

- WINNER. ***My Karst And My City***. Scipio Slataper. Tr. Nicholas Benson & Elena Coda.
 - JOINT RUNNER-UP. ***The House On The Hill + The Moon And The Bonfires*** [a pair]. Cesare Pavese. Tr. Tim Parks.
 - JOINT RUNNER-UP. ***Snow, Dog, Foot***. Claudio Morandini. Tr. J. Ockenden.
 - SHORTLIST. ***Diary Of A Foreigner In Paris***. Curzio Malaparte. Tr. Stephen Twilley.
 - SHORTLIST. ***Without Ever Reaching The Summit***. Paolo Cognetti. Tr. Stash Luczkiw.
 - SHORTLIST. ***The Hummingbird***. Sandro Veronesi. Tr. Elena Pala.
-

Mario's general comments. Re-stating the cliché often espoused by judges, it's always extremely difficult to compare – on any linear/scalar spectrum of 'winner/non-winner' – the complex merits of so various a collection of books. How does one rate, for instance, a limpid, luminous account of a Himalayan pilgrimage against a detailed, highly-wrought treatise on Italian Modernism? That's where having complementary judges really helped to disentangle the Gordian, combining my own long-term experience as Anglo-Italian author and translator with Elena's expert academic view as Italian linguist and translation teacher. We found ourselves constantly revisiting that eternal conundrum of translation: how to assess the thermoplastic dynamic between fidelity and flair, creative freedom and accuracy. I sometimes think of translation as an arranged marriage between graft and craft, othertimes as a tricky love affair between two languages who live quite close to each other but can never wholly consummate! We know that no translation, however meticulous or ingenious, can ever attain perfect oneness with its original, and it's clear that all our translators grappled variously with the profound challenges of capturing tone, dialect, and (a feature of translations too often overlooked) rhythm. Yes, it's easy to tell when translations go wildly wrong, as in this example reputedly signposted in a Nairobi restaurant: "Customers who find our waitresses rude ought to see the manager". Unintentional humour is probably a translator's worst nightmare; but, even in our best efforts, we can get most of the words mostly right only to discover that the tiniest lapse throws everything off. Glaring miscalculations aside, the efficiency and sonority of a literary translation depends on a highly complex transaction, a multi-level negotiation involving common sense, creative nuance, the vicissitudes of trial and error, and plain hard work. Moreover, any judgement of outcome is necessarily subjective: how far does an individual reader/judge tolerate, for instance, any 'rewriting' or licence in the target language? In testing translators, then, one has to humbly test one's own (sometimes most ambiguous, most hazy) limits. Wittgenstein wrote: "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world". All the shortlisted and winning books in this particular John Florio year resoundingly deserved their place; but let's welcome them now into that larger enterprise for which this prize is such a significant host: the ongoing, crucial work of valuing translations and translators that continues to enlarge us all.

- WINNER. ***My Karst And My City***. Scipio Slataper. Tr. Nicholas Benson & Elena Coda. This is the kind of semi-technical text all too easily overlooked by prizes, so we are delighted with Benson and Coda for bringing to such brilliant attention Slataper's smorgasbord of contrasting styles and concerns, ranging from his exquisite passages of sense-driven rural passion to his eclectic reflections on war, art and culture. Centred on a crucial phase of Italian modernism in Trieste, Slataper provides the varied source materials of poetic prose, autobiography, academic criticism, private letters, and essay-like thoughts, all contextualised and fleshed out by Coda's formidable introduction. The rich, gloriously lyrical Italian of Part I is rendered wonderfully into English with due sensual reconnaissance, cementing Slataper's place as Italy's own Proust, drunk on karst terrain. Part II onwards are more specialist, discursive, intellectual, referential... exploring the ideological plate tectonics grating throughout pre-IWW Europe. The scholarship and athleticism required to render this many-textured project into tonal English is nothing short of staggering. ***My Karst And My City*** is a masterwork of epic proportions, and a necessary reminder that academic translation can be linguistically vital as well as culturally important.
- JOINT RUNNER-UP. ***The House On The Hill + The Moon And The Bonfires*** [a pair]. Cesare Pavese. Tr. Tim Parks. Parks has done culture a true favour by bringing these classic Italian texts, accurately and without fuss, into accomplished and eminently readable English. Pavese has a big message, strongly evoking Italian personalities and countryside as backdrop to his bittersweet exploration of human resilience in conflict. All of this, along with the elegant clarity of Pavese's limpid prose, is carried over with impressive skill and confidence. Parks never breaks step with the original.
- JOINT RUNNER-UP. ***Snow, Dog, Foot***. Claudio Morandini. Tr. J. Ockenden. A quirky, witty, claustrophobically existential tale, oddly reminiscent of Beckett, crammed with subtle observations on, and unexpected insights into, the animal basis of human behaviour. The Italian is direct, spare, with a sweep and drive to it; Ockenden's English is correspondingly brisk and confident, the visualisations vivid, the diction effective in that difficult task in translation of recapturing humour or a distinctive sense of place. What other novel coughs up the consumption of tadpoles, or has the word 'borborygmus' in it? One of a kind.