

September 29, 2016—The American Literary Translators Association (ALTA) is pleased to announce the shortlists for the 2016 National Translation Awards (NTA) in Poetry and Prose! This is the eighteenth year for the NTA, which is administered by the ALTA, and only the second year to award separate prizes in poetry and prose. The NTA is the only national award for translated fiction, poetry, and literary nonfiction that includes a rigorous examination of both the source text and its relation to the finished English work.

This year's judges for poetry are Adriana Jacobs, Karen Kovacik, and Cole Swensen. This year's prose judges are Karen Emmerich, Andrea Labinger, and Marian Schwartz. Award selection criteria include the quality of the finished English language book, and the quality of the translation.

The winning translators will receive a \$2,500 cash prize each, and the awards will be announced at ALTA's annual conference, held this year at the Marriott Oakland City Center in Oakland, CA from October 6-9, 2016. Follow our blog (www.literarytranslators.org/blog), Twitter (@LitTranslate), or Facebook (www.facebook.com/literarytranslators) for the announcement of the winners!

The 2016 NTA Shortlist in Poetry (in alphabetical order by title):



Minute-Operas

By Frédéric Forte (France)

Translated from the French by Daniel Levin Becker, Ian Monk, Michelle Noteboom, Jean-Jacques Poucel
(Burning Deck)

Ludic by nature, Forte, a member of the Oulipo since 2005, takes on the Musée du Louvre in this spatially and visually activated collection. Using quick cuts, oblique glances, and slippery connections, Forte creates an associative field around a series of the museum's pieces from antiquity, one per page, augmented by a complex choreography—a bit reminiscent of those dance diagrams from the 50s—but incorporating the entire repertory of 21st century computer iconography. Translating this work meant not only translating words, phrases, spaces, displacements, leaps, gaps, and an array of symbols, but also a gamut of delicate tones, including irony, slang, several levels of humor, and tinges of melancholy. This translation, done by team of four, all bilingual, is positively acrobatic, even balletic—as is the original.



Rilke Shake

By Angélica Freitas (Brazil)

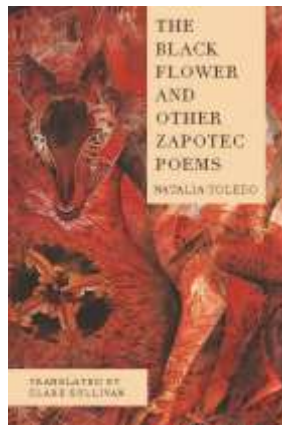
Translated from the Portuguese by Hilary Kaplan
(Phoneme Media)

Freitas' title, a pun on milkshake, suggests in just three syllables the method of this madly exuberant book. The author shakes and swirls literary modernism (Moore, Stein, Pound, Bishop, Pessoa, Rilke) in a lexical blender of slang, neologisms ("dismallarmament"), spells, and loans from other languages. Hilary Kaplan zooms around each linguistic curve along with the poet, finding inventive solutions to bring into English the sounds, rhythms, play, and verve of the Portuguese. Only this omnivorous appetite for the flavors of words, Freitas implies, can save us from a two-dimensional understanding of history, poetry, and ourselves.



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The Black Flower and Other Zapotec Poems

By Natalia Toledo (Mexico)

Translated from the Isthmus Zapotec and Spanish by Clare Sullivan
(Phoneme Media)

In her long poem addressed to T.S. Eliot, Natalia Toledo contemplates the “waste land” of linguistic death, in which her children, “homeless birds in the jungle of / forgetfulness,” will no longer speak Zapotec. This trilingual collection in Zapotec, Spanish, and English stakes a claim against such erasure through its exquisite evocations of the flora, fauna, and history of Toledo’s indigenous culture. Clare Sullivan’s meticulous translations, derived from closely comparing Toledo’s Spanish versions of her Zapotec originals, render this world accessible without condescending or domesticating, allowing the “humid magma” and olfactory richness of *The Black Flower* to flourish in English.



The Collected Poems of Chika Sagawa

By Chika Sagawa (Japan)

Translated from the Japanese by Sawako Nakayasu
(Canarium Books)

For readers new to Chika Sagawa’s work, this collection offers a thorough and persuasive introduction to her work, but Sawako Nakayasu’s expert and exquisite translations also reveal the extent to which these poems remain charged with currency and energy many decades after Sagawa’s early death at the age of 24. In her astute selection from Sagawa’s oeuvre, Nakayasu argues that “Japanese Modernism was not so much an offshoot of European art movements, but rather its own complex web of developments that evolved on its own terms.” So too did Chika Sagawa, who refused to get “chipped away” by the trends of her day.



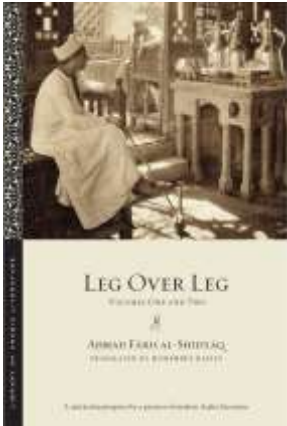
White Blight

By Athena Farrokhzad (Sweden)

Translated from the Swedish by Jennifer Hayashida
(Argos Books)

Athena Farrokhzad’s *White Blight* explores with unsparing brutality the distorted and “disfiguring” relation between memory and history, native and immigrant languages, parents and children. The mother who “let bleach run through her syntax,” also “put her barbarism” in her daughter’s mouth. Jennifer Hayashida’s startling translation is attentive to the distinct voices that shape the book’s intergenerational argument on diaspora, home and belonging. As a visual artist, she is also sensitive to the material properties of the book, the way the white English text moves within and pushes against black highlighted space, calling attention to what remains unwritten, “bleached out” between the white lines.

The 2016 NTA Shortlist in Prose (in alphabetical order by title):



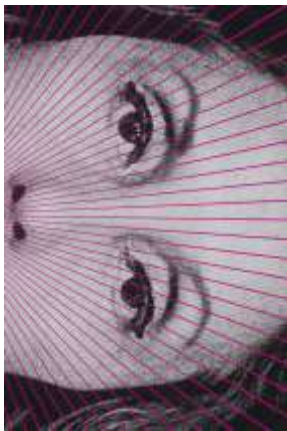
Leg over Leg

By Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq (Lebanon)

Translated from the Arabic by Humphrey Davies

(Library of Arabic Literature/NYU Press)

Humphrey Davies' masterful translation of Faris al-Shidyaq's *Leg over Leg* is the English-language reader's first introduction to the work of this foundational figure of Arabic letters. The protagonist leaves his native Lebanon to make a life for himself elsewhere as an itinerant scribe, poet, translator, editor, and author. This is a book about books, about conventions of writing, reading, bookmaking, cultural creation and crossings, bristling with puns and long digressions about the "oddities of language, including its rare words"—a preoccupation that makes Davies' translation all the more remarkable as a work of literature and scholarship both.



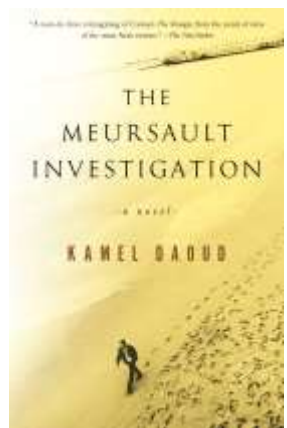
The Complete Stories by Clarice Lispector

By Clarice Lispector (Brazil)

Translated from the Portuguese by Katrina Dodson

(New Directions)

Katrina Dodson's translation of *The Complete Stories of Clarice Lispector* is as innovative and mesmerizing as the original texts. The early stories are innocent and intensely strange, as Lispector continues to try on different voices; the volume ends four decades later, with stories that are more confident but still intensely strange. Dodson brilliantly conveys Lispector's unconventional gaze, which never seems to be looking where we expect in this tour de force of thought and style.



The Meursault Investigation

By Kamel Daoud (Algeria)

Translated from the French by John Cullen

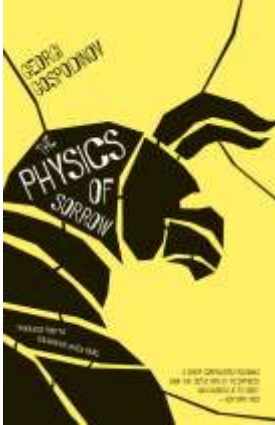
(Other Press)

Kamel Daoud's *The Meursault Investigation* is a powerful reimagining of the story of Albert Camus's *The Stranger*—or, rather, a writing-back that imagines not only the death but also the life of the unnamed "Arab" shot and killed on an Algerian beach in Camus's novel. Daoud gives Meursault's victim a name, Musa, as well as a family: a mother to mourn him and a younger brother intent on rescuing his revered elder brother from the obscurity of a false fame by telling his own version of his brother's death, life, people, and land. John Cullen's translation is lively, colloquial, conversational, and beautifully crafted.



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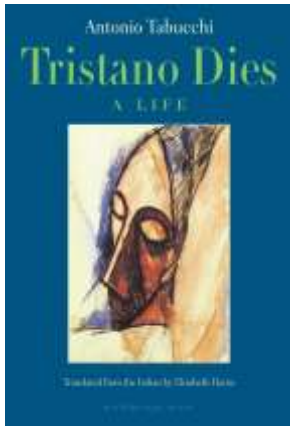
The Physics of Sorrow

By Georgi Gospodinov (Bulgaria)

Translated from the Bulgarian by Angela Rodel

(Open Letter Books)

Alternately funny and heartbreaking, this labyrinthine tale—befitting the Minotaur motif at its core—erases time and space to explore what it means to be a sentient being on this planet. The novel is unabashedly non-linear, leading the reader down blind alleys, from Classical antiquity to the twentieth century's two world wars, with periodic, grim glimpses of life in Soviet Bulgaria. An exercise in the art of story-telling, *The Physics of Sorrow* offers countless possibilities for a dénouement. While hope is by no means guaranteed, it is never entirely excluded, either. Angela Rodel's translation is magnificent.



Tristano Dies: A Life

By Antonio Tabucchi (Italy)

Translated from the Italian by Elizabeth Harris

(Archipelago Books)

In Antonio Tabucchi's *Tristano Dies*, a dying Italian Resistance hero has called a writer to his bedside to tell him the story not of his life—a life of love and war, fidelity and betrayal—but of the mind that lived it. Elizabeth Harris's English translation is that rare and thrilling instance of transcendent translation that stands, independently, on the same high level as the original, a level Harris sustains through this mesmerizing and thought-provoking text.