



The Stephen Spender Prize 2014

in association with **theguardian**

ἐκκαλύπτει δὲ ἐξ ὧν ἔστιν, ἀπὸ δὲ ψυχῆν ἐκάπ
enshrouding her, and the life pas

rips de vostre face arrachera le masque
stripped of its mask, your fac

Hē þe sceal legge læf et hēafde
He'll fetter you in ferns and reeds

pilluckten quitten, wuchteten körbe
quinces, lugged the baskets of yellow

Nythod ddwyn, cyd mi hof ddai
Nesthief, though you winnow leav

for poetry in translation

The Stephen Spender Prize 2014 for poetry in translation

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Winner of the 14-and-under category



Alexia Sloane
'I Have Read that Poets in China'
by Jean Dominique (French)

Winners of the 18-and-under category



First
Sam Norman
'Andromache'
from Book 22 of
the *Iliad* by Homer
(Ancient Greek)



Second
Joshua James
'Against a Wen'
(Anon)
(Anglo-Saxon)



Joint third
Rosemary Brook-Hart
'Age Hangs on You'
by Pierre de Ronsard
(French)



Joint third
Esther Sorooshian
'The Frog'
by Francis Ponge
(French)

Winners of the Open category



First
Iain Galbraith
'Quince Jelly'
by Jan Wagner
(German)



Second
Gwyneth Lewis
'The Wind'
by Dafydd ap Gwilym
(Welsh)



Third
Robert Hull
Epigrams 3.44
by Martial
(Latin)

Commended

14-and-under commended

Kirsty Gaston
'If You Forget Me'
by Pablo Neruda (Spanish)

Weronika Lewandowska
'Museum'
by Wisława Szymborska (Polish)

Krishnan Mulholland
'Continuous Work'
by Raymond Queneau (French)

18-and-under commended

Joshua James
'Against a Swarm of Bees'
(Anon) (Anglo-Saxon)

Victoria McBride
'Notebook of a Return to
My Native Land'
by Aimé Césaire (French)

Henner Petin
'A Rose for My Mainstay'
by Hilde Domin (German)

Anna Tindall
'Hymn to the Bankers'
by Erich Kästner (German)

Open commended

Ian Crockatt
'The Bowl of Roses'
by Rainer Maria Rilke (German)

Iain Galbraith
'Histories'
by Jan Wagner (German)

Iain Galbraith
'The Motionless Bursting of Apples'
by Peter Waterhouse (German)

Gillian Harris
'Poem with Simultaneous Translation'
by Susana Thénon (Spanish)

Olivia McCannon
'February Bike Ride'
by Guy Goffette (French)

Hans-Christian Oeser
'Where I Was Born'
by Michael Krüger (German)

The Stephen Spender Prize, launched in 2004, celebrates its tenth birthday in 2014. Our junior winners from the early years are now working or completing PhDs; we have grown blasé about receiving translations from 50 languages or more; our entrants continue to run the gamut from novice poets and translators to the internationally famous; and some 20 of our translators have received Hawthornden Fellowships, enjoying a month-long writing retreat at Hawthornden Castle outside Edinburgh (an experience described by one as a privilege beyond price).

A birthday calls for a party. To celebrate this happy anniversary and to raise funds for the prize and the Stephen Spender Trust there will be a wonderful evening of live music and readings by a trio of well known actors on Thursday 12 March 2015 at the Royal Institution in London. Tickets will go on sale in January. We hope that as well as being a first-rate evening it will serve as a joyful reunion of past winners and the Trust's many supporters.

All those who have entered will know that the commentary is a particular feature of the Spender Prize. The competition has always been about raising the profile of translators and shedding light on the process of translation, and the commentary gives translators a voice, permitting them for once to explain and justify their decisions. In the case of the younger entrants the commentary often also reveals how they came to choose that particular poem, and this year it is good to have further evidence that teachers and those who

run creative writing clubs (in one case a poet-in-residence) are encouraging students to explore their cultural heritage as well as draw on languages they have studied formally. From 2015 teachers will be able to download from the website lesson plans suggesting how they can incorporate poetry translation into their teaching.

The 2014 judges – Susan Bassnett, Edith Hall, WN Herbert and Stephen Romer – were seemingly unfazed by the arrival of a crate of entries to read over the summer holidays and they debated the final list with perception and tenacious civility. My thanks to them, especially to the two who are stepping down this year. Edith Hall has been a font of knowledge about all things classical (and much else besides). Susan Bassnett has not only been a judge since the prize's birth but was present at its conception; her translation expertise and dazzling linguistic ability which allows her to read in at least eight languages will be hard to replace. Final and heartfelt thanks must go to the generous sponsors of the prize, the Old Possums Practical Trust and the Dr Mortimer and Theresa Sackler Foundation, and to our new media partner, the *Guardian*.

There is room in this booklet to print only the winning entries. To read also the commended entries from this and previous years or to download past booklets please visit stephen-spender.org.

Robina Pelham Burn
Director of the Stephen Spender Trust

Judges' comments



All good things eventually have to come to an end, and this is my final year as a judge of this wonderful prize.

Once again we have some exceptional winners, though the quality of so many of the entries made it hard to decide on the final shortlist and not everything we liked as individuals made it through to the final cut. On my personal list were Conor McKee's extract from 'The Battle of Maldon', Alicia Mason's version of Rilke's 'Herbsttag' and Adam Elgar's translations from Tasso and Ariosto. It is surely a sign of the extent to which poetry translation is flourishing when judges have so many fine poems from which to choose.

When this prize was initiated, one of the aims was to encourage young people to try their hand at translating poetry, and the number of entrants under the age of 18 is genuinely

heartening. I was impressed by one 14-year-old who wrote an account of how he came to choose a poem to translate: he read last year's winning entries, decided to have a go himself, then went to a Routes into Languages seminar where he discovered Goethe. In his comment he admits to having had problems with the language (he had had only two years of German), but used dictionaries and tried to keep the format of the poem, though 'I edited it to make more sense'. Most importantly, he writes about how much he enjoyed translating the poem. This is something that many entrants mention in their comments and which is vital to the continuing success of all poetry in translation.

The range of languages and varieties of poetry seemed to me to be greater than ever this year, and it is interesting to see how many translations there were of ancient languages – Greek, Latin, Anglo-Saxon, Old Norse, Old

Irish, classical Chinese – which shows that translators of all ages are keen to take on the double challenge of translating across languages and across time.

Compared to previous years, there seemed to be more songs translated, hence more experimenting with sounds and rhythms. A number of translators wrote about their struggles with rhymes and rhythms as they tried to map one poetic system onto another. There were some interesting experiments with language variation, such as Galician into Cumbrian or Irish Gaelic into Cockney English, the latter being a tribute to the translator's grandfather. Indeed, many translators of all ages wrote movingly about how they saw their translation as a gift for someone, for a loved person alive or dead.

Translating poetry is not easy, because it requires different kinds of skills. The translator has to be able to understand the original poem, and

Judges' comments

then has to be able to create a poem of quality in English. Sometimes as judges we encounter good poems that are not necessarily good translations, while we also encounter translations that are so close to the original that they fail to work as English poems. Getting the balance right is crucial, and to achieve that it is often necessary for the translator to do some additional research. It is certainly necessary for would-be translators to read the work of poets in whatever language, so as to have a greater sense of what a poem can do. The winning entries in all categories produced fine poems that are also fine translations, thereby demonstrating an understanding of the possibilities of poetry.

Susan Bassnett



It was a liberation this year to retreat from the dismal violence of the headlines into my August ritual of reading out new translations of poetry from around the world. It was noticeable how many entrants were translating poems which reflected the turmoil, especially in the Middle East and Africa.

There were fewer dazzling entries in the Open category this year, despite many tens of well-crafted efforts. I enjoyed Paul Stapleton's nostalgic 'Raven-Rags' (an anonymous Irish poem), an extract from one of the oldest recorded poems, *Gilgamesh*, by Stewart Sanderson, and an intricate, resonant response to Aimé Césaire's French-Caribbean dialect in Chris Beckett's 'The Verb "to Maroonaway"'.

The judges took little time to agree on the winner, Iain Galbraith. His translations from the Hamburg poet Jan Wagner convey Wagner's sensuality, mastery of form, and laser-eye for detail, while converting the whole into idiomatic English poetry. From the medieval Welsh of Dafydd ap Gwilym, we were blown away by the aural delicacy and soft vowels of Gwyneth Lewis' 'The Wind'. And the droll exasperation of Martial, a Spaniard writing Latin verse in imperial Rome, was translated with zest and skill by

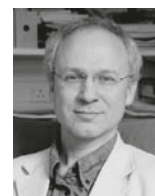
Robert Hull. We have all encountered narcissistic poetasters like the Ligurnus Martial lambasts in epigram 3.44, a versifier so importunate that he shouts his poems even through his victims' bathroom doors.

2014 is a bumper year for translations from ancient Greek and Latin. In the Open category I was treated to two fine, cerebral versions of my favourite Latin philosophical poet, Lucretius; Emma Gee's was excellent. There were intricate responses to Callimachus' *Hecale* and 'Hymn to Delos', Horace at his wittiest in the *Satires* and most lyrical in his *Odes*, a deft Anacreon, an eloquent Sappho, and a racy Propertius. One Catullus spoke like a character in *EastEnders*. Several extracts from Homeric and Virgilian epic were praiseworthy, as were attempts at all three Greek tragedians. Lucian Moriyama's fragments from Petronius came as a breath of fresh air.

Many teenagers shone this year, but the prizewinners were immediately obvious. I was deeply touched by Sam Norman's lovingly crafted, lyrical version of the sequence in the *Iliad* when Andromache hears the news that her husband Hector is dead, and delighted that Homer has won a Spender prize, yet again.

One of the secrets of success in this competition lies in the choice of the original poem. Strong form seems to offer more potential for transformation into a successful English-language poem than discursive, looser rhythmical structures. Entrants could be braver about the verse forms they translate *into* – there is no reason why a prose poem can't become a plausible sonnet. Concise, vivid dramatic vignettes with a unifying motif – Neruda and Cavafy – seem to morph effortlessly from one tongue to another, while excerpts from longer poems need to be carefully selected for their internal, organic cohesion. In his *Poetics* Aristotle called this the principles of the *hen* combined with the *holon* – the single and the whole. Spender Prize winners have always intuitively grasped it.

Edith Hall



I was astonished by the range of work translated in the 14-and-under category – a tribute both to the quality of their teachers and the curiosity of these young translators – and found much that was both unexpected and delightful.

Sometimes this was a single phrase: 'The shes, like bees, / The hes, like fleas' (Maurice Carême, translated by Oliver West). Sometimes it was a whole poem finding solutions for a complex original, as in Krishnan Mulholland's version of Raymond Queneau's 'Le Travail Continu' – the strangeness of 'In the shadow of the word cart' compelled me to read on.

Among the 18s-and-under, it was clear we were in the presence of a few prodigies, and I was especially engaged by Joshua James's way with Anglo-Saxon, which allowed the musical and magical elements of the original charms to emerge through subtle repetition and rhythmic sureness: 'Sputter and fade like a firecoal, wart, / And shrink as ooze shrinks on a wall...'

What particularly impressed me about Sam Norman's translation was the selection of a passage from Homer which worked perfectly as a contained episode, which was then subjected to a virtuoso recasting into quintains rhyming ABAAB. This was done so seamlessly I was left with no doubt about the winner in this category.

One other piece well worth mentioning before I move on from the under 18s is a strong example of something I encountered again and again in the adult category. 'A Rose for My Mainstay' (Hilde Domin, translated by Henner Petin) was a perfect example of the unknown (to me) original which compelled by the elegance of its English: 'on the trapeze of feelings, my bed / floats like a nest in the wind'.

In the main category my curiosity frequently overwhelmed me with authors either new to me, or only familiar as a name or a vague memory. Eeva Kilpi's 'When I Come Home', translated by Donald Adamson, had

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a mysterious chill to it: 'When I come home / I have to gather the dead around me / and tell them where I have been'. While 'Analogia' by Magnus William-Olsson, translated by Pamela Robertson-Pearce, had an assured, unique tone – puzzling, metaphysical: 'Isn't the song always see-through? / Words never.'

Ultimately, though, it was the strong sense of an appropriate level of craft being sought out and achieved, of a commanding syntactic subtlety being brought to bear, which convinced me of my final shortlist. Gwyneth Lewis's virtuosic, controlled yet euphoric translation of Dafydd ap Gwilym, appropriately enough in a poem called 'The Wind', blew me away.

And amazingly, unbeknown to me, my favourite two discoveries, Jan Wagner and Peter Waterhouse, were both translated by the same poet, Iain Galbraith. The measured sensuous metrics of Wagner and the post-Rilkean, witty ecstasies of Waterhouse were equally impressive, and I could have put forward any of these submissions as my winner: after all, who should have to choose between quince jelly and the motionless bursting of apples?

WN Herbert



To translate a poem is to dance in chains, as Paul Valéry put it, but this year's winners more than rose to the challenge. The winner of the 14-and-under category, Alexia Sloane, achieved a beautifully fluid rendering of a poem by the little-known Belgian poet of the Belle Epoque, Jean Dominique (real name, Marie Closset). This version came with a particularly attractive (and moving) commentary which admitted ruefully that reproducing the original rhyme scheme was unworkable in English. An intricate rhyme scheme in the source text is one of the first things an experienced translator learns to jettison. In the same category I was pleased that I persuaded my fellow judges to commend Weronika Lewandowska's version of Szyborska's 'Museum', after a lively discussion concerning the meaning of the final stanza! Among

those who did not quite gain sufficient support for a commendation, I would single out Amber Rothera's version of Rubén Darío's 'Eheu', and Talya Al-Husseini's nicely brisk account of La Fontaine's 'The Cicada and the Ant'.

The 18-and-under category was marked, naturally enough, by a leap in levels of sophistication. Immediately attractive to me was Rosemary Brooke-Hart's audacious and witty take on Ronsard's sonnet 'Vous estes déjà vieille', with its arresting start: 'Age hangs on you like sawdust hangs on velcro – / light, but irremovable...' and the inventiveness sustained throughout to the final 'stripped of its mask, your face is snowdrop-pure'. This was an example of 'versioning' (there were others) – ie when radical liberties are taken with the form and content of the source text – that worked because it remains above all *tonally* true to the original. The commentary appended to this was also illuminating, as it charts the move towards free translation, and the role of happenstance, 'when I was writing the snowdrops were just coming out'... Joint third with the Ronsard was Esther Sorooshian's daring unpacking of Francis Ponge's dense prose poem 'The Frog'; her decision to cast it in the form of a poem, while it might have vexed the poet, found universal favour with the judges. Anna Tindall's commended version of Erich Kästner's brilliantly acerbic, and topical, 'Hymn to the Bankers', very nearly won a prize but for the last lines that did not quite carry the requisite punch of the original, essential to clinch a strongly rhymed, emphatic poem like this. Joshua James's Anglo-Saxon charm poem 'Against a Wen' came through strongly in second place, while Sam Norman's astonishingly mature and accomplished translation of the Andromache section of the *Iliad* was our undisputed winner.

Quality shines through and this was the case with Iain Galbraith's versions of the contemporary German poet Jan Wagner, any one of which could have won first prize in the Open category. We decided upon 'Quince Jelly', not only for its radiant celebration of that

mysterious fruit, but for the translator's brilliant handling in English of the Sapphic metre. Translation at its subtlest is an art of listening, and Galbraith provides a marvellous counterpoint in English to the luscious consonantal clusters of the German. The same translator emerged in the commended section with a version of Peter Waterhouse's intriguing, innovative 'The Motionless Bursting of Apples'. After some discussion, and re-reading, the equally subtle music of Dafydd ap Gwilym's medieval Welsh *cynghanedd* in 'The Wind' came clear. A fiendishly difficult form, handled with great sensitivity and lightness of touch by Gwyneth Lewis. Everyone enjoyed Robert Hull's thoroughly entertaining, knockabout version of a Martial epigram, which came in third.

German came through strongly as the language of choice this year, and Ian Crockatt's majestic Rilkes were all worthy of commendation. Still on the musical theme, I especially enjoyed Olivia McCannon's sensitive responses to the varying rhythms of Guy Goffette on his 'February Bike Ride'. Honourable mention also goes to Michael Copp's Voznesensky, David McCallam's energetic André Chénier, various versions of Else Lasker-Schüler, Chiara Salomoni's take on Silvio Ramat's subtle take on Leopardi, and Patrick Early's noble Machado, 'By the Banks of the Duero'. I was charmed, too, by Kevin Maynard's creative transposition of Leopardi's *Canto XIII* into the key of a conversation poem by Coleridge.

Stephen Romer

J'ai lu que les poètes, en Chine

J'ai lu que les poètes, en Chine, sont très doux.
Et qu'il y en a un qui est mort de la lune;
Et les Chinois ne disent pas qu'il était fou
Car c'est, chez eux, une aventure assez commune.
J'ai lu qu'ils s'enivraient de vin et de la lune,
Et leurs vers se balancent comme de longs bambous
Entre l'eau de leur cœur et les brouillards de plume
Qui s'accrochent, dans leur pays, un peu partout.
Leur âme frêle et sombre, printanière et fidèle,
Fend le ciel et le fleuve comme un vol d'hirondelle,
Et les larmes qui glissent sur la soie de leurs manches,
Sont des feuilles de saule, fines, longues et tendres.
Peut-être est-ce un Chinois qui m'a mis dans le cœur
Cette chanson de l'eau, de la lune et des fleurs,
Et ce doux paysage en noir et en couleur
D'un jonc qui tremble au vent dans la main d'un pêcheur.
Peut-être que mon cœur est un peu bien chinois
Et mourra de la lune un beau jour comme un autre...
Et qu'est-ce qu'on dira, et qu'est-ce qu'on dira
De l'aventure, dans un pays comme le nôtre?

Jean Dominique

I Have Read that Poets in China

I have read that in China, poets are very gentle.
And that one of them died because of the moon;
And the Chinese don't say he was mad
As, over there, it is a fairly common occurrence.
I have read that they become intoxicated with wine
and the moon
And that their verses swing like long bamboos
Between the water emerging from their hearts and the
mist of their quill
Which, in their country, clings to almost everything.
Their frail, dark, faithful and spring-like soul,
Splits the sky and the river like a flock of swallows
And the tears which trickle down the silk of their sleeves
Resemble slim, long and tender leaves from a willow
Maybe a Chinese person has filled my heart with
This song about water, the moon and flowers,
And with this gentle landscape, in black and in colour
Of a rush held in a fisherman's hand and trembling in the wind
Maybe my heart is quite typically Chinese
And will one of these days die because of the moon...
And what will people say, what will they say
About this occurrence, in a country like ours?

*Translated from the French
by Alexia Sloane*

Alexia Sloane's commentary

I chose this fairly unknown poem by the Belle Epoque Belgian poet who wrote under the pseudonym Jean Dominique because I have a particular interest in Chinese culture and language. I came across it when I was searching for poems with a Chinese element and I instantly felt attracted by it. This poem is not very well known outside Belgium. Since coming across this poem, I have read more of her work and feel her poetry certainly deserves to be explored.

I particularly like the simplicity and beauty of her verses as well as their

musicality. Through this poem, and while I cannot see as I am totally blind, I felt totally transported to China and could experience fully the atmosphere of the landscape the poet is depicting. I could imagine being there and hearing the sounds of the water, the leaves, the birds and the rush and bamboos trembling in the wind. The beautiful images of nature, the evocation of a slow and gentle death together with the poet's verbal sensitivity are recurring themes in her poetry and are evident in this poem. I like the simplicity of the vocabulary

and the echo between the first and the last verse of a gentle death caused by the moon.

When translating, I was unfortunately unable to make the poem rhyme without moving too far from the original text which is why I may not have done it justice. This was my very first attempt at translating a poem from the original language into English. My goal is to translate the poem into Chinese and experience the beauty and musicality of the Chinese tones when reading it out loud. I am quite sure Jean Dominique herself would have liked that.

The Iliad, Book 22, lines 437–467

ὣς ἔφατο κλαίουσ', ἄλοχος δ' οὐ πώ τι πέπυστο
Ἔκτορος: οὐ γάρ οἱ τις ἐτήτυμος ἄγγελος ἐλθὼν
ἤγγειλ' ὅτι ῥά οἱ πόσις ἔκτοθι μίμνε πυλάων,
ἀλλ' ἦ γ' ἴστων ὕφαινε μυχῷ δόμου ὑψηλοῖο
δίπλακα πορφυρέην, ἐν δὲ θρόνα ποικίλ' ἔπασσε.
κέκλετο δ' ἀμφιπόλοισιν ἐϋπλοκάμοις κατὰ δῶμα
ἀμφὶ πυρὶ στήσαι τρίποδα μέγαν, ὄφρα πέλοιτο
Ἔκτορι θερμὰ λοετρὰ μάχης ἐκ νοστήσαντι
νηπίη, οὐδ' ἐνόησεν ὃ μιν μάλα τῆλε λοετρῶν
χερσὶν Ἀχιλλῆος δάμασε γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη.
κωκυτοῦ δ' ἤκουσε καὶ οἰμωγῆς ἀπὸ πύργου:
τῆς δ' ἐλελίχθη γυῖα, χαμαὶ δέ οἱ ἔκπεσε κερκίς:
ἦ δ' αὐτίς δμῶσιν ἐϋπλοκάμοισι μετηύδα:
'δεῦτε δὴ μοι ἔπεσθον, ἴδωμ' ὅτιν' ἔργα τέτυκται.
αἰδοίης ἐκυρῆς ὅπως ἔκλυον, ἐν δ' ἐμοὶ αὐτῆ
στήθεσι πάλλεται ἦτορ ἀνὰ στόμα, νέρθε δὲ γούνα
πήγνυται: ἐγγὺς δὴ τι κακὸν Πριάμοιο τέκεσιν.
αἶ γὰρ ἀπ' οὐατος εἶη ἐμεῦ ἔπος: ἀλλὰ μάλ' αἰνῶς
δείδω μὴ δὴ μοι θρασὺν Ἔκτορα δίος Ἀχιλλεὺς
μοῦνον ἀποτμήξας πόλιος πεδίον δὲ δίηται,
καὶ δὴ μιν καταπαύσῃ ἀγνητοῖς ἀλεγεινῆς
ἦ μιν ἔχεσκ', ἐπεὶ οὐ ποτ' ἐνὶ πληθυὶ μένεν ἀνδρῶν,
ἀλλὰ πολὺ προθέεσκε, τὸ δὴν μένος οὐδενὶ εἴκων.'

Andromache

She broke off, weeping – but still, Hektor's wife
had heard nothing, no messenger had come
to warn that her husband had gone to fight
far from the city gates... So for the while
she simply wove, sat in their lofty home.

And working on her two-fold, purple lace,
weaving dappled flowers, she bade her maids go
and heat a massive cauldron straight away
so that when Hektor returned from the fray,
he'd find a steaming bath. She didn't know

that Achilleus and the one with flashing eyes
had laid him low, far-off from any bath.
But when, from the wall, she heard shouts and cries
the legs beneath her rocked dangerously
and from her hand, her shuttle fell to earth.

Then she spoke among her maids with lovely hair:
'I must see what has happened – you two, come!
That was his honoured mother's voice I heard...
Oh, in my breast I feel my very heart
leap to my mouth, and my legs are numb...

'Some evil for the house of Priam is near...
I hope such news will never be revealed,
but godlike Achilleus – I'm racked with fear –
has cut off reckless Hektor far from here,
and is driving him onto the open field

'where he will end the fatal bravery
that summed my husband up – he'd never wait,
safe in the throng of men, but rather he
would charge ahead, outstripping them greatly,
and yielding to no one in his might...'

First prize, 18-and-under category

ὥς φαιμένη μεγάρου διεύσσυτο μαινάδι ἴση
παλλομένη κραδίην: ἅμα δ' ἀμφίπολοι κίον αὐτῇ
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πύργον τε καὶ ἀνδρῶν ἴξεν ὄμιλον
ἔστη παπτήνας' ἐπὶ τείχει, τὸν δὲ νόησεν
ἐλκόμενον πρόσθεν πόλιος: ταχέες δὲ μιν ἵπποι
ἔλκον ἀκηδέστως κοίλας ἐπὶ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν.
τὴν δὲ κατ' ὀφθαλμῶν ἐρεβεννὴ νύξ ἐκάλυπεν,
ἦριπε δ' ἐξοπίσω, ἀπὸ δὲ ψυχὴν ἐκάπυσσε.

Homer

And with these words she rushed out from the hall,
heart pounding, nearly mad – her maids came too –
but when she reached the teeming city wall
and stood there, looking out, among them all,
only then, she saw him and she knew.

There was Hektor, being dragged outside
the city to the hollow, Grecian ships
by quick horses – unburied, brutalised.
Then black night descended over her eyes,
enshrouding her, and the life passed from her lips...

*Translated from the Ancient Greek
by Sam Norman*

Sam Norman's commentary

The *Iliad* is an exploration of one man's wrath. The majority of the action takes place over three days, during which Achilles refuses to fight, indirectly allows his best friend to be killed, and subsequently exacts revenge in a prolonged fit of blind and self-hating anger. One casualty is the Trojan champion, Hektor. It was he who killed Achilles's best friend, and Achilles takes pleasure in defiling his corpse horribly. This passage touches on the moment near the end of the poem when Andromache becomes aware of her husband's fate.

Although people read the *Iliad* as a text, it is important to remember that, as the

result of an oral tradition, it was composed to be *sung*. Thus, the principal challenge, as I saw it, was to convey something of the musicality of the Greek. Taking inspiration from Christopher Logue's wonderful *War Music*, I decided to write my translation in loose iambic pentameter: a highly lyrical metre. I was drawn to ABAAB quintains after reading George Herbert, who skilfully uses this form to generate a poignant and melodic effect. Where perfect rhymes were too difficult, I have used half rhymes or similar sounding words; thus 'hair' is rhymed with 'heard' and 'heart'.

Doing justice to Homer is impossible.

The Greek ἀκηδέστως has the dual meanings 'remorselessly' and 'without burial rites' – what English word captures both these senses? Broadly, I thought it more important to create something that could be called a poem than to stick slavishly to the text. I have occasionally toned down the famous epithets (so wonderful in Greek, but so forced in English).

The *Iliad* is also a poem about tenderness. Hektor, unlike Achilles hitherto, has shown gentleness. It is the deep, deep love that Andromache feels for him that makes the passage so moving.

Against a Wen

Wenne, wenne, wenchichenne,
hēr ne scealt þū timbrien, ne nēnne tūn habben,
ac þū scealt north eonene tō þān nīhgan berhge,
þēr þū hauest, ermig, ēnne brōþer.
Hē þē sceal legge lēaf et hēafde.
Under fōt wolues, under ueþer earnes,
under earnes clēa, ā þū geweornie.
Clinge þū alswā col on heorþe,
scing þū alswā scerne awāge.
and weorne alswā weter on anbre.
Swā litel þu gewurþe alswā linsēcorn,
and micclī lēsse alswā ānes handwurmes hupebān,
and alswā litel þū gewurþe þet þū nāwiht gewurþe.

Anon

Against a Wen

Wenne, wenne, wenchichenne,
Little wart, begone!

You mustn't make your home here, wart;
You oughtn't start to build your stead.
But north from here a short way, wart,
You'll come athwart a town.

Wenne, wenne, wenchichenne,
Little boil, begone!

There, sore cyst, you'll find your brother;
He'll fetter you in ferns and reeds.
Wither under wolf's foot, wretch,
And under eagle's feather;
Hang to eagle's claw, rank whelk –
May you wither there forever.

Sputter and fade like a firecoal, wart,
And shrink as ooze shrinks on a wall,
And waste like water in a drum,
And shrivel seed-small,
Less than the
Flea's flank;
Die down to
Naught!

Wenne, wenne, wenchichenne,
Little wart, begone!

*Translated from the Anglo-Saxon
by Joshua James*

Joshua James's commentary

Primary among my reasons for translating this particular poem was that, as with many of the less famous Anglo-Saxon texts, it very rarely sees daylight except in fusty academic texts. Granted it's no controversy to say that a pagan charm has less literary merit than *Beowulf*, but the poem is still interesting and deserves attention. I haven't made an effort to maintain the alliterative metre of the original (unusually, the original is not particularly strict, especially toward the end), as I felt a more driving, singsong use of metre would make a more comfortable bedfellow for this incantatory

charm. I have, though, made sure to include a good deal of alliteration, partly in reference to the form of the original, but also because it makes good poetic sense for a rhythmic, spell-like piece to make something of these drumming repetitions of sound.

I couldn't bear to part with the opening line of the original; it is such a fantastic set of syllables to get the mouth around and captures the chanting folkloric quality of the original so perfectly that it had to stay. I decided to introduce it as part of a refrain – not present in the original, of

course, but which I feel helps maintain pace and mood, and makes the most out of the unusual rhyming. The *-enne* of this line continues to pulse through the original and, being such a strange and exciting thing to see in a poem whose poetic tradition is famed for its stomping alliteration and not its rhyme, it seemed important to make an attempt to retain this chanting effect. Rather than use the *-enne* of *wenne*, I used the translated equivalent, the 'ort' of 'wart', which reverberates through the translation, mimicking the original, before self-destructing in the 'naught' of line 22.

Vous estes déjà vieille

Vous estes déjà vieille, et je le suis aussi.
Joignon nostre vieillesse et l'accollon ensemble,
Et faisons d'un hyver qui de froidure tremble,
Autant que nous pourrons, un printemps adouci.

Un homme n'est point vieil s'il ne le croit ainsi ;
Vieillard n'est qui ne veut ; qui ne veut, il assemble
Une nouvelle trame à sa vieille, et ressemble
Un serpent rajeuni quand l'an retourne ici.

Ostez moy de ce fard l'impudente encrousture :
On ne sçauroit tromper la loy de la nature
Ny derider un front condamné du miroir,

Ni durcir un tetin desjà pendant et flasque.
Le Temps de vostre face arrachera le masque,
Et deviendray un cygne en lieu d'un corbeau noir.

Pierre de Ronsard

Age Hangs on You

Age hangs on you like sawdust hangs on velcro –
light, but irremovable – and I am
old
as you (older, maybe? memory balks
at counting quicksand years). If we can join
our sawdust-weight of age,
let's make a spring
let's make it grow
hear the pale shoots as they push lightwards through the
ice-hard soil of winter, watch
the first
snow-
drops –
purer than those showy roses that lined
the lanes where we once walked – cast eyes in all
the ditches, thickets, under hedges, seeking
the light-print of those first white buds
as they kiss open, slowly hatching,
lifting like wings to fly at summer's threatening –
and I still don't *feel* old. So am I, then?
Must age give in to agedness, or can
a man tie new cords, slough his wrinkled skin
and with the carousel of wheeling years be young again?
A time-scarred face, two breasts sagging and limp,
no scalpel-blade, no collagen can cure.
The gentle bend of swan-wings maps your back's curve –
stripped of its mask, your face is snowdrop-pure.

*Translated from the French
by Rosemary Brook-Hart*

Rosemary Brook-Hart's commentary

For various reasons, last year I ended up focusing my Extended Project Qualification on Ronsard and how he wrote about ageing, which is how I came across this poem. Unlike many of his other pieces, written to please his sponsors, it seemed honest and unforced. It stuck in my head, and I knew the only way to get it out was to translate it.

The first problem was the meaning. Because of his slightly relaxed attitude to spelling and the paucity of information on the poem, I was left unsure as to the subject of the final line, 'Et deviendray un

cygne...' The 'ay' ending, and the fact that both birds referred to are masculine, suggest that Ronsard is talking about himself, but in the context of the previous line, 'Le Temps de *vostre* face...' it would make more sense for the subject to be his (female) addressee, and as 'devienday' and 'deviendrez' are homophonic it seemed possible that the 'ay' ending was an error. I opted for the latter interpretation, as it also makes the poem feel less egocentric.

I then tried to translate the poem literally and sticking more or less to the original

form, but this got me nowhere. I resorted to writing freely with the original poem in the back of my mind. I found that my translation settled into ten-syllable lines, which seemed more natural in English than Ronsard's twelve syllables. I also found myself building on the idea of spring. When I was writing the snowdrops were just coming out; they contrasted with the roses that are everywhere in Ronsard's earlier love poetry – renewal instead of *carpe diem*. I also had in mind the verb *éclore*, which means both to hatch and to bloom.

La Grenouille

Lorsque la pluie en courtes aiguillettes rebondit aux prés saturés, une naine amphibie, une Ophélie manchote, grosse à peine comme le poing, jaillit parfois sous les pas du poète et se jette au prochain étang.

Laissons fuir la nerveuse. Elle a de jolies jambes. Tout son corps est ganté de peau imperméable. A peine viande ses muscles longs sont d'une élégance ni chair ni poisson. Mais pour quitter les doigts la vertu du fluide s'allie chez elle aux efforts du vivant. Goitreuse, elle halète... Et ce cœur qui bat gros, ces paupières ridées, cette bouche hagarde m'apitoyant à la lâcher.

Francis Ponge

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The Frog

As sharp needles of rain
Bounce from bloated meadows,
A dwarf amphibian,
A one-handed Ophelia,
Barely a fistful, unclenching,
Flings herself from the foot of the poet

Into the next pond.
Unpin her –
She's highly strung,
Her long limbs – such pretty legs –
In the rubber glove of her skin –
No meat on them; lithe
With a grace I've seldom seen
In fish or fowl. Like mercury,

She slips through my fingers.
Engorged,
Alive,
Panting,
Her fat, beating heart.
Her shrivelled eyelids,
And drooping mouth
Move me to let her go.

*Translated from the French
by Esther Sorooshian*

Esther Sorooshian's commentary

I think that Ponge is using the analogy of capturing a frog to express the difficulty poets have when translating from nature. Despite the irony that within the poem the narrator doesn't succeed in capturing the frog, Ponge himself perfectly captures its supple and flickering vitality. I decided it would be an interesting poem to further translate, to see if the frog could undergo another metamorphosis and yet be preserved within another language without being rendered disfigured or untrue. The unearthed frog is described as a 'one-handed Ophelia', and I used the word 'unclenching' to follow this hand imagery

and show how the poet believes he can grip the hand she's unclenched for him; melt her, feel her flow – as if by alchemy – into the new medium of words. I used the clumsy image of a rubber glove to show how translation isn't as simple as this, from nature or poetry, and how she cannot be ignored or disembodied as a handshake that transacts the life within her; she, or the poem, slides like mercury to retain her original form.

The Ophelia reference suggests that poor translation could prevent the poem from being 'a creature native and indued unto that element', the new element being

the English language, but would drown, dragged 'to muddy death' by the weight of stilted words as Ophelia was by her garments. I loosened and scattered the structure to reflect the erratic movement of a frog and placed 'into the next pond' in a second stanza to reinforce her '[flinging] herself' in a slightly gimmicky way. I tried to emphasise the poet's desire to pin her down and admire her, patronisingly observing how she is 'highly strung', with 'pretty legs' which, coupled with the domestic imagery of needles and rubber gloves, introduces a sexist tone.

Quittenpastete

wenn sie der oktober ins astwerk hängte,
ausgebeulte lampions, war es zeit: wir
pflückten quitten, wuchteten körbeweise
gelb in die küche

unters wasser. apfel und birne reifen
ihrem namen zu, einer schlichten süße –
anders als die quitte an ihrem baum im
hintersten winkel

meines alphabets, im latein des gartens,
hart und fremd in ihrem arom. wir schnitten,
viertelten, entkernten das fleisch (vier große
hände, zwei kleine),

schemenhaft im dampf des entsafters, gaben
zucker, hitze, mühe zu etwas, das sich
roh dem mund versagte, wer konnte, wollte
quitten begreifen,

ihr gelee, in bauchigen gläsern für die
dunklen tage in den regalen aufge-
reihet, in einem keller von tagen, wo sie
leuchteten, leuchten.

Jan Wagner

*Achtzehn Pasteten (c) 2007 Berlin Verlag
in der Piper Verlag GmbH, Berlin*

Quince Jelly

when october hung them among the leaves, those
bulging lanterns, then it was time: we picked ripe
quinces, lugged the baskets of yellow bounty
into the kitchen,

soused the fruits in water. the pears and apples
grew towards their names, to a simple sweetness –
unlike quinces, clinging to branches in some
shadowy border's

alphabet, obscure in our garden's latin,
tough and foreign in their aroma. we cut,
quartered, cored the flesh (we were four adult hands,
two somewhat smaller),

veiled by clouds of steam from the blender, poured in
sugar, heat and effort to something that – raw –
made our palates balk. but then who could, who
would

hope to explain them:

quinces, jellied, lined up in bellied jars on
shelves and set aside for the darkness, stored for
harsher days, a cellar of days, in which they
shone, are still shining.

*Translated from the German
by Iain Galbraith*

Iain Galbraith's commentary

Born in 1971 in Hamburg, Jan Wagner is one of the most distinguished and widely read poets of his generation. Typically, his poems combine an unerring instinct for the surprising perspective on events or commonplace objects (plants, animals, landscapes) with a mischievous delight in absurd detail and precarious balance. He is undoubtedly one of the most skilful contemporary German poets, confronting his translator with a challenging array of sonnets, sestinas, villanelles and Sapphics. Wagner is a vigilant yet playful chronicler of the quotidian, his meticulous handling of image and sound forging a sensuous, almost

luminous palpability. Intensely curious, constantly attentive to the unanticipated possibilities afforded by the corset of traditional forms, his poems are nonetheless primarily a celebration of what he has called 'our steaming, glowing, odorous, noisy world'.

The most obvious difficulty faced by the translator of 'Quittenpastete' – a radiantly alluring celebration of domestic family delight – is its strict adherence to the Sapphic stanza form. This is used as rarely in German as in English, and anyone who has faced its complex challenges will know why. Modern English Sapphics are

rendered in accentual metre, determined by the stress on a syllable rather than its length, as was the case in Ancient Greek, and the three Sapphic lines, followed by the shorter Adonic, are built on a precise sequence of trochees and dactyls, with some flexibility permitted on the free fourth syllable, the 'syllaba anceps', and on the final syllable. The task I set myself was to explore the rich potential of this ancient metre, following its drive syllable for syllable, yet seeking to match it with a flow that is natural enough in English to suggest that no word has been inserted primarily for metrical effect.

Y Gwynt

Yr wybrwynt, helynt hylaw,
Agwrdd drwst a gerdda draw,
Gwr eres wyd garw ei sain,
Drud byd heb droed heb adain.
Uthr yw more eres y'th roed
O bantri wybr heb untroed,
A buaned y rhedy
Yr awr hon dros y fron fry.

Dywaid ym, diwyd emyn,
Dy hynt, di ogleddwynt glyn.
Hydoedd y byd a hedy,
Hin y fron, bydd heno fry,
Och wr, a dos Uwch Aeron
Yn glaer deg, yn eglur dôn.
Nac aro di, nac eiriach,
Nac ofna er Bwa Bach,
Cyhuddgwyn wenwyn weini.
Caeth yw'r wlad a'i maeth i mi.

Nythod ddwyn, cyd nithud ddail
Ni'th dditia neb, ni'th etail
Na llu rhugl, na llaw rhaglaw,
Na llafn glas na llif na glaw,
Ni'th ladd mab mam, gam gymwyll,
Ni'th lysg tân, ni'th lesga twyll.
Ni boddy, neu'th rybuddiwyd,
Nid ei ynglyn, diongl wyd,
Nid rhaid march buan danad,
Neu bont ar aber, na bad. [...]
Ni'th wyl drem, noethwal dramawr,
Neu'th glyw mil, nyth y glaw mawr.

Rhad Duw wyd ar hyd daear,
Rhuad blin doriad blaen dâr,
Noter wybr natur ebrwydd,
Neitiwr gwiw dros nawtir gwydd,
Sych natur, creadur craff, [...]
Drycin yn ymefin môr,
Drythyllfab ar draethellfor,
Hyawdr awdl heod ydwyd,
Hëwr, dyludwr dail wyd,
Hyrdwr, breiniol chwarddwr bryn,
Hwylbrenwyllt heli bronwyn.

The Wind

Skywind, skilful disorder,
Strong tumult walking by there,
Wondrous man, rowdy-sounding,
Hero, with nor foot nor wing.
Yeast in cloud loaves, who's been thrown out
Of sky's pantry with not one foot
How swiftly you run, and so well
This moment above the high hill.

Tell me, north wind of the cwm,
Your route, reliable hymn.
Over the whole world you fly,
Tonight, hill weather, please stay high,
Man, go to Upper Aeron
Be cool, and stay right in tune.
Be quick, don't let that maniac,
Litigious Little Bow, hold you back
He's toxic. Society
And its goods are closed to me.

Nest thief, though you winnow leaves
No one condemns you, nor impedes
You, no posse, nor law's hand,
Neither blade, nor flood, nor rain.
No son of man can kill you,
Fire won't burn nor treason harm you.
You won't drown, as you're aware,
You're never stuck—angle-less air.
Horseless, you gallop about,
Need no bridge, nor any boat. [...]
Sight can't see you, wide-open den,
We hear you, nest of great rain.

Across the world, you are God's grace,
The roar when tearing oaks break;
You play clouds' notes in sky's score,
Dance, athletic, over moors,
Dry-humoured, clever creature;
On clouds' stepping-stones you range far. [...]
Sea storms show your jeu d'esprit,
Randy surfer where land meets sea.
Bold poet, rhyming snowdrifts you are,
Scatterer of leaves you are,
Clown of peaks, you go scot-free
Driving masts mad in foaming sea.

Second prize, Open category

Gwae fi pan roddais i serch
Gobrudd ar Forfudd, f'eurferch.
Rhiain a'm gwnaeth yn gaethwlad,
Rhed fry rhod a thy ei thad.
Cur y ddôr, par egori
Cyn y dydd i'm cennad i,
A chais ffordd ati, o chaid,
A chân lais fy uchenaïd.
Deuy o'r sygnau diwael,
Dywaid hyn i'm diwyd hael:
Er hyd yn y byd y bwyf,
Corodyn cywir ydwyf.
Ys gwae fy wyneb hebddi,
Os gwir nad anghywir hi,

Dos fry, ti a wely wen,
Dos obry, dewis wybren.
Dos at Forfudd felenllwyd,
Debre'n iach, da wybren wyd.

Dafydd ap Gwilym

Poor me when I first felt desire
For Morfudd of the golden hair.
A woman's the cause of my disgrace.
Run up to her father's house
Knock hard and make him open
To my messenger pre-dawn,
Find her, if there's any way,
Give voice to the song of my sigh.
You come from unsullied stars,
She's noble, loyal, tell her:
For as long as I'm alive
I will be her loyal slave.
Without her, frankly, I'm a mess
If it's true she's not been faithless.

Climb, hold her in your spotlight,
Then plunge down, heaven's favourite.
Go to Morfudd Gray the blonde
Come back safe, holy vagabond.

*Translated from the Welsh
by Gwyneth Lewis*

Gwyneth Lewis' commentary

Dafydd ap Gwilym, the great medieval poet, is an extreme challenge for translators. This is only partly due to the metrical complexity of the *cywydd*, the measure he invented. Consisting of seven-syllable couplets with alternate feminine and masculine rhymes, the *cywydd* is adapted from French courtly verse. In addition, it's written in *cynghanedd* or 'harmony' within each line. This is a complex codification of alliterative correspondence and internal rhymes. I did not attempt to reproduce this fractal ornamentation because that would require inventing new imagery in English. Former translators of ap Gwilym

have either given a prose rendition of the sense – making it sound baggy – or diluted the content in order to preserve the rhyme.

My aim was to preserve the brilliance of ap Gwilym's metaphorical thinking while retaining his metrical lightness of touch. The pace of ap Gwilym's metre is an important part of his depiction of the mischievous wind. Indeed, the movement of his thinking through his measure is how he embodies the wind in the poem. Everything the poet says about the wind is true of his own method of composition. This poem, therefore, shows Dafydd's muse tumbling, at the pace of his

words, through the world.

My choice of vocabulary steers between two extremes. The first would be using words consistent with the historical period of the poem. The second would be using fully contemporary words to 'update' the world of the poem. I chose to steer a middle course, so that this will not date my translation.

Welsh poetry is syllabic, English accentual. Dafydd ap Gwilym's extreme concision in Welsh is hard to convey within seven syllables and without a sense of strain. My priority has been to capture the tone of the poet's wit and his *joie de vivre*.

Epigrams, Book 3, Number 44

Occurrit tibi nemo quod libenter
quod, quacumque uenis, fuga est et ingens
circa te, Ligurine, solitudo,
quid sit, scire cupis? Nimis poeta es.
Hoc ualde uitium periculosum est.
Non tigris catulis citata raptis,
non dipsas medio perusta sole,
nec sic scorpios inprobus timetur.
Nam tantos, rogo, quis ferat labores?
Et stanti legis et legis sedenti,
currenti legis et legis cacanti.
In thermas fugio: sonas ad aurem.
Piscinam peto: non licet natare.
Ad cenam propero: tenes euntem.
Ad cenam uenio: fugas edentem.
Lassus dormio: suscitans iacentem.
Vis, quantum facias mali, uidere?
Vir iustus, probus, innocens timeris.

Martial

Epigrams, Book 3, Number 44

Would you like to know why it is, Ligurnus,
that no one greets you with enthusiasm?
why it is that whenever you turn up somewhere,
hurried exits tend to take place,
and large breathing-spaces develop?
It's because you're too totally The Poet.
For those round you, it represents
extreme hazard. Nothing, no creature
makes one as nervous, or is as feared. No tiger,
enraged at the theft of her cubs,
is as alarming, no snake burning with thirst
in blistering sun, no, not even
the malevolent scorpion: nothing
possesses your capacity to terrify.
I ask you, who could possibly survive
the tortures you inflict on me?
You read poems at me when I'm standing
casually around, or when I'm relaxing
on a couch. You read at me when I'm in a dash
for the public lavatory, then while I'm on the thing.
I escape to the steam-baths, there you are,
at my ear. I go for a swim, so do you –
and your Poem. I'm on my way to dinner,
you waylay me – a Poem.
I arrive, you're there waiting
to wrestle me from my food –
a Poem.
I'm in bed, exhausted, you'll come by
with – what else? – a Poem.
Don't you notice the acute misery you cause?
Don't you really, you innocent, harmless,
utterly terrifying man?

*Translated from the Latin
by Robert Hull*

Robert Hull's commentary

Marcus Valerius Martialis was born in Romanised Spain on the first of March (hence the *Martialis*) around AD 40. He went to Rome in his early twenties, and Rome is the setting, often the subject, of his *epigrammata*, the short poems that became familiar all over the Roman world.

Epigrammata – yet most of Martial is anecdotal. Many poems – published in carefully organised books – are narrative glances at individuals presented as fictitious: social types whom we might recognise now, so his poems feel 'modern', as well as conveying a sense of physical and social Roman space. But his real attractiveness

as a writer is the warmth and sense of fun, the absence of ego and malice that inform the crusty-seeming accounts of his fellow-citizens.

I first encountered Martial in James Michie's brilliant Penguin versions, done into couplets in lines of different lengths. But trying to deploy rhyme might have worked towards inappropriately Michie-fying my own versions. Moreover, rhyme often needs syntactic manoeuvring space to get the timing of adjacent lines right, and this can make a translation very expansive.

I 'listened' to Martial. My long-lapsed A level Latin was initially inadequate as a

means of resurrecting the sound of Latin verse. But repeated readings aloud brought me to some sense of the rhythms and textures of Martial's language. I came into some sort of touch with his 'voice', and those of his protagonists here.

Martial's line, eloquently terse in inflected Latin – *Et stanti legis at legis sedenti, / Currenti legis et legis cacanti* – can hardly stay tersely eloquent in translation: English prepositions and modal verbs add words, relax the syntax. I've aimed for tone, and tried to catch here the speaker's comic, only partly simulated fury and exasperation.

Translation prizes

Stephen Spender Prize in association with the *Guardian*

Launched in 2004 and currently funded by the Old Possum's Practical Trust and the Dr Mortimer and Theresa Sackler Foundation, this annual prize celebrates the art of literary translation. Entrants, who must be UK or Irish citizens or residents, 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. Booklets of winning entries from previous years can be obtained from the Trust or downloaded from its website.

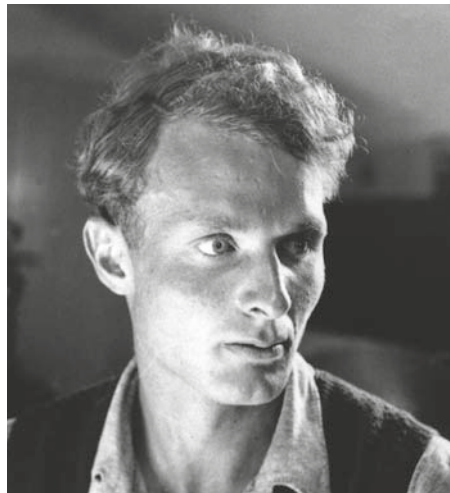
Joseph Brodsky/Stephen Spender Prize in association with *The London Magazine*

This worldwide Russian–English translation prize, commemorating the long friendship between Joseph Brodsky and Stephen Spender and celebrating the rich tradition of Russian poetry, was launched in 2011 and is now biennial, running in even years only. Entrants are invited to translate a Russian poem of their choice into English. In May 2014, Dash Arts and the Stephen Spender Trust presented an evening of poetry, prose, music, discussion and film exploring the remarkable work and life of Nobel Prize winner Joseph Brodsky. 'Joseph Brodsky Night' featured readings by Michael Pennington, a panel discussion with Glyn Maxwell and Valentina Polukhina, and live music from Nigel Burch and the Flea Pit Orchestra. The 2014 Joseph Brodsky/Stephen Spender Prize (closing date 5 December 2014) is judged by Sasha Dugdale, Catriona Kelly and Glyn Maxwell.

Translation in education

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 Educational Trust, funded by Arts Council England, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Mercers' Company, aims to promote pride in the many languages that are spoken and taught in UK schools, instil recognition of the important role translation plays in our lives, and encourage an enjoyment of literary English and the nuances of the English language. To date Translation Nation has seen translators going into 39 primary schools to run three-



Stephen Spender – poet, critic, editor and translator – lived from 1909 to 1995. Inspired by Stephen Spender's literary interests and achievements, the Stephen Spender Trust was set up to widen appreciation of the literary legacy of Stephen Spender and his contemporaries and promote literary translation.

day translation workshops, reaching more than 2,400 children in Years 5 and 6 as well as parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and neighbours who are encouraged to come into school and tell a story in their mother tongue. With the help of the workshop leaders, the children work in small groups to translate these folk tales – children who know the language teamed with children who do not. Once the children are satisfied with their English version it is re-worked as a performance piece and acted out in front of classmates and other year groups who vote on their favourite story.

Like the primary workshops, the hour-long secondary workshops straddle three separate areas of the National Curriculum – literacy, languages and PHSE. Using film and other media, the workshops aim in a playful way to encourage language-learning, celebrate the linguistic diversity found in our schools and generate a curiosity about world literature. They also open participants' eyes to the many career opportunities open to those who speak other languages. To date workshops have been run in 14 secondary schools, reaching some 2,000 children.

Translators in Schools

This professional development programme, developed by award-winning translator Sarah Ardizzone and teacher Sam Holmes and delivered by the Stephen Spender Trust, teaches those who are fluent in English and at least one other language how to run creative translation workshops in schools. The initial one-day workshop covers translation activities, lesson planning and classroom management. Day 2, open to graduates of Day 1, involves two participant-led teaching sessions with 8–11 year olds from a local primary school sandwiched by mentoring sessions with Sarah Ardizzone and Sam Holmes. The final stage sees participants being mentored as they develop their own original workshops and deliver them in schools. Translators in Schools was funded in its pilot stages by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the European Commission. After two successful rounds and in response to growing demand, the training scheme is now being offered in 2015 in two forms: as a standalone training day for multilingual teachers and as a three-day course for translators and bilingual teaching assistants. Graduates of the programme may be contacted by schools via the website: www.translatorsinschools.org.

The archive programme

The Stephen and Natasha Spender archives

Stephen and Natasha Spender's manuscripts, letters, diaries and other personal papers are now housed in the Bodleian Library. Currently only partially available to scholars, the two archives will be fully available (and searchable) once the digital cataloguing process is complete.

Seminar series

Presented by the Stephen Spender Trust in partnership with the Institute of English Studies, the seminar series is free and open to the public. Details and podcasts can be found on both organisations' websites. The most recent seminar saw Sarah Bakewell, Michael Holroyd, Wendy Moffat and Max Saunders discussing the death of literary biography and the growth of 'life writing' as they debated such questions as: Is the 'Golden Age' of literary biography really past? How have changes in the ways we write the lives of authors responded to changes in the publishing industry? Are trends such as group biography, biographies focused on a part of a life, or 'biofictions' glimpses of the future, or symptoms of a declining interest in the genre?

Contacting the Trust

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The Stephen Spender Trust

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