

THE  TIMES

Stephen Spender Prize 2011

We walk barefoot so as not to disturb
caminamos descalzos para no espantar
in woven words, of the wondrous w
wille woðcræfte wordum


it is clothed in gilded Babylonian
plumato amictus aureo Baby

its little pearl buttons crackled like
ses petits boutons de nacre craquaient

Born one day, one day he'll die
Un giorno è nato. Un giorno morirà

Blind is fire fed on anger
caecus est ignis stimulatus ira

for poetry in translation

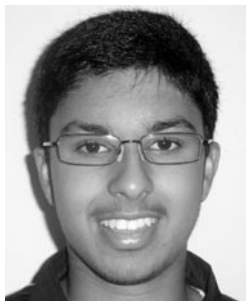
THE  TIMES Stephen Spender Prize 2011
for poetry in translation

Joint winners of the 14-and-under prize

Giles Robinson
'Breakfast' by Jacques
Prévert (French)



Anamay Viswanathan
'Children of the Sun and Wind'
by Mohammed Ebnu (Spanish)



Commended

Derek Lam
'The Ballad of Mulan', anon
(Classical Chinese)

Charlie Mack
'A Dream for Winter'
by Arthur Rimbaud
(French)

Winners of the 18-and-under category

First

Andrew Wynn Owen
'The Whale'
anon
(Anglo-Saxon)



Joint second

Joel Farrance
'As'
by Robert Desnos
(French)



William Kennaway
'In the Jaws of
Luxury...'
by Petronius (Latin)



Phoebe Power
'Blood Orange'
by Jacques Prévert
(French)



Commended

Iman Ahmedani
'From the Child
to His Foot'
by Pablo Neruda
(Spanish)

Oscar Davies
'Open Windows'
by Victor Hugo
(French)

Isobel Gooder
'Good Advice for Lovers'
by Victor Hugo
(French)

Holly Whiston
'Fragment 31'
by Sappho
(Ancient Greek)

Winners of the Open category

First

Meghan Purvis
'The Collar'
from *Beowulf*,
anon
(Anglo-Saxon)



Second

Martin Bennett
'Toto Merumeni'
by Guido Gozzano
(Italian)



Third

Henry Stead
from *Medea*
by Seneca
(Latin)



Commended

Jane Draycott
'The Man in the Moon', anon (Old English)

Adam Elgar
'Sonnet 32', by Gaspara Stampa (Italian)

Meghan Purvis
'Modthryth', from *Beowulf* (Anglo-Saxon)

Sam Riviere
'Tristia', by Osip Mandelstam (Russian)

Patricia Roseberry
'The Murderer's Wine'
by Charles Baudelaire (French)

John Turner
'Sagesse III, XII', by Paul Verlaine (French)

John Turner
'Parsifal', by Paul Verlaine (French)

Introduction

This was a curious year in that we had a wonderfully high number of entries but fewer than usual in the Open category: the total was swollen by an unprecedented number of entries in the 14-and-under and 18-and-under groups. Forty-three languages were represented, with Sindebele and Tibetan appearing for the first time.

My thanks to judges Susan Bassnett, Edith Hall, Patrick McGuinness and George Szirtes, who painstakingly read and made notes on every entry (there is no preliminary sifting)

before deciding the winners at a meeting that new judge Patrick McGuinness described as ‘convivial and edifying and funny in the right parts’. This year’s sponsor has asked to remain anonymous, so it remains only to thank Erica Wagner, Literary Editor of *The Times*, whose promotion of the prize makes an inestimable difference.

Robina Pelham Burn
Director of the Stephen Spender Trust

Judges’ comments



This year’s entries, as ever, included some magnificent translations by people of all ages, from under-14 to over 75, along with some first-rate commentaries. Interestingly, a lot of entrants chose to translate into rhymed verse forms. This works well if the translator/poet can use rhyme in a versatile manner that shows he or she is comfortable with it, but though there were some fine examples of rhymed verse, there were also some cases where the use of rhyme damaged the impact of the translation, making it read like doggerel. My advice to anyone wanting to translate into English rhyme forms is not to do so unless you feel very, very confident that the result will work effectively. Just because there is a form of rhyme in an original does not mean that it will translate easily into rhyme in another language where stylistic rules are different.

There were some very courageous entries this year: translators tackled some of the best known and most difficult poets such as Garcia Lorca and Pablo Neruda. I particularly admired Adam Elgar’s translations of Gaspara Stampa (commended) and, in the under-18 category, Isobel Gooder’s ‘Good Advice for Lovers’ by Victor Hugo, also commended, and Charles Devas’ rendering of Lorca’s ‘The Faithless Wife’.

There were several extremely good Anglo-Saxon translations this year. Andrew Wynn Owen’s ‘The Whale’ won the under-18 category, while Meghan Purvis’ ‘The Collar’ from

Beowulf was our unanimous choice as winner of the Open category, with a second poem commended. Whether this reflects a renewed interest in Old English poetry remains to be seen, but the translations were exceptionally strong. Classical languages also scored highly, and several entries explored dramatic works. We all admired John Turner’s ‘Sagesse III, XII’ based on Verlaine and Dante.

Judging a competition such as this inevitably raises questions of whether there are limits to the freedom a translator may take with an original. Martin Bennett’s translation of ‘Toto Merumeni’ is significantly subtitled ‘After Guido Gozzano’; a comparison with the original shows the strategies used by the translator to create a fine poem in English that retains much of the original without slavishly following it.

For a poem to live on in another language it has to be re-created. Often that means rethinking the poem, deciding what can and cannot be retained, perhaps changing the structure, reworking patterns of sound and rhythm, sometimes substituting images for ones that will have the desired effect. Ezra Pound, poet-translator of genius, was once castigated for his ‘unfaithfulness’ and replied saying that anyone could produce a literal version using a cheap crib. What might be attacked as unfaithfulness in the translation of poetry may result in a poem that does more justice to the original poet than any close following of the original.

When judging, we look carefully

not only at the translations but also at how the translators explain themselves in their commentaries. The quality of work submitted this year was so high that our list of commended entries is longer than usual. What this competition continues to show is that there are dozens of writers, old and young, experimenting with language and producing beautiful, memorable works of art. Stephen Spender would have been delighted.

Susan Bassnett



Every year I read the entries to the competition in a different mood. This year, I had spent July campaigning against the threatened closure of my Department of Classics, where Greek and Latin have been studied for over a century. The proposal was made suddenly at the end of June, on the ground that the department is not expected to make a financial profit next year. It has therefore been more than usually heartening to spend time in the company of hundreds of people who enjoy translating poetry from all kinds of contemporary and ancient languages, for all sorts of reasons, none of them financial.

2011 proved to be the year of Anglo-Saxon, which furnished the texts of the winning entries in both the Open category and the 18-and-under. Meghan Purvis’ evocation of what she calls the ‘violent, feudal, and supernatural’ world of *Beowulf* in her arrestingly modern version of

'The Collar' proved our undisputed Open winner. I will remember for a long time the image of Hygelac's men sleeping with him still, 'downed scarecrows / guarding a field of corpses'. But the masterful alliteration and visual power of Andrew Wynn Owen's rendition of 'The Whale' from the Exeter Book would have won him at least a commendation in the Open category.

I am pleased to say that the ancient languages of Greece and Rome attracted fine entries, too. Amongst the 18-and-unders, Sappho prompted Holly Whiston's brave attempt to make a familiar love song (Sappho 31) speak to contemporary teenagers without betraying the poem's archaic simplicity. On the other hand, the world-weary wit of William Kennaway's precociously knowing Petronius struck us as remarkable in a translator still in secondary school. As a theatre enthusiast, I was delighted with the taut speakability of Henry Stead's excerpt from his version of the grim Senecan *Medea*. I hope that it will encourage others to submit translations from verse drama, a category of translation in which poets such as Ted Hughes and Tony Harrison have recently shown English can be most effective. But there is room in this competition for all genres and moods; if the emotional darkness of Seneca made us flinch, Patricia Roseberry had us in fits with her hilarious take on the drunken ravings of the narrator of Baudelaire's 'The Murderer's Wine'.

The success of a translation in this competition often lies in the choice of original poem. The runner-up in the Open category, with Gozzano's cynical 'Toto Merumeni', showed impeccable judgement; the poem is just long enough to demand a range of solutions to a variety of verbal problems. The same goes for one of my personal favourites this year, Jane Draycott's updating of the 13th-century English lyric 'The Man in the Moon'. Some stunning entries seem too slight in comparison with more

substantial examples. Here I think of Angus Wrenn's lapidary version of Antoine Tudal's 'In the rue Nollet', and Sean Scrivener's tense 'The Bow', a rendering of a Spanish version of a medieval Arabic poem. On the other hand, excerpts from epics or long narrative poems have to be chosen carefully if they are to convey an effect of aesthetic wholeness.

Edith Hall



While there were some disappointingly samey class-exercise-style versions, often of the same poem, the first thing I noticed was the sheer range and variety of languages, genres and periods from which entrants had translated. The pile of papers was a melting-pot of cultures; leafing through it was like walking through an exciting multicultural street or visiting a busy international music festival. What excited me was the spectrum of fidelity and freedom translators I saw. There were graceful, precise, faithful but not grindingly servile translations, and there were also smart and confident versions that took the originals as a starting-point and showed them a different kind of respect by going off at their own tangents. Good poems can take a bit of rough treatment. They aren't there to be stared at behind glass, they're there to be taken off the shelf and handled (though all breakages, as they say, must be paid for...).

In this context, I was especially drawn to translations that showed inventiveness in updating not just context or setting but register and tone. There's a phrase one often sees in translations: 'After Baudelaire', 'After Rilke', 'After Li Po', etc. For me the most impressive entries in this year's competition were the ones that seemed to know what was meant by that innocent-seeming word 'after'. They certainly didn't understand the same thing by it (how could they?), but they had all decided how, for their own purposes, they would negotiate

what we might call the 'afterness' of translation. Did they take it to mean a long way after? A long time after? Going 'after' in the sense of pursuing? Or taking 'after', perhaps in the sense of resembling, the way you'd 'take after' an ancestor?

There were many excellent translations, and some brilliant ones. Many were so good I honestly wondered why I was judging, and from what perspective of qualification. But what makes the Spender prize unique is the way in which it requires the translators to think through their choices and account for them. The commentary is important – knowing what you're doing and why makes you do it better – and I'm convinced it's why so many of these translations were so good. This is a prize named after a very fine poet, and one who in his poetry and translation knew what it meant to be 'after': he understood his relations with his present and his past, with his own culture and with those of others. His work, which is limpid, passionate and generous, is nonetheless unafraid to subject the emotions to the mind's enriching scrutiny. It seems to me that the prize's requirements honour that spirit, and that they bring out the best in the translators too.

This exciting after-ness of translations is especially evident in the winners of the Open and the 18-and-under. Both are from the Anglo-Saxon, and both are inspired not just in their diction, rhythms, register, sound-patterning and lineation but in all the specific, detailed and immediate choices that make translation succeed or fail. Above all, however, the translators made the poems feel ancient – which is what they are: heavy with age in the best, most resonant way – but never archaic. Foreign? Well, Anglo-Saxon is and it isn't. In the past? Yes and no. But like these translations, we too are part of the after-ness of these poems, however thrillingly close their translators have brought them to us, and however richly contemporary they have been made to feel.

Patrick McGuinness



We take a great deal on trust in translations providing we feel the trust has been earned. That trust is earned partly through the ear and the nerves. There are also the competing appeals of brilliant texture and wit as opposed to sonority of feeling. You can't help but notice brilliance, of course. Energy matters, but also the sense of deeper comprehension as though the translator were reaching under the words as well as running fingers over them.

In that respect the youngest category was a little disappointing this year but there was a delightful and, to me, unknown poem, by Mohammed Ebnu, 'Hijos del sol y el viento', translated out of the Spanish by Anamay Viswanathan, that was as graceful and intelligent as Giles Robinson's version of Prévert's 'Breakfast' (complete with product placement!) was inventive and witty, so the prize was shared. Charlie Mack's Rimbaud was ambitious and felicitous in many places and Derek Lam's 'Ballad of Mulan' from the Chinese ran well.

In the other two categories it was the year of the Old English. The 18-and-unders were very strong. 'The Whale', translated by Andrew Wynn Owen, was beautifully handled, its alliterations unfussy and tidal, the difficult task of holding together modern, colloquial and standard diction mastered with great skill. 'I sing of a fish with all my wiles / in woven words, of the wondrous whale' is a terrific beginning and so it goes on. Three others tied for the runner-up spot. It is lovely to have a translation from the French Surrealist Robert Desnos as good as 'As', by Joel Farrance, clever, light yet passionate. Phoebe Power's 'Blood Orange', from Prévert again, is sensuous and rich, and William Kennaway's brisk version of Petronius is full of life, a very skilful piece of work.

There were some terrific things in the Open category. I recognised two of the pieces so I told the other judges that I would have to sit them out and say nothing, which is what I did. It turned out that they liked both and one of them they liked best of all. It was Meghan Purvis' 'The

Collar' an excerpt from *Beowulf*, her other entry from elsewhere in the same text. It is lyrically chiselled and poignant, full of colour. As with 'The Whale' it struck a note that was at a marvellous angle to the original while being close to modern speech. Martin Bennett's 'Toto Merumeni' by Guido Gozzano was dazzling (he was good in all three of his translations including a lovely Apollinaire 'Bestiary') and third was Henry Stead's choral extract from Seneca's *Medea*, punchy, sharp, visceral, the lines broken up in pauses as if, appropriately, spat on the page.

There was charming work by Iman Ahmedani, and outstanding translations by John Turner, Ian Crockatt, Steven Bliss, Patricia Roseberry ('The Murderer's Wine'), John Burrows, Kate Armstrong, Samantha Schnee, Adam Elgar (a group of fine Gaspara Stampa poems), Sam Riviere (who gave us Mandelstam, Rilke and Li Bai), Jane Holland and a previous winner, the excellent Jane Draycott. It would have been great to give them all prizes.

George Szirtes

Déjeuner du matin

Il a mis le café
Dans la tasse
Il a mis le lait
Dans la tasse de café
Il a mis le sucre
Dans le café au lait
Avec la petite cuiller
Il a tourné
Il a bu le café au lait
Et il a reposé la tasse
Sans me parler
Il a allumé
Une cigarette
Il a fait des ronds
Avec la fumée
Il a mis les cendres
Dans le cendrier
Sans me parler
Sans me regarder
Il s'est levé
Il a mis
Son chapeau sur sa tête
Il a mis son manteau de pluie
Parce qu'il pleuvait
Et il est parti
Sous la pluie
Sans une parole
Sans me regarder
Et moi j'ai pris
Ma tête dans ma main
Et j'ai pleuré.

Jacques Prévert

Breakfast

He put the nescafé in the cup
He put the cravendale in the cup
He put the sugar daddie in the cup
He put the small spoon next to the creamy hot cup
He turned and gulped his cup of coffee
He placed his cup of coffee on the table
Without a word
He lit his cigarette
And blew a smoke ring around another girl, I knew then
It was over
He put his ashes in his tray
Without a word
He watched me
He stood up
He placed his hat on his head
He put his coat on
Because it was pouring down
And he left
Under the rain
And me, I put my head in my hands
And started to cry.

*Translated from the French
by Giles Robinson*

Giles Robinson's commentary

I chose this particular poem because I felt it would be reasonably easy to modernise but more demanding if I put my own spin on it. In lines 1–3 I thought that by putting in a little more description it would show more effectively that the girl talking in the poem feels sad that it is over and that she is looking at his every action. Another reason I chose this poem is because I actually saw someone in a café showing these emotions and her emotions came across clearly to me.

Winners of the 14-and-under prize

Hijos del sol y del viento

Aún vivimos en las esquinas
de la nada
entre el norte y el sur de las estaciones.

Seguimos durmiendo
abrazando almohadas de piedra
como nuestros padres.

Perseguimos las mismas nubes
y reposamos bajo la sombra de las acacias
desnudas.

Nos bebemos el té a sorbos de fuego
caminamos descalzos para no espantar el silencio.

Y a lo lejos
en las laderas del espejismo
todavía miramos, como cada tarde
las puestas de sol en el mar.

Y la misma mujer que se detiene
sobre las atalayas del crepúsculo
en el centro del mapa nos saluda.

Nos saluda y se pierde
en los ojos de un niño que sonrío
desde el regazo de la eternidad.

Aún esperamos la aurora siguiente
para volver a comenzar

Mohamed Salem Abdelfatah, 'Ebnu'

Children of the Sun and Wind

We still live,
On the edge of insignificance,
Between the north and south of the seasons.

We still sleep,
Embracing stone pillows,
Like our fathers.

We still follow the same clouds,
Resting in the shadows of bare thorn trees.

We still drink tea with sips of fire,
We walk barefoot so as not to disturb the
silence.

And in the distance,
On the slopes of the mirage,
We still watch on countless evenings,
The sun plunge into the sea.

And the same woman salutes us,
As she waits and watches for dusk,
In the midpoint of the map.

She greets us, then is lost,
In the eyes of a child,
Who smiles from the lap of timelessness.

We still wait,
For a fresh dawn,
To appear once more.

*Translated from the Spanish
by Anamay Viswanathan*

Anamay Viswanathan's commentary

I chose this poem as I feel it conveys a powerful message through very creative and striking imagery. The poet, Mohammed Ebnu, describes a journey, a journey of life, and how we live it. He conveys this with passion and emotion through his imagery. I felt touched and gripped by his poetry and I felt the meaning as it is relevant to anyone who sees life as a journey with up-hill struggles, but it is this hunger and ambition to achieve a desired goal, no matter how steep the climb, that pushes us. This mixture of passion and sophistication was perfectly demonstrated in Spanish but

incredibly difficult to rediscover in English. I also found the fluency and metre, which added so much elegance to the description in Spanish, very much contrasted with the metre and rhythm of my translation. I found it challenging to translate this poem accurately but keeping the elegance of the imagery. I decided to alter the metre as I felt it would keep the same intensity and meaning to the poem's imagery in English. I realised that English and Spanish as languages both have contrasting metres when spoken. 'We still' was the start to most of the stanzas, it gives structure and a rhythm to the piece

though it may not actually be present in the Spanish piece; I felt I needed to loosely translate this.

Though I had altered the metre, I tried to keep the same tone to the poem: the tone of inquisitiveness and thoughtfulness as Ebnu recreates our lives in one journey. I found the translation of words such as 'estaciones', which have two meanings (stations and seasons), difficult. The line 'desde el regazo de la eternidad' holds such elegance in Spanish but I found it difficult to carry the same fluidity and posture into English.

The Whale, from the Exeter Book

Nu ic fitte gen ymb fisca cynn
wille woðcræfte wordum cyþan
þurh modgemynd bi þam miclan hwale.
Se bið unwillum oft gemeted,
frecne ond ferðgrim, fareðlacendum,
niþþa gehwylcum; þam is noma cenned,
fyrnstreama geflotan, Fastitocalon.
Is þæs hiw gelic hreofum stane,
swylce worie bi wædes ofre,
sondbeorgum ymbseald, særyrica mæst,
swa þæt wenaþ wæglipende
þæt hy on ealond sum eagam wliten,
ond þonne gehydað heahstefn scipu
to þam unlonde oncyrrapum,
setlaþ sæmearas sundes æt ende,
ond þonne in þæt eglond up gewitað
collenferþe; ceolas stondað
bi staþe fæste, streame biwunden.
ðonne gewiciað werigferðe,
faroðlacende, frecnes ne wenað,
on þam ealonde æled weccað,
heahfyr ælað; hæleþ beoþ on wynnum,
reonigmode, ræste geliste.
þonne gefeleð facnes cræftig
þæt him þa ferend on fæste wuniaþ,
wic weardiað wedres on luste,
ðonne semninga on sealtne wæg
mid þa noþe niþer gewiteþ
garsecgas gæst, grund geseceð,
ond þonne in deaðsele drence bifæsteð
scipu mid scealcum. Swa bið scinna þeaw,
deofla wise, þæt hi drohtende
þurh dyrne meht duguðe beswicað,
ond on teosu tyhtaþ tilra dæda,
wemað on willan, þæt hy wraþe secen,
frofre to feondum, oþþæt hy fæste ðær
æt þam wærlogan wic geceosað.
þonne þæt gecnaweð of cwicsusle
flah feond gemah, þætte fira gehwylc
hæleþa cynnes on his hringe biþ
fæste gefeged, he him feorgbona
þurh sliþen searo siþþan weorþeð,
wloncum ond heanum, þe his willan her
firenum fremmað, mid þam he færinga,
heolophelme bipeaht, helle seceð,
goda geasne, grundleasne wylm
under mistglome, swa se micla hwæl,
se þe bisenced sælipende
eorlas ond yðmearas. He hafað oþre gecynd,
wæterþisa wlonc, wrætlicran gien.

The Whale

I sing of a fish, with all my wiles
in woven words, of the wondrous whale.
He often appears to unwary wanderers
fierce and unfriendly to all seafarers,
to many a man. He is called Fastitocalon,
this flubber of the ocean lanes.
He resembles a rock roughly eroded
or a seething straggle of strangleweed
bounded by sandbanks, basking offshore
so seafarers think they have spotted shelter.

Now they fix their high-keeled ship
to this trick-land with unravelled rope
and tether the sea-steeds at ocean's edge;
they climb to the top of that ridge
in strong spirits; their ships saunter
sturdy by shore, surrounded by water.
At length the tired crew pitch tents,
bearing no further fears of disturbance.
There, on the summit, a fire is fuelled
and a blaze built; they are all heartened
but bent-double, they rankle for rest.
When the master monster, the briny beast,
supposes the sailors are sound asleep
and kip in camp, content with the weather,
he suddenly slides under the surface;
he speedily dives to his shadowy bed,
delivering sailors and ships to drown
in the Doors of Death.

That's also the deal with demons,
the Faustpact-forgers who, by lying,
lure our best men with mischievous magicking;
they guile them from God with sordid sorcery
and lead them a dance so they tragically try
for a monster's clemency and, at the close,
are dragged down by that friend-foe.
When the devious demon is certain
the Sons of Man, after terrible torture,
are totally brainwashed, bound to his will,
with cunning intelligence he becomes their killer –
sinners who spread his evil on earth,
overreaching and ruthless. Now, under cover
of his enchanted helmet, he digs down to Hell,
that system of circles, that endless abyss
below the mists, just as the whale
scuppers seafarers, both sailors and ships.

But mighty whale, the water-traveller,
knows another miracle still more marvellous.

Winners of the 18-and-under category

þonne hine on holme hungor bysgað
ond þone aglæcan ætes lystep,
ðonne se mereward muð ontyned,
wide weleras; cymed wynsum stenc
of his innoþe, þætte oþre þurh þone,
sæfisca cynn, beswicen weorðap
swimmað sundhwate þær se sweta stenc
ut gewiteð. Hi þær in farað
unware weorude, oþþæt se wida ceaf
gefylled bið; þonne færinga
ymbe þa herehuþe hlemmed togædre
grimme goman.

Anon

If he is hungry when wandering
and the beast's belly moans for feasting,
the ocean-warden widens his mouth,
moving his lips. A sweet scent glides out
and gallons of fish are gulled inside,
thrashing towards the source of the smell
and thronging together, a heedless heap
that jam-packs his jaw. So, in a swiþe,
those unprisable chops imprison their prey.

*Translated from the Anglo-Saxon
by Andrew Wynn Owen*

Andrew Wynn Owen's commentary

Whales are important in Anglo-Saxon literature. In *Beowulf*, the sea is called the 'whale road' ('hron-rad'). Like *The Seafarer*, in which whales also make an appearance, this poem is part of the Exeter Book.

I have tried to imitate the alliterative balance of the Anglo-Saxon verse without letting it become overbearing. Wherever possible, I tried to use internal alliteration,

as in 'unprisable ... imprison'. The strangled echoes of half-rhyme seemed right for whale song. From 'That's also the deal with demons...' to 'just as the whale', the poem takes up an epic simile comparing the whale to a demon. The purpose of this seems similar to mediaeval morality plays and the didactic thread running through the Exeter Book. I hoped

with the more modern phrase 'Faustpact-forgers' to conjure the idea of a satanic pact. The translation 'strangleweed' felt murky enough to stand in for 'særyric' (literally 'sea-reed'). I have cut short the original and ended with the image of the whale's jaw gaping like a hell mouth, just as Herman Melville described 'the wretched hideousness of [Moby Dick's] jaw'.

Winners of the 18-and-under category

Comme

“Come” dit l’anglais et l’anglais vient
“Come” dit le chef de gare et le voyageur qui vient dans cette ville
descend du train sa valise à la main
“Come” dit l’autre et il mange

Comme, je dis comme et tout se métamorphose, le marbre en eau,
le ciel en orage, le vin en plaine, le fil en six, le cœur en peine, la
peur en seine
Mais si l’anglais dit as, c’est à son tour de voir le monde changer de
forme à sa convenance
Et moi je ne vois plus qu’un signe unique sur une carte
L’as de cœur si c’est février
L’as de carreau et l’as de trèfle, miserai en Flandre
L’as de pique aux mains des aventuriers
Et si cela ne plait pas à moi de vous dire machin
Que machin dise le chef de gare
Et moi aussi machin
Machin
Et même machin chose
Il est vrai que vous vous en f ou tez
Que vous ne comprenez pas la raison de ce poème
Moi non plus d’ailleurs

Poème, je vous demande un peu?
Poème? je vous demande un peu de confiture, encore un peu de
gigot
Encore un petit verre de vin
Pour nous mettre en train...

As

Come, says the Englishman,
And the Englishman comes.
Como! says the porter,
And the traveller, suitcase in hand,
Leaves the train.
Come, says the Spaniard,
And the other one eats...

Comme, I say. And everything changes,
As in marble into water, the blue sky into orange,
The split hair, the suffering heart,
Into a web of fear.

When the Englishman says ‘as’
The world appears as he wishes.
But I only see As on cards.
The Ace of Hearts, if it’s February.
The Ace of Diamonds or Clubs –
In Flanders, a soldier’s life in the balance.
The Ace of Spades –
In the hands of the conquistadors.

If you want I’ll just say ‘thingummy’ –
The Englishman says thingummy,
So does the porter,
So does the Spaniard.
And so do I.
Or even ‘thingummyjig’.
I’m probably right to say,
You cannot sound
The depths of this poem.
You run aground.
And so do I.

Poem, I ask you –
I ask you for a bit of jam,
I ask you for a leg of lamb.
I ask you for a glass of wine,
So we can pass the time

Winners of the 18-and-under category

Poème, je ne vous demande pas l'heure qu'il est
Poème, je ne vous demande pas si votre beau père est poilu
comme un sapeur

Poème, je vous demande un peu...?
Poème, je ne vous demande pas l'aumône, je vous l'a fait
Poème, je vous demande pas l'heure qu'il est je vous la donne
Poème, je ne vous demande pas si vous allez bien cela se devine
Poème, je vous demande un peu...
Je vous demande un peu d'or pour être heureux avec celle que
j'aime

Poem, I don't ask you the time.
Poem, I don't ask you
If your father-in-law
Is as woolly as a sheep.
Poem, I don't ask much of you...

I don't ask for charity,
I give you my alms.
I don't ask you the time,
I give you mine.
Poem, I don't ask if you're well,
I assume you are.

Poem, I don't ask you much –
Just a nugget of happiness
With the woman I love.

Robert Desnos

*Translated from the French
by Joel Farrance*

Joel Farrance's commentary

I was not familiar with Desnos (1900–45) until my French teacher suggested some wider reading. Attracted by the surrealist surface of 'Comme', I decided to look at it in more depth. I found the theme of 'Comme' particularly apposite to the whole nature of translation, as in the poem Desnos ponders questions of language and the purpose of poetry.

Initially, the surrealist playfulness meant I found difficulty in judging the intended meaning of some phrases and words. In each case I tried to maintain the nature of the image, while giving an apt English equivalent. For example, I felt

the line 'le fil en six' was a play on the idiom 'couper les cheveux en quatre' – thus 'splitting hairs' seemed the most fitting.

In relation to the poem itself, the most obvious challenge was trying to preserve Desnos' exploration of the crossover between languages in the first passage, especially as it bases itself on his perspective as a French speaker. I ultimately decided to remain with this, rather than try to shift the perspective to an English speaker's. This created a consequent problem: making a clear transition from similar sounding words in different languages, to

the translation within the original. Desnos converts 'comme' to the English 'as', and then back to the French 'as' – meaning an ace. I was pleased to maintain the pun visually with my ideas of 'As' as seen on a playing card.

Wherever possible I tried to preserve the rhyme and imagery. I tried to reflect the original rhythm of the beginning of the poem, with slightly longer line lengths, though I added further rhyme in the last few stanzas, as it emphasised the shift in theme – from questions of language to poetry itself.

In the Jaws of Luxury...

Luxuriae rictu Martis marcent moenia.
Tuo palato clausus pavo pascitur
plumato amictus aureo Babylonico,
gallina tibi Numidica, tibi gallus spado;
ciconia etiam, grata peregrina hospital
pietaticultrix gracilipes crotalistris,
avis exul hiemis, titulus tepidi temporis,
nequitiae nidum in caccabo fecit modo.
Quo margaritam caram tibi, bacam Indicam?
An ut matron ornata phaleris pelagiis
tollat pedes indomita in strato extraneo?
Zmaragdum ad quam rem viridem, pretiosum vitrum?
Quo Carchedonios optas ignes lapideos,
nisi ut scintillet probitas e carbunculis?
Aequum est induere nuptam ventum textile,
Palam prostare nudam in nebula linea?

Petronius

In the Jaws of Luxury...

In the jaws of Luxury, the walls of Mars wither.
To your taste, the peacock is trapped and fed –
it is clothed in gilded Babylonian feathers –
and for you, the guinea-fowl; for you, the capon;
even the stork, that dear and foreign guest,
that baby-bringer, that slim-foot clacker.
Winter's exile, warm weather's claim to fame,
the bird now builds its idle nest in a cooking pan!
Why costly pearls, why fruits of India?
So your wife can be decorated with seafood
and lift her hooves in a strange man's horse-blanket?
Why the green emerald, the precious glass?
Why do you need the fires of Carthaginian stones –
unless for honesty to sparkle out of the rubies?
Should the bride clothe herself in woven breeze,
or should she flaunt her nudity in a linen mist?

*Translated from the Latin
by William Kennaway*

William Kennaway's commentary

I knew from the moment I decided to enter the competition that I would try to choose something 'off-the-beaten-track'; something I hope to have achieved with my selection of one of the many satirical poems of *Satyricon*. In approaching the poem my main goal was to preserve the stabbing articulation of the original.

One of the greatest challenges presented by Latin is the way the language can tersely convey ideas which would require many more words in English. For instance, the three words of line 4, 'pietaticultrix gracilipes crotalistris', literally mean something like 'the worshipper of piety,

the slender-footed castanet dancer', which I thought would be far too clunky a translation; by rendering it instead 'that baby-bringer, that slim-foot clacker', I think I have been fairly successful in maintaining both the sense and the rapid articulation that is achieved in the Latin, despite drifting a little from the precise meaning of 'pietaticultrix'.

Line 14 proved particularly troublesome in satisfyingly translating: the phrase 'nisi ut' has no precise equivalent in English, so I had to compromise with 'unless for honesty to shine forth' for 'nisi ut scintillet probitas'.

Throughout the poem, the author uses alliteration to add to the pace and impetus of the line of attack: in some cases, like 'Martis marcent moenia', 'the walls of Mars wither', I was able to replicate this to a degree, but I was unable to translate the repeated 'p' sounds of lines 2 and 3. There were also subtleties of word order which had to be lost in translation such as the varied placing of 'tibi' in line 4. To compensate for this and other weaknesses I attempted anaphoras that sounded more natural in English: the repeated 'that' of lines 5 and 6, for instance, and the 'why' of 9, 12, and 13.

Winners of the 18-and-under category

Sanguine

La fermeture éclair a glissé sur tes reins
et tout l'orage heureux de ton corps amoureux
au beau milieu de l'ombre
a éclaté soudain
Et ta robe en tombant sur le parquet ciré
n'a pas fait plus de bruit
qu'une écorce d'orange tombant sur un tapis
Mais sous nos pieds
ses petits boutons de nacre craquaient comme des pépins
Sanguine
joli fruit
la pointe de ton sein
a tracé une nouvelle ligne de chance
dans le creux de ma main
Sanguine
joli fruit

Soleil de nuit.

Jacques Prévert

Blood Orange

The zip slid down the small of your back
and all the happy storm of your passionate body
submerged in darkness
burst suddenly
And your dress dropping on to the polished parquet
made no more sound
than an orange peel dropping on carpet
But under our feet
its little pearl buttons crackled like pips
Blood orange
lovely fruit
the tip of your breast
has traced a new line of fortune
in the palm of my hand
Blood orange
lovely fruit

Sun in the night.

*Translated from the French
by Phoebe Power*

Phoebe Power's commentary

I chose to translate this poem because I love the way that it sketches a scene of intense sensuality with such economy of language. The poem's impact is due to the precision of Prévert's verb choices, which act like highly-charged flickers of energy in this moment of passion captured by the poet. I was interested to see whether words of the same precision, if chosen carefully enough, could be found in English to recreate this impact.

My initial problem was the title. It was difficult to convey the connotations of 'Sanguine', which in French hints at a fiery personality, blood, and a flushed face, all

of which add more substance to the image of the passionate woman of the poem. I decided eventually, however, to translate the title literally as 'Blood Orange' to maintain the clarity of the fruit metaphor, while exploiting the sense of violence implied in 'blood' to reverberate later with 'burst' and 'crackle'. Some concise French words such as 'reins' were also difficult to translate in brief, thus requiring special attention to metre in the English.

Prévert uses loose rhymes and assonance (eg 'heureux', 'amoureux', 'bruit', 'tapis') to convey the waves of movement in the poem. Rather than altering the meaning of

words to make them rhyme, I instead tried to suggest movement using consonance; for example, the repetition of d's and p's in 'your dress dropping on to the polished parquet' to convey the languid softness of the dress drifting to the floor. Finding the best translation of certain verbs could also be challenging, in order to recreate the exact physical sense of pearl buttons being stepped on, for example. Overall, my aim was to imitate the charged focus of Prévert's language in English as well as possible.

Beowulf, lines 1197–1214a

Nænigne ic under swegle selran hyrde
hord-maððum hæleþa, syþðan Hama ætwæg
to þære byrhtan byrig Brosinga mene,
sigle ond sinc-fæt; searoniðas fleah
Eormenrices, geceas ecne ræd.
þone hring hæfde Higelac Geata,
nefa Swertinges, nyhstan siðe,
siðþan he under segne sinc ealgode,
wæl-reaf werede; hyne wyrd fornam,
syþðan he for wlenco wean ahsode,
fæhðe to Frysum. He þa frætwe wæg,
eorclan-stanas ofer yða ful,
rice þeoden; he under rande gecranc.
Gehwearf þa in Francna fæþm feorh
cyninges,
breost-gewædu ond se beah somod;
wyrsan wig-freca wæl reafedon
æfter guð-sceare, Geata leode,
hrea-wic heoldon.

Anon

The Collar

Eagles hunt high. Their feathers glint gold against the sun,
mica among the loam-specks of crows a sky-current below.
They hunt by sight – a rabbit tensing to the ground, grass tenting
over a field-mouse’s flight – or light against a gold collar,

a signal-fire gone wild to an empty sky. Coast closer.
The collar sits on Hygelac still, prideful where he clasped it
that dark morning, waves pushing him towards Frisia.
He fell under his shield, and his people’s flag covers them both.

A hand covers the collar and the eagle loses interest,
Franks come for golden carrion once the bravery of battle is gone.
Hygelac’s men sleep with him still, downed scarecrows
guarding a field of corpses. The wind has changed.

*Translated from the Anglo-Saxon
by Meghan Purvis*

Meghan Purvis’ commentary

I translated *Beowulf* because I was intrigued by a poem so closely tied to the idea of Englishness (it is, after all, the first epic poem in our language), but so different from what we think of as our English world. The world of *Beowulf* is violent, feudal, and supernatural, but it is also a world deeply concerned with very modern questions: do we evaluate a person’s actions by words or by deeds? How do we value the ties that connect us? Is it possible to admire a hero while questioning his heroics? Even the act of this translation itself – translating Old

English into modern English – echoes that tension between simultaneous closeness and distance.

As you can imagine, this tension made for interesting work. I chose to translate *Beowulf* from Old English poetry to modern English poetry, translating it into a modern poetic idiom, as an attempt to produce an ancient English story told in a modern English manner. I have retained some alliterative aspects of the original – which I would argue is still a popular modern poetic technique – but for the

most part have deliberately translated the poetry using modern metres and styles. I have also tried to express the myriad ways of reading and understanding *Beowulf* – whether reading it as a hero worshipper, or as a modern woman uncomfortable with the extremely limited female presence in the poem – by using many different characters and voices instead of translating with the omnipotent voice of a narrator. The narrative is split up into separate poems that, read together as a collection, tell the story of *Beowulf*.

Totò Merumeni

I
Col suo giardino incolto, le sale vaste, i bei
balconi secentisti guarniti di verzura,
la villa sembra tolta da certi versi miei,
sembra la villa-tipo, del Libro di Lettura...
Pensa migliori giorni la villa triste, pensa
gaie brigate sotto gli alberi centenari,
banchetti illustri nella sala da pranzo immensa
e danze nel salone spoglio da gli antiquari.
Ma dove in altri tempi giungeva Casa Ansaldo,
Casa Rattazzi, Casa d'Azeglio, Casa Oddone,
s'arresta un'automobile fremendo e sobbalzando,
villosi forestieri picchiano la gorgone.
S'ode un latrato e un passo, si schiude cautamente
la porta... In quel silenzio di chiostro e di caserma
vive Totò Merumeni con una madre inferma,
una prozia canuta ed uno zio demente.

II
Totò ha venticinque anni, temprà sdegnosa,
molta cultura e gusto in opere d'inchostro,
scarso cervello, scarsa morale, spaventosa
chiaroveggenza: è il vero figlio del tempo nostro.
Non ricco, giunta l'ora di "vender parolette"
(il suo Petrarca!...) e farsi baratto o gazzettiere,
Totò scelse l'esilio. E in libertà riflette
ai suoi trascorsi che sarà bello tacere.
Non è cattivo. Manda soccorso di danaro
al povero, all'amico un cesto di primizie;
non è cattivo. A lui ricorre lo scolaro
pel tema, l'emigrante per le commendatizie.
Gelido, consapevole di sé e dei suoi torti,
non è cattivo. È il buono che derideva il Nietzsche
"...in verità derido l'inetto che si dice
buono, perché non ha l'ugne abbastanza forti..."
Dopo lo studio grave, scende in giardino, gioca
coi suoi dolci compagni sull'erba che l'invita;
i suoi compagni sono: una ghiandaia rôca,
un micio, una bertuccia che ha nome Makakita...

III
La Vita si ritolse tutte le sue promesse.
Egli sognò per anni l'Amore che non venne,
sognò pel suo martirio attrici e principesse
ed oggi ha per amante la cuoca diciottenne.
Quando la casa dorme, la giovinetta scalza,
fresca come una prugna al gelo mattutino,
giunge nella sua stanza, lo bacia in bocca, balza
su lui che la possiede, beato e resupino...

Toto Merumeni (after Guido Gozzano)

I
Seventeenth century balconies decked
with greenery; the unkempt garden; spacious rooms:
A villa so bookish I could be its architect,
the perfect scenery for one of my poems...
It has seen better days, summer balls
beneath venerable oaktree and beech,
the great and the good gracing the halls
since stripped bare by dealers in antiques.
Times gone by, Lord or Ladyship arrived
comme il faut, name and crest to draw on;
now a motor-car snorts and judders outside,
its owner in new-fangled leather raps the gorgon.
A dog-bark, retreat of some steps upon the stair
as the door glides shut. Part-barracks part-cloister,
here's the home Toto Merumeni shares with Mother,
his white-haired aunt, an uncle who's not all there.

II
Twenty-five, inkaholic with an expert sneer,
enough culture for several lifetimes yet short on
morals or common sense, intuition
to take away your breath, he's Homunculus of the Year.
Not rich, instead of making money from letters
and pursuing a career as agent or hack,
he chooses exile. Here he's free to play back
transgressions about which the less said the better.
Bad? But how – given he donates monthly to charity,
forwards complimentary copies of his collections
to friends, ghost-writes for a pittance sections
of so-and-such's thesis, acts as such-and-so's referee?
Cold, all too aware of himself and his own wrongs,
no, he's not bad. Good even, at least as mocked by Nietzsche.
'...in truth I deride the inept of whom one speaks
well, only because his claws are insufficiently strong...'
Immersed in studies, he descends all the same
whenever his fans on the lawn call him out to play.
And who are they? A hoarse-voiced jay,
a pussy-cat, this Barbary ape he's renamed Fame.

III
One by one takes back its promises –
Love with a big 'L' doesn't get a second look –
Once he yearned after princesses and divas;
now his oats come courtesy of the teenage cook.
The rest of the house asleep, barefoot she creeps
upstairs, fresh as a plum in morning frost,
reaches his room, between kisses, leaps
and shimmies on top of him, supine, blessed.

continued from page 15

IV

Totò non può sentire. Un lento male indomo
inamidò le fonti prime del sentimento;
l'analisi e il sofisma fecero di quest'uomo
ciò che le fiamme fanno d'un edificio al vento.
Ma come le ruine che già seppero il fuoco
esprimono i giaggioli dai bei vividi fiori,
quell'anima riarisa esprime a poco a poco
una fiorita d'esili versi consolatori...

V

Così Totò Merùmeni, dopo tristi vicende,
quasi è felice. Alterna l'indagine e la rima.
Chiuso in se stesso, medita, s'accresce, esplora, intende
la vita dello Spirito che non intese prima.
Perché la voce è poca, e l'arte prediletta
immensa, perché il Tempo - mentre ch'io parlo! - va,
Totò opra in disparte, sorride, e meglio aspetta.
E vive. Un giorno è nato. Un giorno morirà.

Guido Gozzano

IV

His feeling bypass, a slow untamed pain
has dried up the spring of sentiment;
self-analysis and sophistry do the same
to him as wind round a burning tenement:
And like the ruin that's seen its share of flame
will by and by sprout exquisitely purple flowers,
so this parched soul ventures now and again
a nosegay of slender consoling verse.

V

Almost happy, after sundry interludes,
our Self-Tormentor alternates amateur
psychology with rhyme, probes vicissitudes
of the spirit which he hadn't probed before.
Because his voice is small, Lit (Eng or It)
immense, since life, even as I speak, flits by,
he cuts himself off to work, well, a bit –
tends his smile. Born one day, one day he'll die.

*Translated from the Italian
by Martin Bennett*

Martin Bennett's commentary

It may come as a surprise – it certainly did to me – but J. Alfred Prufrock was alive and, well, not so well, in Northern Italy years before T. S. Eliot's more famous version; alive and going under the unlikely name of Totò Merumeni, meaning in Greek 'self-punisher', the name having been used previously in a poem by Baudelaire and way before that by the Roman playwright Terence. The character

in this case is an alter-ego for the real-life poet Guido Gozzano. Labelled as one of the 'Crepusculari', he has also been hailed by Montale as the forerunner of modern Italian poetry, his variety of register and sense of irony a notable departure from the highfalutin' poetics of D'Annunzio and his followers who had come before. Irony and self-deprecation are rather easier to capture in English than the perfect

Italian rhymes. This version tries as far as possible to maintain the meticulous rhyme scheme, although it sidesteps some parts of the original when the cultural context demands, as for example in the list of Italian aristocratic names, 'Casa Ansaldo', etc... Apologies for when the rhymes occasionally misfire. To rephrase Auden, 'A translation is never finished, only abandoned'.

Medea

caecus est ignis stimulatus ira
nec regi curat patiturue frenos
aut timet mortem: cupit ire in ipsos
obuius enses.
Parcite, o diui, ueniam precamur
uiuat ut tutus mare qui subegit.
sed furit uinci dominus profundi
regna secunda.
ausus aeternos agitare currus
immemor metae iuuenis paternae
quos polo sparsit furiosus ignes
ipse recepit.
constitit nulli uia nota magno:
uade qua tutum populo priori,
rumpe nec sacro uiolente sancta
foedera mundi.
Quisquis audacis tetigit carinae
nobiles remos nemorisque sacri
Pelion densa spoliauit umbra,
quisquis intrauit scopulos uagantes
et tot emensus pelagi labores
barbara funem religauit ora
raptor externi rediturus auri,
exitu diro temerata ponti
iura piauit.

Medea, choral extract 591–633

Blind is fire fed on anger
it has no care for rules or brakes
no fear at all of death
it's drawn to it
like steel
to bone
No hunger of forest fire
No concrete storm at sea
No silence as the bomb tears
No violence of twisting blade
could ever match
a woman scorned
a woman burning
with hate
The known road has no hidden toll
it's safe to tread the trodden path
Neptune rages at the binder of the sea
yearns to destroy the man
who spun a web
around his world
We pray you gods forgive the Argo
Forgive Jason let him live
We pray you gods soothe
soothe
Phaethon stole his father's chariot
chariot of the arching sun
He disobeyed his father's words
scorched the earth
burned himself alive
The known road has no hidden toll
it's safe to tread the trodden path
Tread it safe
do not break natural laws
All the Argonauts are dead
the men who pulled those famous oars
stripped thickwooded Pelion bare
dead
who sailed between the clashing cliffs
suffered cruel tests on the open sea
beached their ship on foreign land
dead
They came back stained with death
A high price for innovation

continued from page 17

Exigit poenas mare prouocatum:
Tiphys, in primis domitor profundi,
liquit indocto regimen magistro;
litore externo, procul a paternis
occidens regnis tumuloque uili
tectus ignotas iacet inter umbras.
Aulis amissi memor inde regis
portibus lentis retinet carinas
 stare querescentes.
Ille uocali genitus Camena,
cuius ad chordas modulante plectro
restitit torrens, siluere uenti,
cui suo cantu uolucris relicto
adfruit tota comitante silua,
Thracios sparsus iacuit per agros,
at caput tristi fluitauit Hebro:
contigit notam Styga Tartarumque,
 non rediturus.

Seneca

The deep demanded punishment
 for their crime
Tiphys original helm
 first tamer of the deep
dead
Orpheus with voice of honey
 whose lyre
hushed the winds and waves
taught the birds to listen
dead sown in a field in Thrace
his severed head flowed down
 to the underworld
no way back this time

*Translated from the Latin
by Henry Stead*

Henry Stead's commentary

The story of *Medea* has grown with me since I first saw a production of Euripides' play as a teenager. I chose Seneca's rather than Euripides' *Medea* because it is criminally undervalued. Seneca maintains a relentless, hopeless and impending horror from start to finish; a feat I admire greatly. My ability to read Latin allows me to experience certain types of poetry that many readers and audiences now seldom get the chance. I feel that the longer poem is something worth fighting for, and I am fascinated by the possibilities of opening up bigger and more complex poems for contemporary audiences by live

performance and audiovisual technologies. There were a number of problems I faced in this translation, but the most important was how to make it accessible to non-specialist audiences. Seneca's verse play is dense with allusion to *Medea's* mythical past and classical myth in general. These allusions can only work if their sources are familiar to the audience (especially in a 'real-time' performance context) and so I decided to simplify, 're-detonate' and, where I had to, cut those that might create too much drag in the minds of my audience. I also wanted to reflect the effect of Seneca's metre without being hamstrung

by foreign metres my words could not fill. So I used a free verse form for my dialogue and captured Seneca's formal and metrical shifts for the choral odes by adopting more regular, lyrical and stylised forms, which can in performance be accompanied by music. Only in *Medea's* spell scene did I use Seneca's own otherworldly, almost tribal beat, which I felt was too good to lose. My word positioning, partly influenced by Hughes' *Oedipus*, was at first designed to help the cast deliver their lines, but later became another way by which I could catch certain traits of Seneca's style.

The Stephen Spender Trust



The Times Stephen Spender Prize

This annual prize, launched in 2004, celebrates the art of literary translation and encourages young people to read foreign poetry at a time when literature is no more than an optional module (if that) in A level modern languages. Entrants translate a poem from any language – modern or classical – into English, and submit both the original and their translation, together with a commentary of not more than 300 words. There are three categories (14-and-under, 18-and-under and Open) with prizes in each category.

Other translation projects

Primary translation, 2010–2012

This collaboration between the Stephen Spender Trust and Eastside Education Trust, funded by Arts Council England, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Mercers' Company, will, by the summer of 2012, have seen translators going into 22 primary schools to run three-day translation workshops, reaching some 1,300 children. In spring 2011 translators of French, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, Arabic, Hindi and Gujarati held workshops in twelve schools in Camden, Lambeth, Hounslow, Brighton & Hove, and Thanet. More information about the project, including film footage and aids for teachers, is available on the Trust's website.

The Joseph Brodsky/Stephen Spender Prize

This new worldwide Russian–English translation prize, celebrating the rich tradition of Russian poetry and commemorating the long friendship between Joseph Brodsky and Stephen Spender, was launched at the 2011 London Book Fair. Entrants, who may be of any nationality, are required to translate a Russian poem of their choice into

English. Supported by the John S. Cohen Foundation, the Foyle Foundation, the Derek Hill Foundation and a number of individuals, the prize is judged in its inaugural year by Paul Muldoon, Catriona Kelly and Sasha Dugdale.

The archive programme
Essays and journalism
In May 2002 the Trust presented the British Library with a collection of Stephen Spender's published prose. Representing around one million words of mainly essays and journalism, this collection covers 1924–94.

The archive programme

Essays and journalism

In May 2002 the Trust presented the British Library with a collection of Stephen Spender's published prose. Representing around one million words of mainly essays and journalism, this collection covers 1924–94.

The New Collected Journals

These journals cover the years from the Second World War to Stephen Spender's death in 1995. Edited by Natasha Spender, John Sutherland and Lara Feigel, they will be published by Faber in May 2012.

The Stephen Spender archive

A long lifetime's worth of manuscripts, letters, diaries and other personal papers is now housed in the Bodleian Library and will soon be available to scholars.

Events

Symposium, 2001

The Institute for English Studies hosted a one-day symposium on 'Stephen Spender and his Circle in the 1930s'.

Queen Elizabeth Hall reading, 2004

Seamus Heaney, Tony Harrison, Harold Pinter, Jill Balcon and Vanessa Redgrave came together to celebrate the publication of Spender's *New Collected Poems*.

Auden centenary, 2007

In February 2007 we joined forces with the British Library to mark W. H. Auden's centenary with a reading of his poetry at the Shaw Theatre by James Fenton, John Fuller, Grey Gowrie, Andrew Motion, Sean O'Brien, Peter Porter and Richard Howard. The programme was devised by Grey Gowrie.

Spender centenary, 2009

The first of the centenary celebrations was a reading in February 2009 in the Royal Institution by Grey Gowrie, Tony Harrison, Seamus Heaney, Barry Humphries, Poet Laureate Andrew Motion and Natasha Spender. A recording of the evening can be downloaded

from the Trust's website. An academic conference was held the following day at the Institute of English Studies, with papers given by John Sutherland, Barbara Hardy, Valentine Cunningham, Peter McDonald, Mark Rawlinson, Alan Jenkins, Stephen Romer and Michael Scammell. A second reading, by Fleur Adcock, Grey Gowrie and Craig Raine, took place in October 2009 at University College, Oxford, where Stephen Spender was an undergraduate.

Institute of English Studies Seminars

The first of these took place on 20 October 2011 and explored the relationship between Stephen Spender's life and work and poetry and prose, looking at key episodes in his life that appear in multiple texts. Poet Alan Jenkins introduced an unpublished poem recently discovered in the Spender archive and Lara Feigel and John Sutherland previewed their edition of Stephen Spender's previously unpublished journals. They were joined by the poet Christopher Reid, who worked closely with Spender on his 1994 collection *Dolphins*.

The 1930s: The Shape of Things to Be

The Trust has been working with three scholars in the period, Lara Feigel, Juliet Gardiner and Alan Powers, to develop a proposal for an exhibition on the arts and the 1930s which will tell the story of the decade through design, using a number of different art forms. We are now looking for a museum to take this idea forward.

Contacting the Trust

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

Robina Pelham Burn
3 Old Wish Road,
Eastbourne,
East Sussex BN21 4JX

01323 452294

info@stephenspender.org
www.stephen-spender.org

The Stephen Spender Trust

PATRONS

Valerie Eliot, Lady Antonia Fraser CBE,
Lord Gowrie PC, Drue Heinz DBE,
David Hockney CH, Lois Sieff OBE,
Wole Soyinka

PRESIDENT

Sir Michael Holroyd CBE*

COMMITTEE

Jonathan Barker MBE, Lord Briggs,
Joanna Clarke, Desmond Clarke,
Professor Warwick Gould, Tony Harrison,
Harriet Harvey Wood OBE*,
Seamus Heaney, Barry Humphries,
Christopher MacLehose,
Caroline Moorehead CBE, Robina Pelham
Burn, Prudence Skene CBE*, Lizzie Spender,
Matthew Spender, Philip Spender*,
Saskia Spender, Richard Stone*,
Sir Tom Stoppard OM CBE, Tim Supple,
Professor John Sutherland, Ed Victor,
Professor Daniel Weissbort

**Also a Trustee*

Registered charity number 1101304
Company limited by guarantee number 4891164
Registered in England at
3 Old Wish Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN21 4JX
Images of Stephen Spender © the Estate of Humphrey Spender