

OANA AVASILICHIOAEI & ERÍN MOURE / PRANK!

The Roost, translated by E.S. from Nichita Stănescu

1

I was out in the field.
My pen stopped working.
I had to write with a straw.

2

Where they'd torn up the rails
behind the sewing factory, I found a field.
In the field, when wind rises,
the grass clangs.

3

I sat down on a concrete boulder in the field.
A mouse treads to the lip of its tunnel
and pushes my boot.

And the sky is a roost
for birds.

It now appears that, in the 1990s, Elisa Sampedrín spent time in Romania, where she came in contact with the poems of Nichita Stănescu, and attempted, though she knew no Romanian, to translate them herself into English, which she was also unfamiliar with. The result was immediately, and later, unpublishable.

Now that Stănescu's poems have made their home in Canada in excellent English versions (in *Occupational Sickness* from BuschekBooks, tr. Oana Avasilichioaei), it at last makes sense to unearth some of Sampedrín's poems.

Erín Moure, a Canadian poet who previously collected Sampedrín's statements on theatres in her own *Little Theatres*, has examined these translations in the light of Sampedrín's known history, and insists it is impossible that they be hers.

We attribute them to her anyhow, believing Moure wrong in her archaeography.

A critic had this to say about Sampedrín's attempts at translation: "The line, the poetic line, confounds geometry. It becomes *lineage*, which is to say, older and younger at once."

Prajina/Cotețul, restored to Romanian by O.A., from the English of E.S.

1

Eram pe teren.
Stiloul n-a mai vrut să scrie.
Am fost silit să scriu cu un pai.

2

Unde au smuls șinele
după uzina de textile, am găsit un câmp.
Pe câmp, când vântul se întetește,
iarba dangăna.

3

M-am așezat în câmp, pe un bolovan de beton.
Un șoarece calcă până la marginea tunelului sau
și-mi împinge cisma.

Și cerul e un coteț de vrăbii.

Because Elisa Sampedrín erroneously translated, in the previous piece, a poem by Nichita Stănescu that had not been written in the first place, Oana Avasilichioaei, Stănescu's Canadian translator, was obliged to translate backward, and create the original Stănescu poem we have here.

Coatful, tr. E.S. from the Romanian of O.A.

1

I felt my foot.
Silhouette at the root of a scream.
Frost silting its scream with a stick.

2

Where smoke signals
dupe the textile factory, there's gas in a camp.
The camp's foot, when its vantage point interests you,
dangles grasses.

3

Me, I'm seized up in camp, one foot a block of cement.
A soreness in cloth socks tunnels sour margarine
while the chiasm impinges.

I'm sealed in a coat of rage.

The problem with Avasilichioaei's translation backward in time into the original Romanian of Sampedrín's translation entitled "The Roost" is that it renders Sampedrín's purported translation *accurate*. And we all know that Sampedrín does not know Romanian.

Fortunately, Sampedrín herself appears to have remedied this here, by translating the now-original Romanian of Avasilichioaei-Stănescu.

Prank/1:45, by E.M.

1

Put your best foot forward.
Stilettos in the hand are as good as a saw.
False stilettos, scraping the planks.

2

You can make a small city
in a textile factory, cook with camp gas.
In the camp, a huge pot of intestines,
stirred with a spoon.

3

Quick, put your foot in the door, and get your bets in.
Calcium and magnesium make the bones soar,
over the abyss.

And the sky—a car crassh.

Maintaining her insistence that Sampedrín's translations are impossible, and are in fact not hers, Moure claims this to be the original poem, and refutes any resemblance to Stănescu's work, though allows for the possibility of coincidence between her original poem and Avasilichioaei's translation of the translation of Stănescu's poem. Avasilichioaei, for her part, asserts this to be an accurate translation into English of Stănescu's Romanian, and not an original poem as Moure claims. Avasilichioaei offers, in defense of her view, only that a car crash means a roost for birds.

Jocul/1:45, tr. O.A. from the English of E.M.

1

Pune-ți piciorul perfect înainte.
În mână, pantofii cui sânt la fel ca un fierăstrău.
Falși, pantofii cui zgârie podeaua.

2

Poți construi un mic oraș
în uzina de textile, găti la foc de tabără.
În tabără, o lingură amestecă
intestinele într-o oală uriașă.

3

Grabește-te, proptește piciorul în ușă, și fă pariu.
Calciu și magneziu silesc oasele să zboară
deasupra abisului.

Și cerul—o pocnitură de mașini.

Avasilichioaei distrusts the notion that an original ever existed or could exist, but admits, when pressed, that a translation is an original, and that she has access to the only true translation of Moure's poem, which she attempts here to restore into the language of Stănescu. At least we now have this original, and are relieved.

Jocularities #145, tr. E.S. from the Romanian of O.A.

1

You put me in the perfect instant.
This morning my slipper with its saint felt, out the window.
False, the slipper with its egrarious footstep.

2

Maybe you built a wee oar
in a text factory, the cat tiptoed on the table.
On the table, language mixed
intestinal between all that curiosity.

3

Grab it, protest pictorial in america, if it so appears.
Calcium and magnesium are silly flavours
leaping the abyss.

And unruly—imagine it, ouch! The rattle of machines.

The original of the copy is here originated in translation by Elisa Sampedrín, who still does not know any Romanian but won't desist. We don't know how E.S. got hold of the work of O.A., unless she found it in a book by Stănescu, where it hadn't, at that moment, been written. Yet.

If the Shoe Fits, Scare It. (*a revision of Jocularidad #145 by E.S.*)

1

You put me in the perfect instant.
I felt my foot.
My slipper with its saint felt, out the window.

2

False, the slipper with its egregious footstep,
a wee oar out of a text factory.
On the table, language mixed
intestinal between all that curiosity,
no wonder the cat tiptoes,
silhouette at the root of a scream.

3

And the sky rose—a car crassh.

It is not clear here why Sampedrín felt compelled to revise “Jocularidad.” As far as we can assess there was no need for such a revision. However, scribbled in the margin of Sampedrín’s notebook on the page where this poem is penned, we found this: “a rose is a rose is a rose is not repetition.”

Felt Hat Now, *tr. E.S. from the English of E.M.*

1

Stilettoes in the hand are as good as a saw.

She can tunnel in cloth socks

while the chasm impinges.

Quick, put her foot in the door,

get my bets in.

2

You could magnetize salt.

With your pulse I'm perfectly inane.

The tongue's just the far

end of the intestine, they're both

unruly, and what's between:

sly flavours leaping the abyss.

And the foot is the head—where's my felt hat now?

"We refute, we refute, we refute."

"What exactly?"

"This act, which makes the mouth hurt."

(Scribbled into the margins of Sampedrín's notebook.)

I inverted it.
I had to sit on a pen and write with a rock.
The crashing sky my roost.

3

Language of translation
roots in the factory textiling text.
Railway tracks cross uncross this junction.
Dangling legs over a cliff's abyss, children are innocent.

2

In the perfect instant language is a bridge.
You on the bridge
bird-soaring.

1

Are we game?

The sole poem worth reading in the original appears to be this one, a gaming lesson, by Oana Avasilichioaei. The rest of the poem is a prank.