

Oct. 6, 2014—The American Literary Translators Association is excited to announce the five finalists for the 2014 National Translation Award (NTA). The winning title will be announced at ALTA’s annual conference (November 12-15 in Milwaukee, WI) and the translator will receive a \$5,000 honorarium. To view the 15-title longlist, which was announced in August, please visit literarytranslators.wordpress.com/2014-nta-award.

The NTA is the only national award for translated fiction, poetry, and literary nonfiction that includes a rigorous examination of the source text and its relation to the finished English work. This is ALTA’s 37th annual conference and the NTA’s 16th year.

Here is what the three finalist judges, Barbara Epler (Publisher, New Directions), Elaine Katzenberger (Publisher, City Lights) and Jessica Cohen (renowned translator from the Hebrew), had to say about each of the five shortlist titles (in alphabetical order by title):

***Between Friends* by Amos Oz, translated from the Hebrew by Sondra Silverston.** “The reader will quickly find himself or herself entranced by the personal yearnings in these characters’ small lives, which are made achingly palpable in the beautifully translated and deceptively simple prose, with the peaceful, fictional kibbutz grounds and its austere houses depicted as vividly and lovingly as the turbulent landscapes of the characters’ minds.”

***An Invitation For Me to Think* by Alexander Vvedensky, translated from the Russian by Eugene Ostashevsky & Matvei Yankelevich.** “Vvedensky is a marvel: a poet too little known in Russia, and not known at all in the English-speaking world, is revealed as a major 20th-century world poet—wonderful, wonderfully strange, and haunting. The alchemical translation, with its shifty rhymes and non-rhymes, intense images and absent logic, knits and unknits reality before the reader’s eyes, walking not a line so much as a live wire.”

***Life’s Good, Brother* by Nazim Hikmet, translated from the Turkish by Mutlu Konuk Blasing.** “The work is daring and experimental in style—a multidimensional kaleidoscope where the lines between fiction and memoir are intentionally blurred, as are the borders between author and protagonist(s). Past, present and future curve endlessly in on themselves, weaving in and out of first- and third-person narration to tell one man’s story, and the story of a generation of Turks who lived during Hikmet’s time. This is a landmark work for Hikmet, and a hugely impressive work of translation!”

***A Treatise on Shelling Beans* by Wieslaw Mysliwski, translated from the Polish by Bill Johnston.** “A masterful work of storytelling, in the most expansive and exhilarating sense of the word! The translation achieves and maintains a brilliantly seamless conversational tone, engaging and full of colloquial charm as the stories emerge from our garrulous narrator, one after another, as layer upon layer of memories coalesce into a tender, homespun, epic retelling of one man’s life spanning the horrors and tragedies of World War II and its aftermath.”

***Theme of Farewell and After-Poems* by Milo de Angelis, translated from the Italian by Susan Stewart and Patrizio Ceccagnoli.** “A startling coexistence of vitality and death, beauty and darkness, love and anger animates these elegiac poems by one of Italy’s foremost contemporary poets, appearing for the first time in a bilingual edition. The poet’s anguish and helplessness in the face of his wife’s illness and death permeate each line as he probes the capacity of language to convey such loss, and all but brings his beloved back to life through recollected snapshots of their past. Raw emotion alongside thoughtful sobriety shine through in the musical, sensual translation.”

Books eligible for the 2014 NTA include titles published anywhere in the world in the previous calendar year (2013) that were translated by an American citizen or permanent resident. Publishers or translator are invited to submit titles for consideration at the beginning of the year, and book selection is based on the quality of the finished book in English, and the quality of the translation.