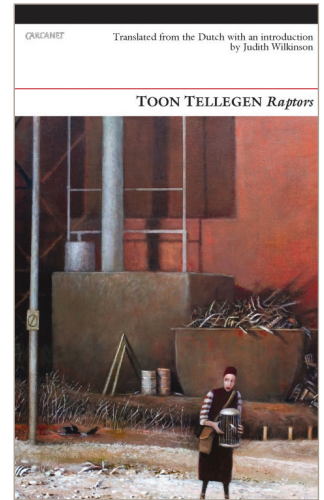


Judith Wilkinson's translation of *Raptors* by Toon Tellegen wins the Poetry Society's Corneliu M Popescu Prize for Poetry in Translation 2011



Tellegen's poem sequence about a dysfunctional family marks a major Dutch writer at the height of his powers, and a "sustained tour de force" of translations.

Judges Sasha Dugdale and Jane Draycott said: "Toon Tellegen's *Raptors* gives mythic shape to the experiences of a child growing up in a dysfunctional family... His complex, often surreal and always highly affecting poems exhibit an understanding of the power of the story in which the dream-like psychology, the marvellously nuanced telling of a family's malaise set him apart as an entirely distinctive voice in European poetry."

The sequence of poems that makes up *Raptors* assembles, piece by piece, an image of a family dominated by a capricious, abusive father whose "ominous, manic energy" takes its toll on each of them separately as well as on the family unit. Each poem begins with the phrase, "My father". Surreal images, darkness and humour, clinical observation and deep psychological insight inform this portrait of a family, and 'father', invented by Toon Tellegen:

My father
a lonely dead man among countless immortals,
no one died as often, as daily and disastrously
as he did

and those who saw him die became uneasy and awkward

Toon Tellegen (born 1941) is a novelist, playwright, memoirist, and prolific and popular children's writer, but considers himself first and foremost as a poet and has written more than 20 collections. He has won numerous prizes and awards, including two in 2007 for his entire body of work. An opera, *The Cricket Recovers*, based on his children's stories, was performed in Britain in 2005. He worked as a GP until his retirement.

Judith Wilkinson is a British poet and translator, concentrating on contemporary Dutch and Flemish poetry. Her first collection

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of translations from the work of Marian Van hee, *Instead of Silence*, was a Poetry Book Society recommendation and she has also received several Pushcart nominations. In 2008 she won the David Reid Poetry Translation Prize. She lives in Groningen, the Netherlands.

Of *Raptors*, she said: "I remember how excited I was when I first read Toon Tellegen's *Raafvogels*... I immediately knew I wanted to translate the book. Having the opportunity to do so was a joy and a privilege."

"I'm grateful to Toon Tellegen, I'd like to thank the Dutch Foundation for Literature for providing a grant, and I'm very grateful to Carcanet Press for publishing the book. I feel enormously fortunate to have received this prize."

Special commendation: the judges would also like to draw special attention also to Jennie Feldman and Stephen Romer's translation of *Into The Deep Street: Seven Modern French Poets*, "as an important light shed on a group of key French poets of the last 70 years, each acute translation a work of great subtlety and clarity offered like a window alongside its original."

Organised by the Poetry Society and sponsored by The Ratiu Foundation, the Corneliu M Popescu Prize is given biennially to a collection of poetry translated into English from another European language.

The winner of this year's £1,500 award was announced at a celebratory close reading event at the Aldeburgh Poetry Festival, Suffolk, on Saturday 5 November.

Raptors is published by Carcanet, at £12.95.

– ENDS –

For further information about the Corneliu M Popescu Prize 2011, telephone Alan Ward on 020 7420 9886 or email award@poetrysociety.org.uk

Notes to Editors:

- **Formerly the European Poetry Translation Prize (1983-1997) the Popescu Prize was relaunched in 2003**, and renamed in memory of Corneliu M Popescu, who translated the work of one of Romania's leading poets, Mihai Eminescu, into English, and died in an earthquake in 1977, aged 19. The Prize's founding sponsor was Romanian journalist, author and democracy campaigner Ion Ratiu. It has been supported by The Ratiu Foundation since 2003. The prize of £1,500 is awarded to a translator.

- **Past winners of the Corneliu M Popescu Prize**

- o 2003: David Constantine for his translation of *Lighter than Air* by Hans Magnus Enzensberger
- o 2005: Adam Sorkin and Lidia Vianu for their translation of *The Bridge* by Marin Sorescu
- o 2007: Ilmar Lehtpere for his translation of *The Drums of Silence* by Kristiina Ehin
- o 2009: Randall Couch for his translation of *Madwomen* by Gabriela Mistral

- **The other shortlisted books were:**

- o Ramsey Nasr, *Heavenly Life* (Banipal Books) translated by David Colmer
- o Harry Martinson, *Chickweed Wintergreen* (Bloodaxe) translated by Robin Fulton
- o Ikinici Yeni, *The Turkish Avant-Garde* (Shearsman Books) translated and edited by George Messo
- o *Into the Deep Street: Seven Modern French Poets* (Anvil), translated by Jennie Feldman and Stephen Romer
- o Mircea Ivanescu, *Lines Poems Poetry* (University of Plymouth Press) translated by Adam J Sorkin and Lidia Vianu

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- **Jane Draycott's** new translation of the medieval dream-elegy 'Pearl', an extract from which was a Stephen Spender Prize-winner 2008, is just published. Nominated as a Next Generation poet, and a previous winner of the Keats-Shelley Prize for Poetry, her collections include *The Night Tree* and *Prince Rupert's Drop* (OxfordPoets) and *Tideway* and *Christina the Astonishing* (with Lesley Saunders) from Two Rivers Press. Her most recent collection *Over* was shortlisted for the 2009 T S Eliot Prize. She teaches at the University of Oxford and Lancaster University.
 - **Sasha Dugdale** is a poet and translator. She worked for the British Council in Russia in the 1990s where she set up the Russian New Writing Project with the Royal Court Theatre. Since her return in 2001 she has translated new plays for the Court, the RSC and other theatre companies. She has published two collections of translations of Russian poetry. The most recent, *Birdsong on the Seabed* (Bloodaxe) by Elena Shvarts was a PBS choice and shortlisted for the Popescu and Academica Rossica Translation Awards. A third collection of her own poems *The Red House* is just published.
 - **The Ratiu Foundation** was established in London in 1979 by Ion and Elisabeth Ratiu, to promote and support projects which further education and research in the culture and history of Romania. This year, the Foundation celebrates 30 years of the fight for independent thought and cultural excellence. The Foundation offers 100 annual grants worth £200,000 to Romanian students studying a wide range of subjects in the UK, principally for projects, postgraduate courses, conference participations, travel grants, and other short-term courses, including academic research. They enable talented graduates and young professionals to become familiar with the UK and gain skills, which they can adapt and apply in Romania. The Ratiu Foundation offers annual seed funding for innovative projects, principally in Romania, which foster Romanian arts and civilisation, heritage, civil society, democracy, and environmental protection.
www.ratiufamilyfoundation.com
 - **The Poetry Society** is Britain's leading voice for poets and poetry. Founded in 1909 to promote "a more general recognition and appreciation of poetry", the Society is now one of literature's liveliest organisations, with nearly 4,000 members worldwide. For a century the Society has championed exciting new work through its leading international poetry magazine *Poetry Review*, featuring contributions from Blok to Brodsky, and Shapcott to Szymborska. With its innovative commissioning, education and publishing programmes, and a packed calendar of readings, performances and competitions, the Poetry Society celebrates poetry in its many forms. "The Poetry Society is the heart and hands of poetry in the UK – a centre which pours out energy to all parts of the poetry-body, and a dexterous set of operations which arrange and organise poetry's various manifestations. It has a long and distinguished history, and has never been so vital, or so vitalising, as it is now." – Sir Andrew Motion. www.poetrysociety.org.uk

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