

EDITORIAL

In his obituary in *The Independent* for Michael Hamburger Iain Galbraith expresses the view that with Hamburger's death "the English language takes leave of one of its most gifted and gently influential poets as well as the twentieth-century's most distinguished and prolific translator of German poetry." It is a view with which I can only agree. I would add though that Hamburger's poetic standing was probably higher in Germany and Austria than in England in the last decade, thanks to the German Hanser Press and the Austrian Folio Press which published Peter Waterhouse's German versions of Hamburger's English poetry. Indeed, eighteen months ago we had the pleasure of publishing two poems by Michael Hamburger – alongside two poems by his wife Anne Beresford. For me personally this was a matter of special satisfaction, because I had met Hamburger in Austria at the Rauris Literature Festival in March 1998 when I had the privilege of conducting an interview with the poet-translator.

Hamburger's influence as poet-translator and critic is not restricted to the United Kingdom. In the 1960s and 1970s in particular, when he held posts as lecturer and visiting professor at a number of US universities, he published regularly, both his own poetry as well as his translations, in a great variety of literary magazines such as *Partisan Review*, *Hudson Review*, *The Boston University Journal*, and *Poetry Chicago*. His first major book to appear in the States was *Beethoven: Letters, Journals, and Conversations* (Pantheon, 1951). Two years later, Pantheon – under its director Kurt Wolff, the eminent German émigré publisher – published *Hölderlin: His Poems*, Hamburger's first volume of Hölderlin translations to be published in the US.

There are many German-language authors that Hamburger either first introduced to an American readership or whose American reception and reputation are to a considerable degree dependent on his translations. Among them are Albrecht Goes, Nelly Sachs, Adolf Muschg, Günter Eich, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Paul Celan, and Günter Grass. Hamburger's American reputation as editor and translator is usually associated with the publication of three mammoth bilingual anthologies: *Modern German Poetry 1910-1960* (with Middleton), *East German Poetry*, and *German Poetry 1910-1975*.

Hamburger's rôle as mediator of German literature is summed up by the British poet Rodney Pybus in a judgment whose validity is not restricted to British readers: "Everyone who has been reading [German] poetry in English in recent decades (especially those without German) is in Michael's debt, for opening so many windows into German literary culture."

Another death to be recorded with regret is that of Bill Griffiths, the poet, scholar and publisher, who died on 12 September. I only met him twice, having been introduced to him by Valerie and Geoffrey Soar on the occasion of a small-press bookfair in London in the early 1990s, where he displayed photocopied and stapled booklets published under his Amra Imprint. Bill, born in Middlesex in 1948, benefitted from the guidance of Eric Mottram and Bob Cobbing. A proper introduction to Bill's *oeuvre* is provided by the recently published *The Salt Companion to Bill Griffiths*, a collection of essays on and interviews with one of the leading figures of the British Poetry Revival. Three years ago Salt also published Bill's *The Mud Fort*, a book that draws together a major selection of his poems from 1984 to 2004, including some on Bill's most important themes, i.e. London, sport, boats, cartoons, food, the classics, the mystical, history, and the North. The fascination of Bill's work is summed up by Clive Bush: "Bill Griffiths' passionate intelligence, lexical virtuosity, and rhythmic command of language is second to that of none in the British Isles. In his poetry lost histories become vital clues to understanding our present condition."

Readers may remember that in *PSR* 11 we published two poems by Du Fu, translated by Keith Holyoak. In the meantime Holyoak has published a bilingual collection entitled *Facing the Moon: Poems of Li Bai and Du Fu* (Oyster River, 2007), which we are delighted to recommend. A spoken-word CD, *Poems of Li Bai* (2006), is still available from broken electric.

Apropos translation: we have always wanted to introduce our readers to contemporary Austrian poetry. The present issue can be seen as a first step towards such an initiative, containing translations of poems by Ilse Aichinger, Robert Schindel, and Peter Turrini. In future issues we intend to publish further translations of Austrian poetry by Andrew Duncan, David Malcolm, and the editor.

Wolfgang Görtschacher