

Islands and Continents

Translators have long felt underpaid and under-recognized, and of late they are doing more to gain recognition for their art. Recently, for example, a group of poets who translate foreign poetry formed an organization that will present the annual Islands and Continents Translation Award for the best poetry translation of the year. What set them off was a dinner conversation last March about the neglect of Hardie St. Martin's book of translations of Spanish poetry, "Roots and Wings." Mr. St. Martin's book has thus been chosen the first winner, with a prize of \$1,000 attached. Among the sponsors are poets Robert Bly, Donald Hall and Gary Snyder. Jonathan Cohen is director; for further information write P.O. Box 25, Setauket, N.Y.

The New York Times Book Review,
August 14, 1977, p. 35.

Poets Initiate New Translation Award

A group of poet-translators have given Hardie St. Martin the first Islands and Continents Translation Award for Roots and Wings: Poetry from Spain 1900-1975 (Harper & Row, 1976). The prize is \$1,000.

Robert Bly and Jonathan Cohen, both poets and translators, originated the idea for the award. "We felt the need for a translation award given by poets themselves," says Bly. "There is a crucial difference when poets translate--Pound showed us that. The critics want literal translations, but they're wrong. Only poets can bring real feeling to poetry in translation." Other poet-translators, among them Donald Hall and Gary Snyder, joined in sponsoring and financing the award.

The choice of St. Martin was unanimous. He has a long record as an excellent translator of Spanish poetry, which he has studied in Madrid and Barcelona. His translation of Pablo Neruda's Memoirs was published in 1977 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

The award will be given annually for the best poetry translation by a poet published during the previous calendar year. The deadline for 1977 entries is December 31, 1977. For more information, write to the contest's director, Jonathan Cohen, Islands and Continents, P.O. Box 25, Setauket, New York 11733. □

From Coda: Poets & Writers Newsletter,
November/December 1977.

\$1,000 from Islands And Continents — Translation Prize

Lucien Stryk and Takashi Ikemoto have won the second Islands and Continents Translation Award of \$1,000 for The Penguin Book of Zen Poetry (Swallow Press, 1977)..

The award, which honors English translations of books of poetry, was begun last year by a group of poet-translators who felt the need to honor their own. They have financed the two awards themselves through contributions and benefit readings.

The judges this year were poet-translators Charles Guenther, Robert Bly, and David Unger. Guenther cited the Stryk-Ikemoto choice: "A fresh, clean rendering of a body of Oriental poetry, some of which was hitherto unknown or little known; and for a high degree of originality in the presentation of this body of poetry to English-language audiences."

Honorable Mention went to John and Bogdana Carpenter for Selected Poems of Zbigniew Herbert (Oxford University Press, 1977).

Contributors of \$20 or more to Islands and Continents become sponsors of the award and receive a copy of the prize-winning book. The 1979 award will go to a poetry book translation published during 1978. Translators and publishers may submit books until December 31, 1978. For more information, write the contest's director, Jonathan Cohen, Islands and Continents, P.O. Box 25, Setauket, New York 11733. ■

From Coda: Poets & Writers Newsletter,
November/December 1978.

From Islands and Continents— Eleni Fourtouni Wins Translation Prize

Eleni Fourtouni has won the third Islands and Continents Translation Award of \$1,000 for Greek Women Poets (Thelphini Press, 1978). Fourtouni was born in Sparta, Greece and came to the United States as an exchange student, studying at Nasson College in Springvale, Maine. Her poetry has been published in Caryatids (Curbstone Press, 1978) and City Lights Anthology --A Poetry Review (City Lights Press, 1977). Greek Women Poets was inspired by Fourtouni's return to Greece in 1974, when she set out to translate poets whose work has been suppressed by the ruling junta.



Elke Geiger

Eleni Fourtouni

Poet-translators Robert Mezey, Al Poulin, Jr., and Muriel Rukeyser chose Fourtouni's book from 25 submissions. Poulin praised the book as one "undertaken by an individual for unswerving personal and artistic reasons and completed without the moral support and subsidy of a university press." He called the book "a genuine 'trail blazer' that introduces American readers to a significant body of non-English poetry heretofore untranslated and unknown in this country."

Honorable Mentions went to Vasa D. Mihailovich for Contemporary Yugoslav Poetry (University of Iowa Press, 1978), Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk for their translation of Nazim Hikmet's The Epic of Sheik Bedreddin (Persea Books, 1978), and to Alexander Taylor and Henrik Nordbrandt for their rendition of Nordbrandt's Selected Poems, published by Curbstone Press.

The Islands and Continents Translation Award is given annually for outstanding English translations of books of poetry published and distributed in the U.S. during the preceding calendar year. It was established in 1977 by three poet translators--Robert Bly, Jonathan Cohen, and David Unger--who wanted to reward their peers for special work. Cohen and Unger pay for the prize with their own money and with contributions from about 50 others--most of them translators. Anyone who donates \$25 or more becomes a sponsor of the award and receives a copy of that year's prize-winning book. The sponsors hope to raise money for future awards with a reading by Eleni Fourtouni and other Greek women poets in New York City this winter.

The 1980 award will go to a poetry book translation published during 1979. Translators and publishers may submit books until January 31, 1980. For more information, write to Jonathan Cohen, P.O. Box 25, Setauket, New York 11733. ■

Coda: Poets & Writers Newsletter,
November/December 1979.

Islands and Continents Translation Award

Two books shared the fourth annual Islands and Continents Translation Award this year: Teresa de Jesus's All of a Sudden, translated from the Spanish by Maria A. Proser, Arlene Scully, and James Scully (Curbstone Press); and Takis Sinopoulos's Landscape of Death, translated from the Greek by Kimon Friar (Ohio State University Press).

Begun in 1977 as an annual independent prize given by poets for the best poetry translation published in the United States, the award formerly carried a \$1,000 cash prize. This is no longer so. "The fourth award, unfortunately, must be limited to kudos," said Jonathan Cohen, who coordinated the competition. "It's become impossible for us to continue giving \$1,000 annually." Although Islands and Continents obtained legal non-profit status last year, efforts to raise prize money through donations and benefit readings did not succeed. No more awards will be given until the financial difficulties are resolved. Islands and Continents Translation Award, P.O. Box 25, Setauket, New York 11733.

Coda: Poets & Writers Newsletter,
8, No. 2 (November/December 1980),
p. 12.