


# Tomas Tranströmer

<b>Tomas Tranströmer</b>	
	
Tranströmer in 2008	
<b>Born</b>	Tomas Gösta Tranströmer 15 April 1931 Stockholm, Sweden
<b>Occupation</b>	poet
<b>Nationality</b>	Swedish
<b>Period</b>	20th century, 21st century
<b>Notable work(s)</b>	<i>Windows and Stones</i> (1966), <i>The Great Enigma</i> (2004)
<b>Notable award(s)</b>	<b>Nobel Prize for Literature</b> 2011
<b>Spouse(s)</b>	Monika Tranströmer

**Tomas Gösta Tranströmer** (born 15 April 1931 in Stockholm) is a Swedish writer, poet and translator, whose poetry has been translated into over 60 languages.<sup>[1]</sup> He was the recipient of the 2011 Nobel Prize for Literature "because, through his condensed, translucent images, he gives us fresh access to reality".<sup>[2]</sup>

## Life

Tranströmer was born in Stockholm and raised by his mother, a schoolteacher, following her divorce to his father.<sup>[3]</sup> He received his secondary education at the Södra Latin School in Stockholm, where he began writing poetry. In addition to selected journal publications, his first collection of poems, *17 dikter* (*Seventeen Poems*), was published in 1954. He continued his education at Stockholm University, graduating as a psychologist in 1956 with additional studies history, religion, and literature.<sup>[4]</sup> Between 1960 and 1966, Tranströmer split his time between working as a psychologist at the Roxtuna center for juvenile offenders and writing poetry.<sup>[5]</sup>

During the 1950s, Tranströmer became close friends with poet Robert Bly. The two corresponded frequently, and Bly would translate Tranströmer's poems into English. Bonniers, Tranströmer's publisher, released *Air Mail*, a work comprising of Tranströmer and Bly's mail, in 2001.<sup>[6]</sup>

Tranströmer suffered a stroke in 1990 that left him partially paralyzed and unable to speak; however, he would continue to write and publish poetry through the early 2000s. His last original work, *The Great Enigma*, was published in 2004. Tranströmer has since retired from writing. <sup>[1]</sup>

In addition to his writing, Tranströmer is also a piano player, something he has been able to continue after his stroke, albeit with one hand. <sup>[3]</sup>

## Career

Tranströmer is considered to be one of the "most influential Scandinavian poet of recent decades". <sup>[1]</sup> Tranströmer has published 15 collected works over his career, which has been translated into over 60 languages. <sup>[1]</sup> An English translation by Robin Fulton of his entire body of work, *New Collected Poems*, was published in the UK in 1987 and expanded in 1997. Following the publication of *Den stora gåtan* (*The Great Enigma*), Fulton's edition was further expanded into *The Great Enigma: New Collected Poems*, published in the US in 2006 and as an updated edition of *New Collected Poems* <sup>[4]</sup> in the UK in 2011. He published a short autobiography, *Minnena ser mig* (*Memories look at me*), in 1993.

Other poets, especially in the "political" 1970's, accused Tranströmer of being apart from his tradition and not including political issues in his poems and novels. His work, though, lies within and further develops the Modernist and Expressionist/Surrealist language of 20th century poetry; his clear, seemingly simple pictures from everyday life and nature in particular reveals a mystic insight to the universal aspects of the human mind.

Tranströmer was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2011. <sup>[1]</sup> <sup>[3]</sup> Tranströmer had been considered a perennial frontrunner for the award in years past, with reporters waiting near his residence on the day of the announcement in years prior. <sup>[1]</sup> The Nobel Committee cited that Tranströmer's work created "condensed, translucent images" that "gives us fresh access to reality." <sup>[5]</sup> Tranströmer's other awards include the Bonnier Award for Poetry, the Neustadt International Prize for Literature, the Oeuvralids Prize, the Petrarca-Preis in Germany, the Golden Wreath of the Struga Poetry Evenings and the Swedish Award from International Poetry Forum. In 2007, Tranströmer received a special Lifetime Recognition Award given by the trustees of the Griffin Trust for Excellence in Poetry, which also awards the annual Griffin Poetry Prize.

## Swedish collections

- *17 dikter* (1954) – *Seventeen Poems*
- *Hemligheter på vägen* (1958)
- *Den halvfärdiga himlen* (1962) – *The Half-Finished Heaven*
- *Klanger och spår* (1966) – *Windows and Stones*
- *Mörkerseende* (1970) – *Night Vision*
- *Stigar* (1973) – *Paths*
- *Östersjöar* (1974) – *Baltics*
- *Sanningsbarriären* (1978)
- *Det vilda torget* (1983)
- *För levande och döda* (1989) – *For the Living and the Dead*
- *Sorgegondolen* (1996)
- *Den stora gåtan* (2004)
- *Galleriet: Reflected in Vecka nr.II* (2007) – an artist book by Modhir Ahmed

## Selected books in English translation

- *20 Poems* tr. Robert Bly (Seventies Press, 1970)
- *Windows and Stones* tr. May Swenson & Leif Sjöberg (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972)
- *Baltics* tr. Samuel Charters (Oyez, Berkeley, 1975)
- *Collected Poems* tr. Robin Fulton (Bloodaxe Books, 1987)
- *Sorrow Gondola: Sorgegondolen* tr. Robin Fulton (Dedalus Press, 1997)
- *New Collected Poems* tr. Robin Fulton (Bloodaxe Books, 1997)
- *The Half-Finished Heaven* tr. Robert Bly (Graywolf Press, 2001)
- *The Great Enigma: New Collected Poems* tr. Robin Fulton (New Directions, 2006)
- *The Sorrow Gondola* tr. Michael McGriff and Mikaela Grassl (Green Integer, 2010)
- *New Collected Poems* tr. Robin Fulton (Bloodaxe Books, 2011)

## References

- [1] "Swedish Poet Wins Nobel Prize for Literature - NYTimes.com" (<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/07/arts/swedish-poet-wins-nobel-prize-for-literature.html?hp>). The New York Times Company. 2011-10-06. . Retrieved 2011-10-06.
- [2] "The Nobel Prize in Literature 2011 – Press Release" ([http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/2011/press.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2011/press.html)). Nobelprize.org. . Retrieved 2011-10-06.
- [3] Lea, Richard; Flood (2011-10-06). "Nobel prize for literature goes to Tomas Tranströmer" (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/oct/06/nobel-prize-literature-tomas-transtromer?newsfeed=true>). *The Guardian*. . Retrieved 2011-10-06.
- [4] "New Collected Poems – review by Paul Batchelor" (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/jun/17/new-collected-poems-tomas-transtromer-review>). *The Guardian*. 17 June 2011.
- [5] [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/2011/press.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2011/press.html)

## External links

- Official Website of Tomas Tranströmer (<http://tomastranstromer.net/>)
- Biography on Pegasos (<http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/trastt.htm>)
- Biography and Poems (<http://www.poets.org/ttran>) on Poets.org
- Biographical profile on Bloodaxe Books website (<http://www.bloodaxebooks.com/personpage.asp?author=Tomas+Transtromer>)
- Griffin Poetry Prize Lifetime Recognition tribute, including audio and video clips (<http://www.griffinpoetryprize.com/awards-and-poets/lifetime-recognition-award/tomas-transtromer/>)
- Poems in English translation (<http://samizdateditions.com/issue3/transtromer1.html>) at *Samizdat*
- *Poetry Fix* video on Tranströmer (<http://www.thethepoetry.com/2010/10/poetry-fix-episode-15-transtromer/>)

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