

EDWIN MORGAN
TRANSLATION WORKSHOP

2015

Scotland-Slovakia
in association
with the Scottish Poetry Library,
presented at the
Edinburgh International Book Festival

20 August 2015

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The bridge translations of the Slovak poems (the base from which the Scottish poets began work) were all provided by James Sutherland-Smith.

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INTRODUCTION

Translation was central to Edwin Morgan's activity as a poet. His *Collected Translations* (Carcanet, 1996) is as voluminous as his own *Collected Poems* (Carcanet, 1990) and his lifelong devotion to making the voices of foreign cultures ring out in English and Scots was never a secondary preoccupation. During the years in which he wrote many of his most popular and enduring collections, he was just as busy translating from a vast array of world languages. The Edwin Morgan Trust exists to help perpetuate Morgan's interests, among them his commitment to young writers and to translation. Last year witnessed the successful launch of the biennial Edwin Morgan Award for poetry which goes to a poet under the age of 30. This year we are pleased to be able to sponsor the first of a series of biennial translation events that will bring some of the world's leading foreign language poets to Scotland, to participate in workshops and readings alongside Scottish poets.

Last year, I was lucky enough to be invited to take part in the annual 'Authors' Reading Month' set in four cities spanning the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland, and it seemed appropriate to return that generous invitation and hospitality by seeking to bring some leading Slovakian poets to Scotland. In May this year Maria Ferencuhová, Ján Gavura and British poet and translator James Sutherland-Smith met up with the Scottish poets Gerrie Fellows, Juana Adcock and myself at the Scottish Poetry Library for a weekend of intense translation activity. Ably guided by the Director of the Library, Robyn Marsack, today's reading and discussion offers some of the fruits of those endeavours and a glimpse into the process of translation itself.

On behalf of the Trust I should like to thank Robyn Marsack and Jennifer Williams at the Scottish Poetry Library for the practical arrangements that have made these visits possible, and for their sensitive guidance of the translation process. I should also like to thank the Edinburgh International Book Festival for hosting this event and extending its commitment to the Trust's activities.

DAVID KINLOCH

Úloha prekladateľa

Drž sa konceptu
ako drahej ruky,
preskúmaj jazvy, teplotu
mozoľnaté časti,
váhu, s ktorou bude viesť
alebo sa nechá viesť.

Jeden deň: skúšaj
slová
jedno po druhom
ako prstene;

ďalší deň: hneď
prvý prsteň
padne ako uliaty:

tak radostne
sa leskne kov,
keď nájde
bledý prúžok
pleti, až sa zdá,

že prsteň
tam je odnepamäti.

JUANA ADCOCK

The Task of the Translator

Hold the concept
as a dear hand
learn its scars, its temperature
the parts hardened by work
the weight with which
it will lead, or be led.

One day: try
words on
one after the other
like rings;

another day: the first
ring chosen
a perfect fit:

how joyfully
the metal glints
for having found
printed on skin
by lack of sun
a band, as if the ring

had been there
all along.

Úplná a úžasná vec
for Fi

V rádiu fragment	z inej časovej zóny
číslo na Richterovej stupnici	kakofónia
	ticha
blokuje telefónne linky celé ráno	
znásobuje sa v ethernetových medzerách oblakov	
v prázdnych priečinkoch	v prázdnych dutinách telefónov
na monitore	beží neznáma žena
	v zábere rýchlou uzávierkou /
	letí dopredu
	celá bez seba/
	ďaleko od mesta kolabujúceho
	vo vrave obedňajšej prestávky
alebo spomalenom pohybe spánku	takmer nočná mora
	kto sa to za ňou stratil
	a kde sú jej milovaní?
Pevnina sa odrazu rozpúšťa	cez roztečené pole
	sa žena úporne snaží
	dosiahnuť na dieťa
	Po pár hodinách
sa signál medzi nami prerušil	každý otras medzera medzi slabikami
	kým som rozprávala prišli ďalšie dva
	jej hlas
	sa znova sám skladá z tmy
	krížom cez atmosféru
	úplný a úžasný
do všedného svetla môjho popoludnia	

GERRIE FELLOWS

The Complete and Wonderful Thing
for Fi

On the radio a fragment from another time zone
a numeral on the Richter scale a cacophony of
silence
jams landlines all morning
multiplies in the ethernet's cloudy gaps
in empty inboxes in the blank cells of phones
on the screen across which a woman runs
in fast shutter/flying forward
beyond herself/
beyond the city collapsing
in the hubbub of lunchtime
or our sleep's slow motion nightmare of almost
and who is lost behind her
and where are our loved ones?
What was solid dissolves across a groundless field
a woman struggling
to reach her child
Hours later
the signal between us jagged
each *aftershock* a gap between syllables
two just while I've been talking
her voice
reassembles itself out of the dark
across space
complete and wonderful
into my afternoon's still ordinary light

MÁRIA FERENČUHOVÁ

Anamnéza

Otec zomrel v 37 rokoch na chorobu srdca,
matka žije, syn zdravý, anamnéza
z psychiatrického hľadiska
bezvýznamná.
Bežné detské choroby,
nelieči sa, lieky neberie,
pred siedmimi rokmi operácia brucha:
vnútorné zranenie po bodnutí nožom.
V slobodnom povolání. Inak čašníčka.
Žije sama, t. č. na ubytovni, fajčí 10 cigariet denne,
pije 2–3 litre vína za týždeň.

Na svitaní ju susedka našla
na balkóne polonahú
vyklonenú cez zábradlie
vykrikovať, že konečne nastal čas.
Je pri vedomí,
kontaktná,
dezorientovaná,
používa vulgarizmy.

Po 14 dňoch hospitalizácie
stabilizovaná, nálada prejasnená,
výborne odpovedá na liečbu.
Dnes ráno prepustená
do ambulantnej
starostlivosti.

Case History

Father died aged 37 from heart disease,
mother living, son healthy,
psychiatric history
insignificant.
Common childhood illnesses,
no current treatment or medication,
stomach operation seven years ago:
internal injuries following stab wound.
Works as a freelance, also a waitress.
Lives alone, in a hostel, smokes 10 cigarettes a day,
drinks 3–4 bottles of wine a week.

Found by a neighbour at dawn
on a balcony, half-naked
leaning over the railing
shouting that at last the time had come.
She is conscious,
capable of communicating,
disorientated,
using obscenities.

After 14 days hospitalisation
stabilised, mood lightened,
response to medication excellent.
This morning released
to outpatient
care.

MÁRIA FERENČUHOVÁ

Meteor

Pripravili sme ti strašnú smrť.
Nechali sme ťa kľbčiť sa so šelmami.
Mysleli sme si, že si jednou z nich.
Dovolili sme ti skrížiť mliečne zúbky s ihličkami,
lastúry mäkkých nechtov s pazúrmami.

Naše predĺženie,
ružová niť
zauzlená v živom
klbku chlpov, šliach
a pružných kostí.

Uprostred umelého
pralesa, ktorý treba trikrát denne zalievať,
aby sa nezmenil na pustatinu,
akou bol doteraz.

Pokojná, nenápadná chvíľa
zauzlenia. Skok do ticha
rytmizujú iba
milióny cikád.

Posledé úvahy šestročného:
Kto vystrihol slnko,
aj keď páli,
kto nám ho neúnavne
ponad hlavy posúva?
Kto si po oblohe
púšťa meteory?

Je svet taký, aký ho vidím?
Som naozaj tým,
kým si myslím, že som
bol?

Meteor

We prepared a terrible death for you.
We left you to brawl with wild beasts.
We thought you were one of them.
We let you parry fangs with milk teeth,
claws with the shells of your soft fingernails.

Our prolongation,
pink thread
tangled up in life
a ball of hair, tendons
and pliable bones.

In the middle of a man-made
rain forest in need of water three times a day
so it won't alter in the wilderness
from what it's been up to now.

A calm unobtrusive moment
of entanglements. A leap into silence
only millions of cicadas
rhythming.

The last reflections of a six-year old:
Who cuts off the sun
even when it's burning,
who never gets tired
pushing it over our heads?
Who drifts meteors
across the sky?

Is the world so, as I see it?
Am I really
who I think I
was?

JÁN GAVURA

VIII (*...nech zmlkne všetko smrteľné*)

Čím hlasnejšie spieval,
tým tichšie mal v duši.

Dominus autem in templo sancto suo
sileat a facie eius omnis terra,
s mníchmi kláštora ráno čo ráno
vzýval boha cudzincov
o dar mlčania. Po deviatich rokoch
z lásky ostalo už len slovo.
Vídal ženu bielu, bez života.

Keď konečne zmlkne,
rozhovoria sa všetci.

Bolesť ho nezabila silou,
ale trvaním.

JÁN GAVURA | translated by JUANA ADCOCK

VIII (...let all mortal flesh keep silence)

The louder he sang,
the quieter his soul.

Dominus autem in templo sancto suo
sileat a facie eius omnis terra,
morning after morning
praying with monastery monks
to the God of strangers
that he might grant silence. After nine years
of love, only the word remained.
He saw a pallid woman, lifeless.

When at last he fell silent,
everyone began talking.

It was not the intensity of the pain which killed him,
but its duration.

JÁN GAVURA

XI

Básnici zveličujú, ich moc rastie
s túžbami publika.
Kto dlho sledoval slová, začína ich nasledovať.

Začiatky bývajú sľubné, básnici prekliati.
Na zločin stačí príležitosť, hlad,
ucho nastavené k tej nesprávnej stene,

básnici zaplátaní, zaplatení, zapletení:

...obecenstvo bolo zle vychované,
básnici sa museli znásilniť,

básnici boli zle vychovaní,
obecenstvo sa muselo znásilniť...

JÁN GAVURA | translated by DAVID KINLOCH

XI

The poets exaggerate, their power grows
with the desires of the public.
He who has tracked words long enough begins to follow in their tracks.

Beginnings are usually promising, poets are cursed.
For crime opportunity is enough, hunger,
an ear placed against the wrong wall,

poets patched, paid, implicated:

... the audience was badly brought up,
the poets had to violate themselves,

the poets were badly brought up,
the audience had to violate itself ...

Lilith

Len trieska, povedal Otecko, len taký úlomok z...
Ale jediné, čo som chcela, bolo ležať pri Adamovi,
pri tom veľkom prostáčikovi s mliečnym chrupom;

a predsa, keď som sa dostala bližšie, ozvalo sa
„puk“, ako keď praskne kosť, a Otecko sa hneď zjavil.
Stále sa prechádzal niekde v záhrade.

Jednej noci sme sa ho striasli a urobili to;
dala som Adamovi toľko, koľko som dostala:
cítila som sa v ňom dobre, jeho rovnocenná partnerka.

Otecko to videl, hore zo stromu
alebo nejako. Povedal, že to skúsi znova.
A tak tu teraz hore sedím so sovami,

s pazúrmí namiesto nôh a v tejto temnote
nevidím nič. Zato počujem ju,
tú novú, Evu, túlať sa hore a dole

po druhej strane. Adam si zrejme nevšimol,
že ona je biela a ja zas čierna;
ale môžem povedať, že je to zvedavá suka

a dobre im to obidvom zariadi.
Lilith to cíti vo svojich kostiach.

DAVID KINLOCH

Lilith

Just a skelf, Dad said, just a chip off the...
But all I wanted to do was lie with Adam,
that big milk-toothed innocent;

yet when I got close, there was always a 'tut'
like a bone snapping, then Dad would appear.
He was always walking in the garden.

One night we lost the third leg and did it;
I gave as good as I got: good to be inside
him again, his utter equal.

Dad saw—up a tree,
or something. Said he'd try again.
I sit here now with owls,

with claws for feet, see nothing
in the darkness. But I hear her,
the new one, Eve, pottering about

on the other side. Adam doesn't seem to notice
she's white and that I'm black;
but I can tell she's a curious bitch

and will do for them both.
Lilith can feel it in her bones.

Ústa

1. Štrbina v stromoch,
voda zrýchľuje medzi
dvoma hrčovitými kameňmi,
ktoré zužujú potok,
poodchýlené dvere na chatke:

lastovičky sa môžu prešmyknúť stromami,
loviť mušky v letku,
ropucha môže vyskočiť
na drsný povrch
z chladného živlu,

ľahko doň zase vpláva,
môžem sa zjaviť ja, vlasy zježené,
skoro ráno sa vymočiť,
všetci sme slovo tvarujúce
chvíľu, keď sa otvárajú ústa.

2. Kvapka vody okrúhla ako O,
jediné stiahnutie mojich úst,
čisté ako samohláska,
potom tiaž ohne list, voda stečie
a dovolí mi zachytiť

rozhovor kameňa, plechu a zeme,
ktorého význam neviem odčítať,
a možno ani nemám,
vychádzam z temnoty do beztvareho,
voľného, tekutého sveta, kde moje stopy zaniknú,

vytieram si z očí spánok
a kým sa videnie číri, hovorenie sa zahmlieva.
Červienke sa rozochvieva hrdlo, v hlase jej neznie
poznánie ani hrozba.
V potoku sa nerast odiera o nerast.

JAMES SUTHERLAND-SMITH

from *Mouth*

1. A gap in the trees,
water accelerating through
two lumpy boulders
that narrow the brook,
the cabin door ajar:

swallows can nip through trees
taking midges on the wing,
a toad can hop
on to a rough surface
from the cool element

it swims in easily,
I can appear, hair spiky,
for my early morning piss,
all of us a word forming
the moment a mouth opens.

2. Water drop round as the letter O,
a single contraction of my mouth,
therefore pure as a vowel can get
until gravity tugs a leaf to let
water run and me to eavesdrop

on conversation upon stone, tin and earth
whose meaning is hard to make out
though possibly I'm not meant to
as from darkness into a world unshaped,
loose, liquid that absorbs my footsteps,

I move, rubbing the sleep from my eyes
so as my vision clears discourse blurs.
The robin's throat quivers and gives forth
neither recognition nor a threat.
In the stream mineral on mineral scrapes.

PARTICIPANTS' BIOGRAPHIES

JUANA ADCOCK is a writer and translator working in English and Spanish. She was born in Mexico in 1982 and has been living in Glasgow since 2007. She completed a Masters in Creative Writing at the University of Glasgow in 2009. Her work has been included in anthologies and literary magazines in Mexico, the UK, Germany, Sweden and the USA. Her first poetry collection, *Manca*, was published in 2014 in Mexico.

GERRIE FELLOWS's most recent collection is *The Body in Space* (Shearsman, 2014). Earlier books include several sequences exploring the effects of technologies on places and people. *The Powerlines*, a collage of poems and prose-poems, traces interconnected Scottish and New Zealand histories through women's voices. *Window for a Small Blue Child*, a sequence charting the experience and imagery of IVF, was shortlisted for the Sundial Scottish Poetry Book of the Year. Born in New Zealand in 1954, Gerrie has lived in Scotland for thirty years, working as a creative writing tutor and as a mentor to emerging poets.

MÁRIA FERENČUHOVÁ, was born in Bratislava in 1975, is a poet, translator and film theorist. She studied dramaturgy and screenwriting at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava and linguistics at the Ecole des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris. She has published three collections of poetry, *Skryté titulky* (Closed Caption, 2003), *Princíp neistoty* (The Uncertainty Principle, 2008), *Ohrozený druh* (Endangered Species, 2012) and a study of documentary film *Odložený čas* (Delay Time, 2009). She is Editor of the film magazine *KINO-ICON*, translates from French, lectures at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava and the Academy of Arts in Banská Bystrica, and lives in Bratislava.

JÁN GAVURA is a poet, translator, university lecturer, and literary critic. He also edits books and journals. He was born in 1975 in Poprad, Slovakia, and currently lectures at Prešov University, where his main areas of research are twentieth-century literature, and the theory, history and translation of literature, especially poetry.

He has published three collections of poetry; the first, *Pálenie včiel* (Burning Bees, 2001) was awarded the annual Ivan Krasko Prize for the best debut in Slovak language literature. This was followed by *Každým ránom si* (Every Morning You Are, 2006) and *Besa* (2012), from which the two poems here are taken.

DAVID KINLOCH was brought up in Glasgow, where he was born in 1959. He is the author of five books of poetry, most recently *Finger of a Frenchman* (Carcanet, 2011) and a chapbook, *Some Women* (HappenStance Press, 2014). He is currently Professor of Poetry and Creative Writing at The University of Strathclyde and the author of numerous studies in the fields of French, translation and Scottish studies. He is the recipient of various awards and fellowships for his work, helped to found the first ever Scottish Writers' Centre, and is a Trustee of the Edwin Morgan Trust.

JAMES SUTHERLAND-SMITH was born in Aberdeen in 1948 and left the UK in 1980, eventually settling in then-Czechoslovakia in 1989. Through his position as Peacekeeping English Project Manager he has experienced at first-hand the difficult era of transition in the Balkans. The most recent of his numerous poetry collections are *Popeye in Belgrade* (2008) and *Mouth* (Shearsman, 2014). He has co-translated several anthologies, and with his wife Viera is the principal translator of Slovak poetry into English, with a number of collections of individual poets including *Scent of the Unseen: Selected Poems of Mila Haugová* (2002). He lives in Slovakia.

A NOTE ON THE TYPE

While based on Humanist types of the 15th and 16th Century, Robert Slimbach's Arno Pro is a thoroughly contemporary serif with a full complement of Latin-based glyphs offering, according to Adobe, 'pan-European language support'. The typeface's 32 fonts offer five optical size ranges—caption, small text, subhead, regular, and display, and includes, unusually, italic Small Capitals.

A NOTE ON THE SCOTTISH POETRY LIBRARY

The Scottish Poetry Library was founded in 1984 and moved to its purpose-built premises off the Royal Mile in the heart of Edinburgh's Old Town in 1999. It is an independent lending and reference library, open to all users: a unique resource and advocate for poetry in Scotland and beyond. Its collection has a Scottish core but international scope. The SPL's activities include work in schools and care homes, reading and writing groups, publishing, podcasting and recording poets, and the encouragement of translation through events and workshops. Its aim is to bring people and poems together.

www.scottishpoetrylibrary.co.uk @ByLeavesWeLive

‘I would say that to translate poetry well,
you need not only great concentration,
but a peculiar mixture of knowledge
and feeling. It is a hard art, but it has
its rewards.’

EDWIN MORGAN

New Hungarian Quarterly, 1967

www.edwinmorganaward.com