



The Stephen Spender Prize 2016  
in association with **theguardian**

ar chríocha a chineáil  
over the lands of all his

plenus sacculus est aran  
Is only filled with cob

mais bruma do que neve n  
more mist than snow to

所有十二年的灰尘  
dust, memories – even the w

Sin la espuela del viento  
Without the spur of the wind

for poetry in translation

# The Stephen Spender Prize 2016 for poetry in translation

in association with **theguardian**

## Winners and Commended

### Winner of the 14-and-under category



**Tomás Sergeant**  
'Desire'  
by Federico García Lorca  
(Spanish)

### 14-and-under commended

**Thomas Delgado-Little**  
'The Crime'  
by Antonio Machado (Spanish)

**Jamie Kennedy**  
'The Soldier'  
by Emilio Prados (Spanish)

### Winners of the 18-and-under category



**First**  
**John Tinnen**  
'Persephone'  
by Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill  
(Irish)



**Second**  
**George Jones**  
Catullus 13  
(Latin)



**Third**  
**Alice Mee**  
'Ballad of the Moon'  
by Federico García Lorca  
(Spanish)

### 18-and-under commended

**Michael O'Connor**  
'Open Windows'  
by Victor Hugo (French)

### Winners of the Open category



**First**  
**Lesley Saunders**  
'Poem'  
by Maria Teresa Horta  
(Portuguese)



**Second**  
**Theophilus Kwek**  
'Moving House'  
by Wong Yoon Wah  
(Chinese)



**Third**  
**Mark McGuinness**  
from *Troilus and Criseyde*  
by Chaucer  
(Middle English)

### Open commended

**Rey Conquer and Izabela Rakar**  
from 'The First World War'  
by Thomas Kling (German)

**Peter Russell**  
'Breaktime'  
by Günter Grass (German)

**Lesley Saunders**  
'The Misses'  
by Yvette K. Centeno (Portuguese)

**Graham Sells**  
'Dawn'  
by Giorgio Caproni (Italian)

This year's competition was held against the backdrop of the impending European referendum. As most of the country looked inwards at the latest polls, Stephen Spender Prize entrants, aged 9–90, looked outwards, submitting translations from some 41 languages and dialects. The poets translated by this year's winners range from four living ones (two from Portugal, one from Singapore and one from Ireland – all charmingly delighted by the news) to Catullus, born two millennia ago.

My thanks go to the judges, Katie Gramich, Sean O'Brien and Stephen Romer – erudite and conscientious in equal

measure; to this year's sponsors, the Old Possum's Practical Trust, the Dr Mortimer and Theresa Sackler Foundation and the Golsoncott Foundation, without whose generosity the prize could not have run; and to our media partner, the *Guardian*.

This booklet contains only the winning entries, but, as always, you can read the commended entries and download booklets from previous years at [stephen-spender.org](http://stephen-spender.org).

*Robina Pelham Burn*  
Director of the Stephen Spender Trust

## Judges' comments

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This year there were strong contenders as usual from French, Spanish, Latin, German, Italian and Russian, but there was also much enjoyment for me in some of the less-translated languages, especially Portuguese, Irish, Chinese, Hungarian, Romanian and Welsh. A few people heeded my call last year for more translations from the Welsh; I particularly liked Ann Corkett's translation of Waldo Williams's classic poem, 'Cofio', in the Open category. This poem, known by heart by many in Wales, holds a special place in modern Welsh culture, making it all the more challenging to translate. But I felt that Corkett achieved the almost impossible by retaining the abcb rhyme scheme and the metrical pattern, as well as the mournful, longing tone of the inimitable original. Well done, indeed! I also admired Jason Walford-Davies's moving translation of Gwyn Thomas's more modern Welsh poem, 'Roger Casement'. However, a few of the other entries showed an insufficient grasp of Welsh to produce a successful translation.

In the youngest age category (14-and-under) some translations from the Spanish were pleasingly lyrical in English. Lorca's apparent simplicity is often difficult to translate successfully, but Tomás Sergeant did an admirable version of his 'Deseo'. Similarly, Thomas Delgado-Little's

straightforward boldness did justice to Machado's 'El crimen fue en Granada'.

In the 18-and-under category John Tinneney's translation of Nuala ní Dhomhnaill's 'Peirseifiné' stood out at once for its distinctive Irish voice and its sensitive interpretation of Dhomhnaill's vision. There were quite a few confident and commendable translations from the Latin of Catullus in this age category, including one highly enjoyable one by George Jones. Once again, though, a poem from a less often translated language took my fancy, namely Maria Calinescu's translation of a Romanian poem, Lucian Blaga's 'În Munți', which contained some excellent lines, such as 'From the east come butterflies as big as owls/searching for their cinder in the flames.'

In the Open category, I was immediately drawn to a small group of translations from the Portuguese by the same translator. Lesley Saunders had translated poems by four different contemporary Portuguese women poets, all carefully chosen and rendered in free, subtle, intriguing, versions which emphatically worked as poems in English. I was particularly bowled over by her translation of Yvette K. Centeno's 'Meninas', which was both haunting and unsettling. Saunders's commentaries were also intelligent, thoughtful, and showed a real comparative mind at work: her contrasting of Maria Teresa Horta's 'Poema' with

Ted Hughes's 'The Thought-Fox' was illuminating about both. Another poem which impressed me greatly was Theophilus Kwek's clever rendering of Wong Yoon Wah's Chinese poem, 'Moving House'. This was a formal tour-de-force, solving the ostensibly insuperable difficulties of translating into English from the beautifully succinct Chinese characters in a suitably neat, pictorial manner. The German entries were not quite as impressive as in previous years, but Rey Conquer and Izabela Rakar's translation of an extract from Thomas Kling's experimental poem in disjointed tercets, 'Der Erste Weltkrieg', was an exception which stood out for its brave tackling of the challenges posed by Kling's collage-like form. Finally, I found Bernard Adams's translation, 'The Night Dog', from the Hungarian of István Ágh, extremely atmospheric; in his commentary he tells us that 'the sound of echoing barks is a familiar, if not always appreciated, feature of the Hungarian night', and in the poem we hear those nocturnal barks in sinister blank verse 'as if, enraged, night were becoming dog'...

I'd like to thank all the entrants for their work this year. I'm grateful for being introduced to new poets and new languages. Your work excited and thrilled me, entertained and amused me, occasionally alarmed and infuriated me, but always kept me reading on...

*Katie Gramich*



There was strong, ambitious work among the prize-winning and commended poems in all the categories of the competition, with an entry that drew largely but not exclusively on European languages. The material included some familiar work against which translators like to test themselves – poems by Catullus, Ovid, Baudelaire, Akhmatova and Lorca, for example, all of whom issue their own highly specific challenges. It was also exciting to encounter some poets new to me, for whom some of the translators made a strong case, as in the case of the winner of the Open category.

In the 14-and-under section, it was encouraging to see a readiness to engage with the difficult directness and immediate depth of feeling found in work by Lorca ('Desire', translated by Tomás Sergeant, the winner in this category) and Machado ('The Crime', Thomas Delgado-Little). There was a pleasing concern with tone, timing and the sense of gesture – qualities which would present difficulties to far more experienced translators.

In the 18-and-under group, the winner, John Tinneny, translated Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's 'Persephone', which retells the myth, or part of it, from the point of view of Persephone herself, in

this instance a naïve and fearless girl who's got in over her head and is saying more than perhaps she knows. What Tinneny manages particularly well is tone. The girl's brash eagerness has to be there, but it mustn't tip over into the reductive colloquialism which would disable the power of the founding myth. Ambiguity is part of what is so often lost in the process of translation, but Tinneny manages to retain it. There was a knowing wit to George Jones's rendering of Catullus 13, while the third placed poem, Alice Mee's beguiling and exciting rendering of Lorca's 'Ballad of the Moon' brought back something of the impact of encountering poetry itself for the first time – no mean feat.

The Open category required long and detailed discussion of a cluster of serious contenders. Among the commended pieces, I was particularly impressed by Peter Russell's rendering of Günter Grass's 'Breaktime', set in a schoolyard as Germany begins to lose the Second World War. With its crisp non-sequiturs and fractured imagery, Russell's version seems to have taken up residence in my head. Graham Sells' account of Giorgio Caproni's poem of death and lost love, 'Dawn', is also memorable, in this case for its near-tangible recreation of a wintry setting where objects and sensations seem at once to freeze and melt. In third place,

Mark McGuinness made a good fist of the opening of *Troilus and Criseyde*, and the runner up, Theophilus Kwek, gave an elegant account of Wong Yoon Wah's 'Moving House'. The winning poem, Lesley Saunders's translation of Maria Teresa Horta, is a witty, erotic piece which traces the way a poem comes into being. As with Ted Hughes's 'The Thought-Fox', it's an animal who enables the poem to happen, but there the resemblance ends, for Horta's poem has a degree of amused relish that makes Hughes sound a little stolid in comparison. Someone could write an interesting essay comparing the two.

Having served on the judging panel only once, and thus having no basis for comparison, I find it difficult to make general remarks. I note the large number of languages from which the entries are drawn – cause for optimism at a time when we seem to be facing a widespread failure, or absence, of curiosity. On a lighter note, I had not expected that in my lifetime I would encounter so many translations of Hugo's 'L'Aube' or Vian's 'The Deserter', though I'm sure they did me a power of good. I would like to thank my colleagues for their insight, and especially I would like to thank Robina Pelham Burn for administering the competition with such finesse, wisdom and good humour.

Sean O'Brien



This year's entries included a poem from the Akkadian and poems from the African languages Igbo and siNdebele; nearer home, it was heartening to see (especially in these post-referendum days) smaller European nations represented, Slovakia and Bulgaria and Montenegro, notably in the 14-and-under category. The poems chosen (on the suggestion of mothers and grandmothers) were of the heroic-patriotic variety, not always the easiest of genres to get across in translation. French and Spanish came through strongly; 'Charmes de Londres', in multiple

translations, was a fresh choice from that perennial favourite Jacques Prévert.

There were several attempts, of varying quality, to translate 'Rêve', a sonnet by the forgotten Decadent Albert Mérat (refusing to be portrayed alongside Verlaine and Rimbaud, Mérat is represented by the potted plant in Fantin-Latour's painting 'Un coin de table'). I was glad that another French poet, Yves Bonnefoy, who died this year, made a first appearance in this category. But it was three poems (chosen from an impressive group, including Pedro Garfias, José Hierro and Miguel Hernández) concerning the Spanish Civil War which impressed us enough

to award them the category prize and our two commendations. 'Desire' by Federico García Lorca, 'The Crime' by Antonio Machado and 'The Soldier' by Emilio Prados, in versions by Tomás Sergeant, Thomas Delgado-Little and Jamie Kennedy respectively. The Lorca pre-dates the War, a poem of longing, finely translated and with a sensitive commentary; the same holds true of the two commended poems, one of which, the Machado, is a moving commemoration (and denunciation) of Lorca's murder.

My personal commendations in this category go to Madison James for her witty rendering of Catullus 13 and to

Alexandra Kouki for her translation (and sensitive commentary) from the Greek of Maria Polydouri.

In the 18-and-under category, this year heady with French Romanticism, we were glad to commend the breezy poem-impression by Victor Hugo, 'Open Windows', nicely rendered by Michael O'Connor. Alice Mee won third prize for Lorca's atmospheric and chant-like 'Ballad of the Moon'. The ever-popular Catullus 13 provoked a wittily-turned response from George Jones. But it was John Tinneny, with his spirited version of 'Persephone', recounting her abduction by Hades, from the Irish of Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, that was the standout winner for the judges. Judicious use of rhyme, and of contemporary phraseology (justified since Hades drives a BMW in the original) and of witty understatement – 'this house here of his is pretty dark' – all made for a satisfying translation.

Given that he is so hard to translate, and most attempts shipwreck, my personal commendation in this category goes to 'Be Drunk', Indigo Douglas's daring versification of Baudelaire's prose poem 'Enivrez-vous', though the judges were bemused that 'vertu' should be translated as 'virility'!

There were several fine individual performances in the Open category, even if the number of really ambitious,

fully satisfying translations was perhaps down on last year. There was, however, a 'standout' set of contemporary Portuguese poems, all of them by women, translated by Lesley Saunders. All four of these came through on the shortlists, and we were impressed by Saunders's engaged and intelligent commentaries; for her, these bold women from Portugal, whose work was for a long time banned, enlarged her sense of what poetry could do 'psychologically and politically'. The winning poem is certainly psychologically challenging; 'Poema' by Maria Teresa Horta is a meta-poem, featuring a kind of 'thought fox' for a feminine poet, part muse part dangerously seductive animus. The translation sure-footedly follows the sinuous twists and turns, approaches and returns of the original. The same is true of 'Las Meninas' by Yvette K. Centeno, which we commended, based on the sturdy, stumpy *jolie-laide* maids and misses in Paula Rego's paintings.

Second prize went to 'Moving House' by the modern Chinese poet Wong Yoon Wah. This is a rueful, witty poem, about a familiar headache, when it involves moving memories as well as objects, and Theophilus Kwek's adventurous decision to cast the English into square forms, resembling rooms, or boxes, is ingenious, retaining the

'otherness' of the Chinese but also an understated wit that seems nicely domesticated. Mark McGuinness's accomplished version of the 'proem' to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* took third prize, his heartfelt commentary praising the poem's 'Dantesque erotic-spiritual light'.

Among the commended poems, I would single out Graham Sells's version of 'Dawn' by Giorgio Caproni, that seems wonderfully to preserve the nervous energy (and anguish) of this poem set in a bar, a little seismograph of amorous anticipation, and the dread of (mortal) disappointment.

My personal commendations would include two bold forays 'after' the French, of Aloysius Bertrand, and Stéphane Mallarmé by Stuart Henson and Martin Sorrell respectively, while the stricter versions of Mallarmé, by Tim Dooley and Clive Wilmer, also had some brilliant *trouvailles*, especially as this poet is something like the North Face of the Eiger to translators. There was much to enjoy in Ranald Barnicot's Catullus, notably the inventive prosody of 'Sirmio'; I liked the atmosphere in Peter Daniels's 'Bezhet'sk' by Akhmatova, and the buffeting rhythm of Elytis's 'The Summer's Swept It All Away' in the version by Alasdair Gordon.

*Stephen Romer*

**Deseo**

---

Sólo tu corazón caliente,  
y nada más.

Mi paraíso un campo  
sin ruiseñor  
ni liras,  
con un río discreto  
y una fuentequilla.

Sin la espuela del viento  
sobre la fronda,  
ni la estrella que quiere  
ser hoja.

Una enorme luz  
que fuera  
luciérnaga  
de otra,  
en un campo  
de miradas rotas.

Un reposo claro  
y allí nuestros besos,  
lunares sonoros  
del eco,  
se abrirían muy lejos.

Y tu corazón caliente,  
nada más.

*Federico García Lorca*

**Desire**

---

Only your warm heart,  
and nothing more.

My Paradise, a field,  
without nightingales,  
or lyres,  
a river, discreet,  
and a little fountain.

Without the spur of the wind  
in the branches,  
without the star,  
that wants to be a leaf.

An enormous light  
which was  
the firefly  
of the Other,  
in a field of broken gazes.

A still calm  
where our kisses,  
sonorous circles  
of echoes,  
will open, far-off.

And your warm heart,  
nothing more.

*Translated from the Spanish  
by Tomás Sergeant*

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**Tomás Sergeant's commentary**

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I chose 'Deseo' by Federico García Lorca because it is a very interesting poem. It depicts a paradisiacal field that contains very few of the things we would think should be in a paradise; for example there are no nightingales – birds believed to have beautiful songs. This oddness that runs through the whole poem grabbed my attention.

After choosing the poem which, I think it is fair to say, is the easiest bit, came one of the hardest choices I had to make: whether I should make a literal translation or not. I did not want to translate this poem word for word

because that is not how poems are written; they are written to convey a feeling or thought and here I sensed despair. One word that I found difficult was 'caliente' which in Spanish means hot, but hot neither conveys its meaning nor sounds good in English. When Lorca uses the word 'caliente' I think he means loving, passionate or even caring; but he does not use any Spanish word for this, he uses the word hot. So I thought and thought and the closest I came to the Spanish word was warm.

After researching Lorca a bit I found out a very interesting fact: he was homosexual in

a time when being homosexual was taboo. I think this is a poem written by Lorca to a lover who is unavailable, maybe because they are in a relationship with another person or they are not homosexual themselves. Having learnt this I read through the poem and saw the bit which I had translated as 'the other' and that made little sense – what is 'the other'? And then I linked these two things: maybe this 'other' is the partner of Lorca's lover and should be 'Other'.

Peirseifiné

---

‘Ná bí buartha fúm, a mháthair,  
is ná bí mallaithe,  
cé go n-adhmaím go rabhas dána  
is nár dheineas rud ort,  
gur thógas marcaíocht ón bhfear caol dorcha  
ina BhMW,  
bhí sé chomh dathúil sin, is chomh mánla  
ná féadfainn diúltú dhó.

Thug sé leis ar thuras thar sáile mé  
thar raoin m’aithne.  
Bhí an gluasteán chomh mear chomh síodúil sin  
gur dhóigh leat go raibh sciatháin faoi.  
Gheall sé sról is veilbhit dom  
is thug sé dom iad, leis.  
Tá sé go maith dhom – ach aon rud amháin,  
tá an tigh seo ana-dhorcha.

Deir sé go mbead i mo bhanríon  
ar chríocha a chineáil,  
go ndéanfaidh sé réalt dom chomh cáiliúil  
le haon cheann acu i Hollywood.  
Tugann sé diamaintí dom is seoda chun mo thola  
ach tá an bia gann. Anois díreach  
thugadar chugham úll gráinneach. Tá sé craorag  
is lán de shíolta ar nós na mílte is na mílte

braonta fola.’

*Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill*

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Persephone

---

‘Now don’t be worried about me, mum,  
and don’t be buck mad,  
though yes, I admit, that I was bold  
and didn’t do as I was told,  
and that I got a lift from the tall dark man  
in his BMW, but  
he was so handsome, and so gentle  
you couldn’t have said no.

He took me on a trip abroad  
beyond everything I’d thought I knew.  
The car-ride was so silky smooth  
that you’d have thought we’d grown wings and flew.  
He promised me velvet, satin,  
and he gave them to me, too.  
He’s so good to me – except for the fact  
this house here of his is pretty dark.

He says I’ll be queen  
over the lands of all his people,  
that he’ll make me into a star as hyped  
as any of them in Hollywood.  
If I want diamonds and silk I get them,  
but food, now that’s limited. He’s only after  
giving me a pomegranate. Blood-red  
and bursting with seeds, like thousands upon thousands

of blood drops.’

*Translated from the Irish  
by John Tinneny*

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John Tinneny’s commentary

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I chose to translate this poem by Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill because I have a keen interest in the Irish language and Greek myths, and in this poem both passions were combined. The conversational tone Persephone uses with her mother was a challenge as the colloquialisms and idioms of Irish can seem quite strange in literal translation e.g. ‘mallaithe’ means ‘cursed’ in English, which would seem unintelligible to an English speaker, whereas ‘buck-mad’ expresses the anger of the mother, grounds the poem in the Irish context that Ní Dhomhnaill has

moved it to, and creates a certain earthiness that with other turns of phrase (‘any of them in Hollywood’) brings the speaker of the poem to life. Moreover, an aspect I loved about the original poem was its use of humorous anachronisms, like the mention of Hades’ BMW, and this was a feature I tried to strengthen with modern phrases like ‘hyped’. The structure of the stanzas wasn’t something that needed to be overly changed in my opinion, especially the last line, which with its closing imagery of ‘blood drops’ was highly effective. However, I was quite free

with line length and breaks. Irish, with its use of the genitive and compound pronouns, can be quite a compact language, and so I was aware that some short lines would be difficult to preserve completely without hobbling the flow of the poem. That said, the musicality of the original poem and language was a quality I tried to evoke through alliteration and assonance and by introducing rhyme into the poem in the second stanza, which not only gave the poem an aesthetic value but mirrored the seduction of Persephone with a similar easiness on the ear.

## Second prize, 18-and-under category

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### Carmen 13

---

Cenabis bene, mi Fabulle, apud me  
paucis, si tibi di favent, diebus,  
si tecum attuleris bonam atque magnam  
cenam, non sine candida puella  
et vino et sale et omnibus cachinnis.  
haec si, inquam, attuleris, venuste noster  
cenabis bene; nam tui Catulli  
plenus sacculus est aranearum.  
sed contra accipies meros amores  
seu quid suavius elegantiusve est:  
nam unguentum dabo, quod meae puellae  
donarunt Veneres Cupidinesque,  
quod tu cum olfacies, deos rogabis  
totum ut te faciant, Fabulle, nasum.

*Catullus*

### Catullus 13

---

You'd dine well with me, my Fabullus,  
In a few days' time. If the gods favour you that is,  
And only if you bring along a proper meal,  
And wine, and wit too, and laughter for all –  
Not forgetting to bring a beautiful date.  
I dare say, you charmer, if you bring all these,  
You will dine well. Trouble is, my small wallet  
Is only filled with cobwebs.

But in return, you'd receive pure love,  
Or maybe something more elegant, more delightful:  
I'll give you the perfume,  
Which the Venuses and Cupids gave to my girl.  
And once you've smelled it, Fabullus,  
You'll beg the gods to make you all nose.

*Translated from the Latin  
by George Jones*

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### George Jones' commentary

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I first encountered Catullus in my studies at school. After studying a few of his *Carmina* in class, I decided I wanted to continue reading his work, both in the original and in translation. This particular poem was attractive to me as it gives an insight of how Catullus acted toward his friends, and shows his deep pride in his girl, Clodia. It

was his line saying that his purse was filled with cobwebs which made my decision to choose this poem for this translation. I felt that I can somewhat relate to Catullus, and his overwhelming pleasure for Lesbia in the poem; I find it very satisfying to see that, even in ancient times, the human condition was not too dissimilar to how it is today.

It was tricky to form a translation I could be pleased with, as the Latin naturally translates to a rather high register in English. Personally, I saw this poem as being a casual piece, written for a friend. I tried to recreate this tone in my translation by using less formal phrases in English.

## Third prize, 18-and-under category

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### Romance de la Luna, Luna

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La luna vino a la fragua  
con su polisón de nardos.  
El niño la mira, mira.  
El niño la está mirando.

En el aire conmovido  
mueve la luna sus brazos  
y enseña, lúbrica y pura,  
sus senos de duro estaño.

Huye luna, luna, luna.  
Si vinieran los gitanos,  
harían con tu corazón  
collares y anillos blancos.

Niño, déjame que baile.  
Cuando vengan los gitanos,  
te encontrarán sobre el yunque  
con los ojillos cerrados.

Huye luna, luna, luna,  
que ya siento sus caballos.

Niño, déjame, no pises  
mi bláncor almidonado.

El jinete se acercaba  
tocando el tambor del llano  
Dentro de la fragua el niño,  
tiene los ojos cerrados.

Por el olivar venían,  
bronce y sueño, los gitanos.  
Las cabezas levantadas  
y los ojos entornados.

¡Cómo canta la zumaya,  
ay cómo canta en el árbol!  
Por el cielo va la luna  
con un niño de la mano.

Dentro de la fragua lloran,  
dando gritos, los gitanos.  
El aire la vela, vela.  
El aire la está velando.

*Federico García Lorca*

### Ballad of the moon, the moon

---

The moon came to the forge  
With her dress of spikenard.  
The boy is watching, watching her.  
The boy is watching her.  
In the restless air  
The moon moves her arms  
And shows, lubricious and pure,  
Her breast of hard tin.

Away, o moon, o moon.  
If the gypsies come,  
They will make white necklaces and rings  
With your heart.

Child, let me dance.  
When the gypsies come,  
They will find you on the anvil  
With your little eyes closed.

Away, o moon, o moon,  
For I hear their horses.

Child, leave me, don't tread on  
My starched whiteness.

The horseman was approaching  
Playing the drum of the plain  
Inside the forge,  
The boy's eyes are closed.

Through the olive grove they came,  
Bronze and dreaming, the gypsies.  
Heads high  
And eyes half closed.

How the tawny owl sings,  
Oh how it sings in the tree!  
The moon moves across the sky  
Holding the child by the hand.

Inside the forge they cry  
Wailing, the gypsies,  
The air watches over  
The air is watching over.

*Translated from the Spanish  
by Alice Mee*

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### Alice Mee's commentary

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When translating this poem, I wanted to retain the sense of straddling the real and the imagined, as it alludes to Andalusian gypsy folklore that if a child gazes upon the moon too long, he can be taken away by it. Lorca partly achieves this through rhyme and rhythm, but I found that this was almost impossible to transfer into English. In order to compensate, therefore, I added an extra definite article in the title, as it creates a rhythm more comparable to the double-consonant 'luna'. I similarly used 'o moon, o moon' instead of the literal 'moon, moon,

moon', in order to emphasise the romantic elements of this poem, and I felt that only repeating 'o moon' once gave the poem a lilting quality reminiscent of the Spanish, evoking a trance or lullaby.

It was a challenge to be faithful to Lorca's imagery of the moon and allusions to it as a symbol of death: I had difficulties translating 'polisón de nardos', which is literally the very unnatural 'bustle of nards'. Thus, I chose the biblical 'dress of spikenard', whose flowers are a traditional symbol of death, and I believe that it effectively conveys the beam of white

light from the moon, whilst at the same time continuing to personify the moon as a feminine being. I decided that 'starched whiteness', similarly, was the best way to express how the moon seems to have a stiff, white skirt. I omitted the direct object pronoun, 'la', in lines 35 and 36, as there is no suitable equivalent which would sound natural in English. There are several possible translations for 'vela', but I decided upon 'watches over', to emphasise the tragic contrast between the boy 'watching' the moon at the beginning, and the scene at the end.

Poema

Deixo que venha  
se aproxime ao de leve  
pé ante pé até ao meu ouvido

Enquanto no peito o coração  
estremece  
e se apressa no sangue enfebrecido

Primeiro a floresta e em seguida  
o bosque  
mais bruma do que neve no tecido

Do poema que cresce e o papel absorve  
verso a verso primeiro  
em cada desabrigo

Toca então a torpeza e agacha-se  
sagaz  
um lobo faminto e recolhido

Ele trepa de manso e logo tão voraz  
que da luz é a noz  
e depois o ruído

Toma ágil o caminho  
e em seguida o atalho  
corre em alcateia ou fugindo sozinho

Na calada da noite desloca-se e traz  
consigo o luar  
com vestido de arminho

Sinto-o quando chega no arrepio  
da pele, na vertigem selada  
do pulso recolhido

À medida que escrevo  
e o entorno no sonho  
o dispo sem pressa e o deito comigo

*Maria Teresa Horta*

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Poem

I let him come.  
He sneaks on tiptoe  
right up to my ear;

under its ribs my heart  
quivers, quickens  
as the excitement mounts:

first the forest appears,  
then the woodland-sequel,  
more mist than snow to the touch –

from the new poem's  
very first line the paper sucks up  
every waif-word

and an ugliness steals in,  
a cunning hungry thing  
crouching there incognito,

pretending to be tame and yet so wolfish  
that he's the kernel of light  
and then the noise of its cracking;

he's lithe on the path,  
doubling back on himself,  
running with the pack, loping alone;

pussy-footing through the night  
he trails moonlight behind him  
like a mink coat.

I feel him when the hairs on my skin  
lift, and in the delicious dizziness  
of my private pulse –

in the midst of my writing, in my dream-life,  
I slip all his clothes slowly off  
and slide him down beside me.

*Translated from the Portuguese  
by Lesley Saunders*

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Lesley Saunders' commentary

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My attraction to Portuguese poetry goes back forty years to the *New Portuguese Letters*, which challenged my sense of what literature could accomplish, formally as well as psychologically and politically. The Three Marias – Maria Isabel Barreno, Maria Teresa Horta and Maria Velho da Costa – exemplified the new feminist resistance that they enacted through a paradoxical combination of public protest and intimate female friendship. To my enormous pleasure, I finally met Maria Teresa Horta last year in a Lisbon *pastelaria*! I learnt that her work is still silenced – these days by a general wish to ‘forget all of that’.

Although I'm still a relatively new student of Portuguese, my background in French

and Latin has enabled me to have a grasp of its general lexical features and syntactical structures. I also referred, for this poem, to online translations, one in German and one by Ana Hudson, who has brought so many contemporary Portuguese poets to an English readership.

‘Poema’ is difficult to translate because of the abbreviated, even dislocated, diction that disguises itself as something direct and uncomplicated – a feature I've tried to replicate, though I have included punctuation in my version – but it's a very interesting poem, not least because of what I take to be its exploration of what the equivalent, for a female poet, might be of the ‘muse’ who inspires male poets. The masculine

prowler-intruder, wolfish and dangerous, who ends up in her bed could be compared with Ted Hughes' ‘The Thought-Fox’, from the nocturnal forest setting to the sudden and alarming entry of the animal into the human realm – alarming but actually welcomed by the poet in both cases. However, Horta's working of the trope is more erotic, more intimate, than Hughes': the wolf is, to use a Jungian term, Horta's animus in a way that Hughes' fox – who is most definitely not a vixen – cannot be his anima. That is perhaps why Hughes' fox is clearly and distinctly *seen*, whilst Horta's wolf remains almost out of sight but is deeply and sensuously *felt*. Hughes' fox turns out to be the poet's poem; Horta's wolf emerges as the poem's poet.

## Second prize, Open category

### Moving House *A poem in six squares*

#### *i. Contract*

The man from Universal looks  
in every corner. He is sure the hefty  
shelves, fridge, table, even  
the fragile *bonsai*, antiques  
won't take more than a morning  
to box a day to move.

Seeing my panic, he adds: twelve years'  
dust, memories – even the view outside  
won't fit. No, not even on a lorry.  
Please. Deal with them yourself.

#### *ii. The Move*

Now that they've unloaded my  
furniture from the lorry, I find  
the moving-men (*a sofa*  
*the dining table, boxes of books,*  
*antiques, pots of garden plants*)  
are tired, thirsty. No-one comes  
in. They squat under the eaves.

A crippled stool wakes in pain,  
sees, in the scalding heat, a juniper  
bending, faltering.  
The tall fridge  
gives off heat. Even its  
shade, like me, breaks into sweat.

#### *iii. Clearing Up*

I've gone back to dust  
The hollow rooms.  
Gingerly,  
from each pile of dust,  
scrap paper, broken things  
I've retrieved  
bits of the past.  
They'll go in supermarket  
bags with me  
to our new home.

#### *iv. Curious Neighbours*

From the high-rise to this  
bungalow. The neighbours are terri-  
bly curious. At dawn, wild  
flowers wash themselves with dew,  
Peer through weeds as I bathe  
the car. Lizards stick their heads  
round corners  
to watch me whitewash walls.  
They can't help but laugh.  
Later moon and stars crowd  
at windows to find me not  
at work but counting stocks,  
savings. They go quietly, leave  
tears on my glass windows.

#### *v. Paint Job*

Sunday morning. A black cat  
Squats under the tree outside  
as I  
give the black barred gate  
a coat of white.  
At noon a white cat on the deck  
finds my black gate turned to white  
and me turned black by the sun.

#### *vi. Cutting Grass*

Front and back weeds in the yard regard a man returning to nature with interest.  
They stand tall in the mud, look east, west, and come to the glass door of the  
dining-room stick their heads in to see what's for breakfast or which headline  
I'm reading today. So I've bought a lawnmower. Every first Sunday  
of the month: the weeds' curiosity put to rest.

*Translated from the Chinese  
by Theophilus Kwek*

*continued on page 12...*

...continued from page 11

搬家记

一、搬运合约

环球搬运公司的估价员  
冷漠的巡视公寓的每一个角落  
肯定的说：  
沉重的书刊、冰箱、桌椅  
甚至脆弱的盆景植物和古董  
只需半天装箱  
一天搬运

见我满脸的惘然  
他再补充一句：  
所有十二年的灰尘和回忆  
窗外的青山绿水  
既不能装箱  
卡车也载不足  
请自己处理

二、搬家

卸下沉重的家具后  
大卡车发现  
搬运工人  
沙发  
餐桌  
一箱一箱的书和古董  
一盆一盆的花和植物  
疲倦、饥渴  
没气力走进我的新居  
各自蹲坐在屋檐下休息

一张断脚的椅子  
在痛苦中醒过来  
看见烈日下的一盆万年青  
四肢发软，低垂着头  
高大的冰箱  
身上冒着热气  
影子也像我  
热得正在流汗

三、打扫回忆

我回去打扫  
搬空后的公寓  
细心的在一堆一堆的  
灰尘、废纸、破物中  
捡起许多旧事和回忆  
放进购物袋里  
亲自载到新家去

四、好奇的邻居们

从高楼公寓  
搬进平地房子  
邻居们对我特别好奇：  
早上院子的野花  
用露珠洗了脸  
纷纷从杂草里伸出头  
偷看我替汽车洗澡  
壁虎日夜躲在墙角探头探脑  
见我汗流浹背的在粉刷墙壁  
便忍不住哈哈大笑  
夜晚  
星子和月亮悄悄来到窗前  
发现我不是读书写诗  
而在计算银行的存款与股票  
便默默的离开了  
把一滴滴眼泪  
留在玻璃窗上

五、油漆记

星期天早上  
一只黑猫蹲在门前的树下  
看着我  
挥动刷子  
迅速的把两扇黑色的铁栅门  
油上白漆

中午  
一只白猫立在阳台上  
发现黑色的铁栅白了  
而我  
却被太阳漆黑了

六、除草记

屋前屋后  
院子里的杂草  
对回归自然的人  
特别好奇  
喜欢从泥土里站出来  
东张西望  
甚至爬到餐厅的玻璃门边  
探头探脑  
想知道我吃什么早餐  
阅读报纸上哪一条新闻  
我于是买了一架剪草机  
每月初的星期天  
把院子里杂草的好奇心  
通通剪掉

王润华

(Wong Yoon Wah)

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by permission  
of the poet

Theophilus Kwek's commentary

The 'square' is the most egalitarian of shapes, and, by virtue of its homonym (the public 'square'), both visual and spatial symbol of open discourse – the Chinese pictograph '口' means 'mouth'. Every student of Chinese learns by tracing the language's intricate characters into squares: first on a grid, to study its proportions, then into rows of identical squares. A 'character', another homonym, denotes (in English) both a single Chinese pictograph and a person. Likewise, a 'radical' means a section of a pictograph (for example, the '口' in '吃'), or 'subversive person'. Traversing these double-meanings,

the 'radical' is both part of, and description of, a 'character', and a character is a person written into a square.

Wong Yoon Wah was uprooted from his family's plantation to a cramped barbed-wire compound during the Malayan Emergency, the British government's protracted campaign to eradicate the Malayan Communist Party. 'Moving House', written in 1987 after Wong relocated to Taiwan, the US, then Singapore, begins with the impossibility of putting 'dust, memories' into boxes. It crosses between new and old homes, alluding to contemporary events (part v, for instance, nods to Deng

Xiaoping's mantra: 'No matter if a cat is white or black, as long as it catches mice.'). before arriving at a sense of finality and silenced dissent ('weeds' curiosity put to rest').

Rather than preserving the poem's form, I have presented it in six 'squares', drawing on the idea of packing a life into boxes, as well as resonances in the homonyms explored above. The first, densely packed sections give way to more fragmented ones, mirroring the slowing pace of life (from the 'high-rise' to the 'bungalow') and the slowing pace of the original. Presented thus, each section comes to resemble a Chinese character in its own right.

**Troilus and Criseyde: Book I, 1–56**

---

The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen,  
That was the king Priamus sone of Troye,  
In lovinge, how his aventures fellen  
Fro wo to wele, and after out of joye,  
My purpos is, er that I parte fro ye.  
Thesiphone, thou help me for t'endyte  
These woful vers, that wepen as I wryte.

To thee clepe I, thou goddesse of torment,  
Thou cruel Furie, sorwing ever in peyne;  
Help me, that am the sorrowful instrument  
That helpeth lovers, as I can, to pleyne!  
For wel sit it, the sothe for to seyne,  
A woful wight to han a drery fere,  
And, to a sorrowful tale, a sory chere.

For I, that god of Loves servaunts serve,  
Ne dar to Love, for myn unlyknesse,  
Preyen for speed, al sholde I therfor sterve,  
So fer am I fro his help in derknesse;  
But nathelees, if this may doon gladnesse  
To any lover, and his cause awayle,  
Have he my thank, and myn be this travayle!

But ye loveres, that bathen in gladnesse,  
If any drope of pitee in yow be,  
Remembreth yow on passed hevinesse  
That ye han felt, and on the adversitee  
Of othere folk, and thenketh how that ye  
Han felt that Love dorste yow displese;  
Or ye han wonne hym with to greet an ese.

And preyeth for hem that ben in the cas  
Of Troilus, as ye may after here,  
That Love hem bringe in hevne to solas,  
And eek for me preyeth to god so dere,  
That I have might to shewe, in som manere,  
Swich peyne and wo as Loves folk endure,  
In Troilus unsely aventure.

And biddeth eek for hem that been despeyred  
In love, that never nil recovered be,  
And eek for hem that falsly been apeyred  
Thorough wikked tonges, be it he or she;  
Thus biddeth god, for his benignitee,  
So graunte hem sone out of this world to pace,  
That been despeyred out of Loves grace.

**Troilus and Criseyde: Book I, 1–56**

---

Before I part from you I want to tell  
Of Troilus, son of Priam, King of Troy,  
And how his lover's fortunes rose and fell  
In double sorrow: from misery to joy  
And out of bliss again. Lend me your voice  
Thesiphone – help me to compose  
These woeful lines, that weep as my ink flows.

To you I call, you goddess of sharp torment,  
You cruel Fury, sorrowing in pain:  
Help me, who am the sorrowful instrument  
That helps all lovers, voicing their complaint;  
Because it suits, to speak the matter plain,  
A wretched man to have a gloomy fellow,  
And a tragic tale, a speaker full of sorrow.

For I, who serve the servants of the Lord  
Of Love, daren't pray to Love for my success  
Even if I die, because I'm flawed;  
I languish so far from his help in darkness.  
But nonetheless, if this may bring some gladness  
To any lover, and advance his courtship,  
Give him the thanks and leave me with the hardship.

But all you lovers bathing now in gladness,  
If any drop of pity be in you,  
Remind yourselves of any former sadness  
That you have felt, and also of the woe  
Of other folk; recall the times you too  
Once felt Love brought you only misery  
Or that you won him far too easily.

And pray for those caught in the same condition  
As Troilus, more of which you'll shortly hear,  
That Love will bring them heavenly salvation;  
And also pray for me to God so dear,  
To give me strength to somehow make it clear  
Through Troilus' own unfortunate adventure  
Such pain and woe as all Love's folk endure.

And also pray for those left in despair  
Of love, with no chance of recovery,  
And all those lovers, whether him or her,  
Whom wicked tongues have done great injury.  
Pray thus to God, from his great charity  
To grant them passage from this earthly place  
Who lose all hope of Love's redeeming grace.

## Third prize, Open category

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...continued from page 13

And biddeth eek for hem that been at ese,  
That god hem graunte ay good perseveraunce,  
And sende hem might hir ladies so to plesse,  
That it to Love be worship and plesaunce.  
For so hope I my soule best avaunce,  
To preye for hem that Loves servaunts be,  
And wryte hir wo, and live in charitee,

And for to have of hem compassioun  
As though I were hir owene brother dere.  
Now herkeneth with a gode entencioun,  
For now wol I gon streight to my matere,  
In whiche ye may the double sorwes here  
Of Troilus, in loving of Criseyde,  
And how that she forsook him er she deyde.

*Geoffrey Chaucer*

And also pray for those who are at ease  
That God will grant their love to long endure  
And give to them the gift to please their ladies  
According to Love's honour and his pleasure.  
For so I hope to make my soul more pure:  
To pray for those who wear Love's livery,  
And write their woe, and live in charity,

And feel for each of them the same compassion  
As though I were their own devoted brother.  
Now listen to me with your full attention  
For now I will go straight to my main matter  
In which you'll hear the double sorrow suffered  
By Troilus when he loved the fair Criseyde  
And how she left her love before she died.

*Translated from the Middle English  
by Mark McGuinness*

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## Mark McGuinness's commentary

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I have translated 500 lines of *Troilus and Criseyde*; the 60-line limit made the eight-stanza 'proem' at the start of Book 1 the obvious choice.

*Troilus* is my favourite of Chaucer's works, his masterpiece and one of the greatest love poems in English, yet it is neglected in favour of the *Canterbury Tales*. Wonderful as the *Tales* are, they won't break your heart the way *Troilus* does. This emotional intensity is evident right from these opening stanzas, glowing with a Dantesque erotic-spiritual light, and displaying Chaucer's boundless compassion for those who suffer 'swich peyne and wo as Loves folke endure'.

Part of me disapproves of translating Middle English – it's not *that* hard to read the original. But another part answers: 'Most people *won't* read it, without encouragement. A translation can open the door.'

*Troilus* was clearly written to be read aloud in company as well as for private enjoyment. So I want to recreate something of the experience of Chaucer's contemporaries, of this readable, lyrical, entrancing and entertaining poem: a page turner and a text fit for performance.

I love Chaucer's rhyme royal and never considered changing the form. One technical challenge can be inferred from a glance at the

two texts: the original is clearly narrower, because some syllables that were voiced in Middle English have fallen silent since. This leaves gaps in the metre that are hard to avoid filling with extra words.

The bigger challenge is to create a text that is accurate, readable *and* a passing imitation of Chaucer's inimitable tone and music, with his prayer ringing in my ears:

And for ther is so gret diversitee  
In Englissh and in writyng of oure tonge,  
So prey I God that noon myswrite thee,  
Ne thee mysymetre for defaute of tonge.

### Stephen Spender Prize in association with the *Guardian*

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

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

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

There are prizes in three categories: Open, 18-and-under and 14-and-under. For many of the younger entrants, the competition is an introduction to poetry in another language and a first attempt at poetry translation; for the adult translators, winning can bring public recognition and publishing contracts as well as, for a lucky few, a Hawthornden Fellowship.

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



**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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### Translators in Schools

Translators in Schools is a collaboration between award-winning translator Sarah Ardizzone, educational consultant Sam Holmes and the Stephen Spender Trust. When it was launched in 2013, funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and European Commission, it was as a professional development programme to widen the pool of translators and teachers with the skills to run translation workshops in schools. For the non-teachers, the training had three parts: a day covering translation activities, lesson planning and classroom management; a day trying out what they had learnt with 9–11 year olds brought in from a local primary school; and a period of e-mentoring when participants developed longer workshops of their own and delivered them in schools.

Translators in School now counts public events and consultancy among its areas of activities and has become part of the wider multilingual creativity movement showcased by Free Word's Multilingual Creativity Lab in November 2015 which was co-curated by the Translators in Schools team.

Events to date include The Big Translate at the Southbank Centre in October 2015,

which was supported by public funding from the National Lottery through Arts Council England and by the European Commission. As part of the London Literature Festival, translators from the Translators in Schools programme helped 60 children from four of the Southbank's associated primary schools translate into English a collection of strikingly illustrated books from around the world. Working with seven languages, some of which used a non-roman alphabet, the children discovered that everything – from pictures, to story and tone – needed translating. They became code-cracking language detectives, using glossaries to create first a literal translation then a polished, nuanced version. They learnt what translation involves, what happens to books when they make the journey from one language (and culture) to another, and how languages and translated literature enrich our lives. The day culminated with a public presentation by the children. The Big Translate was repeated at Short Wood Primary near Telford in June 2016, this time supported by the Mercers' Company. A day of translation activities in the idyllic setting of Short Wood's forest school was again rounded off by a presentation by the children to their peers, parents, teachers and members of the public. Translators in Schools returned to Shropshire later that month when Sarah Ardizzone brought her Little Red Hood translation workshop to Pop Up's schools festival.

For more information about the programme, to watch the Translators in Schools film or to contact Translators in Schools graduates to arrange a workshop in your school, visit [www.translatorsinschools.org](http://www.translatorsinschools.org).

### 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 Stephen Spender (Penguin, 2005).

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