

THE  TIMES

Stephen Spender Prize 2010

I'm hardly a fan of racing, though

Non ego nobilium sedeo stultorum

will entertain you for a while, but

cui tamen ipsa faves, vincat

the fool's opinion on the

While on the breeze the boy

A gwaedd y bechgyn lond

The rain blends with the blood

A'u gwaed yn gymysg efo

Wulf on one island on and

wulf is on iêge ic on ôperre

this fastness encircled by m

fast is þæt eglond fenne biw

for poetry in translation

THE TIMES Stephen Spender Prize 2010

for poetry in translation

Winner of the 14-and-under prize

Henry Miller
Amores 3.2 by Ovid
(Latin)



Commended

Dominic Hand
'Spleen' by Baudelaire
(French)

Sam Peters
'Poem 27' by Catullus
(Latin)

Winners of the 18-and-under category

First

Patrick Heaton
from *Heroides* 1
by Ovid (Latin)



Joint second

Iona Hannagan Lewis
'Rhyfel'
by Hedd Wyn
(Welsh)



Amelia Hassard
'Get Drunk'
by Baudelaire
(French)



Commended

Emily Carpenter
'The Erl King' by Goethe
(German)

Henry Edwards
Elegies 1.3 by Propertius
(Latin)

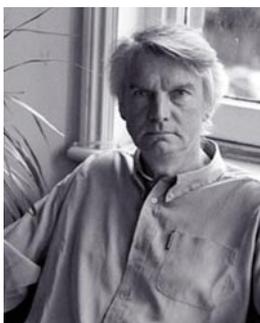
Claire Ewbank
'Grodok' by Georg Trakl
(German)

Ben Pope
Metamorphoses 8 by Ovid
(Latin)

Winners of the Open category

First

John Richmond
'The Retreat from
Moscow'
by Victor Hugo
(French)



Second

Duncan Forbes
'Confession'
by the Archpoet
(Latin)



Third

Jane Draycott
'Song for Wulf'
(Anglo-Saxon)



Commended

Chen Dandan
'Strawberry Pie' by Xia Yu
(Chinese)

Michael Foley
'Poets Aged Seven' by Arthur Rimbaud
(French)

James Knox Whittet
'Hallaig' by Sorley Maclean
(Gaelic)

Mario Petrucci
'History' by Eugenio Montale
(Italian)

Carol Rumens
'Canto 27' from Dante's *Purgatorio*
(Italian)

Introduction

This year saw forty-three languages represented, with Gurmukhi and Romansch making their first appearances and Polish and modern Chinese creeping up the chart. It will be interesting to see if our Primary Translation project, described at the back of this booklet, results in a spate of translations from community languages in the 14-and-under category in 2011.

My thanks, as ever, to the judges – Susan Bassnett, Edith Hall, Karen Leeder and George Szirtes – who cheerfully took delivery of a wine box of entries at the beginning of their summer holidays and then came together two months

later, having read and made intelligent notes on every single translation; to the scholars we consulted when a language was not known to us; and to *The Times* for having faithfully promoted the prize since it began life seven years ago.

Our sponsors this year were the Eranda Foundation and The Old Possum's Practical Trust. At a time when all charitable trusts are having to cut back on their grant-giving, we couldn't be more grateful for their support.

Robina Pelham Burn
Director of the Stephen Spender Trust

Judges' comments



Judging this prize is a great pleasure because the entries are so diverse and one never quite knows what to expect. This year, as ever, the range of poems chosen by translators was vast, and included familiar works and writing by poets who were completely new to me. The commentaries are often illuminating, and I was struck by the fact that two translators compared translating poetry to Sudoku, highlighting the problem-solving aspect of the task. A number of translators highlighted their own involvement with a particular poem or poet, often describing how they had first encountered certain poems, sometimes years before, and why those poems had a particular resonance for them. Close personal engagement with a poem and empathy with a poet can result in powerful translations.

Translating poetry is a complex task; you have first to acquaint yourself thoroughly with the poem, to understand its structures, its rhythms, its wordplay, all its different patterns, and then seek to reproduce the poem for readers in a totally different culture. Reproducing a poem in its entirety is impossible. Shelley compared the process to transplanting a seed in new soil, so that a similar yet different plant will grow elsewhere. James Holmes,

who both translated poetry and wrote about translation, suggested that the translator of a poem establishes in his or her own mind what he called a 'hierarchy of correspondences', in other words, a set of priorities of what to keep and what to discard. The priorities of many of the translators in this competition could often be clearly seen: in some cases colloquial language was used to render the colloquialisms evident in a Latin poem, in other cases the translator explained why a decision had been taken to alter patterns of rhyme. Some of the fine Welsh translators acknowledged the impossibility of rendering the ancient Welsh form *cynghannedd*, others wrestled with Dante's terza rima and produced some very good unrhymed translations of difficult passages from *The Divine Comedy*.

Some translators opted to produce poems with heavy rhyme schemes. Sometimes this works, but unless a writer feels at ease with rhyme, the result can appear stilted or even come across as doggerel. The winning entry, a version of Victor Hugo's 'The Retreat from Moscow' uses rhyme very skilfully, and impressed us all. Indeed, we found ourselves in agreement on the winners in all three sections, and only disagreed as to which poems to commend. I particularly liked Anita Debska's translation of a poem by

the Polish Nobel laureate, Wislawa Szymborska, 'Love at First Sight', and Ian Crockatt's translation from Old Norse of a passage from the 'Orkneyinga Saga'.

We were impressed by the bold choices and translation skills of the younger entrants, though this year we noted with regret that the demise of grammar teaching in modern language classrooms means that often a potentially good translation was marred by basic errors due to inadequate understanding of the language. Once again, we discussed the disparity of quality between translations of poetry in classical languages with translations of poetry in modern languages, which appears to reflect the way in which those languages are taught. Failure to understand exactly how a poet has structured a sentence means that a translator is likely to misread what that poet is seeking to achieve.

Carping about grammar aside, the quality of the entries was impressive and our final list of winners and commended entries is only the tip of an iceberg. What this competition shows is that there are some very talented translators and some fine poets of all ages engaging actively with the complexities of translating poetry. Long may they continue!

Susan Bassnett



It was the greater variety of the translations in the Open category which made judging it such a delight this year. When I opened the plain cardboard box of stapled sheets of A4, I heard the rival voices of poets from archaic Greece to modern Korea, in forms from the epigram (there was a touching version of Martial's funeral 5.34 by Jason Warren) to the acidic prose poetry of Francis Ponge translated by Conor Kelly. An almost uncanny unanimity greeted the winning entry, 'The Retreat from Moscow'; its driving rhythms powerfully suggested the chaos of retreat and the rattling horses' hooves. It is no slur to record that my ten-year-old, coerced into hearing me recite my longlist, instantly identified Hugo as the winner and asked to hear him again. Nineteenth-century narrative poems are not today the most fashionable medium; it is wonderful that they can still produce a version of such genuine conviction and style.

For me it was a close call for second place. In his witty version of the Archpoet's 'Confession', Duncan Forbes conveyed the wry individual humour underneath the near-doggerel of the insistent mediaeval Latin rhyme scheme. But I am haunted by the mysterious grief in Jane Draycott's extract from *Wulf and Eadwacer*, where she achieved a near-perfect marriage of emotion, content and form. Indeed, poems from the Middle Ages and in the languages of northern Europe made a great impression this year: my own shortlist included a tight, pungent rendering of 'Rognvaldr's Nine Skills' in Old Norse by Ian Crockatt. There were also some good versions of poetry in Welsh.

Classical Latin poetry – or rather, Ovid – won hands down in the younger age groups. I was pleased to see brave experiments: Tim Price converted Catullus 54 into Haiku form, while others added amusing contemporary references to Lynx

aftershave or M&S groceries. But Henry Miller's pacy take on Ovid's racy *Amores* 3.2 was uncontested winner in the under-fifteen category. Although far from a faithful translation, this is a well considered and structured version in which the emotional suffering of the young man in love can be heard authentically beneath the playful surface. In the 15–18 category, it was the turn of an Ovidian *woman* in love, in the first of his 'Letters from Heroines', where Penelope addresses Ulysses. The intelligent commentary increased my admiration for this authoritative, elegant reading of an important poem (the earliest ever reading of the *Odyssey* in which Penelope is actually allowed to express anger with her wandering spouse). It is a sign of the times that I wrongly assumed that its advanced gender politics must mean that the translator was female!

The most successful poems, as ever, were strikingly independent in their creation of a new artwork, while simultaneously disciplined in their thinking about metre, rhythm and structure. This year's most recurrent fault was hyperbaton – word order in the English translation so distorted as to be off-putting. Translators in all categories need to trust in their own languages and literary sensibility, even when dealing with the greatest poets who have ever lived.

Edith Hall



This year, again, there was a large degree of immediate unanimity among the judges. The 14-and-under category was dominated by entries in French and Latin and we arrived quickly at our winner: Henry Miller's assured and witty translation of Ovid's *Amores* 3.2, 'Ovid at the Races', which showed an admirable grasp of the technical business of metre and a real feeling for the dynamics of the poem. I was delighted to see that, even where there were sometimes mistakes in comprehension, contestants were

responding to the spirit of the poem. There was a fine rendering of Catullus, for example by Sam Peters, that had the lyric subject sipping not just any wine but 'M&S wine'; and Dominic Hand's beautiful version of Baudelaire's 'Spleen IV' with its dense use of masculine rhymes was memorably lyrical.

In the 18-and-under category the judges wrestled with a more diverse longlist of contenders. As in the 14-and-under category many had outstanding qualities but failed to sustain the tone across the poem as a whole or lost grammatical confidence here and there. In Patrick Heaton's 'Penelope Ulix' from Ovid's *Heroides* we found a worthy winner, which took inspiration from Carol Ann Duffy's treatment of the figure of Penelope but found a voice of his own. This poem headed up a very impressive list of entries from Classical languages which demonstrated a metrical and lexical confidence often lacking in the entries from modern foreign languages. I was also taken with Iona Hannagan Lewis' emotional version of 'Rhyfel' by Hedd Wyn, which tried to recreate the complex Welsh rhyme scheme in English; and enjoyed Amelia Hassard's 'Get Drunk' by Baudelaire which, after a slightly slow start, found a wonderfully confident voice: 'time to get drunk [...] on wine, on poetry, on virtue, on whatever'. One of the great pleasures of this section was a strong showing in German which showed students engaging with the whole range of what is on offer: from the classics of the eighteenth century, including an assured version of Annette von Droste-Hülshoff's 'In the Grass' by Lucy Garrett, to modernist icons like Gottfried Benn or Hermann Hesse and contemporary work by poets still to make a name for themselves in English. Emily Carpenter's version of 'The Erl King' did a great job of capturing the eeriness of Goethe's poem in taut masculine rhymes without becoming doggerel in English and Claire Ewbank's 'Grodok' by Georg Trakl had the confidence to stick close to the poet's dark assonance and disjointed syntax without trying to smooth it over.

In the Open category all the judges were immediately impressed by a clutch of translations and after that it was a matter of teasing out their particular strengths and weighing up different approaches and solutions. John Richmond's 'The Retreat from Moscow' by Victor Hugo is not the kind of poem I generally like; but his was a bravura performance, whose rich vocabulary and unobtrusive couplets won me over with their sheer sweep and pace. Striking this year were a number of poems translated from Chinese which brought welcome interventions from quite different traditions. Here, as a reader without Chinese, I was looking out for voices that persuaded of themselves, no matter how strange, and in a haunting version of Xia Yu's 'Strawberry Pie' Chen Dandan created a voice I could trust.

Beyond the shortlist and commended poems we also discussed quite a range of other entries which did not quite make the final cut. There were impressive versions of old favorites, including John Turner's colloquial version of Verlaine's 'Streets 2', or the strong angular version of Baudelaire's 'Albatross' by Cedric Watts. But I was delighted to see new poets like Ulrike Draesner's tricksily demotic 'Twin Spin', a version of Shakespeare's sonnets for the age of gene manipulation, brilliantly brought to life in Tom Cheesman's versions. And this year there were new languages too: Peider Lansel's 'Tamangur' in Iain Galbraith's memorable version from Romansch.

This is my last year on the panel. I have enjoyed my time hugely and learned a good deal about the way different poets – and even different languages – respond to the challenges of translation. I have also learned a good deal more about the strength and versatility of English as a poetic language. I come away heartened by the energy and verve I have seen among the translators over the last four years and bowled over once again by the way English stretches and flexes to accommodate different traditions and allow different voices to sing within it.

Karen Leeder



Reading translations of poems is not very different from reading poems. If it isn't a poem we seem to be reading, the chances are the translator has missed something. Questions of fidelity to the original are supposedly at the core of the matter, and in many ways are so, but reading a translation by a poet we don't know is like reading an entirely new poem, and we are or are not captivated by it. The poem in the receiving language has to make itself a poetic space so that, while undoubtedly not of it, it is nevertheless in it.

In the 14-and-under section it was fascinating to see last year's favourite original poet, La Fontaine, being overtaken by this year's, Catullus, who produced surprisingly sophisticated elegance in some and exhorted others to experiment with tone. It is also quite something for someone under fourteen to come to terms with Baudelaire's 'Spleen' (what became of childhood boredom or listlessness?) but at fourteen, perhaps, you are not a child any more and the translation by Dominic Hand felt mature and authoritative. If it was beaten by Henry Miller's translation 'Ovid at the Races', it was by a short head. The verse here gallops along in firm Victorian manner and Sam Peters's commanding, contemporary-sounding Catullus 27 was a length or so behind it.

The 18-and-under section was not quite as bright as it was last year. More Baudelaire here in Amelia Hassard's translation of 'Get Drunk', which certainly got some of Baudelaire's dark brio and a welcome translation from the Welsh of Hedd Wyn's 'Rhyfel' by Ioana Hannagan Lewis, but the winner was out of Ovid again, from the *Heroides*, by Patrick Heaton. The best, as before, were very good, but there were fewer of them.

The Open section, however, was very good and I had many more poems marked as excellent than could possibly be accommodated on an agreed list. For lack of space I can do

no more than mention some of them. Cedric Watts's version of Baudelaire's (Baudelaire again!) 'The Albatross', A. Franklino's version from the Greek of George Seferis' 'Interlude of Joy', Leonard Lavery's translation of Robert Desnos's 'The Voice', two translations of Léopold Senghor by William Oxley, Patricia Hann's Jules Supervielle, a group of poems from the Yiddish translated by Norbert Hirschhorn, John Turner's Verlaine (so hard to do!), Joanne Cooper's Noriko Ibaragi from the Japanese, A.C. Clarke with Baudelaire's 'U-Turn' (another original take by her, as I remember from last year), Michael Swan's version of Hendrik Nordbrandt's Norwegian poem, 'A Dream about My Mother', two excellent Rilkes by Ian Crockatt, a lovely ironic Cavafy by Sylvia Moody. And a lovely translation from the Romansh of Peider Lansel by Iain Galbraith.

The winners and commended are all marvellous pieces of work and it was very hard deciding the top three. As implied at the beginning, it helps to have a proper poet's ear for what is telling. I am delighted for John Richmond, Duncan Forbes and Jane Draycott. These are serious works. Close behind them come poets like Michael Foley, Mario Petrucci and Carol Rumens, all major figures.

We don't know the names of the translators when we read of course, nor can we tell a translator by his or her style, but poetry will out. And so it has. It is also very good to see translations from the so-called minor languages. More of these please. We know the poetry is there.

George Szirtes

Amores 3.2

Non ego nobilium sedeo studiosus equorum;
cui tamen ipsa faves, vincat ut ille, precor.
ut loquerer tecum veni, tecumque sederem,
ne tibi non notus, quem facis, esset amor.
tu cursus spectas, ego te; spectemus uterque
quod iuvat, atque oculos pascat uterque suos.
O, cuicumque faves, felix agitator equorum!
ergo illi curae contigit esse tuae?
hoc mihi contingat, sacro de carcere missis
insistam forti mente vehendus equis,
et modo lora dabo, modo verberare terga notabo,
nunc stringam metas interiore rota.
si mihi currenti fueris conspecta, morabor,
deque meis manibus lora remissa fluent.

Ovid

Ovid at the Races

I'm hardly a fan of racing, the thrill of which I'm sure
Will entertain you for a while, but for me it's not much more
Than some fool's opinion on the breeding of a horse
Who tethered to three others runs up and down a course.

I know you like the races, to me that much is clear
And while I enjoy the loud and dusty atmosphere,
I don't care for the races, the reason I am here
Is to make it clear to you, it's you that I hold dear.

I know there is one man, your favourite racing driver:
All I'll say is, 'Lucky guy!' and wish him my good favour.
But truth be told, I envy him and all the while I wonder,
What if I was in the race, your dashing brave contender?

I imagine for a moment it is I who holds the whip
Waiting in the starting box, facing down the dusty strip.
The gates open and suddenly I'm brutally flung forth
With drivers either side, I speed down the narrow path.

I come around the corner; the strait of sand before me
I'll whip with all my strength and soon all of you will see
Me atop my chariot, passing drivers blue and red
My horses' hooves pound the sand and soon I'm far ahead.

Near the end of the strait, I come to that sharp meander
There is no room for error; there is no room to blunder.
I twist and pull the reins with the right amount of stress
My inner wheel clips the post but I make it nonetheless.

But despite all the ecstasy, the excitement and the thrill
Should I see you in the crowd, my heart will force me still;
I'll drop my reins, slow my steeds, and all will disappear,
All I'll want to see is you; for it's you that I hold dear.

*Translated from the Latin
by Henry Miller*

Henry Miller's commentary

I chose to translate this particular poem because I see two sides to it. One of them portrays Ovid as calm and collected: he's not interested in the races, preferring to accompany a girl he admires who in turn is in love with a racing driver. He day-dreams of himself as a racer, so that she might love him instead – these meanings are quite obvious. However, I can see the poem also describing Ovid the lover as nervous: he wants to tell her how he feels but he is afraid she will not be impressed by him. His day-dream is a metaphor for the immensity of the task he has set himself of speaking to her, but he knows he is

unequal to both tasks – speaking to her and the racing – for as soon as she looked at him, he knows he will 'drop his reins', and fail. I think Ovid meant to combine both the obvious and underlying meanings here to try and express a complex mix of emotions.

The most prominent issue I faced when translating this poem was which form to use: a spondaic form of long and short syllables, or a more English stressed metre, which, as well as conveying Ovid's (in the story) nervousness and the excitement of chariot racing, would also be more interesting to a modern English audience.

In the end, I chose the latter, but only after an original attempt which followed the former option. This original draft was sluggish and less interesting, but more closely matched the meanings and phrases in Ovid's original poem.

When rewriting my draft I also had to consider whether to match exactly Ovid's meanings to convey the poem or to expand on the story to better convey Ovid's meaning to a modern audience. Again, I chose the latter, which made my translation longer, but at the same time more engaging as an English translation of the poem.

Penelope Ulixi
Heroides 1 (lines 1–50)

haec tua Penelope lento tibi mittit, Ulixē;
nil mihi rescribas attinet: ipse veni!
Troia iacet certe, Danais inuisa puellis;
vix Priamus tanti totaque Troia fuit.
o utinam tum, cum Lacedaemona classe petebat,
obrutus insanis esset adulter aquis!
non ego deserto iacuissem frigida lecto,
nec quererer tardos ire relictā dies;
nec mihi quaerenti spatiosam fallere noctem
lassaret viduas pendula tela manus.
quando ego non timui graviora pericula veris?
res est solliciti plena timoris amor.
in te fingebam violentos Troas ituros;
nomine in Hectoreo pallida semper eram.
sive quis Antilochum narrabat ab hoste revictum,
Antilochus nostri causa timoris erat;
sive Menoetiaden falsis cecidisse sub armis,
flebam successu posse carere dolos.
sanguine Tlepolemus Lyciam tepefecerat hastam;
Tlepolemi leto cura novata mea est.
denique, quisquis erat castris iugulatus Achivis,
frigidus glacie pectus amantis erat.
sed bene consuluit casto deus aequus amori.
versa est in cineres sospite Troia viro.
Argolici rediere duces, altaria fumant;
ponitur ad patrios barbara praeda deos.
grata ferunt nymphae pro salvis dona maritis;
illi victa suis Troica fata canunt.
mirantur iustique senes trepideaque puellae;
narrantis coniunx pendet ab ore viri.

Penelope to Odysseus
Heroides 1 (lines 1–50)

Another page of paper wasted on you, slow Odysseus,
Not a word I've heard: Come home!
You've certainly razed Troy, the enemy of so many girls.
But Priam and Troy were never even of any concern to me!
If only when that philanderer went sailing to Sparta,
Mad waves had covered him!
Then I wouldn't have stayed in this frigid bed,
Then I wouldn't have had reason to complain about the
sluggish days,
Then I wouldn't have had to waste what little energy remained
on brushing away cobwebs,
While I whiled away the dark hours.

Always fearful of the worst, I was.

Love was the cause of this fear, invading my mind,
Whilst the shadows of violent Trojans surround your memory,
And Hector chases the colour from my cheeks.
If someone unwittingly told me of the death of Antilochus,
I grew faint with this new worry;
Or if Patroclus fell in selfish armour,
I prayed that lightning never struck twice.
When Tlepolemus warmed Sarpedon's blooded spear,
My pacing resumed.
You get the picture, whenever news of a death filtered through,
My heart skipped a beat.

Thank the god who values such pure love as ours!

Troy is dust, and the victor lives.
All the others have returned:
The sweet smell of sacrifices fills the air:
Exotic booty is offered to the gods of our lands:
Wives add to the piles in thanks for their safe husbands:
Victory songs fill the air:
All, young to old, male and female, are amazed:
A wife hangs on the narration of her husband.

Winners of the 18-and-under category

continued from page 7

atque aliquis posita monstrat fera proelia mensa,
pingit et exiguo Pergama tota mero:
“hac ibat Simois; haec est Sigeia tellus;
hic steterat Priami regia celsa senis.
illic Aeacides, illic tendebat Ulixes;
hic lacer admissos terruit Hector equos.”
omnia namque tuo senior te quaerere misso
rettulerat nato Nestor, at ille mihi.
rettulit et ferro Rhesumque Dolonaque caesos,
utque sit hic somno proditus, ille dolo.
ausus es – o nimium nimiumque oblite tuorum! –
Thracia nocturno tangere castra dolo
totque simul mactare viros, adiutus ab uno!
at bene cautus eras et memor ante mei!
usque metu micuere sinus, dum victor amicum
dictus es Ismariis isse per agmen equis.
sed mihi quid prodest vestries disiecta lacertis
Ilios et, muros quod fuit, esse solum,
si maneo, qualis Troia durante manebam,
virque mihi dempto fine carendus abest?

Ovid

Some ex-soldier uses utensils to describe the battle around a table,
Where Troy is demoted to a puddle of wine.

‘Imagine that this fork is the Simois, that plate is Sigeian land.
Priam dwelled in the lofty candle.
Achilles made this napkin his home, Odysseus that one.
Hector, a dishevelled salt cellar, put the fear of the gods into the
oncoming peppercorns.’

Aged Nestor spun the tale to your son, whom I sent to seek you,
And he told me of Rhesus and Dolon’s bitter end,
How sleep betrayed the former, and trickery the latter.
You – reckless oaf, brushing your family ties to one side! –
Dared to attack the Thracian camp under night’s disguise
And killed many men, with the help of only one!
My bosom quivered endlessly with fear, until you were named,
victorious
And rode through the friendly ranks on fine horses.

Thank the gods my memory kept you measured in your victory!

But these things are all useless!
I don’t care that Troy has been destroyed, even if it were by your hand,
Because I am still waiting as I always have been,
Filled by an empty chasm where you should be.

*Translated from the Latin
by Patrick Heaton*

Patrick Heaton’s commentary

I decided to translate one of Ovid’s *Heroides* for several reasons. For English Literature GCSE I had to read some poems by Carol Ann Duffy, many of which came from her book *The World’s Wife*. The poems from this book take their lead from Ovid’s *Heroides*, in that they talk of a tale, often a mythical one, from the point of view of the woman in the story. I wanted to translate one of the *Heroides* to see the similarities and differences between the approach of Duffy and Ovid. I therefore decided to translate *Heroides* 1 because Duffy had written a poem called ‘Penelope’ in the same vein.

I chose to break the structure of my translation up by leaving several lines

separate from the rest of the text. I did this as I feel these phrases need to be emphasised and stood well as separate sentences.

I use colloquial language in my translation in parts. An example of this is during the speech in lines 33–36. I wanted to vary the language used in the translation and felt that this was an effective place to do it.

Penelope is often thought of as the perfect wife. She waited 20 years for her husband to return from Troy, and stayed faithful the whole time, refusing to remarry. Although she is thought of as being a patient individual, I wanted to translate this poem in a way that portrayed her as both patient and faithful but also annoyed,

worried and tired. I translated the opening in a way that suggests that Penelope is fed up of waiting, translating *missit* as ‘wasted’, implying her frustration. I varied this style of translation from line 12. Here I wanted to suggest Penelope’s fear, and so stuck close to the structure of the Latin, which I thought was particularly evocative of her distress by the use of parallel structure. From line 25 I use short clauses to suggest Penelope’s longing for her husband to return – she is saying how all the other couples and women are reacting, but she has nothing to be thankful for. At the end I return to the feeling of the beginning of my translation, one of disappointment and anger.

Winners of the 18-and-under category

Rhyfel

Gwae fi fy myw mewn oes mor ddreng,
A Duw ar drai ar orwel pell;
O'i ôl mae dyn, yn deyrn a gwreng,
Yn codi ei awdurdod hell.
Pan deimlodd fyned ymaith Dduw
Cyfododd gledd i ladd ei frawd;
Mae swm yr ymladd ar ein clyw,
A'i gysgod ar fythynnod tlawd.
Mae'r hen delynau genid gynt
Yng nghrog ar gangau'r helyg draw,
A gwaedd y bechgyn lond y gwynt,
A'u gwaed yn gymysg efo'r glaw

Hedd Wyn

Rhyfel

Cursed am I to live such a life.
While God recoils on distant shores,
Man, in His wake, will toil in strife,
To prove his power through his wars.

When God's presence began to wane
Man took up arms to kill his own,
And now the sound of slaughter reigns,
Its shadow haunts the hearth and home.

Sweet harps of old that used to sing
Hang silent now in grove and glen.
While on the breeze the boys' cries ring,
The rain blends with the blood of men.

*Translated from the Welsh
by Iona Hannagan Lewis*

Iona Hannagan Lewis' commentary

Hedd Wyn's 'Rhyfel' is one of my favourite Welsh poems. The allusions to God and nature lend the poem a myth-like quality reminiscent of Celtic war poetry, yet the poet damns war instead of glorifying it.

It was also very interesting to translate. The Welsh has an inherent rhythm, and while translating I realised that if I was going to try to capture the power of the original, I would have to respect its metre. This proved to be quite difficult – the differences in syntax between the languages meant it was hard to maintain the exact up-beat, down-beat pattern, though I have

tried to do so whenever possible.

It was important that I remained as faithful as possible to the original imagery used, yet sometimes I have had to make small concessions. For example, I couldn't think of a way to fit *Yn codi ei awdurdod bell* – which translates literally as 'Raises his vile authority' – into the rhyme scheme. In the context of the poem I felt it fair to assume that 'vile authority' pertained to the corrupt authority of war, and so I hope I have remained close to the spirit of the poem. Also, I chose to translate *Gwae fi* as 'Cursed am I', since I felt the more correct

'Woe is me' to be too archaic.

For the last stanza, I wondered whether or not to use a more faithful version:

[..]

Hang silent now in grove and wood.

[..]

The rain pours, mixing with their blood.

However, I finally decided to keep the version I have submitted. Though the addition of 'men' changes the meaning slightly, the final image is so horrific that, in order to underline its potency, I felt I had to end on a perfect rhyme.

Winners of the 18-and-under category

Enivrez-Vous

*Il faut être toujours ivre,
Tout est là;
C'est l'unique question.
Pour ne pas sentir
l'horrible fardeau du Temps
qui brise vos épaules
et vous penche vers la terre,
il faut vous enivrer sans trêve.
Mais de quoi?
De vin, de poésie, ou de vertu à votre guise,
mais enivrez-vous!
Et si quelquefois,
sur les marches d'un palais,
sur l'herbe verte d'un fossé,
vous vous réveillez,
l'ivresse déjà diminuée ou disparue,
demandez au vent,
à la vague,
à l'étoile,
à l'oiseau,
à l'horloge;
à tout ce qui fuit,
à tout ce qui gémit,
à tout ce qui roule,
à tout ce qui chante,
à tout ce qui parle,
demandez quelle heure il est;
et le vent,
la vague,
l'étoile,
l'oiseau, l'horloge,
vous répondront,
il est l'heure de s'enivrer!
Pour ne pas être les esclaves martyrisés du Temps,
enivrez-vous ;
enivrez-vous sans cesse!
de vin, de poésie, de vertu, à votre guise.*

Charles Baudelaire

Get Drunk

Always be drunk.
That is all
there is to it.
Do not feel
Time's horrible burden
chip at your shoulders
and crush you into the earth,
by getting drunk and staying so.
On what?
On wine, on poetry, on virtue, on whatever.
But get drunk.
And if you find yourself
at the steps of a palace,
on the green grasses of a gutter
or in the bleak dejection of your room,
waking to find your drunkenness
already fading, disappearing,
ask the wind,
wave,
star,
bird
or clock,
ask anything that flees,
anything that whimpers,
ask anything that rolls,
sings
or speaks,
ask what time it is;
and the wind,
wave,
star,
bird or clock
will all answer you,
'Time to get drunk!
Avoid becoming Time's martyred slaves,
by getting drunk;
by getting drunk endlessly!
On wine, on poetry, on virtue, on whatever.'

*Translated from the French
by Amelia Hassard*

Amelia Hassard's commentary

I chose to translate 'Enivrez-Vous' by French poet, author and leading figure of the Decadent movement, Baudelaire. This poem is a favourite of mine for its meaning and feel, but I ultimately chose the poem for its unconventional structure and idiomatic sentences, which I felt would be a challenge to translate into a foreign language as many phrases are unique constructions.

In translating from French into English I found that problems arose when translating conjugated verbs which were conveying a habitual action, as the English equivalent is often clumsy.

*enivrez-vous;
enivrez-vous sans cesse!*

conveys a very particular idea of repeated, cyclical action of getting drunk, rather than a one-off drunkenness that is everlasting.

I tried to keep the same metre in the poem as it is fundamental to its strength. Baudelaire's poem is prose, without formal metre or rhyme, but its charming cadence is still maintained through repetition of words and phrases, which speeds up the poem into a gallop.

L'Expiation, Section 1

Il neigeait. On était vaincu par sa conquête.
Pour la première fois l'aigle baissait la tête.
Sombres jours ! l'empereur revenait lentement,
Laisant derrière lui brûler Moscou fumant.
Il neigeait. L'âpre hiver fondait en avalanche.
Après la plaine blanche une autre plaine blanche.
On ne connaissait plus les chefs ni le drapeau.
Hier la grande armée, et maintenant troupeau.
On ne distinguait plus les ailes ni le centre :
Il neigeait. Les blessés s'abritaient dans le ventre
Des chevaux morts ; au seuil des bivouacs désolés
On voyait des clairons à leur poste gelés
Restés debout, en selle et muets, blancs de givre,
Collant leur bouche en pierre aux trompettes de cuivre.
Boulets, mitraille, obus, mêlés aux flocons blancs,
Pleuvaient ; les grenadiers, surpris d'être tremblants,
Marchaient pensifs, la glace à leur moustache grise.
Il neigeait, il neigeait toujours ! la froide bise
Sifflait ; sur le verglas, dans des lieux inconnus,
On n'avait pas de pain et l'on allait pieds nus.
Ce n'étaient plus des cœurs vivants, des gens de guerre ;
C'était un rêve errant dans la brume, un mystère,
Une procession d'ombres sous le ciel noir.
La solitude vaste, épouvantable à voir,
Partout apparaissait, muette vengeresse.
Le ciel faisait sans bruit avec la neige épaisse
Pour cette immense armée un immense linceul.
Et, chacun se sentant mourir, on était seul.
– Sortira-t-on jamais de ce funeste empire ?
Deux ennemis ! Le Czar, le Nord. Le Nord est pire.
On jetait les canons pour brûler les affûts.
Qui se couchait, mourait. Groupe morne et confus,
Ils fuyaient ; le désert dévorait le cortège.
On pouvait, à des plis qui soulevaient la neige,
Voir que des régiments s'étaient endormis là.
O chutes d'Annibal ! lendemains d'Attila !
Fuyards, blessés, mourants, caissons, brancards, civières,
On s'écrasait aux ponts pour passer les rivières.
On s'endormait dix mille, on se réveillait cent.
Ney, que suivait naguère une armée, à présent
S'évadait, disputant sa montre à trois cosaques.
Toutes les nuits, qui vive ! alerte, assauts ! attaques !
Ces fantômes prenaient leur fusil, et sur eux
Ils voyaient se ruer, effrayants, ténébreux,
Avec des cris pareils aux voix des vautours chauves,
D'horribles escadrons, tourbillons d'hommes fauves.
Toute une armée ainsi dans la nuit se perdait.

The Retreat from Moscow

It snowed. Their very victory had brought on their defeat.
For once, the eagle bowed its head. Dark days! In slow retreat
from smoking Moscow, emperor and men recrossed terrain
whose only feature now was snow: white plain, then more white plain.

A brief thaw, and an avalanche of water. In the spate
none knew his leader nor his flag; no-one could separate
the army's centre from its flanks. How had it come to pass
that yesterday's proud columns were today's disordered mass?

The opened bellies of dead horses sheltered wounded men:
the only refuge on the road. The snow set in again.
Beside deserted bivouacs, the silent, frozen ghosts
of buglers, upright in the saddle, occupied their posts,
their copper instruments glued fast to mouths of stone. The sky
dropped cannon-ball and shell, mixed with its own artillery
of snowflakes, deathly white, which settled on the grenadiers,
who trembled as they marched, absorbed in private thoughts and fears,
their grey moustaches trimmed with ice.

Across the unknown lands
the north wind and the driving snow chased barefoot, starving bands
of former warriors, and broke their hearts. They were a dream
they'd wandered into, in the mist; a mystery, a stream
of shadows under leaden sky. The utter loneliness!
The sky's revenge: a mighty army in a wilderness,
enwrapped in snow – a silent shroud the elements have sewn.
Each man imagined he was dying; knew he was alone.
Here, in a fateful realm, two enemies pronounced their curse.
The Czar was one; the North another, which was worse.

Gun-carriages chopped up for firewood; cannon thrown away;
men lying down to die; this was a mob, confused, astray,
in headlong flight, their bleak processions swallowed in the waste.
The folds and bulges where the snow had seemed to drift embraced
whole regiments. The fall of Hannibal was on this scale.
Attila left behind such dreadful scenes: the wholesale
rout of wounded, dying men, on stretchers, barrows, carts; the rush
to cross the bridges; death by suffocation in the crush.
Ten thousand closed their eyes to sleep; a hundred saw the day.

Great Marshal Ney, whom once an army followed, ran away.
He haggled with three Cossacks for his watch.

And every night
the French imagined Russian soldiers harrying their flight.
They grabbed their weapons. 'Who goes there?' In nightmare fantasies
came squadrons, whirlwinds of wild men, whose terrifying cries
were like the calls of bald-head vultures, harbingers of doom.
In panic one whole army fled, and vanished in the gloom.

continued from page 11

L'empereur était là, debout, qui regardait.
Il était comme un arbre en proie à la cognée.
Sur ce géant, grandeur jusqu'alors épargnée,
Le malheur, bûcheron sinistre, était monté ;
Et lui, ce chêne vivant, par la hache insulté,
Tressaillant sous le spectre aux lugubres revanches,
Il regardait tomber autour de lui ses branches.
Chefs, soldats, tous mouraient. Chacun avait son tour.
Tandis qu'environnant sa tente avec amour,
Voyant son ombre aller et venir sur la toile,
Ceux qui restaient, croyant toujours à son étoile,
Accusaient le destin de lèse-majesté,
Lui se sentit soudain dans l'âme épouvanté.
Stupéfait du désastre et ne sachant que croire,
L'empereur se tourna vers Dieu ; l'homme de gloire
Trembla ; Napoléon comprit qu'il expiait
Quelque chose peut-être, et, livide, inquiet,
Devant ses légions sur la neige semées :
- Est-ce le châtement, dit-il, Dieu des armées ? -
Alors il s'entendit appeler par son nom
Et quelqu'un qui parlait dans l'ombre lui dit : Non.

Victor Hugo

The emperor surveyed the scene, as if he were a tree,
a giant oak, about to taste the axe. Catastrophe,
the fatal axe man, who had spared his greatness until now,
had climbed up on him. Now he shuddered as each severed bough,
his officers and men, crashed round him one by one. He watched them die.

He paced inside his tent. A remnant of his company,
who'd loved him, trusting in his destiny, stood by outside.
Fate had betrayed him, surely. To and fro they saw his shadow stride.

Within, Napoleon was dazed and pale. Perhaps this was not fate?
Perhaps – he knew not what to think – he had some sin to expiate?
The man of glory trembled as a sudden unaccustomed dread
assailed his soul. He turned to God in anguish. 'Lord of Hosts,' he said,
'is this my punishment, to see my legions scattered on the snow?'

He heard his name called in the dark. A voice said, 'No.'

*Translated from the French
by John Richmond*

John Richmond's commentary

Victor Hugo wrote this poem while living in the Channel Islands, in exile from Louis Napoleon's Second Empire, whose most famous critic he had become. 'L'Expiation' is long; I have translated only its first section. The poem describes the disasters of the late period of Napoleon Bonaparte's reign. At the end of each of the first three sections – while retreating from Moscow, after Waterloo and on Saint Helena – Bonaparte asks God whether these are his punishments for some imagined sin. God mysteriously replies, respectively, 'No,' 'No,' and 'Not yet.' There then follow satirical sections in which Hugo

castigates the corruption and banality of the Second Empire. In the final section, Bonaparte's ghost (his corpse having been restored to Paris) surveys the wreckage of his grand designs which the Second Empire represents. God gives him the cruel truth in the last words of the poem. His punishment is for 'DIX-HUIT BRUMAIRE', the date (9 November 1799) on which Bonaparte declared himself emperor. Hugo the republican has his revenge.

My skill is not up to mirroring Hugo's alexandrines. I have made room for myself by using fourteeners, occasionally extending

a line to sixteen syllables or shortening it to twelve, for effect. But I have stuck with rhyming couplets. Once or twice, for example in my line 10, I have invented words to fill out a line. But on the whole, this is a pretty close translation.

Hugo is a master of atmospheric narrative. I have nowhere read such an account of the desolation of defeat in a Russian winter, unless it be Antony Beevor's *Stalingrad*. Hugo never let facts get in the way of a good story; so far as my researches have gone, Marshal Ney was never guilty of the act of dishonourable betrayal of which he is here accused.

X

Estuans intrinsecus ira vehementi
in amaritudine loquar mee menti:
factus de materia levis elementi
folio sum similis de quo ludunt venti.

Cum sit enim proprium viro sapienti
supra petram onere sedem fundamenti,
stultus ego comparor fluvio labenti
sub eodem aere nunquam permanenti.

Feror ego veluti sine nauta navis,
ut per vias aeris vaga fertur avis.
Non me tenent vincula, non me tenet clavis,
quero mei similes et adiungor pravis.

Mihi cordis gravitas res videtur gravis,
iocus est amabilis dulciorque favis.
Quicquid Venus imperat, labor est suavis;
que nunquam in cordibus habitat ignavis.

Via lata gradior more iuventutis,
inplico me viciis immemor virtutis,
voluptatis avidus magis quam salutis,
mortuus in anima curam gero cutis.

Presul discretissime, veniam te precor:
morte bona morior, dulci nece necor;
meum pectus sauciat puellarum decor,
et quas tactu nequeo, saltem corde mechor.

Res est arduissima vincere naturam,
in aspectu virginis mentem esse puram;
iuvenes non possumus legem sequi duram
leviumque corporum non habere curam.

Archpoeta

Confession

I'm seething introspectively
with angry indignation
and in the bitterness of mind
I speak my condemnation.
I am a lightweight character
of slender occupation
and like a leaf that scatters I'm
a wind-blown recreation.

And since it is appropriate
for any man of vision
to build his house on solid rock
and take a firm position,
I must be in my folly like
the flowing river's mission
and never underneath one sky
but always in transition.

I'm carried like a wayward bird,
a ship without a sailor,
as through the airy pathways I
go wandering *inter alia*,
no chains and fetters binding me,
no iron key my jailer,
but when I seek my kindred-kind
I find a fellow-failure.

I can't take seriously at all
a serious sobriety;
I like a joke, the spice of life
is honey-sweet variety,
and as for Venus's commands
they have my total piety;
she never on an evil mind
imposes her society.

Thus down the slippery slope I go
with all a youth's defences,
I wrap myself in vices so,
forgetting virtue's censors
and since the soul is mortified
let flesh enjoy the senses:
I seek not safe salvation now
but pleasures, the intensest.

I beg your pardon, gracious Lord,
Archbishop Holy Order,
but I'm enjoying this good death
and my voluptuous slaughter:
I'm suffering a mortal wound
from someone's pretty daughter
and if I'm not allowed to touch
can't I in daydreams court her?

It is so very difficult
to conquer nature's urging,
be pure in mind and/or refined
when looking at a virgin;
we are young men and we cannot
submit to such harsh purging,
or fail to want our bodies to
enjoy a lively merging.

*Translated from the Latin
by Duncan Forbes*

Duncan Forbes' commentary

What little we presume to know about the Archpoet is gathered from the internal evidence of the poems themselves. This unreliable evidence is also used to date his 'Confession' to circa 1162/3 although the poem acquired its title in the 13th century.

What drew me to this celebrated poem was the durable energy and verve of the medieval Latin lyric by the *Archipoeta*. Described as a tour de force, the original presents a real challenge to the translator. It is written in the 'goliardic metre' in verses which use feminine rhymes throughout (four per verse, each on the same sound)

which are impossible to match in English, although it's challenging to try, particularly since half- or off-rhyme can provide an expedient alternative.

This showpiece poem apparently survives in a number of manuscripts. Specialist scholars may speculate by vainly trying to identify a plausible candidate for the Archpoet but what comes across from his Latin words over eight centuries and more are the ironies and energies, the vitality and drive of the Archpoet's highly individual 'Confession' concerning wine, women, gambling, sin and song.

Inevitably, I have taken some liberties

with the original but I hope the result reflects something of the wit, learning, satire, feeling, humour, self-mockery, knowing self-dramatisation and the skilful versification of the *Archipoeta* himself.

The metre is like that of 'Good King Wenceslas' but the content and style of the 'Confession' are surprisingly individual and the sensibility seems to me both of its time and in many ways startlingly fresh. Almost all verse translations of such a lively poem are bound in a sense to be confessions of failure themselves but I hope my version may at least redirect attention to this Archpoem of the anonymous Archpoet.

**Wulf and Eadwacer
from The Exeter Book**

Lēodum is mīnum swylce him mon lác gife
willað h̄ h̄ine āþecgan gif h̄e on þrēat cymeð
ungelīc is ūs.
wulf is on iege ic on oþerre
fæst is þæt eglond fenne biworpen
sindon wælrēowe weras þær on īge
willað h̄ h̄ine āþecgan gif h̄e on þrēat cymeð
ungelice is ūs
Wulfes ic mīnes wīdlāstum wēnum dogode
þonne hit wæs rēnig weder ond ic rēotugu sæt.
þonne mec se beaducāfa bōgum bilegde
wæs mē wyn tō þon wæs mē hwæþre ēac lāð.
wulf mīn wulf wēna mē þīne
sēoce gedydon þīne seldcymas
murnende mód nales metelīste
geh̄yrest þū eadwacer uncerne earne hwelp
bireð wulf to wuda
þæt mon ēaþe tosliteð þætte nāfre gesomnad wæs
uncer giedd geador.

Anon

**Song for Wulf
from The Exeter Book**

To my people he'd be like a gift easy prey
if he dared to come armed, the man they'd love to destroy.
So we live in our separate worlds

Wulf on one island I on another,
this fastness encircled by marsh and fen,
this island of bloody-thirsty battle-hard men
who'd love to destroy him if ever he dared to come armed.
So we live, in our separate worlds.

In my thoughts I follow his far-trailing footsteps
while rain continues to fall and I sit here keening
wound fast in the circling warrior arms of another,
each thought bringing equal measures
of pleasure and pain.

Wulf, my own Wulf I am weak
from thinking of you and your over-long absence,
the grief in my heart far greater
than any hunger for food.

Remember Eadwacer, warrior: it's easy
to sever those ties never truly united.
Remember that Wulf has carried our unhappy wolf-cub
away with him into the woods – the song
he and I made together.

*Translated from the Anglo-Saxon
by Jane Draycott*

Jane Draycott's commentary

Described by Donald Fry as 'the most perplexing poem in the language', the dramatic intensity of the piece best known as *Wulf and Eadwacer*, together with the mystery regarding its full meaning, give it something of the quality of a conversation half-heard at night under an open window – enough to feel the full heat of the moment without ever knowing the whole story or even who the speakers are. What no one doubts is the power of the female speaker's heartfelt cry in her lament for Wulf, trapped twice as she seems to be within the confines of her island and in the arms of a new warrior-lover.

The original manuscript contains more than the usual scattering of unsolved Anglo-Saxon mysteries. Decades of scholarly detective work offer the translator a complex permutational web to consider in relation to almost every line. Standing back a little, I've tried to gain a sense of how individual words work not only in syntactical relation to their neighbours but across the whole piece. In an attempt to articulate the poem's key moments of development, I have inserted stanza breaks and additional indentation, and have in several places played with re-sequencing phrases and ideas. The translation also

pushes out a little from the original's taut metrics towards a more contemporary kind of lyricism, as a way partly of creating more interpretive elbow-room.

The poem contains all the most captivating aspects of Anglo-Saxon literature – the electric mix of brutal and elegiac language, the sense of a world where love and conflict co-exist in equal intensity. What touched me most was what lies buried perhaps in that final image: the woman separated irremediably from her lover, sustained by the thought of her child, made out of love, like the song the poet has left to us.

About the Stephen Spender Trust



The translation programme

The Times Stephen Spender Prize

The aim of this annual prize, launched in 2004, is to draw attention to the art of literary translation and encourage young people to read foreign poetry at a time when literature is no more than an optional module (if that) in A level modern languages. Entrants translate a poem from any language – modern or classical – into English, and submit both the original and their translation, together with a commentary of not more than 300 words. There are three categories (14-and-under, 18-and-under and Open) with prizes in each category, the best entries being published in *The Times* and in a commemorative booklet produced by the Trust. The prize is promoted by *The Times* and has been sponsored in 2010 by the Eranda Foundation and the Old Possum's Practical Trust, to whom the Trust is very grateful.

Primary translation

We are working with Shoreditch-based Eastside Educational Trust on a two-year programme of workshops aimed at raising the profile of community languages and literary translation for children at primary school in years 5 and 6. An online resource for teachers will be produced to ensure a legacy for the project, which is funded by Arts Council England, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Mercers' Company.

The Joseph Brodsky/Stephen Spender Prize

In the 1960s Stephen Spender knew Joseph Brodsky only by reputation, as a poet imprisoned in the Soviet Union. They met for the first time in 1972 when WH Auden brought Brodsky, who had been expelled a few days earlier from his country, to London to the Poetry International and they stayed with the Spenders. There was an instant connection. The Joseph Brodsky/Stephen Spender Prize, which has the blessing

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.

of both poets' widows, celebrates this thirty-year friendship. Run by the Stephen Spender Trust and judged by Paul Muldoon, Catriona Kelly and Sasha Dugdale, the competition will be open worldwide and entrants will be asked to translate a Russian poem of their choice into English. The prize will be launched in April 2011, subject to our obtaining the necessary funding.

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. It was compiled by postgraduates, financed by a grant from the British Academy, and was supervised academically by Professor John Sutherland and by Lady Spender. The 821 items, from 79 published sources in Britain, Europe and the USA, are catalogued chronologically and also alphabetically by source.

The New Collected Journals

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

The Stephen Spender archive, which comprises a long lifetime's worth of manuscripts, letters, diaries and other personal papers, is now housed in the Bodleian Library where it will be available to scholars from September 2011.

Events

Symposium, 2001

The Institute for English Studies hosted a successful one-day symposium on 'Stephen Spender and his Circle in the 1930s' featuring contributions on Edward Upward, Isherwood, Auden, Spender and MacNeice.

Southbank reading, 2004

Seamus Heaney, Tony Harrison, Harold Pinter, Jill Balcon and Vanessa Redgrave came together at the Southbank Centre to celebrate the publication of Spender's *New Collected Poems*. The 90-minute programme was devised by Lady Spender

and directed by Joe Harmston; all 900 seats of the Queen Elizabeth Hall sold out.

Auden centenary, 2007

In February 2007 we joined forces with the British Library to mark WH Auden's centenary with a reading of his poetry at the Shaw Theatre. Natasha Spender, who knew Auden well, selected the readers (all poets themselves): James Fenton, John Fuller, Grey Gowrie, Andrew Motion, Sean O'Brien, Peter Porter and – in recognition of the years Auden spent in the United States – American poet and academic Richard Howard. The programme was devised by Grey Gowrie, a founding member of the Stephen Spender Trust and Auden scholar.

Spender centenary, 2009

The first of the centenary celebrations was a reading in February 2009 in the Royal Institution's Faraday Theatre 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 at the Institute of English Studies the following day, with papers given by John Sutherland, Barbara Hardy, Valentine Cunningham, Peter McDonald, Mark Rawlinson, Alan Jenkins, Stephen Romer and Michael Scammell. A second reading, featuring Fleur Adcock, Grey Gowrie and Craig Raine, took place in October 2009 at University College, Oxford, where Stephen Spender was an undergraduate.

Contacting the Trust

For further information about the Stephen Spender Trust and its activities, please contact the Director of the Trust:

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The Stephen Spender Trust

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