

Volume 19 #2
Spring 2025

In this issue, *Ezra* brings readers a taste of works by the Argentinian poet Roberto Juarroz, translated here below by our featured writer Wally Swist. An amuse-bouche whets the appetite: “Forms of fidelity that we ignore, only in them is it possible to postpone a little the impossibility of everything.” In these few simple words, Juarroz captures the essence of poetry and translation at once. *Forms of fidelity* evoke not only the ethics that guide translators through the translation process, but likewise the very stock in trade of poets and translators: the signs and symbols that organize language systems. Juarroz’s wisdom here recognizes, more importantly, that in those forms - the signifiers and signifieds to which we endeavor to remain faithful - lies the power of the poet and the translator: namely, the possibility *to postpone the impossibility of everything*. That *impossibility* in the literary sense becomes *possible* via the miraculous thing called poetic text, which has the inexplicable power to create shared transcendent meaning for readers out of what is otherwise chaos. It is likewise the wondrous thing we call translation, which has the power to break open works to audiences for whom such beautiful texts might otherwise remain *impossible* to grasp.

Ezra proposes here as well lovely translations of poetry by Zhang Zhihao, Ma Yongbo, and Ovid. In addition, we include elegant 13th century French weaving songs, translated by Timothy Perry. Taste the possibilities spring. And as we fend off the chaos that is human existence in the world, may we all enjoy a little *postponed impossibility*.

FEATURED WRITER : Wally Swist

Wally Swist’s *Huang Po and the Dimensions of Love* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2012) was selected by Yusef Komunyakaa as co-winner in the 2011 Crab Orchard Series Open Poetry Contest. He was the 2018 winner of the Ex Ophidia Press Poetry Prize for his collection *A Bird Who Seems to*

Know Me: Poetry Regarding Birds and Nature (2019). Recent books include *Awakening and Visitation* (2020), *Evanescence: Selected Poems* (2020), and *Taking Residence* (2021), all with Shanti Arts. His translation of *L'Allegria* by Giuseppe Ungaretti was published by Shanti Arts in 2023.

His essays, poetry, and translations have appeared in *Asymptote*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, *Commonweal*, *Hunger Mountain*, *The Montreal Review*, *Poetry London*, *Today's American Catholic*, *Transference: A Literary Journal Featuring the Art & Process of Translation*, (*Western Michigan Department of Languages*), *Vox Populi*, and *Your Impossible Voice*.

Here below Swist shares with readers his translations of numerous poems by Roberto Juarroz, the Argentine poet best known for his *Vertical Poesies*, the first iteration of which was published in 1958.

It shouldn't be possible
to fall asleep without being nearby you
a voice to awaken to.

It shouldn't be possible
falling asleep without being nearby
one's own voice to awaken.

It shouldn't be possible
to fall asleep without waking
at the right moment in which the dream is found
with those eyes open
that don't need to sleep anymore.

A day will come
in which there would be no need to push the glass to make it fall,
nor hammer the nails to hold them,
nor put the stones to rest so that they remain silent.

The great union will begin.
Even God will learn to speak
and the air and the light
will enter their cave of fearful eternities.

Then there will be no difference between your eyes and your belly,
nor between my words and my voice.
The stones will be like your breasts
and I will make my verses with my hands,
so that no one can be confused anymore.

Each one goes as best they can,
some with their chests open,
others with only one hand,
some with the identity card in their pocket,
others in the soul,
some with the moon screwed in the blood
and others without blood, nor moon, nor memories.

Each one goes even if they can't,
some with love between their teeth,
others changing their skin,
some with life and death,
others with death and life,
some with their hand on their shoulder
and others with it on the shoulder of another.

Each one goes because they're going,
some with someone sleepless between their eyebrows,
others without having crossed paths with anyone,
some through the door that seemingly opens onto the road,
others through a door drawn on the wall or perhaps in the air,
some without having begun to live
and others without having begun to live.

But everyone leaves with their feet tied,
some along the path they took,
others for what they did not do
and all for which they will never do.

The last light is always soldered by hand.

It is a fruit,

an already complete body.

Yes after her

if another return was possible,

the whole body would see.

The light of the water is the water,

the one with the shadow, the shadow,

and that of one foot, the other foot.

After half a life or maybe all of it,

few things resist:

the place where the parallels tremble,

the night when a dead love is alive again,

an instance that is not light, shadow or their intermediate gradations,

a place that is not everything except the others,

certain outward introductions.

Forms of fidelity that we ignore,

only in them is it possible

to postpone a little the impossibility of everything.

Sometimes I play catch up.

I run with the one I was
and with whom I will be
in the race of what I am.

And sometimes I play I pass myself.

Then maybe I run
the race of which I am not.

But there is yet another race
in which I play that I am passed
and that will be the true race.

traduttori/traduttrici

Ma Yongbo (self-translation)

He Yuemin (Zhang Zhihao)

Josh Raab (Ovid)

Roberta Antognini,
Deborah Woodard (Amelia Rosselli)

Timothy Perry (Anonymous, French Weaving Songs)

Ma Yongbo *(translating his own work)*

You've Always Been Arranging Flowers on the Island

Things always have their shadows,
their images in your mind,
Are they as simple and clear as your flower arrangements?
A stem with the rusty texture of a dried lotus pod,
a few strands of spring orchid leaves hanging low.
The silence at the tip of the branch begins to sway.
You seem to always be arranging flowers on the island,
patiently adjusting the flowers and your relationship with them.
Occasionally, you look up and see another island,
where someone releases swarms of bees flying in bomber formation.
You're always the woman with a straw hat, yellow flowers in hair,
The sun rises slantwise, becoming the roof over your head.
The sun is your only shield, inscribed with a legend.
Islands keep appearing among us,
like the cork stoppers we put in the basins of our childhood,
each island has identical people.

They imitate me as I build mud houses, repair white fences,
pull back the overgrown branches of fruit trees, tie them with red thread,
sowing grains of salt, shouting while holding dry firewood.
You never return from the island,
it seems like there's only you on it.
You get smaller and smaller, wearing clothes the color of duck eggs,
like a queen ruling without taking unnatural actions.
The island has no horizon.
Footprints on the beach quickly fill with sparkling tide.
While other islands quietly sail into the mist,
your clothes become transparent, and you rise from the island.
You finally see the boundary between water and land,
and those swarms are already wrapped in clouds,
falling silent, retreating into the black beehives under the trees.

Reflect on the Universal Connectivity of All Things while Encountering Lotus Flowers

Just some leaves, either plump or shriveled,
Just some petals, either red or white, repeating.
They are like some pink brush tips dipped in dew,

Hesitating over the rice paper of wrinkled and darkened water.
Just some lotus heads not yet breaking the surface,
When faded, flowers turn into green lanterns dimly glowing.
The startled fish darting beneath the lotus leaves,
Just the black water growing even darker,
Limbs entangled in a little lake besieged by high rises
Just a pile of clues waiting to be cleaned up,
Twin blossoms, are simply arranged together
by a random hand, their moments of blooming
yet both obeying commands from deep within the starry sky.
They are sheltered by random eyes,
Like a nouveau riche, embracing sister flowers into a mansion,
Replacing lotus flowers with flesh and blood,
It's difficult to repay the debts forgotten from past lives.
As I walk midst flowers and leaves,
Wanting to see how their roots conspire in the darkness,
but get surrounded by more flowers, more leaves,
More sisters, more repeated beauty
I dare not withdraw,
Only pretending to pass by coincidentally,
Brushing away the tangled threadlike wickers on the plank path,
Aware that lotus flowers do not bloom for me,
Nor for anyone,
Not even for themselves.

Similarly we come here, not for the lotus flowers,
As we gradually penetrate like a wedge-shaped prow,
The lotus leaf skirts dodge layer by layer,
Making space for an increasingly dark water surface.

MA YONGBO

UNTITLED

Translated by: Yuemin He

On every late-night walk home, I can see

a star in the same position

On the same road have I traveled many a year

yet I still cannot avoid going astray, mostly after drinking

I am attracted by roadside shadows or bright light

But greater attractions still come from

the light of that stationary star

Dim yet deep

it needs to shine over nothing

it only safeguards that while living in mistakes

I won't be led astray by bigger mistakes

SEARCHING FOR A MATCHING SOCK

Searching from a pile of socks

a matching pair, and even expecting

them to be the original pair

Doesn't that sound a little demanding?

A pile of washed socks often looks

the same: all black

or all gray in color

I hate the design

though I also succumb to its convenience

Sometimes on the balcony

I would pick and choose, and then put a random pair

on my feet; other times

I would suddenly stop walking, and

the thought--The socks were not the original match

but can still move together--

strikes me as an elating secret

ZHANG ZHIHAO

The Transformation of Daphne (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I.543-567)

Translated by: Josh Raab

Spent from the chase, overcome by the ceaseless effort of sprinting,
Daphne is drained of her color – but she spies the Peneus’s currents.
“Father,” she begs him, “Help me! If you have divinity, rivers,
Ruin my form, which has pleased too much, with a transfiguration.”
Numbness envelops her limbs, though her praying is scarcely completed:
Tree bark covers her delicate breasts in a tenuous casing;
Foliage sprouts from her hair, and her arms shoot forth into branches;
Roots cling fast to the feet that had just displayed such swiftness;
Crowning her head is a treetop. Even thus, she is lovely.
Phoebus adores this too. As he touches the trunk with his fingers,
Under the bark he is able to sense her trembling bosom.
Arms embracing the limb-like branches tightly, Apollo
Kisses the bark, but the bark as well shrinks back from the kisses.
“Though you cannot be mine as a wife” he declared to the changed one,
“Still, you will certainly be my tree. You will compass my lyres,
Laurel, forever adorning my hair and my quivers of arrows.
Marshals of Rome will delight in your presence when jubilant voices
Sing as the Capitoline observes the triumphal processions;
As an implacable guard, you will stand at the gates of Augustus,
Keeping the garland of oak in your leaves by the front of the doorposts.
Finally, like my immortal face which has never been shaven,
You, too – carry the honor of foliage ever in verdure.”
Paean had finished; the laurel bowed its new-made branches,
Seeming to shake its top like a head that nods in agreement.

JUST BECAUSE

Translated by: Roberta Antognini and Deborah Woodard

Just because I show up you've got a pencil
to write down the horrors?

Just because I don't show up you've got a pencil
to write about me?

Do you have pants? I've got green saliva.

I no longer see the saints.

TO RENATO

Learning to have faith! Without
you I can't sense in the air other
than buffoons.

Laughter isn't always bitter... maybe the air
writes of magic, miracles, distension
characters urging for love.

Truth that you're reborn what unexpected tumor

is this that assails me running with you

through tumultuous streets?

FOR GIANFRANCO

I don't want to die today, I've no

hope of dying today: I'm in full

throttle; I'm like the others –

candid, of your flowered death of afterlives

of your death offered as a prize, of

your shy youthful smile, of your

defrocked and certain cheekiness. I'm

certain you'll switch gears, I'm quite certain

that you won't love me even there, where you go

and where I'll go, living. Are you ever certain

of this same thing, matter, delusional

certainty of aging?

("I'm uncertain of being close to you, never

do I feel wholly certain of you, who spying
brief or reach me... Competition!
life unleashed, snarls, throat
or impervious freshness." I was delirious, and I
started tinkering to correct this
vice... of knowing you armed with wisdom
of knowing you a quarter of a mile away
as if all the wisdom in the world could
mangle dogs as I'm already doing, as
I'll certainly do, resting in this hovel
resting in search of you who die
almost cheerfully. – Why, such a big smile
and such courtesy? In the arabesque smiles
of the flowing and dry wine, superb the
wine but mixed the mixture!
And I'm dead by now near your striking
whole arrows for my parmesan, in

laughing at life and death wholeness and sponges

I've nothing more to say, like you, who

fire or flee.)

AMELIA ROSSELLI

The weaving song is a genre of medieval French lyric that originated in the traditional songs sung by women as they worked with textiles. All surviving examples, however, are self-consciously literary texts written by men. The songs present brief narratives of love each told from the point of view of a young woman, who is often weaving (or spinning or sewing) as the poem begins. Most weaving songs feature a happy ending, with the lovers reunited after a minor misunderstanding (as in the first poem translated here) or the young woman escaping with her lover's help from a dangerous situation (usually caused by an abusive father or husband). The second poem translated here concludes more ambiguously, however, with only one of the two sisters involved getting the outcome she desires.

The name of love is sweet

Translated by: Timothy Perry

Lovely Yolande was sitting in her rooms

And sewing clothes of finest Syrian silk—

She wished to send them to her love; and as

She sewed she sighed, and sighing sang this song:

‘The name of love is sweet: I never thought

That I would feel such pain.’

‘My love, so beautiful, I wish to send

These clothes to you as pledges of my love.

I pray, by God, that you may pity me.’

She could not stand, but sat upon the ground.

The name of love is sweet: I never thought

That I would feel such pain.

And as she spoke these words and thought these thoughts

Her love arrived and came into the house;

And when she saw him there she lowered her chin

And could not speak, not even ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

The name of love is sweet: I never thought

That I would feel such pain.

‘My lady, you’ve forgotten me.’ And at
These words she smiled, and stretching out her arms
To him she sighed, and sighing took him in
Her arms, and held him in a sweet embrace.
The name of love is sweet: I never thought
That I would feel such pain.

‘My love, I cannot flatter with false praise,
But love you from my heart without deceit.
And if you wish to kiss me, go ahead—
But I desire to go and lie with you.’

The name of love is sweet: I never thought
That I would feel such pain.

Her love then takes her in his arms; they sit
Together, side by side, on a fine bed.
Lovely Yolande now holds him close, and by
Some wrestler’s trick she lays him on his back.
The name of love is sweet: I never thought

That I would feel such pain.

II. 'Gaiete and Oriour', anonymous (France, early 13th century)

On Saturday the week comes to an end—

Gaiete and Oriour, two sisters, hand

In hand, go down together to the spring.

And the wind blows and the trees shake, but those

Who love each other lie asleep.

Gerard, a squire, returning from the joust

And noticing Gaiete beside the spring,

Enfolds her in a sudden, sweet embrace.

And the wind blows and the trees shake, but those

Who love each other lie asleep.

'When you have drawn the water, Oriour,

Go back—you know the way; but I will stay—

Gerard alone appreciates my worth.'

And the wind blows and the trees shake, but those

Who love each other lie asleep.

So Oriour goes back, pale and distressed,

And as she goes her eyes are full of tears,

Her heart of sighs—she goes without Gaiete.

And the wind blows and the trees shake, but those

Who love each other lie asleep.

‘It seems that I was born for misery:

Gerard now takes my sister, whom I left

Down in the valley—takes her far away.’

And the wind blows and the trees shake, but those

Who love each other lie asleep.

But now Gerard has gone, and Gaiete too;

They took the road that leads straight to the town—

As soon as they arrived he married her.

And the wind blows and the trees shake, but those

Who love each other lie asleep.

REVIEWS:

.....*And the Dogs Were Silent*, Césaire, Aimé , translated and introduced by Alex Gil. Duke University Press, 2024. pp 298.

“My hand of light and vengeance”: Aimé Césaire’s Early Turn to Haiti

In 1946, the French publisher Gallimard released Aimé Césaire’s acclaimed collection of poems, *The Miraculous Weapons*. This text also contained a dramatic work titled *Et les chiens se taisent*, or, *And The Dogs Were Silent*, a three-act play which tells the story of a tragic hero, known simply as the Rebel, struggling against an oppressive, colonizing, enslaving force. Notably, like Albert Camus’ *La Peste* (1947), Césaire’s play (he called it a “lyric oratorio”) concerns real-world atrocities but lacks a specific historical or cultural setting. It tends towards the abstract and universal.

Thanks to scholar and translator Alex Gil, we are learning that this celebrated closet drama was predated by a “more fiery,” more political play that did have an explicitly historical element. As Gil explains, around five years before the 1946 publication, during the Vichy occupation of Martinique, Césaire wrote and revised a drama set during the Haitian revolution that follows the rise to power of its central figure, Toussaint Louverture (Césaire alluded to Louverture just a couple years earlier in his famed *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land* (1939)—“What is also mine: a little cell in the Jura / . . . a lone man imprisoned in whiteness / a lone man defying the white screams of white death (TOUSSAINT, TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE).”

The play unfolds as various prophetic voices surround and intermingle with a series of dramatic events—moments that, as Gil clarifies, do not aspire to a perfect realism but instead “condense and evoke major events of the Haitian revolution.” In the opening act, *Louverture* is illustrated with a kind of prophetic gravity. One of the play’s recurring voices, the Recitante, states: “I was awakened from my grand dream of violet seas and chocolate earth, and I saw a man arrive near the clove trees. He turned the sky black; his face was a peat bog cut with dragonflies.” The first act also includes episodes from the early years of the revolutionary struggle. In one scene, a group of white deputies tries to persuade black insurgents to give up their cause: “Return to the fields. Return to work. We are ready to recognize the freedom of the best among you, and we guarantee the rest of you our paternal kindness.” This only results in cries of “death to the whites” and then, a massacre: “corpses roll down to the foot of breadfruit trees . . . [t]he ravine sprouts corpses.” By the second act, *Louverture* is leading Saint-Domingue, but he takes little comfort in this position. Soon, troops and parliamentarians appear, intending to take back the colony for France (these are Napoleon’s men) and offering a choice, “war or peace.” *Louverture* vows destruction: “Sulfur my brother, sulfur my blood / will spread over the proudest cities / its scented fragrances, / the charisma of its grace.” In the final act, we are with Toussaint as he is imprisoned in the Jura mountains near Switzerland. He speaks with his son Isaac who wants his father to cooperate with France: “Saint-Domingue is waiting for peace, / forgetting, / convalescence.” But *Louverture* remembers

the rage he felt when his old master sized up the new-born Isaac as a piece of property. He feels his purpose in a sacred way: "I've brought my heart back to that ancient flint, that old amadou that Africa deposited deep inside of me." Following a visionary section, where he encounters the Virgin Mary, Louverture dies, and the text breaks into swells of prophetic speech. The play also conjures up Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who would carry on Louverture's liberatory spirit: "Dessalines the butcher, Dessalines the avenger. / Toussaint, Toussaint Louverture!" In the closing lines, as elsewhere in the play, we get delicate, relational images whose effect is all the more potent as it contrasts with the drama's violent, revolutionary pathos—the chorus in the closing lines chanting, "islands / silent lands / truncated islands. / I come to you / I am one with you islands." (Indeed, it is notable how Césaire often mixes imagery that communicates great sensitivity to the world, especially the natural world, with more violent imagery. This combination contributes to the text's power: early on, Louverture declares "violets and anemones rise at each step of my blood . . . at each step of my voice, with each drop of my name / ...araucaria cones, cherry bouquets"; or later, "[h]ere is my hand / my daybreak hand, my fountain-of-blood hand / my hand of kelp and iodine / my hand of light and vengeance"; in another scene, amidst a massacre: "oblivion of blood, beautiful as the unleashed memory of fresh forgetting, revenge rose up with the day's ear, and all the vanilla dust that weaves the nights' flesh, and all the wasps that salivate the nights' cassava, and all the barracudas that sign the nights' backside have pushed until they saw their keyhole eye.")

Given only the basic facts surrounding the original *And the Dogs Were Silent*—for instance, the fact that it shows Césaire engaging so early on with Louverture and the Haitian revolution theme, a major inspiration in Caribbean literature; or the fact that it was essentially composed in secret, at a time of real censorship and danger (Césaire’s journal *Tropiques* was shut down by the censors in 1945)—based on these facts alone, we assume that this play should have its own legacy, or at least should occupy an important spot in the œuvre and understanding of Aimé Césaire. This has not been the case. Of course, Césaire himself heavily revised the play for the 1946 release; he also tried to disown the original version, feeling that it was too weighed down by history and “theme” (this is partly due to Césaire’s increasing commitment to surrealism, to poetry itself as a form of liberation, one that didn’t require thematic material). The accidents of literary history also played an important role in keeping the play unknown. Fascinatingly, Gil explains how during the Vichy years, Césaire sent the typescript to surrealist poet André Breton, who sent the text on to Yvan Goll (a poet associated with surrealism and also an early translator of Césaire). As it happens, Goll fell out with Breton and never returned Césaire’s material. This earlier version of the play would then remain in Goll’s archives in Saint-Dié des Vosges, France, untouched and unknown until 2008. Here, Gil himself becomes part of the story. Following on from a footnote he found in an article on Goll and Breton’s friendship, Gil’s doctoral research on Césaire led him to Saint-Dié des Vosges where he came across the original typescript. Gil eventually made sense of the text and its import and has since championed

and edited it, and he offers us now (almost 85 years after Césaire's original) an accurate, compelling, timely translation, complete with the original French as well as a pitch-perfect scholarly apparatus (especially helpful when it comes to situating the play's references to actual historical events and to appreciating the complexity of its author).

This early*And the Dogs Were Silent*—Gil stylizes it this way following Césaire's draft—will no doubt be read and studied for years to come. It will help readers to see how Césaire turned to drama following the *Notebook of a Return* and how his project (at this early point, with Césaire still in his 20s) was both mature and evolving. Indeed, the text lets us see diverse creative ambitions at work, especially as it blends more straightforward authorial need (the need to tell a story, to develop the revolution and Louverture for the stage) with the highly experimental, imaginative language that characterizes Césaire's endeavor. Again, as we move through the events, language that we can easily recognize as Césaire's (in the voice of Toussaint, in the voice of the prophetic chorus, etc.) always surges back into the play: rhythmic, multivocal, hyper-articulate, overflowing, responsive to the world. And this is all rendered beautifully into English by Gil's careful and passionate translation. Here, we are left with renewed appreciation for Césaire's historical concern as well as for his profound literary gift. We also see, of course, how they intertwine. Césaire's experimental writing cannot but give us the feeling that for new social and political possibilities to become realities, new and different ways of being in the world will have to win out. Individuals and communities will have to find ways to relate to the

world other than those privileged by the occidental order. If this is not a revolution, it is at least on the road to liberation, and this is what Césaire practiced through poetry, and perhaps what his poetry still urgently asks of its readers. Whether his writing lacks a theme or commits to one completely, whether violent and tempestuous, or lowly, delicate, and receptive, an undeniable sense of new possibility lives in the *parole* of Aimé Césaire.

Christopher J. Monier

Nicholls State University

The Seizure of the Beast, Militaru, Iulia, translated from the Romanian by Claudia Serea. Montreal: Guernica World Editions 69, 2023. 100pp.

In his most recent book, *The Philosophy of Translation*, Damion Searls calls translation “something like moving through the world;” this is a good metaphor for the way translation introduces readers to other cultures and works of literatures, broadening their horizons and enriching our experiences. At the same time, the saying alludes to translation’s ability to enable our movement through the world, while also allowing the world to

move through us, imbuing our mind and emotions with the intensity of the Other.

The translator of *The Seizure of the Beast*, Claudia Serea, is also a poet and editor. She is the author of seven poetry collections and four chapbooks, most recently *In Those Years, No One Slept* (2023). She co-edited and co-translated *The Vanishing Point That Whistles*, an *Anthology of Contemporary Romanian Poetry* (2011) and from Romanian, *Adina Dabija's Beautybeast* (2012).

Her translation of Militaru's work is clear and flows on the page, capturing the author's language explorations as well as her performative intentions. Claudia Serea beautifully depicts the immediacy and playfulness of *The Seizure of the Beast* and catches the integrity of the poet's work: how sound, meter, sound, imagery, tone, connotations, and denotations contribute to the aesthetic effect.

A Romanian writer and editor, Iulia Militaru is the author of several works: *The Great Pipe Epic* (2001), *Dramadoll* (2012), *Atlas (auto)mat/on (auto)BIO/graphyl/I © of several main types of speeches* (2017). Her

collection *The Seizure of the Beast* first appeared in Romanian in 2016 and in 2023 in Claudia Serea's translation.

The collection opens with the author's introduction —Concept, and work method — where she explains the long labor of the book and the idea on which it is based: gathering archived objects/concepts and recycling them in order to render, with the help of literary speech, the feeling of alienation residing from the interaction of such concepts, distinct types of speech and various fields. By focusing on both performative and noncreative writing, Iulia Militaru attempts to explore the connection between speech and the relationship with the Other.

The Seizure of the Beast questions the nature of a poem/the poem, its use, and its ability to reinvent and stay open. Militaru makes an analogy between her poem and Magritte's pipe, a physical object that can be many things: a name, an image, a simple word, a thing itself.

Claudia Serea beautifully renders the poet's use of a fluid form for her poem, meant to complement the inquisitive nature of its versatile content:

The poem:

We use it to show off our genius to the individuals of the opposite sex.

We use it to guide our spirit toward dreaming.

We use it to escape reality.

We use it to dive into reality.

To change the world.

To preserve the world.

To forget.

To remember.

For everything.

For nothing.

The Seizure of the Beast is intent on addressing the shapeshifting nature of poetry and act as an anti-poem. It is equally connected to one's identity and displays how gender, the masculine/ feminine dichotomy, death, life, all permeate the layers of a poem. Militaru's work is infused with medical and philosophical terms/ references, questioning the nature of the speech and how form can be bent to challenge norms.

Her experimental take on language and its shifting nature is illustrated by the use of fragments of official documents, and other noncreative

sources; by collapsing the edges of the poetic genre, Militaru lets her ideas flow freely. Claudia Serea's translation of these explorations invites readers to respond more actively with the text, inducing a deeper mode of engagement.

Death is one of the themes the poet investigates in all its forms: physical decay, medical fact, research, afterlife, the way it is recorded by history, the way it is amended by the law, customs, obituaries, faith, etc. It is in the poet's words, "the condition of life progress" (31).

Death: What is free of your intentions/ What always occurs
onward; Reprehensible when it becomes your intention/
Reprehensible when it does not occur outwardly. (18)

Claudia Serea's use of alliteration grants the text an audible pulse, while also conferring musicality to the first and third lines.

Space is present in the collection not only as a theme but a character itself. There is a decalogue for using space, tying the religious and ethical directives to the presence of the State as a lawmaker. "Thou shalt have no other spaces before me" thunders the legislative voice and the reader is

immediately reminded that “one of the fundamental duties of the State is to streak the space that it owns or use the smooth spaces as means of communication at the service of the streaked space” (39).

As a character itself, white space is one of the poet’s favorite poetic devices, shaping sound and words to delineate the poetic field. It teaches the reader where to pause and enjoy the silence. It is not only an expression of the poet’s creativity, but it also visually generates an aesthetic. The poet plays with line breaks and equally manipulates the perimeter of the poem and the page itself, creating instances of change and liminality. In her poem, “Impression from Olympus,” Iulia Militaru blends pauses, absences, and white space to make silence both visual and dense:

Heavy sky. Weighing. On us,
oppressive. Dry wave
of time steps out from us, onto us.

Blue. Blue. Blue

gull that splinters. Cry

blue blue white

star. White moon seen through daylight.

Serea's word choices and word order create a sense of immediacy and building tension.

Movement and color complement each other to balance directness and clarity, on one hand, with magnifying meaning and impact.

The collection is hybrid in both form and content, exploring the limitations of poetry and spilling its genre edges. Content wise, it brings together various literary and nonliterary sources, challenging the idea of a fixed subject matter. Thus, links to YouTube sources, newspaper clippings, medical language, cultural references, etc. allow the reader to actively interact with the abundant material and also consider how hybridity is a genre itself, an expression of one's identity and obsessions.

The poet contrasts the demands we place on language and poetry, the expectation to be "a beautiful representation/ to conquer everyday banality" with the ugliness of our daily existence (111). Though her pieces might document historical tragedies such as that of the children's home of Cighid

where orphans were kept in inhumane conditions during the communist regime in poem, “Room nr. 5”, the tone is not gloomy or hopeless, but rather sensible. The epode ending the collection is an invitation to escape reality: “Run. Be /come animal again and again, with no end” (116).

Claudia Serea’s translation of Militaru’s work demonstrates the potential of literature to expand language and culture and bring into English Militaru’s way of thinking and versatile style.

Searle, Damion, The Philosophy of Translation. Yale University Press, 2024.

<https://guernicaeditions.com/en-us/products/the-seizure-of-the-beast>

<https://www.broadstonebooks.com/shop/p/in-those-years-no-one-slept-poetry-by-claudia-serea>

~~Clara Burghilea

