Featured Poet: Gregory Dowling

Gregory Dowling, who read English at Oxford University, teaches American literature at Ca’ Foscari University of Venice. He has done numerous translations from Italian into English, has co-edited two anthologies of poetry, written a book on American narrative poetry, a guidebook to Byron’s Venice, a study of the poet David Mason, as well as numerous articles on British and American literature. He is editor of the British section of the Italian poetry-journal Semicerchio and a member of the committee for the new museum devoted to Lord Byron, which is due to open in Ravenna, Italy, in 2018. He has published five thrillers, the latest being Ascension, a spy-story set in 18th-century Venice; the sequel will come out this summer.

Dowling and Moira Egan will lead a critical seminar on The Achievement of Stevie Smith.

Description: Stevie Smith (1902-1971) was one of the most popular poets of the 20th century. Her work was known for its “variety and inventiveness, much humour and understanding, and a constant poignancy” (Seamus Heaney). A new Collected volume, edited by Will May, gathers Smith’s poems and drawings to celebrate her decades-long career, which was honoured with the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. In this critical seminar, each participant will give a 10-minute presentation on a chosen poem by Stevie Smith, with discussion to follow.

Dowling translates poetry. Here is a translation of a poem by Giovanni Pascoli, together with the original:

**November**

The air is gemlike and the sun so bright

you'd think the apricot were now in flower,

and in your heart the whitethorn’s scent is still

pungent and sour.
But the thorntree’s bare bare, and the naked plants
contrive black webs against the cloudless blue,
the sky’s a blank; the ground beneath your feet
drums hollow too.

Around you silence: just the winds that stir
the gardens and the distant trees that shed
their delicate glissade of leaves: the cold
summer of the dead.

Novembre

Gemmea l’aria, il sole così chiaro
che tu ricerchi gli albicocchi in fiore,
e del prunalbo l’odorino amaro
sentì nel cuore…

Ma secco è il pruno, e le stecchite piante
di nere trame segnano il sereno,
e vuoto il cielo, e cavo al piè sonante
sembra il terreno.

Silenzio, intorno: solo, alle ventate,
odì lontano, da giardini ed orti,
di foglie un cader fragile. E’ l’estate,
fredda, dei morti.