Stephen Spender Prize 2012

for poetry in translation
**THE TIMES**  Stephen Spender Prize 2012
for poetry in translation

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

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### Joint winners of the 18-and-under category

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Winners of the Open category

First
Kaarina Hollo
‘Stillborn 1943: Calling Limbo’
by Derry O’Sullivan
(Irish)

Second
Patricia Hann
‘The Sunflower’
by Eugenio Montale
(Italian)

Third
Jane Tozer
‘The Gibbet’
by François Villon
(French)

Commended
Antoinette Fawcett
‘Alycone’ by Ed Leeflang (Dutch)

Margot Harrison
from ‘The Lament for Art O’Leary’ by Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill (Irish)

Seán Hewitt
‘A Jackeen Keens for the Blasket’ by Brendan Behan (Irish)

Brian Holton
‘Spring Sun on the Watterside Clachan’ by Du Fu (Classical Chinese)

John RG Turner
‘Classical Walpurgisnacht’ by Paul Verlaine (French)

Peter Whale
‘A Woman’s Love, Rime 208’ Gáspara Stampa (Italian)
Introduction

This has been a very good year: more entries than ever; more languages than ever (51 – smashing last year’s record of 43); and entrants ranging in age from 8 to 86. This was the year in which, not content with having an unprecedented three winners in the 14-and-under category, the judges asked me whether we couldn’t have five winners in the Open category. I apologise here to Seán Hewitt and John RG Turner for saying ‘no’ and cruelly insisting on a vote to decide the top three.

Amongst this year’s translators, Susan Bassnett, Edith Hall, Patrick McGuinness and George Szirtes are the most enthusiastic of judges, seemingly relishing the difficult task of comparing apples and pears (not to mention lychees and kiwis) in order to agree the Best Fruit in Show. I thank the four of them, Erica Wagner at The Times for her promotion of the prize, and, lastly, the Dr Mortimer and Theresa Sackler Foundation and the Old Possum’s Trust for their generous sponsorship.

Judges’ comments

Judging this prize is always a pleasure, partly because of the great range of work submitted, partly also because of the interaction between the judging panel. This year our decisive meeting lasted longer than usual, not because there were major disagreements but because we had difficulty singling out winners from a particularly strong crop of entries. Our decision to award the Open prize to an Irish poem was unanimous, but we were also deeply impressed by two other Irish entries, a beautiful short poem by Brendan Behan translated by Seán Hewitt and Margot Harrison’s version of the famous ‘Lament for Art O’Leary’.

How does a panel reach its conclusions is a question often asked. There is no simple answer, for all sorts of criteria come into play: crucial of course is the effectiveness of the poem in English, along with evidence of the strategies employed by the translator in creating that poem. We also consider the difficulties facing a translator, which is not to suggest that the more problems posed by a poem, the more likely it is to win, but rather that it is clear that in some cases the translator has had to work very hard indeed to find creative solutions. It was interesting to see how many extremely difficult poems were attempted this year in all categories, and it was also notable that many commentaries referred to personal encounters with poems and poets, often through hearing a poet read at a literary festival or through a return to a piece that held special memories.

We admired translations of very well known poems, such as Montale’s ‘The Sunflower’, and translations of poets whose work is very difficult to translate well, such as Gáspara Stampa and Paul Verlaine. High on my personal list of fine translations was Peter Mullins’ superb rendering of nine short poems from the Orkneyinga Saga and a comic poem I did not know by the Mexican poet Renato Leduc, ‘Epistle to a Lady who has never seen an Elephant’, translated by Annie McDermott. I also admired a sequence of poems by Georg Heym on the French Revolution, shockingly violent but very powerfully rendered by Gilbert Carr.

The same ambitious choice of poems was also evident in the 14-and-under category. We had no hesitation in choosing the winner, and were impressed by the confidence with which some very young translators demonstrated their skills and obviously enjoyed the experience of translating, particularly of comic poems. We found two Dutch poems in our final list, both excellent: Max Birkin’s ‘Thinking of Holland’ did not win, but is a fine translation that impressed me greatly.

There were many commentaries in the 18-and-under category about the process of translating, often stressing the difficulties encountered, particularly with complex grammatical structures. Interestingly there were fewer classical language entries this time, though some difficult modern language poems were attempted, and one young translator wrote that motivation had been ‘a desire to stretch myself outside of the syllabus’, which I would guess motivated several others as well. Many translators in all sections wrote about the various stages of their translating, often starting with a word-for-word rendering and then moving on to shape a new poem in English, which of course is how many of the greatest poetry translators have also worked.

Poetry transcends all kinds of boundaries and speaks to readers across cultures and generations, as this prize continues to demonstrate. We had a huge range of languages this year, and our winners include poems from Dutch, Bengali, Spanish, German, French, Italian and Irish, with our youngest winning translator being 12, and our oldest 86, a fact which only adds to the pleasure and privilege of serving as a judge for this important prize.

Susan Bassnett

I read all the entries this year against the backdrop of the Olympics. This turned out to be a wonderfully appropriate context – it was not just that so many different world languages were to be heard in British sports venues, but that so many British athletes were revealed to have roots or ancestry in other lands. It was heartening to feel this inspiring hybridity reflected in translations from Bengali and Yoruba, Tamil and Sicilian, Ukrainian and Chinese. Amongst this year’s translators,
moreover, the intensity of the competition seemed to mirror the rivalry on the running track and in the velodrome. In the Open competition, at least: although deciding who should appear on the final shortlist was not difficult, choosing between these finalists proved virtually impossible.

A great translation must fulfil several criteria: technical cleverness needs to be combined with emotional authenticity, daring image with rhythmic discipline. Kaarina Hollo’s translation of Derry O’Sullivan won because, in the end, we privileged her gut-wrenching evocation of past tragedy, with its implicit social commentary, over the dazzling verbal artistry of Patricia Hann’s take on Montale’s ‘Sunflower’ and the grim Gallic humour, perfectly welded to metre, in Jane Tozer’s ‘Gibbet’ by Villon.

But there were at least thirty other outstanding, cogent translations in this year’s Open category. The phrase that ran repeatedly round my head was the great Latin poet Horace’s advice to all who would express themselves in verse: ars est celare artem, ‘the art lies in concealing the art’. Horace was the greatest of all the ancient Latin writers at creative adoption of Greek metre to his own tongue, camouflaging the arduous process of rhythmical assimilation under a sheen of effortless grace and style. Particular favourites of mine from the metrical standpoint included Peter Mullins’ translations from the Orkneyinga Saga, and Peter Whale’s ‘A Woman’s Love, Rime 208’ by Gáspara Stampa.

There were some fine attempts at translating from ancient Greek and Latin authors, especially Paul Batchelor’s other-worldly version of Lucan’s witch-scene and Ruth Mufflebury’s adroit take on Theocritus. It was refreshing for me to be treated to less well known ancient poets, including Solon the archaic Athenian singer-lawgiver, and Aratus who made polished poetry out of the stars he saw in the night-sky.

Brilliance at concealing technical effort was what for me distinguished Amanda Thomas’ deceptively simple ‘Abdication’ by Fernando Pessoa in the 18-and-under category, although it was impossible to make a qualitative judgement between her translation and those of the other two winners. In the youngest group, David Meijer’s version of ‘The Lion Is Loose!’ by Annie M.G. Schmidt seemed to me to combine precociously mature wry humour with a Dutch lifting rhythm and atmosphere.

Perhaps it was the Olympic flame which lit up this year’s entries. More poets, more languages, and more far flung parts of the world were represented than I can remember. But more importantly, many more translators showed a willingness to take risks – to speak from the heart as much as the head, to remember that a linguistic conversion needs to convey the clout and outlook-transforming potential of the original as well as its inventiveness. After all, Horace’s other great dictum was that the very best art is not only intensely pleasurable but ethnically and socially worthwhile.

Judges’ comments

This was my second year as a Spender Prize judge, and I continue to be impressed by the range – the widening range, I think – of languages entered. This year we read translations not just from the European languages we might have expected to see, but from Bengali, Romanian, Bulgarian, Polish, Russian, Chinese, Norwegian, Kurdish and more. It’s hardly surprising, since the Spender competition postbag must inevitably, despite poetry’s marginalised status, reflect something of the diversity of the world we inhabit. It reflects, too (as the poems from the Kurdish, Arabic and other languages testify), the less comfortable realities which make that world diverse: forced and often violent migration, exile, refuge-seeking and the consequences of war and revolution.

The presence of Britain and Ireland’s oldest indigenous languages – Welsh, Irish, and Scottish Gaelic – in a competition like this is especially heartening, and we saw both classic and contemporary poems in those languages translated with exceptional skill and imaginative sympathy. There were also some marvellously creative translations from the Chinese into Scots by Brian Holton, an act which, leaving aside the quite excellent results, challenges us to define what we take to mean by ‘English’. In any case, the presence of these languages, carrying over their riches into English, seems to me to enlarge our sense of what a British literary heritage might be, and made me think that if we in the UK wanted to go beyond Anglocentrism, we could start by seeing the riches within our shores. This was for me, this year at any rate, the competition’s greatest pleasure.

Thinking and talking about translation can be exhausting and repetitive. This is because it’s inconclusive, which is a good thing. It is in fact as inconclusive as thinking and talking about poetry itself. As with poetry, the thinking and the talking, the theorising and the postulating, bear no relation to the final product. You can go to all the translation conferences in the world, read all the books, write essay after essay on ‘method’ and ‘theory’, but in the end it’s just you and the text. What makes the best of these entries so good is the way each translator had understood that, like the acrobat in the circus, when the lights go out it’s just them and the tightrope (let’s leave aside the question of safety net for the moment). I read translations which were better and more inventive, subtler and more nuanced, than anything I could do myself. Some of the translators here are so good it’s a wonder they don’t have books out. All seem to have come to the poems they worked on with a mix of complete creative freshness and deep knowledge not just of the text.
but of its eco-system of allusion and reference, its place in its own culture as well as the place it might have in ours once it had made it across into English.

What makes this prize unique is that it requires a translator to write a commentary explaining her or his choices and decisions. This is no mere addendum to the competition: it’s a chance for the judges to get an insight into the process of art itself. I recommend the commentaries to you with almost as much enthusiasm as I recommend the translations themselves.

The best of these commentaries – and there were many dazzlingly clever and penetrating ones – understood that translation is a mix of critical and creative engagement with the original. The translators tested out their ideas, scrutinised their approaches, but they also played with their interpretations in ways that directly fed into the final product. The process of reflection itself added to the translations and made them better, and we should think of translation in the way it is presented to us in this brochure and demonstrated by this competition: as a symbiotic process where creativity and reflection work together to make something that, quite simply, would not otherwise exist.

Patrick McGuinness

Having been a judge for the past few years it has been fascinating to see tides come and go. The wave of La Fontaine among the youngest group for example, was nudged aside by Prévert, and now, goodness knows, it is replaced by Rimbaud, Verlaine and Catullus – the young mature ever earlier! In terms of numbers the major Europeans languages – Spanish, French, German and Italian – continue to dominate all three groups, so it is a great delight this year that the 14-and-under category has been won by a remarkably nimble translation from the Dutch of Annie M. G. Schmidt. David Meijer’s ‘The Lion Is Loose’ even manages to transplant the location of the poem to London without any judder on the rails though it was run close by Damayanti Chatterjee’s version of Chakraborty from the Bengali – another pleasure.

Not that translating from unusual languages was an advantage of course and Thomas Franchi’s version of Quevedo’s gorgeous tease of a poem, ‘To a Nose’, was joint second in the same section, and the joint winners of the 18-and-under category – unusually, it was impossible to split them this year – are three very different poems, translated from French (Verlaine), German (Goethe) and Portuguese (Pessoa). I don’t think this was the best year for this age group but all three winners – James Martin, Francis Scarr and Amanda Thomas – took on difficult tasks and made energetic, convincing poems from the material.

It was, however, a deep and rich year for the Open category and the list of winners and commended could easily have been double the length. It was here that the various strategies of translation were fully explored. Because there are many strategies, I thought about these in some detail on a blog that people might care to read: http://georgeszirtes.blogspot.co.uk/2012/09/judging-translations.html. Translation is not a simple act. The conclusion of the blog is that the translation of a first-rate poem should be ‘apprehended as a first-rate poem in itself’. The poem is the business in this case, not the exhaustive exegetics of a given text. That exegesis is assimilated in the act of creating the shadow poem we call the translation.

It took ages to decide the winner. Sometimes it is the sheer spell of subject matter as treated by the original poem, quietly and subtly conveyed by the translation that takes our breath away; sometimes it is the grace of the original poem as it is applied to a particular subject, rendered into grace in English; sometimes it is the appropriate virtuosity of the translation against high odds. Kaarina Hollo from the Irish, Patricia Hann from the Italian of Montale, and Jane Tozer from the French of Villon all left me breathless in admiration, each in an entirely different way. But the commended poems too were a delight.

Antoinette Fawcett, Margot Harrison, Seán Hewitt, Brian Holton, John Turner, Peter Whale, and more... I wish I could publish them all. Marvellous.

George Szirtes
De leeuw is los! De leeuw is los!
Hij wandelt al door de straten.
Hij wil naar ’t Amsterdamse bos,
Dat heb ik wel in de gaten.
Hij bromt en hij briest en hij brult
en iedereen schrikt zich een bult.
Daar is ie al op de Postzegelmarkt,
daar loopt ie al over het Singel!
De tram blijft staan en klingelt hard
van klingeldeklingledeklinglegel.
Het hele verkeer staat stil...
en de tramcondukteur geeft een gil!

Nu is hij op de Overtoom!
We worden hoe langer hoe banger...
En iedereen klimt in z’n eigen boom,
de timmerman en de behanger.
O! Roepet de pianostemmer,
waar blijft nou die leeuwenstemmer!

O kijk, daar komt een jongetje aan,
o, zou z’n moeder dat weten?
Tjee, kijk dat jongetje daar eens staan!
Straks wordt ie opgevreten!
Wie is dat jongetje dan?
Werempel, het is onze Jan...!

Hij haalt een klontje uit z’n zak,
Wat gaat hij toch beginnen?
De leeuw wordt mak! De leeuw wordt mak!

De leeuw begint te spinnen!
Hij aait hem eens over zijn rug
en brengt hem naar ’t circus terug. Hoi!
En brengt hem naar het circus terug.
Hoera!!!!

Annie M.G. Schmidt

The Lion Is Loose!
The lion is loose! The lion is loose!
He’s strolling down the street.
He wants to go to London’s woods,
and look for something to eat.
He growls and grumbles and grunts
at everyone that he confronts.

There he is on Wimbledon lawn,
there walks on Downing Street!
The bus has to stop and beeps its horn
like beepedybeepedybeep.
The whole lane comes to a halt...
and prepares for the lion’s assault!

Now he’s there in Bloomsbury!
The longer we’re here the more afraid...
And everyone hides in his or her tree,
the carpenter and the kitchen maid.
Oh! shouts the picture framer,
where on earth is that lion tamer!

Oh look, there comes a boy,
what a brave young soul.
Do you think his mother knows,
that lion could swallow him whole?!
Who is that young boy then?
Oh my, that’s little Ben...!

He takes a yarn ball from his bag,
and with an anxious shriek...
The lion’s gone meek! The lion’s gone meek!

The lion starts to purr!
He even strokes his fur
and returns him to the circus. Hurray!
And returns him to the circus. Hurrah!!!!
Omolkaanthi, my friend,  
We went to school together,  
He always arrived late,  
And he never tested well,  
When asked about Sanskrit declensions,  
He stared so dumbfounded out of the window,  
It was painful to watch,

Some of us wanted to be teachers,  
Some doctors,  
Some lawyers,  
Omolkaanthi didn’t want any of that,  
He wanted to be the sunshine!  
The type of sunshine, that  
On rainbowed afternoons filled with birdsong,  
Lingers like a shy smile,  
On the leaves of tropical trees.

Some of us became teachers,  
Some doctors,  
Some lawyers,  
But Omolkaanthi didn’t become the sunshine,  
He now works in a dark printing shop,  
From time to time he visits,  
Drinks tea,  
Makes small talk,  
Then says ‘I’ll be rising then’,  
I show him to the door,

The one amidst us who became a teacher,  
Could have easily been a doctor,  
The one that became a doctor,  
Wouldn’t have lost out by becoming a lawyer,  
However, their dreams all came true,  
But not Omolkaanthi’s,  
He couldn’t become the sunshine,  
That same Omolkaanthi,  
Who, every day, was enchanted by the sun,  
wanting nothing but to be it  
Couldn’t.

Nirendranath Chakraborty  
Translated from the Bengali  
by Damayanti Chatterjee

Damayanti Chatterjee’s commentary

I chose this poem because the original is simple, with no rhyme or metre, but still conveys a profound message. If I chose a poem like this, I could focus on getting the message and emotion of the poet across, which I believe is the most important part of any poem. It’s about an ordinary person, who wanted to do something extraordinary. And when all the other ordinary people got their ordinary wish, he, Omolkaanthi, was left without his extraordinary dream. The poet leaves us without an explanation for this, so we’re left coming up with our own reasons why and how. Most of all, the poet leaves us thinking about the injustice of it, and makes us want to change it somehow.

When approaching this poem, I decided to twist some of the exact translations to get the emotion across because I felt this was more important than a word-for-word translation. For example, the phrase ‘rainbowed afternoon’ was a problem as, in the Bengali, one word was used to describe this, which exactly meant ‘a summery afternoon just after the rain stops and the sun peeks out just before setting’. I felt I should keep the translation to one word to follow the poetry of the original, so I chose ‘rainbowed’, as this word has similar connotations.

Another tricky bit is the line ‘Then says “I’ll be rising then”,’ – the natural verb to use there is ‘getting up’, however in the Bengali, the verb for ‘getting up’ is also the one used to say the sun is ‘rising’ – and this is a direct reference to Omolkaanthi’s dream of becoming the sunshine. But in English, the pun’s lost if I use ‘getting up’, so I used ‘rising’ as this is the verb we use for the sun.
There was once a man who had a nose.
It was a most impressive nose,
the nose of a killer,
a writer’s nose,
a hairy pointed sword of a nose.

It was a like a badly-shaped sundial,
pensive and still,
it was an elephant turned upside down,
it was Ovid’s nose, but…nosier.

It was like the breakwater from a galley,
it was an Egyptian pyramid,
it was the twelve tribes of noses.

It was a peach of a nose,
An infinite mass of nose,
A nose
so fierce.

Translated from the Spanish
by Thomas Franchi

When translating this poem I came to a
few hurdles but still had fun and enjoyed
the translation. I started by quickly
translating the poem, just to get the feel
of it and then I read the Spanish over and
over again to try and get behind it. Once I
had properly understood the poem, I went
back to the beginning and went through it
very slowly.

The first thing that I noticed about
the poem is that it is a sonnet. Although
sonnets usually follow iambic-pentameter,
this poem doesn’t so I didn’t translate
it using this either. The main problem
I found was that I had to find a way of
translating the word ‘érase’ in a way so that
the emphasis of the poem didn’t switch
from the nose to ‘érase’. I had to do this due
to the sheer amount of times Francisco
Quevedo used this word, nine times in
fact. The second hurdle I hit was when
the poem says, ‘era Ovidio Nasón más
narizado’. I chose to translate the line as
‘it was Ovid’s nose, but…nosier’ because
it replicates Quevedo’s word play in the
original Spanish. Secondly, I know that
the ‘ón’ ending in Spanish can be used as
an intensifier, and thought that this could
be well expressed by the comparative
adjective ‘nosier’.

Another challenge which I faced whilst
translating this poem was the line ‘las
doce Tribus de narices era’. With this line
I had to think about either expanding
the meaning or changing it due to racial
overtones. After thinking about this, I
decided to leave it in because it gives some
historical context to the poem. This poem
was written about one hundred years
after the Jews were expelled from Spain,
so the historical context is also important
as well as the overall humour side of the
poem. The last point which I had to really
think about was the penultimate line,
‘érase un naricísimo infinito’. I wanted
to really emphasise the superlative in an
interesting way and not by just saying
‘the biggest nose’ or something alike.
The way which I found to express the
size of the nose was by using the word
‘peach’ which I think really expresses
the bulbous nature of the nose as well as
being a good English idiom.

To add to the overall effect of the poem,
which is as much for a reader as it is for a
listener, I have reshaped the poem and the
lines to look like an old man’s nose, maybe
even Quevedo’s? I think that this enhances
the poem even more and is a fitting tribute
to Quevedo and indeed Ovid.
I chose this particular poem to translate because its vivid imagery made such an impact on me; in its description of the picture or painting, it reminded me of shots from the old horror movies I used to watch as a child and which gave me nightmares.

The original poem has no regular metre, and thus, although it is technically composed of rhyming couplets, Verlaine deliberately uses the irregularity of the metre to play down the rhyme scheme, and edge even more towards awkward dissonance instead of harmony. In focusing most of my efforts on Verlaine’s powerful images, I decided to do away with the rhyme scheme. I have kept, where possible, the spirit of the irregularity of his sentence length (although more in spirit than in dogged loyalty to each individual line).

At certain points in my translation, I have felt it necessary to translate a word or phrase differently from the literal meaning, to preserve the dark atmosphere of Verlaine’s images: for example, translating ‘étêtéinte’ (literally ‘without light’) as ‘tenebrous’, and ‘au lointain gris’ as ‘in the distant gloom’.

I chose to stress or emphasise some of the most vivid images, if it was possible to do so while keeping the translation fluent – for instance, in the phrase ‘Tandis que leurs pieds sont la pâture des loups’, I have omitted the ‘tandis que’ and formed a separate sentence with the rest of the line, emphasising the image. Personally, I found the result and added emphasis more satisfying to read in English than the literal translation.

Finally, I have extended some small phrases towards the end of the poem, either to stress the image, or to make the English read more fluently (while taking into account the dissonance and awkwardness intended by Verlaine at points).
Die Zerstörung Magdeburgs

O Magdeburg, die Stadt,
Die schöne Mädchen hat,
Die schöne Frau'n und Mädchen hat,
O Magdeburg, die Stadt.

Da alles steht im Flor,
Der Tilly zieht davor,
Durch Garten und durch Felder Flor,
Der Tilly zieht davor.

Der Tilly steht davor!
Wer rettet Stadt und Haus?
Geh', Lieber, geh' zum Tor
Hinaus und schlag' dich mit ihm draus!

Es hat noch keine Not,
So sehr er tobt und droht,
ich küss' deine Wäglein rot,
Es hat noch keine Not.

Die Sehnsucht mach mich bleich.
Warum bin ich denn reich?
Dein Vater ist vielleicht schon bleich,
Du, Kind, du machst mich weich.

O Mutter, gib mir Brot!
Ist denn der Vater tod?
O Mutter, gib ein Stückchen Brot!
O welche große Not.

Dein Vater lieb ist hin,
Die Bürger alle fliehn.
Schon fließt das Blut die Straße hin,
Wo fliehn wir hin, wohin?

The Destruction of Magdeburg

Ever been to Magdeburg?
A city of golden girls –
Loaded with top-class women.
You must have heard of it...

...where flowers bloom by the roadsides
Count Tzerclaes is coming.
Trampling the meadows and blossom,
The Count is closing in.

‘Christ! He’s here!’
‘We’re done for.’
‘Stand up to him!’ ‘Man up!’
‘Go and batter him!’

‘There’s still time!
He’s coming bloody quickly
But we’ve still got time
For a roll in the hay…’

Listen to them:
Money won’t save me now.
Your father’s already dead.
Kid, please don’t go.

Child 1: Mummy I’m starving.
Child 2: Is Daddy dead?
Child 3: Please, just some bread!
Mother 1: We’re stuffed.

Mother 2: Daddy’s dead, little one.
Everyone’s on the run.
A crimson cascade there already.
Mother 3: Where are we going?
Francis Scarr’s commentary

Having heard about this monumental ravaging of a city on a radio programme, I was interested to discover this poem. The poem is particularly archaic and I found that my literal translation seemed quite stilted and unoriginal. Therefore, I have aimed to create something entirely different from the original in terms of structure yet at the same time to maintain as much of the meaning as possible. I wanted to play with this formality and make the translation a raw expression of the emotions the poem contains.

One particular difficulty I faced in this translation was rendering what seems to be direct speech into something more creative. This I achieved by using a drama-like appearance which gives the poem a completely different form and captures the variety of voices caught in the onslaught of the Catholic army. Additionally, although Goethe seems to imply the desperation between lovers in the moments before Tilly’s army finally besieges the town, he does not actually describe any such ideas in much detail. In order to make this aspect more immediate, I employed the sexual innuendo of ‘But we’ve still got time/ For a roll in the hay’ which seemed to bring out this despair for lovemaking more vividly. As a Lutheran city, Magdeburg was threatened by Tilly’s Catholic army and I thought that to convey this anti-Catholic feeling I should play with certain phrases. For example, Goethe shows the church and houses burning, personifying the church as collapsing in horror: ‘Die Kirche stürzt in Graus’. I altered this line to ‘Our church fears these rosary-grapplers’ which I feel conveys the friction between the Lutheran and Catholic faiths in seventeenth century ‘Germany’ in a better way to a modern audience.

Die Kirche stürzt in Graus,  
Da droben brennt das Haus,  
Es qualmt das Dach, schon flammt’s heraus –  
Nur auf die Straß’ hinaus!

Our church fears these rosary-grapplers.  
The crucifix-clutchers wrapped round that house.  
Hell’s inferno with fire and brimstone.  
Get out of the house!

Ach, keine Rettung mehr  
In Straßen rast das Heer,  
Mit Flammen rast es hin und her,  
Ach keine Rettung mehr!

We’re stuffed.  
The army dances through the streets,  
Here and there amongst the pyres.  
Shit! They’ve left us.

Die Häuser stürzen ein.  
Wo ist das Mein und Dein?  
Das Bündelchen, es ist nicht dein,  
Du flüchtig Mägdelein.

Houses fall everywhere.  
Is mine alright?  
What’s mine isn’t yours!  
So leave it mate.

Die Weiber bangen sehr,  
Die Mägdlein noch viel mehr.  
Was lebt, ist keine Jungfer mehr.  
So raset Tillys Heer.

Women scream in fear.  
The girls scream even more.  
They’re screwing everything that moves –  
And they’ve raped the town as well.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe  
Translated from the German  
by Francis Scarr

18-and-under category
I chose this poem because of the striking imagery and strong emotions that Pessoa describes in his portrayal of the king abandoning his position, all contained in the concise form of a sonnet. I feel that the great linguistic control that the poet demonstrates, using simple syntax and word choice, makes it suited to translation as the ideas can be expressed with the same concentrated images of night and solitude.

For example, the sunset of ‘ao morrer do dia’ can be replicated by ‘the dying of the day’ in English; the idiom has the same connotations of death or surrender in both languages.

I found that the images were relatively easy to recreate in English, but it was harder to get across the idea of movement as the king comes away from the chamber, out of the antechamber and down the stairs.

Pessoa uses the strict rhyme scheme of a Petrarchan sonnet, which is hard to achieve in English if one stays true to the literal meaning and images of the original. I decided to sacrifice rhyme for fidelity to Pessoa’s words, and instead relied on assonance, especially in the sestet, to replicate the stylistic integrity of the poem. Pessoa’s lines have a strong rhythmic regularity which I tried to echo using lines of pentameter, although this sometimes meant I had to think of different phrasing in order to have the right numbers of syllables in the lines, such as in line 6 when I chose to use comparatives (‘stronger, calmer’) rather than simple adjectives (viris e calmas).
Marbhghin 1943: Glaoch ar Liombó
(do Nuala McCarthy)

You were born dead
and your blue limbs were folded
on the living bier of your mother
the umbilical cord unbroken between you
like an out-of-service phone line.
The priest said it was too late
for the blessed baptismal water
that arose from Lough Bo Finne
and cleansed the elect of Bantry.
So you were cut from her
and wrapped, unwashed,
in a copy of The Southern Star,
a headline about the War across your mouth.
An orange box would serve as coffin
and, as requiem, your mother listened
to hammering out in the hallway,
and the nurse saying to her
that you’d make Limbo without any trouble.
Out of the Mercy Hospital
the gardener carried you under his arm
with barking of dogs for a funeral oration
to a nettle-covered field
that they still call the little churchyard.

You were buried there
without cross or prayer
your grave a shallow hole;
one of a thousand without names
with only the hungry dogs for visitors.
Today, forty years on
I read in The Southern Star –
theologians have stopped believing
in Limbo.

continued...
I translated ‘Marbhghin 1943’ because I wanted to enter as fully as possible into the universe that it creates and share it with others.

O’Sullivan (b. Rochestown, Co. Cork, 1944) lives in Paris. He writes poetry in Irish and Latin, and translates from Irish into English and French. His first language was English, the language in which the Bantry of 1943 was experienced by the mother of the poem. The world in which he grew up, however, was permeated with Irish, in particular through place names and their associations. This linguistic layering challenges the translator. Two examples: *Loch Bó Finne* is the Irish name of a small lake a short distance from Bantry. It is transparent to someone with some knowledge of Irish as meaning ‘The lake of the White Cow’. One of the many associations with white bovines this raises is *Bealach na Bó Finne*, the Milky Way (lit. ‘The Way of the White Cow’). These milky associations in a poem about lost maternity are compelling. They could be brought into English with a literal translation – ‘White Cow Lake’; this I dismissed as too exoticising. Michael Davitt gives us ‘Milky Way Lake’, which seems whimsical and at odds with the overall tone. I decided to sacrifice that particular emotional charge and recoup it elsewhere.

How to translate *coiníneach*? This is a deformation of *cillineach*, a variant of *cillín*, ‘little church/churchyard’. Unbaptised infants were buried in *cillíní* located at liminal sites – crossroads, cliff-edges, abandoned churches. The form *coiníneach* complicates matters further, as it seems to contain *coinín* (‘rabbit’), well suiting a waste area left to the poem’s feral dogs. I could have left it untranslated, or alternatively interpreted (eg ‘limbo-land’). However, I decided on ‘little churchyard’ as evocative enough (and short enough to fit the line).

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Derry O’Sullivan

But I’m telling you, little brother whose eyes never opened that I’ve stopped believing in them. For Limbo is as real as Lough Bofinne: Limbo is the place your mother never left, where her thoughts lash her like nettles and *The Southern Star* in her lap is an unread breviary; where she strains to hear the names of nameless children in the barking of dogs, each and every afternoon.

Translated from the Irish by Kaarina Hollo

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Kaarina Hollo’s commentary

Ach geallaimse duit, a dheartháirín nach bhfaca éinne dath do shúl nach gcreidfead choice iontu arís: tá Liombó ann chomh cinnte is atá Loch Bó Finne agus is ann ó shin a mhaireann do mhaithair, a smointe amhail neantóga á dó, gach nuachtáin leabhar urnaí, ag éisteacht le leanaí neamhníte i dtafann tráthnóna na madraí.

Derry O’Sullivan

Loch Bó Finne is the Irish name of a small lake a short distance from Bantry. It is transparent to someone with some knowledge of Irish as meaning ‘The lake of the White Cow’. One of the many associations with white bovines this raises is *Bealach na Bó Finne*, the Milky Way (lit. ‘The Way of the White Cow’). These milky associations in a poem about lost maternity are compelling. They could be brought into English with a literal translation – ‘White Cow Lake’; this I dismissed as too exoticising. Michael Davitt gives us ‘Milky Way Lake’, which seems whimsical and at odds with the overall tone. I decided to sacrifice that particular emotional charge and recoup it elsewhere.

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Il girasole

Portami il girasole ch’io lo’trapianti
nel mio terreno bruciato dal salino,
e mostrì tutto il giorno agli azzurri specchianti
del cielo l’ansietà del suo volto giallino.

Tendono alla chiarità le cose oscure,
si esauriscono i corpi in un fluire
di tinte: queste in musiche. Svanire
è dunque la ventura delle venture.

Portami tu la pianta che conduce
dove sorgono bionde trasparenze
e vapora la vita quale essenza;
portami il girasole impazzito di luce.

---

The Sunflower

Bring me the sunflower here and let me set it
in the parched briny soil of my own place
to turn all day to the heavens that reflect it
the broad gaze of its yellow yearning face.

Things of the dark aspire to all that’s bright,
their forms dissolving into a cascade
of tints merging in music. Simply to fade
from view is the great adventure, lost in light.

Bring me the plant that points us to the height
where there’s a clearness tinged with the sun’s rays
and life itself is thinning to a haze.
Bring me that flower delirious with light.

Eugenio Montale

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Patricia Hann’s commentary

For an English poet the attempt to transplant Montale’s ‘Sunflower’ can seem la ventura delle venture. The rhyme scheme, or something very like it, needs to be represented in translation or there will be a loss of cogency, while the choice of vocabulary is a delicate matter. The Italian language is happier than English with abstractions, and there are ambiguities in the original which are not easily resolved without imposing a straitjacket on the meaning or impairing the mystical element. In what sense is the sunflower classed by implication among le cose oscure? Is there a reflection here on Clytia’s darkhearted betrayal of her rival or simply on the emergence of the sunflower (and plant life in general) out of the dark? Or does the term embrace both ideas within its wider applications? And does tendono imply an urge or simply something that happens?

Fluidity is a keynote of the poem, and the transformation of colours into musiche, presented almost as a logical progression, may need to be handled differently in a language where music has no plural. Both bionde and trasparenze pose problems of interpretation. The equivalents in modern English have inconvenient connotations, but yellow, gold etc seem strong words to describe trasparenze and it is hard to know just what Montale had in mind with that word, or how to interpret essenza. I decided to take my cue from vapora and recast the two lines, feeling that the passionate note at the end reinforced the sense of the poet’s identification with the yearning sunflower, his mystical aspiration towards a sort of nirvana.
The Gibbet

Everyman. Everyman. Live your life’s full span. 
Don’t turn your heart to stone as you pass by.
If you have pity on your fellow man
Forgiveness might come faster when you die.
You watch us swing, a batch of half a dozen
Hunks of good meat, once sleek and overfed.
Then ravaged, gamey, rotten, dried and wizened
We weathered skeletons are dust, wind-spread.
Nothing to laugh at in our rise and fall.
Pray God’s pure mercy rain upon us all.

We are your likeness. Meaning no offence
Here, but for the grace of God… you know the rest.
Rough justice left us hanging in suspense.
All humans make mistakes. From worst to best
We’re frail, and we should care for one another.
Friends, forgive us. Bid a kind farewell.
Kneel down and pray to Christ’s sweet gentle mother:
Release us from the reeking jaws of hell
And save us from the everlasting fall.
Merciful Mother, smile upon us all.

Harsh rain and hail have drenched us, scrubbed our skin
The sun came out and dried us, tanned our hides.
Fat birds have stitched us up, ripped our beards thin
Magpies poked flesh and ravens hoiked out eyes.
We’re jeered at, sneered at, hangdog, low-down, beat-up
If we could speak, you’d hear our doleful groans
We never have a chance to put our feet up
This way and that, the four winds shake our bones.
Don’t join our band. We’re Satan’s free-for-all.

Christ in compassion, save us one and all.

Jesus, staunch champion of the common man
Don’t let the devil get the upper hand
To claim poor sinners in his counting hall.
Brothers, don’t mock us dead, if laugh you can.
Spirit of mercy, shine upon us all.

François Villon

Translated from the French
by Jane Tozer

Death row, le Châtelet, Paris 1462

Villon was caught on the fringe of a drunken stramash, outside the office of a papal notary, Ferrebec. The story goes that a scrivener was knifed; no more than a flesh-wound, but still a capital offence. Ferrebec had influence from Paris to Rome. He pulled rank. Villon was a marked man; an intractable rogue, no friend to the church. Despite a lack of evidence, he was tried and convicted.

His stark death sentence: ‘Pendu et étranglé’. Dangled, strangled. A slow, cruel, humiliating spectacle. Bodies rotted on the gibbet; often at landmarks like crossroads, places of destiny where you must choose your way. The devil waits, as in The Soldier’s Tale and Robert Johnson’s famous Blues.

‘Iconic’ is a debased word. ‘Ballade des pendus’ is a true icon, breathtaking in more ways than one. It evokes woodcuts of plague, war, witch trials, danse macabre, tarantella. This poem is a bleak documentary; cautionary, with dashes of gallows humour. What courage.

‘Frères humains’: wow! Human brothers: yawn. My fellow humans: Dubya’s drawl. When translating, I read the poem last thing each night, until it inhabits my unconscious.

The Gibbet is a last-minute flash from an old allegory.

In French, pecked with more pockmarks than a thimble is vivid. I left that line out. It makes the crows appear once too often. Thimbles and saddler’s palms are museum pieces now.

‘Why this is hell, nor am I out of it.’ If there’s an inferno, it’s here, now. Mankind made it. Drug cartels, fanatics, neo-nazis. Honour to Norway’s solidarity, principles, dignity, justice.

Villon was clearly stitched up like a kipper. In 1463, his sentence was commuted to ten years’ exile from Paris. No one knows what happened afterwards. He was 32.
A Jackeen Keens for the Blasket

Sunset, and the wide sea will be laid out like glass, no sailing boats or signs of life, just a last eagle that glints on the world’s edge, separate, circling over the lonely, spent Blasket...

The sun sunk down, and nightshadows scattered over the high moon, herself scaling the ground with bare, outstretched fingers, cold on the broken houses, the life’s scaffold...

All silent but the birds’ bellies sliding over the waves, glad to be home, head tucked snug in breast, the wind’s breath rocking the door, and the damp hearth, fireless, heatless, unwatched.

Translated from the Irish
by Seán Hewitt

Seán Hewitt’s commentary

Brendan Behan learnt Irish in prison. He was a Dubliner, a ‘jackeen’, chiefly remembered for his English works; but this poem shows a gentle longing for an Ireland wildly unlike the poet’s own, one removed from him not simply geographically, but also culturally and linguistically. It was written, poignantly, just five years before its prediction was fulfilled: in 1953, the last Blasket islanders were evacuated, and an ancient culture was abandoned, strangled by the ever-encroaching pressures of the modern world.

Last summer, I had the privilege of continuing my study of Irish in West Kerry, thanks to a generous grant, and my visit to the Blaskets was truly haunting – I will never forget the slow backbone of land rising out of the sea-mist, the cormorants skimming the water and, most incredibly, the sheer, devastating silence.

It is this silence that the poem conveys so well. It doesn’t have the sense of being stuffed full of language, and so I have tried to translate the words and syntax simply, giving an ease to the English, which was challenging considering the significant differences between the languages’ structures. I have preserved the rhyme and tried to keep some of the word-sounds (such as the ‘sc-’ words in the second stanza) in order to replicate the aural softness of the Irish.

William Blake wrote that ‘Nature without Man is barren’, and Behan gives a similar sense in this poem, with the feminine moon poring gently over the ‘signs of life’ which are, ironically, lifeless, ‘unwatched’. The importance of the personification here convinced me to preserve the moon’s gender: she longs like a mother for the island’s children, and Behan follows her gaze cinematically to a close-up of the hearth, the telling centrepiece of an oral culture now consigned to history, and to silence.
Nuit du Walpurgis classique

C’est plutôt le sabbat du second Faust que l’autre. Un rhythmique sabbat, rhythmique, extrêmement Rhythmique. — Imaginez un jardin de Lenôtre, Correct, ridicule et charmant.

Des ronds-points ; au milieu, des jets d’eau ; des allées Toutes droites ; sylvains de marbre ; dieux marins De bronze ; çà et là, des Vénus étalées ; Des quinconces, des boulingrins ;

Des châtaigniers ; des plants de fleurs formant la dune ; Ici, des rosiers nains qu’un goût docte effila ; Plus loin, des ifs taillés en triangles. La lune D’un soir d’été sur tout cela.

Minuit sonne, et réveille au fond du parc aulique Un air mélancolique, un sourd, lent et doux air De chasse : tel, doux, lent, sourd et mélancolique, L’air de chasse de Tannhäuser.

S’entrelacent soudain des formes toutes blanches, Diaphanes, et que le clair de lune fait Opalines parmi l’ombre verte des branches, — Un Watteau rêvé par Raffet ! —

S’entrelacent parmi l’ombre verte des arbres D’un geste alangui, plein d’un désespoir profond ; Puis, autour des massifs, des bronzes et des marbres, Très lentement dansent en rond.

— Ces spectres agités, sont-ce donc la pensée Du poète ivre, ou son regret, ou son remords, Ces spectres agités en tourbe cadencée, Ou bien tout simplement des morts ?

Classical Walpurgisnacht

Think Sabbath. Faust. No, not Part One, the other! A rhythmic, very rhythmic ground, becoming A garden in the manner of Lenôtre: Proper, over the top, and charming.


Dwarf roses, here, sculpted by informed pruning. Further away, yews coaxed into a cone. Horse chestnuts. Flowerbeds as landscape. Shining On all of this, an August moon.

Twelve chimes – From the dynastic park an answer: A soulful slow sweet melody, the kind Of sweet slow haunting hunting song Tannhäuser Heard as he crept from underground.

Pale sudden shapes that couple and uncouple In the green shade of leafage, interweaving A lucent whiteness that the moon tints opal – A Watteauesque Raffet engraving –

And now, weaving in the green shade of leafage, Listlessly round the statuary, round The plantings, with that unrecovered grief age Deepens, perform their antique round.

Unsettled spirits, rhythmical as surfers, Are they the drunken poet’s thoughts? Indeed Are they regrets, or the remorse he suffers? Or are they just, instead, the dead?

John RG Turner’s commentary

As the Duchess of Plaza-Toro has it: ‘It’s extraordinary what unprepossessing people one can love.’ Ditto, poems. I fell in love with this little-known Verlaine while in the out of body state induced by a train journey. The embarrassing bit (and ‘it feels almost like confessing to a murder’) is that while I can get a poem like this from a straight read (plus a little dictionary research), I seldom do things the right way round: understanding the poem and then preparing a carefully judged translation. Normally, I don’t actually understand a poem until I’ve translated it or, a bit less embarrassing, the translating and coming to an understanding are part of the same process.

Getting deep into the ‘Walpurgisnacht’ uneartehs some problems. In Verlaine’s defence, and to use a quotation that he would later employ as an epigraph ‘[Il] était si jeune’, I maintain that the poem has some enchanting moments, and scholastically it is significant in revealing embryonic themes and techniques that would later become trademarks: almost a dry-run for the Fêtes Galantes (ancien régime park with figures), and on into much later poems; but instead of the lightly suppressed eroticism, this poem seems to be about being drunk – a subject he has picked up from Baudelaire, but which considering its importance in his life, is very little represented in his art! Knowing what Tannhäuser had been up to in the Venusberg, the poet must have had one pig of a hangover.

The poem tends to have too many foci, and his celebrated vagueness comes out more as inconsistency. As always with Verlaine the landscape is visually full of self-contradiction (what style of garden is this?); and referencing literature, music, graphic art and landscape design in one poem is, as he says of Lenôtre’s designs, just
Sont-ce donc ton remords, ô rêvasseur qu’invite
L’horreur, ou ton regret, ou ta pensée, — hein ? — tous
Ces spectres qu’un vertige irrésistible agite,
   Ou bien des morts qui seraient fous ? —

N’importe ! ils vont toujours, les fébriles fantômes,
Menant leur ronde vaste et morne et tressautant
Comme dans un rayon de soleil des atomes,
   Et s’évaporant à l’instant

Humide et blême où l’aube éteint l’un après l’autre
Les cors, en sorte qu’il ne reste absolument
Plus rien — absolument — qu’un jardin de Lenôtre,
   Correct, ridicule et charmant.

Paul Verlaine

Your conscience then, my inappropriate dreamer,
These spectral gyres in non-stop motion? Hey!
Remorse, regret and guilt that stake their claim? Or
Are these the dead who would be gay?

Who knows! They never stop, these frantic phantoms,
These lindy-hopping, jitterbugging leapers,
Gnats in the sun, a shaft of dust and atoms,
   That instantly revert to vapours

As the damp daylight, one after another
Blots all the horns out. And the mists re-forming
Just nothing. Just a garden by Lenôtre,
   Proper, over the top, and charming.

Translated from the French
by John RG Turner

a bit over the top. And let’s face it, one of the stanzas verges on the dire.

But I still love it! I have used strict metre – the only other modern translation I know is free – because the unexpected short line, along with the rather extreme *enjambement*, produces a slight sense of things being off-balance – much less diatonic at 5:4 feet even than the original at 12:8 syllables – and you can’t be ‘unexpected’ if the metre generates no expectations. I felt slant rhymes went better here than conventional ones, with the exception of one homophone and one that is simply outrageous.

Not a little of the delight comes from the way Verlaine imitates Baudelaire – as often at this stage in his life – but then undercuts him: are these figures the poet’s reproachful conscience? Nah, they’re just a bunch of old ghosts! The thing being that Verlaine didn’t do guilt and remorse. As a psychopath, they were probably outside his capacities. (Reproach though, he could manage, particularly with the much put-on Mathilde, and he did in the end make a convincing list of repentance.)

Rather than imitating the original Baudelaire imitation, I let the imp of the perverse insert a few stolen phrases from my elders and betters. Spotting them requires no great scholarship, to put it mildly, though the Yeats is just one word. The double meanings, as in ‘ground’ and ‘ruler’, are intended. *Lontano*: the direction for the instrument[s] to be played within earshot from another room. *A quincunx* is an arrangement of five related objects – say a water-god and four naiads – at the centre and corners of a square, like the ‘5’ on the dice. They must have had a wow effect when placed on radiating paths round a hub.
Stephen Spender – poet, critic, editor and translator – lived from 1909 to 1995. The Trust was set up in his memory to promote literary translation and to widen knowledge of 20th century literature, with particular focus on Stephen Spender’s circle of writers.

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 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. Booklets of winning entries from previous years can be obtained from the Trust or downloaded from its website.

Other translation projects
Translation Nation
Winner of a Euro Talk Primary Languages Prize and a European Label for Language in recognition of the project’s innovative qualities, this collaboration between the Stephen Spender Trust and Eastside Education Trust, funded by Arts Council England, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Mercers’ Company, has seen translators of French, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, Arabic, Hindi and Gujarati going into 22 primary schools to run three-day translation workshops, reaching some 1,300 children in Years 5 and 6. 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 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 in 2011. Entrants, who may be of any nationality, are required to translate a Russian poem of their choice into English. The 2012 judges are Sasha Dugdale, Catriona Kelly and Glyn Maxwell.

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 were published by Faber in July 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 is 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.

Seminar series
At the October 2011 seminar Lara Feigel, Alan Jenkins, Christopher Reid and John Sutherland explored the relationship between Stephen Spender’s life and work and poetry and prose. In January 2012 Jason Harding, Maren Roth, James Smith, Matthew Spender and Frances Stonor Saunders discussed with some passion Encounter, the CIA, the IRD and the relationship of British intellectuals with the Establishment. This was followed in October 2012 by ‘Bernard Spencer: Mystery Poet’ at which Jonathan Barker, Valentine Cunningham and Peter Robinson discussed the writer’s life, his work and his contemporaries. Presented by the Stephen Spender Trust in partnership with the Institute of English Studies, these seminars are free and open to the public. Details and podcasts can be found on both organisations’ websites.

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