,  
inevitable, as if in a cycle,  
a close band once again,  
at last, after motion, calm.

*Translated from Mexican Spanish  
by Olivia Flint*

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## Olivia Flint's commentary

Throughout the poem, I struggled to translate the many reflexive verbs into suitable English equivalents whilst still maintaining fluidity. For example, the translations of 'se buscan' and 'se tocan' require the addition of the phrase 'each other' for them to make sense. Consequently, I chose the verbs 'seek' and 'reach' instead of more literal translations. This added assonance, a device not utilised in the original, but which compensated for the loss of rhythm created by 'se buscan, se tocan'. This rhythm is not possible in English due to the absence of verb groups such as 'AR' verbs which share the same endings.

When translating 'para encrespar', I was conflicted as to whether to include an allusion to hair (one of the verb's meanings is 'to make [hair] curly'), since in the original poem it forms part of a subtle extended metaphor comparing the children's movements to hair. I found the other references to hair equally difficult to translate whilst nonetheless preserving the same layered meaning as in Spanish. Eventually, I chose not to carry this metaphor through my translation and instead used 'awakening'. On balance, I felt this was the best option to convey the overall essence and imagery of the line to English readers.

The phrase 'nada se da de golpe' provided many challenges in the translation process. Firstly, the verb 'dar'/'darse' in Spanish has an immense number of meanings dependent on context, thus complicating my search for a logical definition. Having unpicked the general sense of the phrase, I then addressed the issue of maintaining the rhythm created by the succession of short, sharp syllables in the original. I substituted 'occurs abruptly' for 'happens suddenly' because, although the latter seems more natural, the stilted awkwardness of the sounds in my final choice reflect the poet's style.

日人石井君索和即用原韵

漫云女子不英雄，万里乘风独向东。

诗思一帆海空阔，梦魂三岛月玲珑。

铜驼已陷悲回首，汗马终惭未有功。

如许伤心家国恨，那堪客里度春风！

*Qiu Jin*

---

Writing rhymes with Sir Ishii

Do not tell me women cannot be heroic,  
I sailed the eastward winds alone for thousands of miles.

My poetic thought a solitary sailboat covering the vast ocean,  
I dreamt of your three islands, exquisite under the light of the moon.

With sorrow I remember the copper camels of our nation, trapped and unable to move forward  
Ashamed, I have sweated my warhorse, yet achieved nothing.

Grieving over my homeland fills me with regret,  
How can I spend my days here?  
A guest, enduring your pleasant spring breezes.

*Translated from Chinese  
by Isobel Birkeland*

---

Isobel Birkeland's commentary

This poem, written by Qiu Jin, a 19th-century Chinese poet, expresses her 'poetic thoughts' about the role of women in society, her life in Japan, and her regrets over leaving China. It is written in the form *lüshi*, which consists of eight lines of five or seven characters. *Lüshi* also often have parallelism between couplets: a theme developed in one couplet would be contrasted in the following one, thus making this poem seem rather disjointed. Although this poem was written with seven characters per line, I felt

I would not be able to fully convey, in only seven words per line, the meaning created through the multiple meanings held by each character in the poem, so I chose to not obey this, but instead to make each line as concise as I could.

As this is a Chinese poem from the nineteenth century, there were some cultural references I had difficulties in translating. One such reference was '铜驼' which literally means 'copper camel'. I chose to translate this as 'the copper camels of our nation' on line

5, as '铜驼' refers to the bronze camel statues which guarded one entrance to the imperial palace in China, symbolising the palace and therefore China as a whole. I also chose to translate the last seven-character line of the poem as two separate lines, and I translated '堪' as both 'can', in line 8, and 'endure', in line 9, in order to emphasise what I perceived as the conflict of emotion the poet experienced in feeling out of place and guilty, living pleasantly in Japan while the inequality she fought against still existed in China.

康桥西野暮色

一个大红日挂在西天  
紫云绯云褐云  
簇簇斑田田  
青草黄田白水  
郁郁密密鬍鬍  
红瓣黑蕊长梗  
罌粟花三三两两  
一大块透明的琥珀  
千百折云凹云凸

南天北天暗暗默默  
东天中天舒舒阔阔  
宇宙在寂静中构合  
太阳在头赫里告别  
一阵临风  
几声 “可可”

一颗大胆的明星  
仿佛骄矜的小艇  
抵牾着云涛云潮  
兀兀漂漂潇潇  
侧眼看暮焰沉销  
回头见伙伴来!

晚霞在林间田里  
晚霞在原上溪底  
晚霞在风头风尾  
晚霞在村姑眉际  
晚霞在燕喉鸦背  
晚霞在鸡啼犬吠

晚霞在田陇陌上  
陌上田垌行人种种  
白发的老妇老翁  
屈躬咳嗽龙钟  
农夫工罢回家  
肩锄手篮口衔菰巴

白衣裳的红腮女郎  
攀折几茎白葩红英  
笑盈盈翳入绿荫森森  
跟着肥满蓬松的 “北京”  
罌粟在凉园里摇曳  
白杨树上一阵鸦啼

[...]

Wild West Cambridge at Dusk

a big red sun hangs on the western sky  
purple clouds crimson clouds brown clouds  
mottled fields in clusters lie  
green grass yellow wheat white fens  
lush lush dense dense shagginess  
red petals black stamens long stems  
poppies in flower in twos and threes  
one large lump of translucent amber  
concave convex cloud-folds without number

south sky north sky hugger-mugger hush hush  
east sky mid sky totally leisurely  
universe gathering in tranquillity  
sun departing in supreme glory  
a gust of wind  
some sounds bye-bye

a bold star arrogantly rides  
like a bumptious little boat  
braving cloud-billows cloud-tides  
pip-pip pitter-patter afloat  
in a blink the dusk-blaze subsides  
see you later mate

sunset glows on the woods and the fields  
sunset glows on the plain and the beck  
sunset glows on windward and lee  
sunset glows on a country girl's brow  
sunset glows on crow's back swallow's neck  
sunset glows on cock's cry dog's bark

sunset glows on the field-ridge lane  
on the track through the field walk folk of all kinds  
white-haired old women and old men  
bent bodies stoop splutter senile minds  
farmers stop work and prepare to rush home  
shoulder hoe hand trug mouth bite mushroom

white dress worn by a red-cheeked maid  
breaking off stalks white buds red flowers  
prettily laughing in thick green shade  
fat smug fluffy beijing retires  
poppies wave in the cool outdoors  
on the white poplar a lone crow caws

[...]

夕照只剩了几痕紫气  
满天镶嵌着星巨星细  
田里路上寂无声响  
榆荫里的村屋微泄灯芒  
再再有风打树叶的抑扬  
前面远远的树影塔光  
罌粟老鸦宇宙婴孩  
一齐沉沉奄奄眠熟了也

*Xu Zhimo*

the sunset has left a faint purple wake  
all of the sky is a mixed-star mosaic  
on the road in the field all is still and quiet  
the cottage by the elm leaks a needle of light  
the wind-struck leaves rise and fall on the boughs  
the distant trees cast pagoda shadows  
poppy crow universe babies all  
sleep sound breathe soft resting well

*Translated from Chinese  
by Stuart Lyons*

---

### Stuart Lyons's commentary

---

In the spring of 1922, Xu Zhimo read James Joyce's newly published novel *Ulysses*. He was bowled over by Molly's punctuation-free monologue in the final chapter. 'Wild West Cambridge at Dusk', depicting scenes around his home village of Sawston, was the result. When Xu sent it for publication, he included an introductory note. 'A snake does not need feet in order to move,' he wrote, 'and a poem does not need punctuation.' In *Ulysses*, he noted, there were 'no capital letters, no '.....? : ---- ; ---- ! ( ) " ' " but a cascade of truly great writing.' I treated the exclamation mark in the standard Chinese

text (stanza three, line six) and the inverted commas around 可可 (stanza two, line six) and 北京 (stanza six, line four) as probable interpolations and removed them from my English translation. Xu overcomes the need for punctuation through the clarity of his poetic writing. Every stanza describes an acutely observed phase of the closing day. His lines have colour, texture, sound and wit – 'beijing' refers to his pregnant wife. Xu's sometimes unusual choice of Chinese characters adds to the enchantment; he uses duplicated characters frequently and on occasion innovatively, a feature which

I referenced through alliteration and assonance. I tried to respect Xu's rhythmic and rhyming schemes and to be true to his imagery, while using vocabulary that was close to the Chinese but would strike a chord with English readers, for example in the star's boat-ride across the clouds. In the last stanza, I aimed to express the scene though Xu's eyes – the night sky as a mosaic, the needle of light from a darkened cottage and the pagoda-shaped shadows from the trees. 'Wild West Cambridge at Dusk' broke new ground. It is rhythmically compelling and artistically spectacular.

## Radość pisania

---

Dokąd biegnie ta napisana sarna przez napisany las?  
Czy z napisanej wody pić,  
która jej pyszczek odbije jak kalka?  
Dlaczego łeb podnosi, czy coś słyszy?  
Na pożyczonych z prawdy czterech nóżkach wsparta  
spod moich palców uchem strzyże.  
Cisza – ten wyraz też szeleści po papierze  
i rozgarnia  
spowodowane słowem „las” gałęzie.

Nad białą kartką czają się do skoku  
litery, które mogą ułożyć się źle,  
zdania osaczające;  
przed którymi nie będzie ratunku.

Jest w kropli atramentu spory zapas  
myśliwych z przymrużonym okiem,  
gotowych zbiec po stromym piórze w dół,  
otoczyć sarnę, złożyć się do strzału.

Zapominają, że tu nie jest życie.  
Inne, czarno na białym, panują tu prawa.  
Oka mgnienie trwać będzie tak długo, jak zechcę,  
pozwoli się podzielić na małe wieczności  
pełne wstrzymanych w locie kul.  
Na zawsze, jeśli każę, nic się tu nie stanie.  
Bez mojej woli nawet liść nie spadnie  
ani źdźbło się nie ugnie pod kropką kopytka.

Jest więc taki świat,  
nad którym los sprawuję niezależny?  
Czas, który wiązę łańcuchami znaków?  
Istnienie na mój rozkaz nieustanne?

Radość pisania.  
Możliwość utrwalania.  
Zemsta ręki śmiertelnej.

*Wisława Szymborska*

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## The Joy of Writing

---

The written doe. Where is she running through the written wood?  
To dip her written muzzle in the inky pool  
to take a drink?  
Why does she lift her head? What does she hear?  
She listens, balanced,  
on limbs borrowed from the truth emerging from beneath my fingers.  
Silence – that word also scuttles across the page  
parting  
the branches of the wood sprung up from words.

On the white page, letters  
lie in wait to leap  
into a tangled undergrowth of sentences  
from which there is no escape.

In a drop of ink, there are more than enough  
hunters, squinting,  
ready to run down the steep slope of the pen,  
to hem in, to take aim at the doe.

They forget that this is not life, here.  
Other laws govern in black and white.  
The blink of an eye lasts as long as I command,  
will split into future fragments  
full of bullets stopped mid-flight.  
Unless I say so, nothing here will change.  
Unless I will it, not even a leaf will fall,  
nor will the doe break the sedge beneath her hoof.

So is there such a world  
on which I rest my fate?  
In which I bind time in symbolic chains?  
World without end at my command?

The joy of writing.  
The power of preserving.  
Taking revenge against the hand of death.

*Translated from Polish  
by Marta Ciechanowicz*

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## Marta Ciechanowicz's commentary

---

The main challenges in translating Polish to English are that Polish, being inflected, lacking articles and often subject pronouns, is highly economical, something that is challenging to replicate in English. It also allows the Polish poet extraordinary flexibility of word order. Furthermore, the Polish sound palette, quite unlike English, tends to sibilance, and as there are so few cognates between Polish and English, the translator has to create wholly new networks of sound associations. A strictly faithful translation was not possible without losing lyricism.

Szymborska's poem is a variation on a well-worn theme – the potency of poetry to

create, destroy and preserve – but delivered with a freshness, directness and lyricism that I found captivating. However, that very imagery, with its complex dual narrative of hunting and writing sustained throughout the poem, was precisely where the challenge lay in the translation. The content of the poem gave license for liberty.

I chose to build a soundworld by alliterating predominantly on 'l', punctuated with onomatopoeic words like 'scuttles', which echoes the onomatopoeic Polish word 'szeleści'. I highlighted the halt of the bullets with the percussive 'bullets stopped mid-flight'. The free verse form gave me

scope to place emphasis on certain words, for example by giving 'parting' its own line. I also exploited rhythm, slowing and gathering the pace of the line, for example the tense, slow monosyllables of 'lie in wait to leap'.

By far the most challenging image to render was that of the doe bending to drink, her face reflected in the pool, as dark as carbon paper. I replaced this image with one of the deer, dipping her muzzle to suggest a pen in an inkpot or ink bleeding into water, which extends Szymborska's original complex metaphors of the implements of writing.

### staub

wenn die tür geschlossen wird, sind auch die hunde  
still in ihren hütten, der flugverkehr ist eingestellt, kein  
rasenmäher und kein weckerticken, nichts stört, nur

der saum der gardine, der am boden schleift. ein lichtstrahl,  
der mein auge trifft. fiebergefühle. das holz knackt leise.  
nur eine wespe, die ans fenster schlägt. drausen wiegen

die tannen. im zimmer, unter meinem bett, wo einer  
liegt mit stumpfem messer, zittern die flusen. staub.  
staub. ich höre die wespe, die über mir ist. das klappern

von tellern aus der küche, gläserklirren, jetzt der besteck:  
wer, wenn ich schrie, hörte mich denn, ist erst der tierfilm  
im dritten programm und das gespräch in vollem gang

und nichts davon für mich bestimmt, gefangen im endlosen  
nachmittagslicht. staub. staub. bin ich das insekt, das maßlos  
erschöpfte, in diesem bett lag meine mutter als kind.

*Nadja Küchenmeister*

Originally published as 'staub' in *Alle Lichter*  
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### dust

whenever the door is closed, the dogs too are  
silent in their houses, no more flights, no  
lawnmowers and no ticking clocks, nothing disturbs, only

the hem of the curtain polishing the floor, a finger of light  
touching my eye. fever feelings. the wood softly cracks.  
only a wasp pounding the window. outside the pine

trees rock. in the room, under my bed, where someone  
lies with a dull knife, the lint balls quake. dust.  
dust. i hear the wasp, who is above me. the clatter

of plates from the kitchen, glass clink, now cutlery:  
who, if I scream, will hear me then, it's only the animal film  
on channel three and the conversation in full swing

and certainly nothing there for me, caught in endless  
afternoon light. dust. dust. am i the insect, the boundlessly  
exhausted, in this bed my mother lay as a child.

*Translated from German  
by Ben Fergusson*

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## Ben Fergusson's commentary

Nadja Küchenmeister (b. 1981) is a multi-award-winning German poet from Berlin. In her poem 'dust' she beautifully weaves together the nightmarish and the quietly domestic in a monologue that may simply describe the experience of someone convalescing at home, or something far more threatening. In translating the poem, I have carefully kept to the rhythms of the German and have worked hard to capture the sense of feverish hyper-sensitivity evoked by Küchenmeister's interplay of soft and hard sounds and the uncomfortable broken syntax of the verse.

I have kept the all-lowercase form of the German, an approach that has been popular in German poetry since the middle of the last century, aiming to flatten the hierarchy of the words. The effect in German, with its capitalised nouns, is much more visually pronounced than in English – compare 'der saum der gardine, der am boden schleift' and the correctly capitalised 'Der Saum der Gardine, der am Boden schleift.' In the English translation, the lowercase 'i' of the first-person pronoun 'I' is the only place that an English reader really feels the strangeness of this effect for the German reader.

I have tried to retain the sense of many of the compound nouns in the German – 'fiebergefühle' (fever feelings); 'gläserklirren' (glass clink) – which would be more literally translated as 'feelings of fever' and 'clinking of glasses' respectively, but would lose the power of the original German nouns. German word order also allows Küchenmeister to split verbs from their subjects over stanzas – 'drausen wiegen / die tannen' – which in English sounds forced and old-fashioned. In these places, I have split the compound nouns to echo a little of the disorientating effect – 'outside the pine / trees rock.'

Our new Spotlight programme, launched in 2018, unites the Stephen Spender Prize with our education programmes. It enables us to give extra attention to languages spoken in the UK, through workshops for young people and a dedicated strand of the Prize.

Over the past three years we have developed partnerships with Polish Saturday Schools across the UK, with the Polish Cultural Institute, and with Polish translators and poets. These networks, together with funding from the Rothschild Foundation, the Polonsky Foundation, the European Commission in the UK and the British Council, have enabled us to nurture a growing community of budding young translators from Polish.

The Spotlight prize is open to 18-and-under entrants only, allowing us to tailor it to the needs of young translators. Keen to make the prize accessible to all, regardless of background, this year our judge Antonia Lloyd-Jones curated a booklet of poems for translation, and we broadcast a series of virtual masterclasses on translating Polish poetry. We are grateful to all the poets, translators and publishers who

contributed to these online publications, which will remain on our website to inspire future generations of translators. Particular thanks are due to Maja Konkolewska. As well as participating in the Spotlight strand of our Creative Translation in the Classroom project, Maja worked with Antonia to select poems for the booklet, and supported our development of virtual resources for Polish literature. Both Maja and Antonia are committed and generous advocates of Polish literature in the UK, and it has been a great pleasure to work so closely with them both.

As Polish moves away from the Spotlight, we look forward to increased Polish entries to the multilingual categories of the Stephen Spender Prize in the coming years. And as we celebrate this year's excellent winners and commendees, we also usher in our new Spotlight on Urdu, which we will launch in 2021 in partnership with poet and translator Sascha Aurora Akhtar.

*Charlotte Ryland*  
*Director of the Stephen Spender Trust*



This year I decided to take the opportunity to introduce the potential contestants to some contemporary poets whose work they might not know, by providing a curated list of twenty-five poems for them to choose from. With the invaluable help of Maja Konkolewska, who has run school workshops in poetry translation for the Stephen Spender Trust and has an excellent ear for poems that appeal to children of various ages, I chose a range of poems aimed at the youngest as well as the oldest translators, from comical rhymes to be read at bedtime to sophisticated, philosophical verses. I wondered whether to categorise the poems by age, but realised that some of the comical rhymes are the most difficult to translate, so it would be wrong to impose limits.

Asked for their permission to use their work for the competition, the poets and their agents were very willing – I'm extremely grateful to them for being so open to the idea. Seventeen of the twenty-five curated poems were chosen for translation by the entrants, some of them several times. One of the most difficult and meaningful poems, 'A Song on the End of the World' by Czesław Miłosz, attracted the most

entries, which was six.

It was interesting to see from the commentaries provided by the translators how even the youngest put careful consideration into their work, not just translating literally but with thought for the poet's intentions and methods. They have weighed up the effects produced by a particular choice of tense, punctuation, rhyme and rhythm, and have experimented to see if these need to be preserved or changed to serve the poet's aims better in English. There are plenty of encouraging signs here for the future of Polish poetry in English translation, I'm happy to say.

In the 10-and-under category, the entrants were not afraid to tackle rhyme and rhythm. The winner, Aaron Ferguson, ambitiously chose a playful poem by Zbigniew Machej, about fleas jumping from one dog to another. He has understood that the poem needs to hop from line to line, just like the fleas. The runner-up, Maximilian Hempler, has admirably retained the rhyme and rhythm of Łukasz Dębski's 'The Sawfish', with some imaginative use of phrases gleaned from British children's literature.

In the 14-and-under category, the winner, Alexander Fletcher, has produced a very impressive translation of 'Opposing Winds' by Tomasz Różycki,

showing intelligence and maturity in his thought processes and sensitivity to the meaning and form of the poem. In her translation of 'Tea Party' by Agnieszka Frączek, the runner-up, Michaela Konkolewska-Grybè, can clearly see that the success of the poem relies on rhyme, rhythm, and comedy, and that clever alternatives to the literal meaning are the key to achieving the same effect in English.

In the 18-and-under category, Hanna Kisiala's winning translation of 'Homecoming' by Bronisław Maj conveys a complex poem with great empathy and skill, retaining the emotional momentum and beauty of the original. In second place, Skye Slatcher's translation of 'And that's why' by Adam Zagajewski shows awareness of the apparent simplicity of lines that offer a subtle message, which comes across convincingly. And in third place, Patrick Lynch has produced a bold translation of Czesław Miłosz's 'A Song on the End of the World' that successfully recreates the sinister contrast between ordinary life and its inevitable end.

Overall, the standard of entries was high, showing literary talent and imagination. Well done and congratulations to all our contestants.

*Antonia Lloyd-Jones*

### Z psa na psa skacze pchła

z psa na psa  
skacze pchła  
hop hop hopsa  
hop hop hopsa  
pchła skacze  
bardzo wysoko  
jak przez piramidę Cheopsa  
lepiej niż pasikonik  
a pies psa goni  
a pies za psem leci  
raz w tył  
raz w skos  
raz naprzeciw  
raz wbrew  
biegają sobie w parku  
psy pośród drzew  
a pchła  
hop hop hopsa  
skacze  
z jednego grzbietu  
na drugi  
jak Indianin który łapie mustangi  
nie ma dla pcheł lepszej balangi  
niż przeskakiwać z psa na psa  
z ogona  
na ogon  
z jednej psiej sierści  
na drugą  
i wwyż i w dal  
jak na zawodach  
jak na olimpiadzie  
pchła  
jak lekkoatletka  
cyrkówka i baletnica  
tylko się trochę napręży  
i skacze  
daleko daleko  
jak z ziemi  
na księżyc  
a nawet na drugą stronę księżycy  
na taki psi i pchli teatrzyk  
każdy by sobie chętnie popatrzył  
no tak na takie cyrki pchle  
popatrzeć by nie było źle

[...]

### From dog to dog flea bobs

From dog to dog  
Flea bobs  
Nip nip nips  
nip nip nips  
Flea bobs  
Very high  
Beyond the Cheops Pyramid  
Better than grasshopper  
And dog runs after dog  
Once backwards  
Once crosswise  
Once opposite  
Once against  
Running around the park  
Dogs among the trees  
And Flea  
Nip nip nips  
Bobs  
From one ridge to another  
Like an Apache chasing mustangs  
There's no better rave for the flea gangs  
Than to hop from dog to dog  
From Tail to Tail  
From coat to coat  
High and far  
Like in a game  
Like in the Olympics  
Flea  
The Athlete  
Acrobat and Ballerina  
She just tenses a little  
And hops  
Far far away  
Like from the Earth to the Moon  
Even to its dark side  
Such Dog and Flea Theatre  
Everyone would like to see  
Well yes, such Circus de Flea  
wouldn't be bad to see

[...]

ale widzimy  
tylko dwa psy  
co latają za sobą  
po parku  
tylko czasami  
jeden albo drugi  
staje siada  
pysk odwróci  
i łapą energicznie  
drapie się po karku  
by pchłę  
z siebie zrzucić

*Zbigniew Machej*

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But we can only spot  
two dogs  
that chase each other  
around the park  
Only sometimes  
either one or another  
gets up or sits down  
looks around  
Or briskly scratches  
its collar line  
To get rid  
of the flea from its spine

*Translated by  
Aaron Ferguson*

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### Aaron Ferguson's commentary

---

I speak two languages and understand that direct translation doesn't always work. Words may not work in the same sentence in a different language, so I had to find the right ones and make them fit and rhyme. During this task the biggest challenge was finding the right words in English that would also make sense and rhyme like the original. I felt the pressure of trying to create a poem from translation that would also make sense, that an author or poet might sometimes feel and I thoroughly enjoyed the task set.

### Ryba Piła

Ostra i zła ryba piła  
Małego śledzia gonila.  
Poprosił więc śledź chudzina  
O pomoc starego rekina.  
Ten w pomoc sił włożył tyle,  
Że stąpił piłę złej pile.  
Skąd dziwnych wypadków tych splot?  
Odpowiedź: to był rekin młot.

*Lukasz Dębski*

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### A Sawfish

There was a sawfish  
Sharp like a sting  
Who chased a thin herring – poor thing!  
'Help, help' – the herring called  
His friend – Mr Shark – who was very old.  
He came to the rescue with all his might and main  
And his efforts were not in vain.  
So how did he get the sawfish to lose its sharp?  
The answer is simple – his full name was Mr Hammerhead Shark!

*Translated by  
Maximilian Hempler*

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### Maximilian Hempler's commentary

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I have involved my son, aged 5, in translating poetry during lockdown. He loves poems by classic Polish authors and enjoys rhymes in all forms. The final version of the poem is the result of scaffolded and structured activities from the Trust's page as well as my own activities created at home. My son picked 'Ryba Piła' as he worked on a similar poem at school called 'Starvin' Martin' and a short text 'A Shark in the Park'.  
Big Decisions: How to make it rhyme? My son noticed very quickly, after translating

the poem literally word for word, that it didn't rhyme and sounded 'boring'. His first big decision was how to choose words for the ends of the lines so they'd rhyme. We looked at the words for two lines and tried to see what rhymes with them. This was the basis for the rhyming pattern. How to translate *chudzina*? I explained that this word refers to a person or animal that is very thin but also poorly, and the word makes us feel sorry for them. My son referred to a song from school, 'The North Wind Doth

Blow', and concluded that the herring from the Polish poem is a 'poor thing', just like the robin. Direct quote from other stories: My son struggled with the line *ten w pomoc...* He didn't quite understand what had really happened when the shark *sił włożył tyle*. He then took out one of his favourite stories in English, 'Zog and the Flying Doctors', and referred to a line from the book, explaining that it is exactly what Zog and Sir Gadabout did to help Princess Pearl. He decided to change the quote to suit his translation.

### Przeciwne wiatry

Kiedy zacząłem pisać, nie wiedziałem jeszcze,  
że każde moje słowo będzie zabierało  
po kawałku ze świata, w zamian zostawiając  
jedynie miejsca puste. Że powoli wiersze

zastąpią mi ojczyznę, matkę, ojca, pierwszą  
miłość i drugą młodość, a co zapisałem,  
ubędzie z tego świata, zamieni swe stałe  
istnienie na byt lotny, stanie się powietrzem,

wiatrem, dreszczem i ogniem, i to, co poruszę  
w wierszu, znieruchomieje w życiu, i pokruszy  
się na tak drobne cząstki, że się stanie prawie  
antymateria, pyłem całkiem niewidzialnym,

wirującym w powietrzu, tak długo, aż wpadnie  
w końcu tobie do oka, a ono załzawi.

*Tomasz Różycki*

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### Opposing Winds

When I started writing, I did not know yet  
that each of my words would be taking away  
a piece of the world, leaving behind  
only empty places. That slowly verses

would replace my homeland, my mother, my father, my first  
love and my second youth, and what I had written,  
would be taken away from this world, would abandon its solid  
state, evaporate, become air,

wind, rain and fire, and that which I animated  
in verse, would become still in life, and would crumble  
into particles so minuscule, that it would become almost  
anti-matter, a cloud of invisible dust,

spiralling in the air until in the end,  
it falls in your eye and makes it tear up.

*Translated by  
Alexander Fletcher*

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### Alexander Fletcher's commentary

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When translating this poem by Tomasz Różycki, I encountered a few dilemmas, because, although the poem looks fairly simple at first glance due to a lack of complicated metre, it has its particular melody and deep philosophical meaning.

My first dilemma was whether to split up the two original sentences that constitute the poem in Polish to adapt it to a modern English style of writing, in which sentences tend to be shorter than in Polish, or whether to preserve the original two-sentence construction of the poem. After experimenting with these two approaches, I decided not to

alter the original structure, because I liked the effect that the heavy use of enjambment, creating a more dramatic atmosphere, had on the poem. I also decided to preserve the original capitalisation in my translation, rather than starting each verse with a capital letter in a more conventional fashion.

Another problem that I faced was translating the title literally as 'opposing winds', which is a common maritime term in English, but not necessarily what the poet had in mind choosing this title for his poem. However, after considering a few alternatives such as 'rival winds', I decided

that the literal translation worked best and reduced the risk of twisting the poet's intention.

The final problem I had to solve was translating scientific terms from Polish into English ('stałe istnienie na byt lotny' or 'stanie się prawie antymateria'). This was difficult because they had to make sense in the poem, but also be scientifically correct. I circumvented this problem by first making sure these terms made sense from the scientific point of view in English, and then evaluated my choices from the poetic angle.

## Herbatka

Ciocia Hela z wujkiem Tadkiem  
zaprosili na herbatkę  
tłum sąsiadów, pół rodziny  
i znajomych dwa tuziny.

- Czy są wszyscy...?  
- Zaraz...! Liczę...  
(Proszę, jedzcie już słodycze.)  
Nie ma damy z rudą kotką!  
(Częstuj się szarlotką, złotko.)

- Tej, co mieszka na parterze?  
- Tak, tej właśnie!  
- Śpi?  
- Nie wierzę!  
- Może dama jest nieśmiała?  
- Może o nas zapomniała?  
- Może się przed lustrem stroi?  
- Ale po co? Sami swoi...  
- Pójdę po nią! Poczekajcie?

Lecz już było po herbatce..

*Agnieszka Frączek*

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## Tea Party

Aunty Hela and Uncle Jesse  
Invited us round for a cup of tea  
A crowd of neighbours, half the family  
And some friends (two dozen actually)

“Is everyone here?”  
“Wait, I’m counting!”  
(Look at the amount of sweets she’s downing!)  
“The lady with the red cat isn’t here!”  
(Help yourself to some cake, my dear)

“The one that lives on the ground floor?”  
“Yes! Her.”  
“Is she sleeping?”  
“I’m not sure”  
“Perhaps the lady is just shy?”  
“Maybe she forgot the time?”  
“Maybe she is getting dressed?”  
“But why? We are all her friends.”  
“I’ll go get her! Wait for me?”

But they all ran out of tea

*Translated by  
Michaela Konkolewska-Grybė*

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## Michaela Konkolewska-Grybė’s commentary

For my entry I chose the poem ‘Herbatka’ by Agnieszka Frączek.

The first challenge for me was finding rhyming words. The poem also had rhythm so I had to find words that would create a similar flow.

The second challenge was to find a name for my character (the uncle) that rhymed with the word ‘tea’. I couldn’t think of any names off the top of my head so I went to Google and found the name Jesse.

The third challenge was to add in speech. In the poem there were many conversations and it was difficult to think of dialogue that had rhythm and rhyme.

Overall, I really enjoyed translating this poem.

## Powrót

W tej jednej chwili, która już minęła, tak  
jak przemija i chwila narodzin: stara  
kobieta o ciele spustoszone chorobą - nagle  
łagodnie odsuwa lekarstwa, biel bandażu, nasze ręce, płacz,  
śmierć i życie - i wybiega: w słońce; młodziutka  
dziewczyna, złotowłosa i smukła jak tańczący  
płomyk, w gorące, senne popołudnie tego  
czerwca: idzie przez rynek miasteczka, niecierpliwa,  
spragniona. Do studni, w zmienny cień  
akacji: schylona, w lusterku wody widzi niewinnie  
czysty wizerunek świata i - zachwycona - swoją twarz  
w koronie warkoczy, w koronie światła, świata, w złocie  
i bieli obłoków. Radośnie zawstydzona, łagodnie, mąci  
obraz: pije żywą wodę. I odbiega, spragniona. Czas  
wracać do domu: cichą ulicą Kühna, w odurzającym  
szpalerze róż i malw nad płotami, z każdą chwilą  
młodsza, pod czerwonymi lampionami jarzębin, idzie do domu:  
domu sióstr, braci, kotów, lalek, wstążek, coraz  
młodsza: mała dziewczynka, z trudem odmyka kutą furtkę,  
biegnie, niecierpliwa, spragniona, przez ciepłą trawę - do domu,  
do Domu Ojca. I, coraz młodsza, maleńka, zaledwie  
objawiona niewinnemu światu, jeszcze bezimienna, jeszcze  
nie rozumiejąc ani słowa, a nagle  
już wszystko pojmując - usłyszy,  
spragniona, usłyszy: „Talitha  
kum!” I  
powróci.

*Bronisław Maj*

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## Homecoming

In that single moment, which is over now, as  
fleeting as that of birth, the old woman, her body  
devastated by disease, suddenly, gently  
pushes away the medicine, the white bandages, our hands, our tears,  
death and life- she runs out: out into the sun; a youthful  
girl, golden-haired and graceful as a dancing flame on a  
hot sleepy afternoon in June; she walks through the square  
of the little town, impatient, thirsty. To the well, in the  
fickle shade of the acacia; bending over, she sees in the water's mirror  
an image of the world, innocent and pure and - delighted - her face in a  
crown of braids, in a crown of light, crown  
of the world, gold and white as the clouds.  
Happily humbled, she gently stirs the picture: she drinks the living water  
and runs off, eager. It's time to go  
home, along quiet Kühn Street, with its intoxicating  
rows of roses and mallow over its fences, every second she is  
younger, under the red rowanberry lanterns, she is going home: the home  
of sisters, brothers, cats, dolls, bows; she is younger and  
younger, a little girl, she struggles to open the iron gate, she runs, impatient,  
eager, through the warm grass- she is going to her home, her Father's house.  
And, even younger, so little, barely revealed to the  
innocent world, still nameless, still barely understanding a word, suddenly she understands  
everything. Eagerly, so eagerly, she will hear: "Talitha Kum!"; and she is  
home.

*Translated by  
Hanna Kisiala*

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## Hanna Kisiala's commentary

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I decided to translate 'Powrót' by Bronisław Maj because it reflects the cultural significance of Christian belief in Polish literature, masterfully channelling metaphysical concepts into vivacious imagery. This meant having contextual understanding whilst translating; I interpreted Maj's use of '[Dom] Ojca' to mean 'her Father's House', which alluded to Jesus's expressions in the Bible, and which I thought best enriched the image of the young girl eagerly running home to her spiritual father, longing to be where she can achieve satiety for eagerness that is repeated throughout the poem.

Another challenge was preserving the enjambment, which I was keen to do, as it reflects how the girl is running towards her final destination as she gets younger and younger, the sentences spilling over lines, until at the very end the poem can stop when she finally returns home. Since most of the English words I employ are longer than their Polish counterparts, I simplified the punctuation within the lines so as to keep the reader engaged by breaking up some longer sentences, which also amplified the enjambment.

I had to decide on the translation of some of the key words of the poem which would

lose their significance in direct translation. For example, although 'Powrót' literally means 'return', with the significance being in the belief that the afterlife is where people return to God, I felt that this word in English was not reflective of the significance of the girl's journey to a specific destination where her heavenly Father resides, so I decided to employ the idea of 'home'. Since Polish has one word for 'home' and 'house', while the English understanding of 'home' is more personal and emotional, I employed this word in both the title and end to convey the sentiment of why this 'return' is special.

## I dlatego

I dlatego chodziłem korytarzami  
Tych wielkich muzeów  
Patrząc na obrazy świata  
Na których Dawid jest niewinny jak harcerz  
Goliat zasługuje na nikczemną śmierć  
A na płótnach Rembrandta panuje wieczny półmrok  
Półmrok niepokoju i skupienia  
I przechodziłem od sali do sali  
Podziwiając portrety cynicznych kardynałów  
W rzymskiej purpurze  
Ekstazy chłopskie wesela  
Namiętnych graczy w karty albo w kości  
Oglądając żaglowce bitwy i chwile pojednania  
I dlatego chodziłem korytarzami  
Tych sławnych muzeów tych nieziemskich pałaców  
Próbując zrozumieć ofiarę Izaaka  
Smutek Marii i pogodne niebo nad Sekwaną  
I zawsze wracałem na wielkomijską ulicę  
Gdzie wciąż trwały szaleństwo cierpienie i śmiech –  
Jeszcze nie namalowane.

*Adam Zagajewski*

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## And that's why

And that's why I walked the corridors  
Of these big museums  
Looking at paintings of the world  
In which David is as innocent as a boy scout  
And Goliath deserves a fate worse than death  
Or on Rembrandt's canvases an eternal dusk reigns  
A dusk of anxiety and focus  
And I walked from hall to hall  
Admiring the portraits of cynical cardinals  
In Roman purple  
Joyous peasant weddings  
Passionate players of cards or dice  
Looking at sailing ships battles and moments of reconciliation  
And that's why I walked the corridors  
Of these famous museums of these unearthly palaces  
Trying to understand Isaac's sacrifice  
Mary's sorrow and the serene skies over the Seine  
And I always returned to the metropolitan streets  
Where the chaos suffering and laughter continued -  
Not yet painted.

*Translated by  
Skye Slatcher*

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## Skye Slatcher's commentary

In these peculiar times of isolation and social-distancing, one form of entertainment I have found particularly comforting is a virtual museum or art gallery tour. So, when I was browsing the curated selection of poetry for the Polish Spotlight, and came across 'I dlatego' by Adam Zagajewski, I knew I had to choose it. It reflects on the beauty of paintings, concluding with a memorable statement about our lives, 'not yet painted'.

One challenge I faced, while translating, was retaining the tone that Zagajewski introduces. The poem has a sort of

reminiscent, contemplative mood; keeping this was very important. Therefore, I tried to stay as close as possible to the exact imagery in the original, as this plays a key part in setting the atmosphere.

I found that *panuje* was a difficult word to translate, on line six. *Panuje* can mean 'there is', however I didn't think that this was the best translation – I wanted to ensure the line was as poetic in English as in Polish. I chose to use the verb 'reigns' instead, as this maintains the prominence of the dusk in the Rembrandt painting.

Often, we see Zagajewski using alliteration,

for example 'p' on line six. I decided that I would not keep this in my version, because I couldn't find the appropriate words to fit both the tone of the poem and the repetition of a letter.

I think that the poem in its entirety poses a challenge to the translator as well as the reader. Zagajewski leaves to the imagination the reason for the speaker's journey through the museum. He/she could be looking for inspiration, an escape from reality. To me, however, it speaks of searching for something in a painting that he is missing in his own life, a sense of peace and tranquillity.

### Piosenka o końcu świata

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W dzień końca świata  
Pszczola krąży nad kwiatem nasturcji,  
Rybak naprawia błyszczącą sieć.  
Skaczą w morzu wesołe delfiny,  
Młode wróble czepiają się rynny  
I wąż ma złotą skórę, jak powinien mieć.

W dzień końca świata  
Kobiety idą polem pod parasolkami,  
Pijak zasypia na brzegu trawnika,  
Nawołują na ulicy sprzedawcy warzywa  
I łódka z żółtym żaglem do wyspy podpływa,  
Dźwięk skrzypiec w powietrzu trwa  
I noc gwiaździstą odmyka.

A którzy czekali błyskawic i gromów,  
Są zawiedzeni.  
A którzy czekali znaków i archanielskich trąb,  
Nie wierzą, że staje się już.  
Dopóki słońce i księżyc są w górze,  
Dopóki trzmiel nawiedza różę,  
Dopóki dzieci różowe się rodzą,  
Nikt nie wierzy, że staje się już.

Tylko siwy staruszek, który byłby prorokiem,  
Ale nie jest prorokiem, bo ma inne zajęcie,  
Powiada przewiązując pomidory:  
Innego końca świata nie będzie,  
Innego końca świata nie będzie.

*Czesław Miłosz*

'Piosenka o koncu świata' from OCALENIE  
© 1945 by Czesław Miłosz. All Rights Reserved

### A song on the end of the world

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On the day of the end of the world  
A bee is hovering over a nasturtium flower,  
A fisherman is mending a shimmering net.  
Happy dolphins are jumping in the sea,  
Baby sparrows are clinging to the gutter  
And a snake has golden skin, as it should do.

On the day of the end of the world  
Women are walking across fields under umbrellas,  
A drunk is falling asleep by the kerb,  
Vegetable sellers are calling in the street  
And a yellow-sailed boat is returning to the island  
The sound of a violin is hanging in the air  
Opening a starry night.

And those who expected lightning and thunder  
Are disappointed.  
And those who expected signs and archangel trumpets  
Do not believe it is happening now.  
As long as the Sun and Moon are above,  
As long as a bumblebee visits a rose,  
As long as pink babies are born,  
No one believes it is happening now.

Only a grey-haired old man, who would be a prophet,  
But is not a prophet for he has other work to do,  
Is saying while tying up tomatoes:  
There will be no other end of the world,  
There will be no other end of the world.

*Translated by  
Patrick Lynch*

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### Patrick Lynch's commentary

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My first attempt to translate a Polish poem happened during an interview for a place at Oxford University. When I found out about the competition, I jumped at the idea of having another go at translating, this time in a more relaxed setting and with more time. To warm myself up I had a go at the poem I was asked to translate during the interview, namely 'Lesson on silence' by Tymoteusz Karpowicz. And then something amazing happened: I started to discover the beauty and emotions that poetry can evoke. I was hooked.

To take part in the competition I have chosen a poem by Czesław Miłosz, 'A Song on the End of the World'. Although written in 1945 it is still an immensely powerful and visionary image of a society and its individuals – that one can see among us every day. The poem refers to The Apocalypse of St. John, through its title and repetition at the end of the poem. The comparison between an apocalypse and everyday life is striking, notably because none of the poem's characters are aware of the inevitability of death. The observations of everyday activities

promise nothing but peace. Only the 'grey-haired old man' understands the concept of death and that it will arrive for everyone at any point in time. I've taken from this poem not only the idea of an apocalypse but also a moral rule. A rule on how to live wisely, and what attitude is needed when faced with the world. According to Czesław Miłosz, it is necessary to have an awareness of death and accept what is inevitable. Only in this case will man overcome fear and calmly focus on everyday life.

### The Year in Review

2020 marks ten years since the Stephen Spender Trust began to run education programmes, with the launch of 'Translation Nation'. While we haven't been able to celebrate this anniversary quite as we would have liked, this year has seen great progress in our work with young people.

### Why translation?

Translation is a unique and highly interactive way of introducing diverse texts to the classroom, and brings with it a host of benefits for young people. As you translate, you both comprehend the original text and re-imagine it in another language: you are therefore simultaneously reading and writing, decoding and creating. Creative translation fosters intercultural interest and understanding, while revealing the workings of language and the mechanisms of storytelling. It is a thrilling, collaborative, creative process that gives pupils an exciting linguistic experience in the here and now, rather than telling them that language-learning will be rewarding for their future careers.

Through the Stephen Spender Prize since 2004, and our education programmes since 2010, SST has celebrated international poetry, multilingualism and language-learning through translation.

### Creative Translation in the Classroom

Over the past two years we have integrated the Stephen Spender Prize more closely with our education programmes. 'Creative Translation in the Classroom' aims to embed creative translation into school curricula, making it an integral part of teachers' educational practices. Following a pilot in 2017–18, the three-year programme (2019–22) was developed with funding from the Rothschild Foundation and Polonsky Foundation. The Stephen Spender Prize takes centre-stage as a focus of motivation and aspiration for the young people taking part, and each year includes a focus on one community language. These languages are also highlighted in the Stephen Spender Prize with a special 'Spotlight' category.

Creative Translation in the Classroom



**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.

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establishes year-long partnerships between translators and teachers at primary, secondary, and supplementary schools in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. The first year of the scheme saw translators run workshops on translating comics, picture books, plays, and poems. Through the programme, we aim to build a legacy of creative translation activities and multilingual storytelling in our partner schools, and to publish the resulting lesson plans, videos and worksheets for teachers across the UK to use.

### Virtual Creative Translation

Each year we aim to reach more teachers and to empower them to integrate creative translation into their teaching. To this end, in 2019 we began to develop virtual resources in addition to our in-school workshops. We could not have imagined how relevant and necessary these resources would become in 2020,

and it has been a pleasure to work with translators and poets across the world to develop our Virtual Creative Translation project. When this year's Prize was launched in April, we also launched a new resources hub [multilingualcreativity.org.uk] and YouTube channel for the Trust, with resources including video masterclasses, live-illustrated poems, and short films of poets reading their work. Aware that young people cannot always access international poetry easily, and that this was especially challenging during the school closures of 2020, we also published multilingual booklets of poetry in fourteen languages.

We're looking forward to developing these resources in 2021, along with a new remote training course for teachers across the country.

### Stephen Spender Prize 2021

As we look ahead, we're especially excited to be working with poet and translator Sascha Aurora Akhtar, who will curate the new Urdu Spotlight in 2021. Our multilingual poetry booklets for next year's Prize will focus on South East Asian languages. We look forward to working with more teachers, translators and poets as together we inspire ever increasing numbers of young people to read and translate poetry from across the world.

### 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 Spender (Penguin, 2005).

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For more information about the Stephen Spender Trust and its activities, please visit

[www.stephen-spender.org](http://www.stephen-spender.org)  
or email [info@stephenspender.org](mailto:info@stephenspender.org)

# The Stephen Spender Trust

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