

## *Esperantlingva Verkista Asocio*

Association of Esperantophone Writers  
Cooperating with the Universal Esperanto Association

### **The President**

To:  
The Swedish Academy  
P.O. Box 2118  
SE-103 13 Stockholm  
The President

Mr President,

as the President of the Association of Esperantophone Writers, the representative body for literary activities in Esperanto, I have the honour of putting forward Baldur Ragnarsson as a candidate for the 2007 Nobel Prize for Literature.

More than any other living author, Baldur Ragnarsson has seminally influenced the development of a modern, flexible poetic discourse in Esperanto literature, thanks to an interplay in his work between the continental tradition, with rhyme and syllabic metre as the foremost expressive tools, and the Nordic tradition, where alliteration and stress metre are the main means of constructing poetic text. It is this interplay that has made Ragnarsson's oeuvre a key step in the advancement of Esperanto from a language intended predominantly for non-literary communication to a fully-fledged natural language which is not only as suitable for poetic expression as any national language but draws for the purpose on its own syntactic and lexical resources. Thus, thanks to the explorations he inspired on the relationship between poetic language and the instruments of poetry, Ragnarsson marked the start of an extremely fertile development in Esperanto literature.

Launched in 1887 by the Polish Jew Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof, Esperanto has undergone continuous development over the last century. While keeping to its solid grammatical and structural foundations, the language has enormously enriched its lexicon and increased its flexibility. This process has transformed Esperanto into a natural language spoken by hundreds of thousands of individuals, who constantly contribute to its development. On a literary level, this transformation has been reflected in a steady adaptation of the language to the needs of modern expression, as well as in an extension of the fields covered. There is unanimous acknowledgment that the most representative author, who marks a turning point in this process, is Baldur Ragnarsson.

Ragnarsson was born in Reykjavík in 1930 and learnt Esperanto in 1949. On his first contact with the language, he was immediately struck by the literary possibilities inherent in its structure, which he felt to be demonstrated beyond doubt by the short translation from the Iliad in his Esperanto textbook. In an important essay many years later, Ragnarsson reflected strikingly on this close link between the structure of the language and literariness: "I realised that this was high literature, an example of worthy cooperation between form and content. Even then, after only three months of enthusiastic study, my positive attitude to Esperanto was firmly established: I was fascinated by its

harmony, its phonetic spelling and syntactic transparency, by the high ideal underlying it which, to me, had the beauty of a cloudless sky. Obviously, my fascination was - like every emotion - subjective, but well enough rooted in linguistic facts to provide me with a feeling of authenticity. Naturally and without effort, I was able to transpose this impression of Esperanto as a language of harmony into the world of its literature" (*Esperanto-literaturo: iluzio, miraklo aŭ simpla fakto?*, Literature in Esperanto: illusion, miracle or simple reality?).

Foremost in Ragnarsson's literary output stand two collections of poems that were to change the course of Esperanto literature: *Ŝtupoj sen nomo* (Steps without a name) and *Esploroj* (Explorations). In his foreword to the latter, Ragnarsson shows himself to be fully aware of the tension between, on the one hand, advanced poetic language (as bequeathed by the continental tradition) and, on the other, the need for a factual discourse, without metaphors, void of rhetoric ornament. While the language becomes more dense with a view to unexplored solutions, made possible only by the agglutinative features of Esperanto (Ragnarsson is one of the most difficult authors to translate in European literature), the simplicity of the content and the expression aims to draw readers back towards a concreteness from which the complexity of the diction seemed to be constantly distancing them.

This striving for a direct and unadorned poetry, in particular the endeavour to convey images in the most antirhetorical way possible, makes Ragnarsson resemble Kavafis - but critics have also brought out the decisive influence of Nordic literature, which also approaches its themes in an extremely direct way, while bearing an epic flavour at variance with the mild tone of its diction. Indeed, Baldur Ragnarsson is also a noted scholar of ancient Icelandic literature, and has written on it extensively in Esperanto and in Icelandic. Having translated Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*, Ragnarsson recently (2003) completed the task of transposing into Esperanto the best-known Nordic epic, *Njálssaga*. Baldur Ragnarsson's poetry owes its international flavour to a unique alliance between epic simplicity in the poetic discourse, a typically Nordic trait, and the exceptional density and clarity of every single word used, properties deriving from the particular typological features of Esperanto as an agglutinative language, where words can derive from a creative fusion of even semantically distant lexemes.

The literary activity of Baldur Ragnarsson now extends over more than fifty years, and includes, besides his two momentous collections, numerous poems published in the foremost international Esperanto journals, countless translations, mostly from Icelandic, and a rich array of essays on subjects ranging from Icelandic literature to theoretical considerations on the nature of poetry, and studies on particular Esperantist or Icelandic authors. Ragnarsson has also been a member of the Writers' Union of Iceland since 1977, and has published collections of poetry and essays on numerous linguistic and literary subjects in Icelandic. Ragnarsson's literary bilingualism is in fact one of his most interesting features, making him a typical frontier writer, on the cusp between a Nordic tradition that continues to be seen as relevant (also in its metric aspects) and an international literature of which he is at present the leading exponent.

Ragnarsson has taken on numerous commitments in the Esperantist cultural movement: he has served for many years as president of the Icelandic Esperanto Association, for ten years (1975-1985) he was in charge of *Belartaj Konkursoj*, the most important literary competition run by the World Esperanto Association (UEA). From 1983 to 1986 he served on the latter's executive as the member responsible for culture and education, and from 1980 to 1983 he was its vicepresident. Since 1979, he has been a full member of the Academy of Esperanto.

Mr. President, the Association of Esperantophone Writers believes that by bestowing the Nobel Prize for literature upon Baldur Ragnarsson, the Academy would acknowledge the international

stature of an author who, by his creative writing and essays, has contributed more than any other to reflections on the relationship between poetry and language. Baldur Ragnarsson has accomplished this thanks to his belonging to a Nordic tradition which, with its themes and its metric and rhetoric structures, is amazingly diverse and complements the continental tradition. These characteristics of Baldur Ragnarsson's oeuvre make him the greatest living poet in the Esperanto language, who deserves to be recognised at the highest level of world literature.

Dr. Mauro Nervi  
President of the Association of Esperantophone Writers

## Baldur Ragnarsson: Selected Works

### Works in Esperanto:

#### Poems

Ŝtupoj sen nomo. Originala poemaro. 127 p. Stafeto, La Laguna 1959.

Esploroj. Originala poemaro. 122 p. Stafeto, La Laguna 1974.

#### Essays

La Sagaoj kaj Zamenhof: stabiligaj faktoroj. Nagoya Esperanto-Centro, Nagoya 1982.

Studado de alia lingvo. Metodiko en la praktiko. Esperanto-Centro Paderborn / Hungara Esperanto-Asocio, Budapest. 1982

La proza poemo: la ĝenro, ĝiaj latentoj kaj aplikoj. *100-jara Esperanto*. Fonto, Chapecó-SC (Brazilo). 1987.

Esperanto kiel anti-lingvo. Serta gratulatoria in honorem Juan Régulo. 1987.

La Poezia Arto. Kolekto de 5 eseoj. Artur E. Iltis, Saarbrücken 1988.

Cent jaroj de poezio en Esperanto. Memorlibro pri la internacia jubilea Esperanto-konferenco. Cent jaroj de Esperanto-kulturo. Eldonejo Perspektivo, Rødovre, Danio. 1989.

Tradukante la antikvan islandan literaturon en Esperanto. Menade bal pŭki bal. Festlibro por Reinhard Haupenthal. Edition Iltis, Saarbrücken. 1998.

La poezio de la skaldoj. Festlibro por André Albault. Edition Iltis.

La fono kaj la fronto: kelkaj konsideroj pri semiotikaj aspektoj de la Esperanta poezio. Lingva arto, jubileta libro omaĝe al William Auld kaj Marjorie Boulton. Universala Esperanto-Asocio. 1999.

La poemoj de Armand Su. Iltis-Forumo. 1993.

Kombino de poeta virtuozecko kaj ties instrumento. Eseo pri *Poemo de Utnoa* de Abel Montagut. Iltis-Forumo. 1994.

Þórbergur Þórðarson, verkisto kaj esperantisto. Eseoj memore al Ivo Lapenna. 2001.

Ŝekspiraj tradukoj: Kelkaj konsideroj. Esperanto. 2006.

*Various articles about Esperanto writers, to date 15, since 1999, in the magazine Juna amiko.*

#### Translations

Sub stelo rigida. Translation under a single title of two collection of poetry by the Icelandic poet Þorsteinn frá Hamri. Stafeto, La Laguna, 1963.

Islandaj pravoĉoj. Translation of three stories and one poem from old Icelandic literature. Eldona Societo Esperanto, Malmö 1964.

Sagao de Njal. Translation of the greatest of the old Icelandic sagas. Flandra Esperanto-Ligo, Antwerpeno 2003.

*Moreover, many other translations from Icelandic literature in several journals, most of them in La Tradukisto. E.g.:*

#### Poems:

*Postperda sopiro.* Jóhann Jónsson: Söknuður.  
*La insuleto de Gunnar.* Jónas Hallgrímsson: Gunnarshólmi.  
*Se min benus harp' sonora.* Friðrik Hansen: Ætti ég hörpu ....  
*Je mateno.* Jón Helgason: Að morgni.  
*Ne povas mi dormi.* Guðmundur Ingi Kristjánsson: Ég get ekki sofið.  
*Oceano.* Einar Benediktsson: Úsær.  
*Pri komparo al la suno.* Bjarni Gissurarson: Kvæði um samlíking sólarinnar..  
*Poemo pri Brymr.* Þrymskviða.  
*La kanto pri Grotti.* Gróttasöngur.  
*Tereco.* Jóhannes úr Kötlum: Jarðerni.  
*Kaŝita en la herbo.* Guðmundur Böðvarsson: Falið í grasi.  
*Mi restis tro longe.* Snorri Hjartarsson: Mér dvaldist of lengi.  
*La junulo en l'arbaro.* Halldór Laxness: Únglingurinn í skóginum.  
*Stelo de majo.* Halldór Laxness: Maístjarnan.  
*La Forpasintoj.* Hannes Sigfússon: Hinir framliðnu.  
*Vizaĝo.* Sigfús Daðason: Andlit.  
*Rilke.* Sigfús Daðason: Rilke.  
6 poems by Ingibjörg Haraldsdóttir: *Memero; Elreviĝo; Virino; Eduko; Anonco; Nun estas alia tempo.*  
2 poems by Jón Óskar: *Serĉante belecon; Vi kaj la mondo.*  
*Juniaj tagoj* de Kristján Karlsson.  
2 poems by Hulda (Unnur B. Bjarklind): *Se estus mi Aŭroro; Arbara kvieto.*  
2 poems by Jóhann Hjálmarsson: *Al la violo; La poeto.*  
2 poems by Kristinn Reyrr Pétursson: *Ŝirmejo; Sonoj de paŝoj.*  
*Sekreto* de Vilborg Dagbjartsdóttir.  
*Vi, blua montejo.* Steingrímur Thorsteinsson: Þú, bláfjallageimur.  
*Mara magio.* Stephan G. Stephansson. Rammislagur.  
*Printempa suno.* Stefán frá Hvítadal: Vorsól.  
*Hodiaŭ.* Sigurður Sigurðsson frá Arnarholti. Vorsól.  
*Poemo de Atli.* Atlakviða.

## Prose

*Tikloj.* Helgi Hjörvar: Kitlur.  
*La filozofio de l'falo.* Braddi Jóhannesson: Heimspeki fallsins.  
*Kolumkilli:* El Sjálfstætt fólk de Halldór Laxness.

## Other translations:

*Proza Edda.* Snorri Sturluson.  
*La Edda poemoj.* Eddukvæði.  
*Sendependaj homoj.* Sjálfstætt fólk de Halldór Laxness.

## WORKS IN ICELANDIC

### Poems

Undir veggjum veðra . 1962. Heimskringla, Reykjavík.

Töf. 1970. Heimskringla, Reykjavík.

## **Specialist books**

Mál og málnotkun. 1965. Skálholt, Reykjavík.

Skólaritgerðir. 1967. Skálholt, Reykjavík.

Íslenzk hljóðfræði. 1969. Skálholt, Reykjavík.

Mál og ritleikni I. 1971. Ríkisútgáfa námsbóka, Reykjavík.

Mál og ritleikni II. 1972. Ríkisútgáfa námsbóka, Reykjavík.

Mál og leikur. Handbók handa móðurmálskennurum. 1973. Ríkisútgáfa námsbóka, Reykjavík.

Greinarmerkjasetning: reglur og verkefni. 1974. Ríkisútgáfa námsbóka, Rvk.

Móðurmál. Leiðarvísir handa kennurum og kennaraefnum. 1977. Ritröð Kennaraháskóla Íslands og Iðunnar. Iðunn, Reykjavík.

Ljóðlist. 1983. Iðunn, Reykjavík.

Stílfraði. 1985. Mál og menning, Reykjavík.

Ný kennslubók í esperanto. 1987. Mál og menning, Reykjavík.

Bókmenntafræðileg hugtök. 1988. Menntaskólinn við Hamrahlíð, Reykjavík.

Mál og málsaga. 1992. Mál og menning, Reykjavík.

Tungumál veraldar. 1999. Háskólaútgáfan, Reykjavík.

Skýringar við Gylfaginningu og goðsagnir Skáldskaparmála Snorra-Eddu. 2000. Iðnú, Reykjavík.

Planmál. Íslenskt mál 22, 2000. Íslenska málfræðifélagið, Reykjavík.

Esperanto - alþjóðlegt samskiptamál. 2004. Íslenska esperantosambandið, Reykjavík.

Setningafræði handa framhaldsskólum. 2004. Iðnú, Reykjavík.

*Many other articles in specialist journals.*